

INTERPRETER

— ∞ —
A JOURNAL OF MORMON SCRIPTURE

VOLUME 16 • 2015

THE INTERPRETER FOUNDATION

OREM, UTAH

THE INTERPRETER FOUNDATION

CHAIRMAN AND PRESIDENT

Daniel C. Peterson

VICE PRESIDENTS

Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

Daniel Oswald

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Kevin Christensen

Steven T. Densley, Jr.

Brant A. Gardner

William J. Hamblin

Bryce M. Haymond

Louis C. Midgley

George L. Mitton

Gregory L. Smith

Tanya Spackman

Ted Vaggalis

Allen Wyatt

BOARD OF EDITORS

Matthew L. Bowen

David M. Calabro

Alison V. P. Coutts

Craig L. Foster

Taylor Halverson

Ralph C. Hancock

Cassandra S. Hedelius

Benjamin L. McGuire

Tyler R. Moulton

Mike Parker

Martin S. Tanner

Bryan J. Thomas

Gordon C. Thomasson

A. Keith Thompson

John S. Thompson

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Robert S. Boylan

John M. Butler

James E. Faulconer

Kristine Wardle Frederickson

Benjamin I. Huff

Jennifer C. Lane

David J. Larsen

Donald W. Parry

Ugo A. Perego

Stephen D. Ricks

G. Bruce Schaalje

Andrew C. Smith

John A. Tvedtnes

Sidney B. Unrau

Stephen T. Whitlock

Lynne Hilton Wilson

Mark Alan Wright

DONOR RELATIONS

Jann E. Campbell

TREASURER

Kent Flack

PRODUCTION EDITOR & DESIGNERS

Kelsey Fairbanks Avery

Timothy Guymon

Bryce M. Haymond

MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY

Bryce M. Haymond

THE INTERPRETER FOUNDATION

EDITORIAL CONSULTANTS

Linda Hunter Adams

Jill Bartholomew

Tyson Briggs

Joshua Chandler

Kasen Christensen

Ryan Daley

Marcia Gibbs

Laura Hales

Hannah Morgan

Jordan Nate

Eric Naylor

Don Norton

Neal Rappleye

Jared Riddick

Katie Robinson

William Shryver

David Smith

Stephen Owen Smoot

Kaitlin Cooper Swift

Kyle Tuttle

MEDIA VOLUNTEERS

Sean Canny

Scott Dunaway

Ellen Fehr

Brad Haymond

S. Hales Swift

Dallan Wright

© 2015 The Interpreter Foundation. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 444 Castro Street, Suite 900, Mountain View, California, 94041, USA.

ISSN 2372-1227 (print)

ISSN 2372-126X (online)

The goal of The Interpreter Foundation is to increase understanding of scripture through careful scholarly investigation and analysis of the insights provided by a wide range of ancillary disciplines, including language, history, archaeology, literature, culture, ethnohistory, art, geography, law, politics, philosophy, etc. Interpreter will also publish articles advocating the authenticity and historicity of LDS scripture and the Restoration, along with scholarly responses to critics of the LDS faith. We hope to illuminate, by study and faith, the eternal spiritual message of the scriptures—that Jesus is the Christ.

Although the Board fully supports the goals and teachings of the Church, Interpreter Foundation is an independent entity and is neither owned, controlled by nor affiliated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or with Brigham Young University. All research and opinions provided are the sole responsibility of their respective authors, and should not be interpreted as the opinions of the Board, nor as official statements of LDS doctrine, belief or practice.

This journal compiles weekly publications. Visit us online at MormonInterpreter.com
You may subscribe to this journal at MormonInterpreter.com/annual-print-subscription

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Toward Ever More Intelligent Discipleship.....vii

Daniel C. Peterson

*A Response to Denver Snuffer's Essay on Plural Marriage,
Adoption, and the Supposed Falling Away of the Church –
Part 1: Ignoring Inconvenient Evidence.....1*

Brian C. Hales

*A Response to Denver Snuffer's Essay on Plural Marriage,
Adoption, and the Supposed Falling Away of the Church –
Part 2: Facade or Reality?.....31*

Brian C. Hales

Careless Accounts and Tawdry Novelties.....63

Louis Midgley

*The Prodigal's Return to the Father: House of Glory
and Rediscovery.....75*

Timothy Guymon

*The Deuteronomist Reforms and Lehi's Family Dynamics:
A Social Context for the Rebellions of Laman and Lemuel87*

Neal Rappleye

The Doctrine of Resurrection in the Book of Mormon.....101

A. Keith Thompson

Not Leaving and Going On to Perfection.....131

Matthew L. Bowen

Learning Nephi's Language: Creating a Context for 1 Nephi 1:2.....151

Neal Rappleye

*The Treason of the Geographers: Mythical "Mesoamerican"
Conspiracy and the Book of Mormon.....161*

Matthew Roper

<i>John Bernhisel's Gift to a Prophet: Incidents of Travel in Central America and the Book of Mormon.....</i>	<i>207</i>
---	------------

Matthew Roper

<i>A Treasure Trove of Questions.....</i>	<i>255</i>
---	------------

Steven T. Densley, Jr.

<i>The Theory of Evolution is Compatible with Both Belief and Unbelief in a Supreme Being</i>	<i>261</i>
---	------------

David M. Belnap

TOWARD EVER MORE INTELLIGENT DISCIPLESHIP

Daniel C. Peterson

Abstract: The temporarily rather comfortable “fit” between the Restored Gospel and American civic religion is a thing of the past, and we contemporary Latter-day Saints seem to find ourselves in a more and more marginalized position, theologically and socially. This was where our predecessors, both earlier in this dispensation and among the first Christians, were located, and it may not be an altogether bad thing. It will, for instance, force us to take our beliefs more seriously, less casually. And it may well drive us back to the unique resources provided by the Restoration, which have much to offer.

There are as-yet unplumbed depths in the Restored Gospel that might well — as one Catholic theologian has recently argued — make it uniquely able to respond to the challenges of modern thought. One of the reasons for the existence of the Interpreter Foundation is to foster the kinds of scholarship and reflection that will enable us to identify those depths and to lay them out for the benefit of both Latter-day Saints and honest and open-minded outsiders, to give us important tools for doing the Lord’s work in an ever-changing intellectual and cultural environment. Growing up in the fifties and sixties, it was easy to assume that American society respected Latter-day Saints. We might be out on the theological fringe, regarded as a bit quirky, but American civic religion was at least theoretically pretty much on our side. For example, Americans seemed to honor ideals of faithful, heterosexual marriage, with fathers taking the lead and mothers caring for children. Society was, in other words, largely in sync with, and supportive of, fundamental, practical Mormon values. In fact, Mormons seemed quintessentially American — which, in the postwar era of the Pax Americana, benefited our church not only in the United States but in Europe and Japan.

Today, though, Mormonism and Western society seem to be parting ways in crucial respects. They’re no longer aligned. The most powerful engines of popular attitude-formation and elite opinion in America and

Europe are typically amused by, when not altogether contemptuous toward, conservative Christianity — which, in the sense relevant here, certainly includes the Latter-day Saints. In an era when such things aren't appreciated, Mormonism seems socially retrograde and corporate to many outside observers. Mormonism's patriarchal orientation, for example, is, to put it mildly, out of fashion in fashionable circles. Its emphasis on heterosexual marriage is often seen as hateful, its insistence on fidelity within marriage as somewhat quaint, and its requirement of chastity outside of marriage as transparently ridiculous.

Young minds are particularly sensitive to peer pressure and fashions, and, consequently, it's unsurprising that the relatively sudden collapse of external social support for core Mormon values seems disproportionately to affect the younger generation. That generation is also exceptionally "wired," and has therefore been hit with an onslaught of attacks based on Mormon history for which traditional Church instruction has left them woefully unprepared. I'm convinced that those attacks can be met, but the fact remains that, because the details of its history aren't safely lost in, say, the distant biblical past, Mormonism is more open to such attacks, in a very real sense, than are most other, older, religious traditions.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has repeatedly warned that the Church is never more than a generation from extinction, so everything hinges on how well and how widely the faith is transmitted.¹

The way in which the Church responds to this challenge will determine much about its future over the next five, twenty, and hundred years. Fortunately, Mormonism is well equipped, in my judgment, with resources that Latter-day Saint thinkers haven't even begun to employ — including teachings and doctrinal insights that are truly radical, in every meaning of that word including the etymological sense of getting down to the roots (Latin *radix*; plural *radixes* or *radices*).

I actually think we were lulled somewhat into complacency by the seeming congruence of Mormon values with American civic religion during much of the twentieth century. We were often depicted, and sometimes thought of ourselves, as simply a family church with an extra book (and, generations earlier, with extra wives). And, of course, we are that. But Mormonism is far, far more, as well.

1 As, for example, in Jeffrey R. Holland, "That Our Children May Know," a devotional address given at Brigham Young University on August 25, 1981, before his call as a General Authority. See https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/jeffrey-r-holland_children-may-know/.

And, while we share much in common with others of religious faith, and especially with our fellow Christians — most importantly, in the latter case, our commitment to Jesus as the resurrected divine Lord through whom alone salvation is possible — if we emphasize only our commonalities, others will understandably wonder why they shouldn't simply keep what they have.² Mormonism, after all, is a high-demand form of religion. If it isn't in some way dramatically different from Methodism or Catholicism, why embrace it?

One observer who has noticed the radical distinctiveness of Mormon doctrine, and who can helpfully remind us of it, is the Catholic theologian Stephen Webb, author of, among many other volumes, *Mormon Christianity: What Other Christians Can Learn from the Latter-day Saints*.³ “Much of this book,” he himself writes, describing the volume, “is nothing more than an attempt to take seriously the possibility that God has a form or shape that is something like what we call a body.”⁴

And that, of course, is a central doctrine of Mormonism. But it's not a notion that's been in vogue among Christian thinkers for, say, the past nineteen hundred years or so. So what's this Catholic thinker's take, in that light, on The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? “*I am not a Mormon*,” he writes (and the italics are his), “*but sometimes I wish I were one*.”⁵

That wasn't always his attitude. For the first part of his life, his opinion of Mormonism was precisely what one would have expected from the conservative Midwestern American Protestant background in which he was raised. When he eventually gave some real attention to the subject, though, he was surprised: “I came to realize just how deeply Christ-centered Mormonism is.”⁶

He thought he already knew about the Book of Mormon, too. (As the Catholic sociologist Thomas O'Dea famously observed, “The Book of Mormon has not been universally considered by its critics as one of those

2 I don't discount the importance of stressing our common faith in Christ. I've even published a book on the topic. Daniel C. Peterson and Stephen D. Ricks, *Offenders for a Word: How Anti-Mormons Play Word Games to Attack the Latter-day Saints* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1998).

3 Stephen H. Webb, *Mormon Christianity: What Other Christians Can Learn from the Latter-day Saints* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

4 Ibid., 5.

5 Ibid., 11.

6 Ibid., 115.

books that must be read in order to have an opinion of it.”⁷) But he was somewhat unprepared for the reality of the text: “When I actually read this book, however, I was utterly surprised by what I found. The Book of Mormon, I found, is utterly obsessed with Jesus Christ, and I concluded that everything it teaches is meant to awaken, encourage, and deepen faith in him.”⁸ “Mormonism is pre-Nicene theology in a post-Nicene world,” he writes with palpable delight, “the theological equivalent to discovering that dinosaurs are still living on some isolated island.”⁹

“Studying Mormonism has made me a better Christian,” he says, “which is why I am eternally grateful for the teachings of Joseph Smith as well as all those scholars, church leaders, and everyday believers who have labored to maintain those teachings as a living tradition. ... BYU is a thriving, Christ-centered, and intellectually exciting place and should serve as a model for how Christianity and the academy can be productively integrated.”¹⁰

At one point, toward the end of his book, he compares the reformer John Calvin with Joseph Smith. “If I had to choose between Smith and Calvin,” he writes:

I would unhesitatingly choose Smith. A Calvinist could not begin to fathom all the riches in Mormonism, although a Mormon can go a long way toward understanding and sympathizing with Calvinism. Mormonism is just a bigger set of ideas than Calvinism. It is capacious and expansive, with plenty of intellectual room to grow.¹¹

Webb is particularly taken with the “original, fascinating, and provocative metaphysics” of Mormonism, which he sees as “sophisticated and radical.”¹² I myself have often suggested that the fundamental “heresy” (if you will) of Mormonism is the assertion that God and humankind are members of the same genus or species, that divinity and humanity aren’t fundamentally different (*ganz anders*) but are points on a continuum. Much about our soteriology, our doctrines of salvation and exaltation; our conception of human nature, the purpose of life, and

7 Thomas F. O’Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 26.

8 Webb, *Mormon Christianity*, 118.

9 Ibid., 167.

10 Ibid., vii.

11 Ibid., 182.

12 Ibid., 25, 9.

the plan of salvation; and the nature of God flows from this single, rich concept. Stephen Webb makes a similar point (if not essentially the same one): “I propose that the most basic principle of Mormon metaphysics states that all of reality ‘under the sun’ (the natural world) is of the same basic nature as all of reality ‘above the sun’ (the supernatural world).”¹³ In Mormonism, “God is still mysterious, but his mystery is a matter of just how great, not how distant, he is.”¹⁴ “Just as there is no metaphysical gap between God’s nature and human nature, there is also no moral gap between God’s perfection and human striving.”¹⁵ “The early Christians were known,” he remarks,

to have remarkably positive views of the human body. Celsus was a second-century Greek philosopher who wrote the first book against Christianity (it was published around A.D. 178). In it, he called Christians a *philosomaton genos*, which means a “flesh-loving people.” Celsus was amazed that Christians took their physical existence so seriously that they wanted to take their bodies with them to the afterlife. If we take Celsus’s definition to heart, then Mormonism is the most characteristically Christian movement of all Christian traditions.¹⁶

“The Mormon imagination is solidly grounded in material reality,” writes Webb, “but it takes the physical world to new and unheard-of heights.”¹⁷ In the mainstream of Christianity, by contrast, “even the least theologically astute Christians have appropriated Plato, whether they know it or not. Take away Plato from Christianity and you will get ... well, you will end up with something very much like the Mormon conception of the divine.”¹⁸

Do Latter-day Saints themselves grasp the spectacular sweep of their doctrine? The grandeur of their vision of humanity and its destiny?

Elder Orson F. Whitney, who served as a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints until his death in 1931, related an interesting experience that has made the rounds in the Church in the decades since then:

13 Ibid., 33.

14 Ibid., 40.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid., 148.

17 Ibid., 10.

18 Ibid., 85.

Many years ago a learned man, a member of the Roman Catholic Church, came to Utah and spoke from the stand of the Salt Lake Tabernacle. I became well-acquainted with him, and we conversed freely and frankly. A great scholar, with perhaps a dozen languages at his tongue's end, he seemed to know all about theology, law, literature, science and philosophy. One day he said to me: "You Mormons are all ignoramuses. You don't even know the strength of your own position. It is so strong that there is only one other tenable in the whole Christian world, and that is the position of the Catholic Church. The issue is between Catholicism and Mormonism. If we are right, you are wrong; if you are right, we are wrong; and that's all there is to it. The Protestants haven't a leg to stand on. For, if we are wrong, they are wrong with us, since they were a part of us and went out from us; while if we are right, they are apostates whom we cut off long ago. If we have the apostolic succession from St. Peter, as we claim, there is no need of Joseph Smith and Mormonism; but if we have not that succession, then such a man as Joseph Smith was necessary, and Mormonism's attitude is the only consistent one. It is either the perpetuation of the gospel from ancient times, or the restoration of the gospel in latter days."¹⁹

Now, of course, that unnamed "learned man" was referring to the question of ecclesiastical or priesthood authority, not theology, but, in my opinion, the same question holds: Do we understand the strength of our position? Do we appreciate it? Are we doing our job in expounding it?

"Could it be," asks Stephen Webb, focusing on one particular area of potential strength, "that [Joseph] Smith ... foresaw a middle ground between Plato's immaterialism and the secular, atheistic ideology of materialism? ... Could it be that Smith, who had virtually no formal education, put in motion ideas that will overthrow the consensus of Western theological immaterialism?"²⁰

And he suggests, current science is also transforming our understanding of matter and the physical world; the concept of matter has become increasingly problematic, and Mormonism's notions of

19 Cited in LeGrand Richards, *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1950), 3–4.

20 Webb, *Mormon Christianity*, 81, 82.

“pure” and “refined” matter may have something theologically and philosophically important to say in this new situation.²¹

Even ordinary matter is, for example, largely empty space, not really solid at all. The distance between nuclei and their protons is, relatively speaking, vast. And those protons aren’t the hard, little planet-like objects that I grew up seeing in schoolroom models and illustrations, but “probability waves” of uncertain location. Moreover, although our word *atom* comes from the Greek of Democritus, meaning “indivisible,” Los Alamos and Hiroshima and Nagasaki taught us decades ago that they are, in fact, divisible, and we’ve learned a great deal since those first atomic bombs about their constituent parts: baryons, gluons, quarks, wave-particle duality, quantum fluctuations, and Higgs bosons.

Mr. MacPhee, the sturdy-minded and skeptical materialist in C. S. Lewis’s novel *That Hideous Strength*, still has his representatives in atheistic and agnostic circles today, but his simple, stout, commonsense materialism is no longer tenable.

Consider, for example, the new world discussed in Richard Panek’s 2011 book *The 4% Universe: Dark Matter, Dark Energy, and the Race to Discover the Rest of Reality*: Our universe, which we now know to have originated in an inconceivable explosion roughly 13.75 billion years ago, is composed of 72.8% dark energy and 22.7% dark matter. The remainder — a mere 4.56% of the cosmos — is “baryonic matter.” That’s the matter that we know, the matter that we can often see and sometimes touch, the stuff of which stars and planets and mountains and pine trees and Porsches and buildings and kittens and babies are made. These figures, writes Panek, offer “an exquisitely precise accounting of the depth of our ignorance.”²²

Of course, it’s never prudent to tie one’s theology too closely to current scientific theories or fashionable philosophical positions. Nicene Trinitarianism and the geocentrism of Galileo’s ecclesiastical opponents offer clear cautionary examples that could be multiplied indefinitely and should never be overlooked.

But scientific investigations of the nature of matter suggest to Stephen Webb one area where Latter-day Saints might find a congenial opportunity for mining the considerable intellectual resources that their faith offers them. “By arguing that only the physical is real,” he writes,

21 Ibid., 78–80.

22 Richard Panek, *The 4% Universe: Dark Matter, Dark Energy, and the Race to Discover the Rest of Reality* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Mariner Books, 2011), 242.

“and that the divine is physical in ways that we can only glimpse in this world, Mormon metaphysics actually has some advantages over more traditional metaphysical schemes that emphasize the immateriality of the divine. Most significantly, Mormonism can address directly and sympathetically the question of materialism that lies at the heart of modern atheism.”²³ “The case can be made that the most serious alternative to fundamentalism and Catholicism in terms of having the resources to turn back the tide of modernity is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”²⁴

And there are undoubtedly many other promising areas to consider. We need only engage in the deep thinking, reading, and reflection that is required to discover them and to lay them out: “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.”²⁵ “The things of God,” wrote the Prophet Joseph Smith,

are of deep import; and time, and experience, and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out. Thy mind, O man! if thou wilt lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost heavens, and search into and contemplate the darkest abyss, and the broad expanse of eternity — thou must commune with God.²⁶

I have absolute confidence that Mormonism can prosper if it draws deeply from its own well, which brims with rich and profound insights that Latter-day Saints haven’t even begun to appreciate, let alone adequately to deploy. In this, I agree with the great B. H. Roberts, who provided something of a creed for me when he wrote:

I believe “Mormonism” affords opportunity for disciples of the second sort: nay, that its crying need is for such disciples. It calls for thoughtful disciples who will not be content with merely repeating some of the truths, but will develop the truths; and enlarge it by that development. Not half — not one-hundredth part — not a thousandth part of that which Joseph Smith revealed to the church has yet been

23 Ibid., 9.

24 Ibid., 147.

25 Doctrine and Covenants 88:118.

26 *History of the Church*, 3:295–96; paragraph divisions altered; from a letter from Joseph Smith and others to Edward Partridge and the Church, March 20, 1839, Liberty Jail, Liberty, Missouri.

unfolded, either to the church or to the world. The work of the expounder has scarcely begun. The Prophet planted by teaching the germ-truths of the great dispensation of the fulness of times. The watering and weeding is going on, and God is giving the increase, and will give it more abundantly in the future as more intelligent discipleship shall obtain. The disciples of “Mormonism,” growing discontented with the necessarily primitive methods which have hitherto prevailed in sustaining the doctrine, will yet take profounder and broader views of the great doctrines committed to the Church; and, departing from mere repetition, will cast them in new formulas; cooperating in the works of the Spirit, until they help to give to the truths received a more forceful expression and carry it beyond the earlier and cruder stages of development.²⁷

If the challenges of this new era awaken Mormons from the comfortable complacency of the fifties and sixties and return them to the native theological radicalism of their faith, that won’t be a bad thing.

I recall an offensive comment made to me many years ago by a very kind man who meant nothing negative at all. He was a member of the Church, but he hadn’t been active or involved for many years, if, indeed, he ever had been. My wife and I were moving with our small family to Utah Valley to take a teaching position at Brigham Young University. “Oh,” he said, approvingly, “Provo’s a nice, quiet, churchy little town.”

I’ve thought about that innocent remark ever since. My vision of the gospel isn’t one of quaintness or churchiness. To me, the gospel offers a bracing, fundamentally transformative, deeply radical worldview that goes far beyond the homespun pieties of Old Time Religion. “Just ordinary people trying to become gods,” quips one wit.²⁸

The Interpreter Foundation was established, in part at least, to encourage and further the kind of discipleship called for by Elder Roberts. In that spirit, although Doctrine and Covenants 88 had the Kirtland Temple in mind, it’s perhaps not entirely inappropriate to continue the quotation from above:

27 B. H. Roberts, “Book of Mormon Translation,” *Improvement Era* 9/9 (July 1906): 713.

28 Cited by Terryl L. Givens, *People of Paradox: A History of Mormon Culture* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 309.

Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God; that your incomings may be in the name of the Lord; that your outgoings may be in the name of the Lord; that all your salutations may be in the name of the Lord, with uplifted hands unto the Most High.²⁹

Similar goals and a similar ethos suffuse, or should suffuse, the Interpreter Foundation, too. We invite everybody who is at all interested in this effort to join us, whether as readers, donors, volunteers, editors, or writers. In this way, we hope to serve the Lord with our minds, as well as with our hearts and hands, to build an edifice and construct a record that will be “worthy of all acceptance.”³⁰

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 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).

29 Doctrine and Covenants 88:119–120.

30 Doctrine and Covenants 128:24.

A RESPONSE TO DENVER SNUFFER'S ESSAY ON PLURAL MARRIAGE, ADOPTION, AND THE SUPPOSED FALLING AWAY OF THE CHURCH

PART 1: IGNORING INCONVENIENT EVIDENCE

Brian C. Hales

Abstract: Denver Snuffer posted an essay entitled “Plural Marriage” on March 22, 2015.¹ It is apparently a transcription of a recent talk he had given and provides his followers with his views on Joseph Smith and plural marriage. Snuffer’s basic conclusion is that the Prophet did not practice polygamy. He alleges that the historical evidences that support Joseph’s participation should instead be attributed to John C. Bennett’s activities in Nauvoo in 1840–1842 or blamed on Brigham Young’s behaviors and teachings after the martyrdom. This article provides references to dozens of documents that counter this conclusion and shows plainly that Snuffer is in error. On page 28 of the transcript, Snuffer shifts away from the subject of plural marriage, touching on several themes he has written on before. Part 2 of this response will specifically address those twenty pages of Denver Snuffer’s claims.

Multiple Ironies

In his essay “Plural Marriage,” Denver Snuffer provides his followers with an analysis and conclusions regarding reports that Joseph Smith was married to more than one wife. Snuffer, an author of multiple books, some of which discuss plural marriage, explains to his audience why he chose to address the topic at this time:

This is a subject I address sooner than I would have liked. It is driven by recent events that necessitate addressing the subject now. I should not put this off for another 18 months or more while I work on so many other projects given to me. There are so many former polygamists who had recently been

¹ Denver Snuffer, “Plural Marriage,” accessed June 19, 2015, <http://denversnuffer.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Plural-Marriage.pdf>.

rebaptized that there is a need to clarify some of our history and underlying teachings to address the subject so people do not lapse back into the mistake of polygamy again. Therefore, this is been driven by the current needs, and not necessarily by whether I want to address this subject now. It needs to be done and so I am going to do it. (p. 1)

Apparently some of his followers were polygamists before embracing his teachings. Having then been “rebaptized” by him or under his direction, they sought his advice on the status of their plural unions, as well as his beliefs regarding Joseph Smith’s involvement in polygamy. Doubtless, those that were living in plural relationships were anxious to learn how his counsel might affect their polygamous families. Other followers might have wondered what the future held concerning Snuffer’s teachings on exaltation and plurality.

Because Snuffer chose to single out my *Joseph Smith’s Polygamy: History and Theology* as a primary reference for his ideas, I felt it might be useful to address his assertions. They not only call into question my interpretations but also mirror a trendy reconstruction gaining traction on the Internet and elsewhere that seeks to deny the nature of Joseph’s actual involvement in the practice. Concerning my attempt to lay out a timeline of Joseph Smith’s interactions with polygamy, Snuffer writes: “I take issue with the *speculative chronology* in these books” (italics mine). Indeed chronology is very important. A *speculative chronology* would not be one based upon historical evidence but instead upon opinion and conjecture. Snuffer and I agree that such would not be useful to seekers desiring the truth.

In his essay, Snuffer brings nothing new to the discussion of plural marriage. In fact, Snuffer’s interpretations regarding the Prophet and polygamy are ironic in several ways:

- Snuffer declares: “I am only interested in addressing one thing: What did Joseph Smith understand, teach, and do related to the subject of the plurality of wives” (p. 2). Yet, he quotes very few people who heard Joseph Smith teach, even though such references are readily available in multiple published and primary sources.
- Early in Snuffer’s speech, he explains his own interpretation of Joseph Smith’s teachings and behaviors regarding plural marriage, but nowhere does he address the plain evidences that contradict his position. It is similar to a courtroom battle where

- only the prosecution is allowed to testify.
- While classed with Mormon fundamentalists in many of his views, Snuffer rejects modern polygamy and invites contemporary polygamists to desist from their plural behaviors: “Those who are in polygamy now being baptized to leave it [*sic*], need to end the practice with them” (p. 42).
- Though sometimes subtle, throughout the text Denver Snuffer portrays himself as a new guiding visionary to readers. This relevance to plural marriage is not obvious.

The focus of the article shifts away from polygamy on page 28, devoting most of the last twenty pages to other topics including severe condemnation of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, even though the Church condemns the earthly practice of plural marriage among members. These pages will be covered in Part 2 of my response.²

Defending Joseph Smith against Charges of Adultery

Throughout the essay Denver Snuffer positions himself as a defender of Joseph Smith's moral integrity with many supportive statements:

I would not want to attribute to Joseph Smith sexual indiscretions. (p. 2)

My theory of what happened, taking Joseph Smith's claim he was not guilty of any great or malignant sins at face value. (p. 10)

None of us should want to attribute to Joseph Smith sexual sins. (p. 10)

I would be careful of the accusations you make against Joseph. (p. 12)

We are forced to choose between circumstantial proof, often from witnesses telling their tale decades after the events, compounded by the conjecture of the witness or the audience

² He even mentions that at one point I had offered to co-author a book on polygamy with him, but my reasons for making the offer were perhaps less than obvious: I simply hoped that my involvement in such a project would prevent him from misrepresenting the historical record as I knew he had done in the past regarding other topics.

who heard the witness, to support the proposition that Joseph Smith was a vile hypocrite. (p. 14)

Despite these declarations, Snuffer also alleges “there is some proof” that Joseph had improper relations with a woman (p. 45). *Proof* is a strong word for an attorney and sends a subtle and conflicting message.

Regardless, Snuffer’s defenses of the Prophet are paradoxical. He approaches plural marriage by implying such relationships would have been adulterous and then affirms that Joseph Smith never engaged in such associations:

It would be bigamy to marry another woman for this life while having an existing wife. I do not believe Joseph Smith was ever involved in adultery or bigamy. Joseph Smith had a wife. If he added others, it was for the afterlife and not for bigamy. (p. 2)

Of course Snuffer is entitled to his opinion but his response piles two faulty speculations on top of each other in order to advance his interpretation.

Plural Marriage was Not Adultery

Snuffer asserts that polygamy would have been adultery. This is inaccurate according to modern-day revelation. Joseph Smith’s first inquiry regarding Old Testament polygamy was to discover how such behaviors had been *justified*. That is, how could Abraham and Jacob practice plural marriage without committing adultery?

The question was most likely raised in 1831 as he was translating the Bible. Nauvoo polygamist Joseph B. Noble recalled in 1883:

The Prophet Joseph told him that the doctrine of celestial marriage was revealed to him while he was engaged on the work of translation of the scriptures [the Joseph Smith Translation or JST], but when the communication was first made the Lord stated that the time for the practice of that principle had not arrived.³

3 Joseph B. Noble speaking at a quarterly stake conference held at Centerville, Davis Co., Utah, June 11, 1883. Quoted in Andrew Jenson, “Plural Marriage,” *Historical Record* 6 (July 1887): 232–33. See Brigham H. Roberts’s introduction to volume five of the history of Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret

Records show that the Prophet was working with Genesis in February and March of 1831.⁴ There he would have encountered the accounts of polygamous patriarchs like Abraham (Genesis 16:1–6) and Jacob (Genesis 29:30).⁵

Verse one of the revelation (now D&C 132) begins with this question about how polygamy was not adultery:

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.

Portions of the remaining revelation discuss how ancient patriarchs entered into plural unions and had children by polygamous wives without committing sin. For example, Abraham's wife Sarah bore Isaac and his other wife Hagar bore Ishmael. Concerning Abraham's other children, the Old Testament reads: "Unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away" (Genesis 25:6). Abraham's grandson Jacob had twelve sons by four women (Genesis 35:23–26).

According to Latter-day Saint canonized doctrine, none of the fathers and mothers in these polygamous families committed sin in their marital behaviors. The divinely sanctioned practice of Old Testament polygamy needs to be addressed if any author (including Denver Snuffer) is going to assert that latter-day polygamy is inherently adulterous. Nowhere in D&C 132 does the Lord condemn authorized polygamy. Using Old Testament language where men were considered to have ownership of their wives and children, verse 61 states plainly that if a man espouse a second wife by proper authority, "then is he justified; *he cannot commit adultery* for they are given unto him; for he cannot commit adultery with that that belongeth unto him and to no one else" (*italics added*).

Book, 1960), 5:xxix; see also Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Utah* (San Francisco: A. L. Bancroft Co., 1889), 161–62.

4 Mark Staker, *Hearken O Ye People: The Historical Setting for Joseph Smith's Ohio Revelations* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2009 [2010]), 117n22.

5 Snuffer writes: "I have dated the first portion of Section 132 in 1829" (p. 7), claiming that Oliver Cowdery sought to enter plurality at that time. Snuffer is undoubtedly in error. Oliver was unmarried in 1829. To enter polygamy he would have needed to marry two women.

In short, asserting that Church-authorized plural marriages in Joseph Smith's day were adultery is not substantiated by any known scripture or teachings from that period.

Joseph Smith Sought to “Multiply and Replenish” with his Plural Wives

The next assertion advanced by Snuffer is that Joseph did not consummate his plural marriages because they were only spiritual (not physical) marriages. This idea contradicts one of the reasons for plural marriage that is plainly declared in the revelation. Verse 63 states: “for they are given unto him to multiply and replenish the earth, according to my commandment ... that they may bear the souls of men.” The language is unambiguous. To “multiply and replenish the earth” requires sexual relations.

Also, the Lord stated in the Book of Mormon that one reason plural marriage might be commanded was to “raise up righteous seed unto the Lord” (see Jacob 2:30, D&C 132:63).⁶ This could not be done if celibacy was maintained in plural relationships. Helen Mar Kimball, one of Joseph's plural wives, explained, “It was revealed to him [Joseph Smith] that there were thousands of spirits, yet unborn, who were anxiously waiting for the privilege of coming down to take tabernacles of flesh, that their glory might be complete.”⁷

Concerning Joseph Smith's plural wives, Denver Snuffer intimates they left no record of their marriages to the Prophet: “The women involved left us nothing” (p. 27). In reality, they left dozens of letters, statements, affidavits, and declarations that affirm that some of the marriages were consummated. For example, three of Joseph Smith's wives were questioned in the Temple Lot trial in 1892. All declared under oath that they experienced sexual relations as Joseph's plural wife. Undoubtedly they were mortified to make their intimate relations with the Prophet public. Yet, when asked: “Did you ever have carnal intercourse with Joseph Smith?” Emily Partridge answered plainly, “Yes sir.” When the prodding follow-up question “How many nights?” was

6 Apostle Erastus Snow taught: “God has reserved to Himself this right to command His people when it seemeth to Him good and to accomplish the object He has in view — that is, to raise up a righteous seed, a seed that will pay respect to His law and will build up Zion in the earth.” Erastus Snow, *Journal of Discourses*, 24:165 (June 24th, 1883).

7 Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, *Why We Practice Plural Marriage* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1884), 7.

posed, she responded, "I could not tell you."⁸ Similarly, Malissa Lott was asked: "Did you ever room with Joseph Smith as his wife?" She responded, "Yes sir." When the inquirer sought more specific information by asking, "Did you cohabit with him as his wife?" the answer was the same: "Yes sir."⁹ Malissa reiterated her involvement in 1893 when questioned by Joseph Smith III. He inquired, "Were you married to my father?" She answered, "Yes." Seeking more clarity, the Prophet's son asked precisely: "Was you a wife in very deed?" The answer was affirmed.¹⁰ Lucy Walker's response to the Temple Lot prosecutor's question: "Did you live with Joseph Smith as his wife?" was a little more ambiguous. She responded, "He was my husband sir."¹¹ But several other sources corroborate that Lucy had conjugal relations with Joseph.¹²

In addition to these plain admissions are multiple secondary sources that support that Joseph Smith consummated other plural unions. Joseph B. Noble, the brother-in-law of polygamous wife Louisa Beaman, also testified in the Temple Lot litigation. When asked: "Do you know whether Joseph Smith ever lived with Louisa Beaman as his wife?" he answered, "I know it for I saw him in bed with her ... they did sleep together."¹³ Also, Benjamin Winchester corroborated conjugality in a statement regarding Louisa Beaman. When asked "Did they sleep together?" he replied, matter-of-fact, "Yes they did."¹⁴

Almera Johnson's brother Benjamin F. Johnson penned this reminiscence:

The Prophet with Louisa \Beeman/ and my Sister Delcena,
had it agreeable arranged with Sister Almara and after a little

8 Emily Dow Partridge Young, deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Part 3, pp. 371, 384, questions 480–84, 747, 751–62.

9 Malissa Lott, deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Part 3, pp. 97, 105–6, questions 87–93, 224–60.

10 Melissa Lott Willes, statement, August 4, 1893, CHL.

11 Lucy Walker, deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent's Testimony, Part 3, pp. 450–51, 468, 473, questions 29–30, 463–74, 586.

12 See Angus Cannon, "Statement of an Interview with Joseph Smith III, 1905, Regarding Conversation on October 12, 1905." MS 3166, CHL; D. H. Morris, untitled typed statement, June 12, 1930. Text begins: "The following was given by Judge D. H. Morris of St. George, Utah ..." Marriott Library, Vesta P. Crawford Papers, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah, MS 125, Box 1, fd. 5.

13 Joseph B. Noble, deposition, Temple Lot Case, Part 3, pp. 396, 426–27, questions, 52–53, 681–704.

14 Benjamin Winchester, testimony to Joseph Smith III, Council Bluffs, Iowa, November 27, 1900.

instruction, She Stood by the Prophets Side and was Sealed to him as a wife by Brother Clayton. After which the Prophet asked me to take my Sister to occupy Room No 10 in his Mansion home dureing her Stay in the City. But as I could not long be absent from my home & Business We Soon Returned to Ramus, whare on the 15th of May Some three weeks later the Prophet again Came and at my house ocupied the Same Room & Bed with my Sister.¹⁵

Additional evidence supporting sexuality can be identified in the historical record regarding other plural wives including Eliza Maria Partridge, Almera Woodard Johnson, Maria Lawrence, Sarah Lawrence, Olive Frost, and Mary Heron.

Children from Joseph Smith's Plural Wives?

Snuffer bolsters his case for non-sexual plural unions by observing that no children have been documented through DNA testing:

In the effort to identify children of Joseph Smith born by a plural wife, DNA testing has not proven a single child to be Joseph's. The only woman who bore him children was his wife, Emma. There are those complain some of the DNA testing cannot prove one way or the other. The test is equivocal. But to admit that is to concede the point there is no proof of his paternity. So in the absence of proof, I would be careful of the accusations you make against Joseph. (p. 12)

The verbiage chosen by Snuffer is unfortunate. Offspring from one of Joseph Smith's plural unions would not be surprising and would not constitute an *accusation*. Regardless, it is true that DNA testing of available candidates has not produced a single uncontestable positive. However, Josephine Lyon, daughter of Sylvia Lyon, is positive but as Ugo Perego explains: "In light of the multiple familial relationships shared by both Josephine Lyons and Joseph Smith's descendants, it is clear that a lot of 'genealogical noise' is also present."¹⁶ The result is inconclusive, not negative.

15 Dean R. Zimmerman, ed., *I Knew the Prophets: An Analysis of the Letter of Benjamin F. Johnson to George F. Gibbs, Reporting Doctrinal Views of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young* (Bountiful, Utah: Horizon, 1976), 43–44.

16 Ugo A. Perego, "Joseph Smith, the Question of Polygamous Offspring, and DNA Analysis," in *The Persistence of Polygamy: Joseph Smith and the Origins of*

There are reports of children born to Joseph's polygamous wives. Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner stated: "I know he [Joseph Smith] had three children. They told me. I think two are living today [1905] but they are not known as his children as they go by other names."¹⁷ On another occasion she declared, "I don't know about his having children, but I heard of three that he was the father of."¹⁸

Multiple sources support a child was born to Joseph Smith's plural wife Olive Frost that did not live long or may have miscarried.¹⁹ Joseph E. Robinson wrote: "During the afternoon I called on Aunt Lizzie. ... [S]he knew Joseph Smith had more than two wives. Said he married ... Olive Frost [and] had a child by him and that both died."²⁰ Some evidence has been found supporting the birth of a third child, a son to the Prophet and one of his plural wives may have been raised by the Dibble family.²¹

A second-hand account from Lucy Meserve Smith,²² wife of Apostle George A. Smith, recalls that what while living in Nauvoo her husband, "related to me the circumstance of calling on the Prophet one evening about 11, o clock, and he was out on the porch with a basin of water washing his hands, I said to him what is up, said Joseph one of my wives has just been confined and Emma was midwife and I have been assisting her. He said she had granted a no. of women for him."²³

Mormon Polygamy, eds. Newell G. Bringhurst and Craig L. Foster (Independence, Mo.: John Whitmer Books, 2010), 255.

17 Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, "Remarks," given at Brigham Young University, April 14, 1905, Harold B. Lee Library, Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, MSS 363, fd. 6, 5. Mary Ann Barzee Boice stated in her "History," that "some" of Joseph Smith's plural wives "had children." Quoted in D. Michael Quinn Papers — Addition — Uncat WA, MS 244 [Accession:19990209-c], Box 1.

18 J. D. Stead, *Doctrines and Dogmas of Brighamism Exposed* (Lamoni, Iowa: RLDS Church, 1911), 218.

19 See James Whitehead, interview conducted by Joseph Smith III, April 20, 1885. Original in possession of John Hajicek. Olive Frost died October 6, 1845.

20 Joseph E. Robinson, autobiography, recounting October 26, 1902, MS 7866, CHL.

21 Transcript in D. Michael Quinn Papers — Addition — Uncat WA, MS 244 [Accession:19990209-c], Box 1.

22 For a history of Lucy Meserve Smith (1817–1892), see Kenneth W. Godfrey, Audrey M. Godfrey, and Jill Mulvay Derr, *Women's Voices: An Untold History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1982), 261–71.

23 Lucy Meserve Smith, statement, Wilford Wood Collection of Church Historical Materials, Microfilm at CHL, MS 8617, Reel 8, Internal reference within collection — 4-N-b-2. For a very similar handwritten statement dated May 18,

Hopefully these brief documentary references show plainly that asserting, as Snuffer does, that plural marriage would have been adultery in light of the theology taught by Joseph Smith and that the Prophet did not practice it is contradicted by multiple reliable evidences. If Snuffer wishes to successfully advance his unique interpretation, he should also address these evidences rather than hope that this audience will not be aware of them.

Focusing on Fanny Alger

The weaknesses of Snuffer's arguments do not mean that he fails to provide a case in support of his position. He promotes several evidences that might validate his views. But as shown below, the historical topics he chooses to discuss do not directly defend his interpretation, but are more akin to diversions away from the pertinent primary documents.

Snuffer spends pages 6–10 discussing whether the plural marriage between Joseph Smith and Fanny Alger included sexuality and concludes:

Fanny Alger may well have been Joseph Smith's first plural wife but whatever else that may have involved there was no "malignant sin" or adultery involved with the relationship. ... With Fanny and Joseph in the prime of their reproductive years, together they produced no children. (p. 9)

Unfortunately for his readers, Snuffer's discussion regarding Fanny Alger is like beating a dead horse. I have accumulated the twenty known historical manuscripts referring to the incident.²⁴ A couple of them could be used to support the existence of sexual relations, but, as both Denver and I agree, the evidence is inconclusive.

The observation that no children are documented arising from the union is not particularly meaningful. For several reasons, manuscript evidence of a child might not have persisted in the historical record. Neither do we know how long after the marriage ceremony was performed that the union was discovered by Emma and was practically dissolved when Emma sent Fanny away. It could have been months or years, but it also could have been just weeks.

1892, and signed by Lucy M. Smith, see copy of holograph in Linda King Newell Collection, Marriott Library.

24 Brian C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Kofford Books, 2013), 2:369–78 (Appendix D).

Snuffer's observations regarding Fanny Alger are not particularly thorough or applicable to the question of whether Joseph consummated any of his plural marriages. Regarding such questions, Fanny is a poor example and hardly worth mentioning because the available evidences describing their interactions are so sparse and contradictory.

Extended Discussion about John C. Bennett

Snuffer spends a number of pages (14–23) reviewing John C. Bennett's activities among the Latter-day Saints between late 1840 and June of 1842, the time of his departure from Nauvoo. Bennett was an adulterer before arriving in Nauvoo and he continued his debaucheries there seducing multiple unsuspecting women. Sometime in early 1842 he heard rumors of plural marriage, but there is no evidence that Joseph ever taught him anything about it.²⁵

Denver's multi-page discussion about John C. Bennett is puzzling unless an author is attempting to shift rumors of Nauvoo polygamy onto Bennett and his adulterous activities. In fact, it appears Snuffer is making that very assertion:

Those who have grappled with the subject of polygamy must look back through a lens that has been distorted by John C. Bennett. Whether you accept Bennett's account, or suspect it may have some truth, or you reject it altogether, you must nonetheless at least confront it as one of the earliest hints of what was happening in Nauvoo during Joseph Smith's lifetime. To measure Joseph's public statements you need to be acquainted with the sexual mischief going on in his city and the public clamor Bennett was attracting for Nauvoo's citizens and Joseph Smith as their leader. It was against this backdrop that Joseph's public statements and private conduct must be interpreted. (p. 21)

There are multiple problems with such an interpretation, primary among them is the timeline. Available evidence indicates that at the time Bennett became estranged from Joseph (April–May of 1842), the Prophet may have been the only authorized polygamist in Nauvoo. By that date

25 See also Brian C. Hales, "John C. Bennett and Joseph Smith's Polygamy: Addressing the Question of Reliability," *Journal of Mormon History* 41/2 (April 2015): 131–81.

he had been sealed to perhaps seven women (Louisa Beaman, Zina Huntington, Presendia Huntington, Agnes Coolbrith, Mary Elizabeth Rollins, Patty Bartlett, and Marinda Johnson), most of whom were plausibly nonsexual, eternity-only sealings. The bulk of Joseph Smith's plural marrying occurred well after Bennett was out of the picture.

			Probable Marriage Type		
<i>Joseph Smith's Plural Wives</i>	<i>Ceremony Date</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Time Only</i>	<i>Time & Eternity</i>	<i>Eternity Only</i>
1. Fanny Alger		1835?	X		
2. Louisa Beaman	Apr. 5	1841		X	
3. Zina Huntington	Oct.				X
4. Presendia Huntington	Dec. 11				X
5. Agnes Coolbrith	Jan. 6	1842	X		
6. Mary Elizabeth Rollins	Feb.				X
7. Patty Bartlett	Mar. 9				X
8. Marinda Nancy Johnson	Apr.				X
BENNETT LEAVES NAUVOO					
9. Delcena Johnson	<Jul.		X		
10. Eliza R. Snow	Jun. 29			X	
11. Sara Ann Whitney	Jul. 27			X	
12. Martha McBride	Aug.		X		

			Probable Marriage Type		
<i>Joseph Smith's Plural Wives</i>	<i>Ceremony Date</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Time Only</i>	<i>Time & Eternity</i>	<i>Eternity Only</i>
13. Sylvia Sessions	Early	1843		X	
14. Ruth Vose	Feb.				X
15. Flora Ann Woodworth	Spring			X	
16. Emily Dow Partridge	Mar. 4	1843		X	
17. Eliza Maria Partridge	Mar. 8			X	
18. Almera Johnson	April			X	
19. Lucy Walker	May 1			X	
20. Sarah Lawrence	May			X	
21. Maria Lawrence	May			X	
22. Helen Mar Kimball	May			X	
23. Hannah Ells	mid-year			X	
24. Elvira Annie Cowles	Jun. 1				X
25. Rhoda Richards	Jun. 12				X
26. Desdemona Fullmer	Jul.			X	
27. Olive G. Frost	Summer			X	
28. Malissa Lott	Sep. 20			X	
29. Fanny Young	Nov. 2				X

			Probable Marriage Type		
<i>Joseph Smith's Plural Wives</i>	<i>Ceremony Date</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Time Only</i>	<i>Time & Eternity</i>	<i>Eternity Only</i>
30. Lucinda Pendleton	Unknown				X
31. Nancy Winchester				X	
32. Elizabeth Davis					X
33. Sarah Kingsley					X
34. Esther Dutcher					X
35. Mary Heron				X*	

*Poorly documented.

As shown in the chart, the vast majority of the Prophet's plural marriages for time and eternity occurred after John C. Bennett had moved east away from the Saints.

A similar timeline is found among sealing dates of other Nauvoo polygamists. While Vinson Knight, Brigham Young, and Heber C. Kimball each married one plural wife in undated ceremonies before the summer of 1842, their sealings appear to have been a reaction to an "early February" angelic visit to Joseph Smith commanding him and other LDS men to practice plural marriage.²⁶ These three men *might* have been involved with plural marriage while Bennett was in Nauvoo, but it is plain that the remaining twenty-six who entered polygamous unions before the martyrdom did so after Bennett's exit.

²⁶ See Mary Elizabeth Rollins Lightner, letter to Emmeline B. Wells, Summer 1905, MS 282, CHL.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Date of First Plural Sealing</i>	<i>Total Plural Wives</i>
1 Heber C. Kimball	1842	early	1
2. Brigham Young		June 14	4
3. Vinson Knight		pre-July 31	1
BENNETT LEAVES NAUVOO			
4. Willard Richards	1843	January 18	3
5. William Huntington		February 5	1
6. Orson Hyde		February	2
7. Lorenzo Dow Young		March 9	1
8. Joseph Bates Noble		April 5	2
9. William Clayton		April 27	1
10. Benjamin Johnson		May 17	1
11. James Adams		July 11	1
12. Parley P. Pratt		July 24	1
13. William Felshaw		July 28	1
14. Hyrum Smith		August 11	4
15. John Smith		August 13	2
16. John Taylor		December 12	4
17. Isaac Morely		December 19	2
18. William Sagers		December	1
19. Edwin D. Woolley		?	2
20. Theodore Turley	1844	January	3
21. Erastus Snow		April 2	1
22. William Smith		April-May	1
23. Ezra T. Benson		April 27	1
24. Joseph Coolidge		?	1
25. Howard Egan			1
26. Joseph A. Kelting			2
27. John E. Page			1

<i>Name</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Date of First Plural Sealing</i>	<i>Total Plural Wives</i>
28. Lyman Wight	1844	?	3
29. Renolds Cahoon			1
		Total	50

These charts demonstrate that the majority of Nauvoo plural unions were sealed well after Bennett had left Nauvoo, and his friendship with Joseph had been severed. Coupling that detail with the multiple evidences that Joseph Smith did not teach Bennett about eternal plural marriage demonstrates that Snuffer's extended examination of John C. Bennett is not helpful in discerning any of the important details of Joseph Smith's introduction of polygamy because that expansion occurred well after Bennett had left the picture.

Blaming Brigham Young

Toward the last few pages of the essay, Snuffer returns to the topic of plural marriage and advances an additional theory. He blames Brigham Young for polygamy as it was practiced after the martyrdom labeling it a "vast wasteland of adulterous relationships unapproved by God, unsanctioned by Him" (p. 41). Snuffer is very critical of Brigham:

Access to sex partners was the purpose Brigham Young practiced. That was done was in error. The perpetuation of it is an error. (p. 42)

Brigham Young wanted to breed, and wanted to establish it as a "fundamental part of his religion." (p. 45)

It is time to throw away the detour Brigham Young imposed on Mormonism. (p. 45)

Separating Joseph Smith's teachings from those of Brigham Young and other later Church leaders is paramount for any theory that alleges that the Prophet did not practice or authorize plural marriage. Snuffer explains: "Joseph Smith was not Brigham Young. Brigham Young did not comprehend the things Joseph comprehended" (p. 45). However, an uncomfortable truth for Snuffer is that multiple evidences support

that men like Brigham Young learned of plural marriage right from Joseph's own mouth. Between December 13, 1841, and May 18, 1842, the Prophet's diary contains 21 references to Brigham Young, 15 to Heber C. Kimball, and 13 to Willard Richards (who became a polygamist January 18, 1843).²⁷

The context of these encounters varies from Joseph teaching Brigham regarding the building of the temple on December 11, to a group meeting with Brigham, Heber C. Kimball, Willard Richards, and John Taylor on December 27 "instructing them in the principles of the kingdom."²⁸ Is there any evidence that marriage doctrines were taught during these meetings? Yes. An October 23, 1843, reference in Brigham Young's journal states plainly: "With Elder H. C. Kimball and George A. Smith, I visited the Prophet Joseph, who was glad to see us. ... He taught us many principles illustrating the doctrine of celestial marriage, concerning which God had given him a revelation."²⁹

Joseph Smith Taught the Apostles about Plural Marriage

Seven apostles returned from their mission to England in 1841 (Orson Pratt, Willard Richards, Heber C. Kimball, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, George A. Smith, and Brigham Young). Multiple documents exist describing how at least five were personally taught by Joseph Smith about the restoration of polygamy. Heber C. Kimball's daughter Helen Mar Kimball vividly recalled her father's homecoming:

On the 1st day of July my father with President Young and Brother John Taylor arrived home from their mission. ... The Prophet and many more were there ready to greet and welcome them home again, Joseph would have them go home with him to dinner. ... [W]e thought this almost an unkindness for it seemed so long a time to us who were waiting and watching with impatience to see him. ... My mother felt the presence of others at such a time almost an intrusion, but Brother Joseph seemed unwilling to part with my father; and from that time

27 Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith: Journal, 1832–1842*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 2:335–84. In addition, John Taylor was mentioned eight times, Wilford Woodruff six, Newel K. Whitney five, William Marks four, and Orson Pratt three.

28 Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith: Journal, 1832–1842*, 2:345.

29 Eldon J. Watson, *Manuscript History of Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City: Smith Secretarial Service, 1969), 154. See also *Journal History*, CHL, for date.

kept the Twelve in council early and late, and she sometimes felt nearly jealous of him but never dreamed that he was during those time revealing to them the *principles of celestial marriage* and ... *they* little realized the meaning of his words when he said “he was rolling off the kingdom from his own shoulders onto the shoulders of the Twelve.”³⁰

In a discourse delivered on the tenth anniversary of the martyrdom, Apostle John Taylor recalled those early days when the Prophet introduced the principle to them:

I remember being with President Young and Kimball and I think one or two others with Brother Joseph soon after we had returned from England. He talked with us on these principles and laid them before us. It tried our minds and feelings. We saw it was something going to be heavy upon us. it was not that very nice pleasing thing some people thought about it. It is something that harried up our feelings. Did we believe it? Yes we did. I did. The whole rest of the brethren did but still we should have been glad to push it off a little further. We [would have] been glad if it did not come in our day but that somebody else had something to do with it instead of us.³¹

Years later on October 14, 1882, President John Taylor again recalled the event:

When this principle was first made known to us by Joseph Smith, it was in Nauvoo, and many of you will remember the place very well. We were assembled in the little office over the brick store, there being present Brs B. Young Heber C Kimball, Orson Hyde & myself. Br Willard Richards may have been present too, but I am not positive. Upon that occasion [sic], Joseph Smith laid before us the whole principle pertaining to that doctrine, and we believed it. Having done this, Joseph felt, as he said, that he had got a big burden rolled

30 Helen Mar Kimball Whitney, “Scenes and Incidents in Nauvoo,” *Woman’s Exponent* 10 (August 15, 1881): 42; emphasis hers.

31 John Taylor, “Sermon in Honor of the Martyrdom,” June 27, 1854, Papers of George D. Watt, MS 4534, Box 2, Disk 2, images 151–52, CHL. Sermon not in *Journal of Discourses* or in CR 100 317. Transcribed by LaJean Purcell Carruth, September 1, 2009. Used by permission. Terminal punctuation and initial capitals added.

off his shoulders. He felt the responsibility of that matter resting heavily upon him. Notwithstanding, however, that we received the principle & believed it, yet we were in no great hurry to enter into it.³²

During an 1892 deposition taken in the Temple Lot litigation, Wilford Woodruff recounted his feelings upon returning from England on October 5, 1841, from the apostolic mission:

Joseph Smith of course taught that principle while in Nauvoo, and he not only taught it, but practiced it too. ... I heard him teach it — he taught it to the quorum of twelve apostles, and he taught it to other individuals as they bear testimony. I know he taught it to us. ... In his addresses to the quorum of twelve apostles, when he visited us, he would teach that. ... It was nearly six months, and he spoke of it frequently. ... He taught it to us as a principle amongst other things.³³

Apostle George A. Smith also remembered this period. “At one of the first interviews” he had with Joseph after returning from his mission to England on July 13, 1841, he “was greatly astonished at hearing from his lips that doctrine of Patriarchal marriage, which he continued to preach to me from time to time. My last conversation with him on this subject occurred just previous to my departure from Nauvoo (May 9, 1844) in company with Elder Wilford Woodruff, to attend Conference in Michigan. ... He testified to me and to my father [John Smith] that the Lord had given him the keys of this sealing ordinance, and that he felt as liberal to others as he did to himself.”³⁴

Warren Foote, whose niece was one of George A. Smith's plural wives, recorded a conversation in which George A. related his struggle in accepting the revelation:

[1846 January] 23rd. ... After receiving our endowments, I and my wife went down to Bro. George A. Smith's who had

32 John Taylor, quoted in *Minutes of the Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1835–1893* (Salt Lake City: Privately Published, 2010), 342 (October 14, 1882).

33 Wilford Woodruff, deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent's Testimony, Part 3, pages 10, 58, questions 62–64, 573–80. Woodruff's recollection of a six-month teaching period fits quite well with the documented meetings from August 1841 to March 1842, with the most intense period being in the late fall and winter of 1841–42.

34 George A. Smith, letter to Joseph Smith III, October 9, 1869, Journal History.

married my sister Betsey's daughter Nancy for his third wife, Bro. Smith was at home. He related to us what a trial it was to him to receive the revelation on plural marriage. It was first made known to him by the Prophet Joseph. He did not feel at first at though he could receive it as from the Lord. But again he knew that Joseph was a prophet of God, and he durst not reject it. Thus he reasoned with himself, until he obtained a testimony from the Lord for himself.³⁵

Brigham Young returned to Nauvoo July 1, 1841, and immediately assumed a privileged position as Joseph Smith's confidante. Speaking at the Third Ward Meeting House in Salt Lake City when he was seventy-three, he recalled his own spiritual preparation for Joseph Smith's disclosures:

We came to Nauvoo, and the Twelve went to England. While we were in England, I think, the Lord manifested to me by visions and his spirit, things that I did not then understand. I never opened my mouth to any persons concerning them, until I returned to Nauvoo. Joseph had never mentioned this, there had never been a thought of it in the Church that I knew anything about at that time. But I had this for myself, and I kept it to myself, and when I returned home and Joseph revealed these things to me, I then understood the reflections that were upon my mind while in England. But this was not until after I had told him what I understood. I saw that he was after something by his conversation, leading my mind along, and others, to see how we could bear this. This was in 1841; the revelation was given in 1843, but the doctrine was revealed before this, and when I told Joseph what I understood which was right in front of my house in the street, as he was shaking hands and leaving me, he turned round and looked me in the eyes, and says he: "Brother Brigham, are you speaking what you understand, — are you in earnest?" Says I: "I speak just as the Spirit manifests to me." Says he: "God bless you, the Lord has opened your mind," and he turned and went off.³⁶

35 Warren Foote (1817–1903), autobiography and journal, MS 1123, 3 vols., 1:83, CHL.

36 Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 18:241 (June 23, 1874).

Notwithstanding these intuitions, Brigham related in 1855 his initial anguish with the practice: "My brethren know what my feelings were at the time Joseph revealed the doctrine; I was not desirous of shrinking from any duty, nor of failing in the least to do as I was commanded, but it was the first time in my life that I had desired the grave, and I could hardly get over it for a long time. And when I saw a funeral, I felt to envy the corpse its situation, and to regret that I was not in the coffin."³⁷

Of all of the apostles, Brigham Young was apparently singled out by Joseph Smith to teach selected individuals regarding the principle. Joseph A. Kelting learned of plural marriage directly from Joseph Smith, but after this introduction, Kelting recalled that he "referred me to Brigham Young if I wanted any more on this subject, Brigham seeming to be the man he trusted most with this matter, and was putting him to the front."³⁸ Even Brigham could not teach doctrines independent of Joseph. Wilford Woodruff recalled that the Prophet "taught the principle to certain individuals. ... There was no one teaching it only under his direction."³⁹

Denver Snuffer attempts to dismiss these testimonies:

This will not be an attempt to explain what Brigham Young, John Taylor, George Cannon⁴⁰ or Orson Pratt thought, believed or taught. They and their contemporaries have gone on the record and elaborated on this subject. You have all their material in front of you if you want to know what they believed it is available to you. (p. 1)

Why would any truth seeker ignore the teachings of men and women who were personally taught by Joseph Smith?

Joseph Smith Taught Other Church Members about Plural Marriage

The apostles were not the only Latter-day Saints taught by Joseph Smith concerning plural marriage. Cyrus Wheelock recalled that he first learned the principle of plural marriage from the Prophet at Joseph Noble's home

37 Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 3:266 (July 14, 1855).

38 Joseph Kelting, affidavit, September 11, 1903, CHL.

39 Wilford Woodruff, deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent's Testimony, Part 3, pp. 56 question 536; sentence order reversed.

40 George Q. Cannon was not personally taught by the Prophet. He converted and joined the Saints after Joseph's death.

in 1841.⁴¹ He reported that such teachings were subsequently shared with others on a “rainy and chilly” day in a forest setting about a mile west of Montrose, Iowa. There Joseph taught a small group of men regarding plural marriage:

Joseph had to be on the run to keep out of the way of his enemies, and some times he would go out in the country to one of our neighbors, for he felt that he could trust anyone that lived in the woods or forest down the river, and we would go out in the timber to talk under the trees about the principles of the church, amongst other principles that of baptism for the dead was discussed and the building of the temple and all those things together. It was at this time, amongst others, that he taught us the principle of plural marriage, but his teaching was not specially directed to me, but to all who were in the company. We talked about it as we might here or any brother qualified and having authority to do so will discuss principles when he gets along with his brethren in friend and confidential discourse.⁴²

Samuel W. Richards remembered: “I heard him [Joseph Smith] teach it [plural marriage] privately to quite a number at different times — that is, in the aggregate, to quite a number, but not to many at a time. And I never did hear him preach it or teach it in what could be called a public manner.”⁴³ Similarly Joseph C. Kingsbury recounted: “Joseph Smith taught me the principle of polygamy. He gave me to understand it with his own mouth that he had married wives more than one. Now in conversation with him, he told me that.”⁴⁴ Another Nauvoo resident, Nathan Tanner, affirmed: “In the Spring of 1844 at Montrose, lee County, Iowa, he heard President Joseph Smith ... teach the doctrine of Celestial Marriage or plurality of wives.”⁴⁵

In 1894, Joseph Kelting recalled his meeting with the Prophet:

41 Cyrus Wheelock, deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent’s Testimony, Part 3, p. 538, question 78.

42 Ibid., p. 539, question 80. See also questions 107, 136, 139, 142.

43 Samuel W. Richards, deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent’s Testimony, Part 3, page 572, question 129.

44 Joseph Kingsbury, deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent’s Testimony, Part 3, page 178, question 18.

45 Joseph F. Smith Affidavit Books, MS 3423, fd. 51:76, CHL.

Calling at the house of the prophet one day, early in the spring of 1844, on some business or other not now remembered, the prophet invited me into a room up stairs in his house, called the Mansion. After \we/ entered the room he locked it \the door,/ and then asked me if I had heard the rumors connecting him with polygamy. I told him I had. He then began a defense of the doctrine by referring to the Old Testament. I told him I did not want to hear that as I could read it for my self.

He claimed to be a prophet — I believed him to be prophet — and I wanted to know what he had to say about it. He expressed some doubts as to how I might receive it, and wanted to know what stand I would take if I should not believe what he had to say about it. I then pledged him my word that whether I believed his revelation or not I would not betray him.

He then informed me that he had received a revelation a revelation from God which taught the correctness of the doctrine of a plurality of wives, and commanding him to obey it. He then acknowledged to having married several wives. I told him that was all right. He then said he would like a further pledge from me that I would not betray him. I asked him if he wanted me to ~~ex~~ accept the principle by marrying a plural wife. He answered yes. A short time after this I married two wives in that order of marriage.⁴⁶

Elsewhere Kelting recalled asking Joseph Smith during the interview: “Have you more than one wife sealed to you by this authority”? The Prophet answered directly: “I have.”⁴⁷

Joseph Smith acted as an intermediary organizing a few plural marriages. Mary Ann Covington (Sheffield Smith Stratton West) was sealed to William Smith in the spring of 1844. She remembered:

I went to live at Orson Hyde's and soon after that time Joseph Smith wished to have an interview with me at Orson Hyde's. He had the interview with me, and then asked me if I had ever heard of a man's having more wives than one, and I said I had not. He then told me that he had received a revelation from God that man could have more wives than one, and that men

46 Joseph A. Kelting, “Statement,” Joseph Smith Affidavits, images 11–16a, CHL.

47 Joseph Kelting, affidavit, September 11, 1903, CHL.

were now being married in plural marriage. He told me soon after that his brother William wished to marry me as a wife in plural marriage if I felt willing to consent to it. ... He said that there was power on earth to seal wives in plural marriages.⁴⁸

Another Nauvoo Latter-day Saint, Mercy Rachel Fielding Thompson, explained in 1892 that her plural marriage was arranged by the Prophet:

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught me that principle himself, both publicly and domestically, or privately. ... The Prophet himself told me it was a true principle, and was taught in the bible — in the old bible, and I believed it of course, because I could read it for myself in the Bible and see that it was practiced in those days, and the Lord approved of it and sanctioned it, and I believed it was right of course, and believed what the Prophet taught me, and he taught me that. ... He was the one that introduced it to me, and he was the one that taught that principle of plural marriage to me first, and I heard him teach it to others. He taught it to me I know, and he must to others, for my sister was the first one that came to me and spoke to me about being sealed to Hyrum Smith.⁴⁹

In a letter to Joseph Smith III, Mercy Rachel explained how she was sealed to Hyrum and that children were expected to be born from that plural marriage:

The time was appointed with the consent of all parties your Father [the Prophet Joseph Smith] seald me to your Uncle Hyrum for time in Sisters Room with a covenant to deliver me up in the Morning of the Resurection to Robert Blashel Thompson with whatever ofspring should be [born] of that union. At the same time counciling your Uncle to build a Room for me and have move over as soon as convenient which

48 Mary Ann West, deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent's Testimony, Part 3, pages 495–96, 504, questions 13, 272. According to her testimony, this was the only time she discussed plural marriage with the Prophet. See *ibid.*, page 503, questions 264–65.

49 Mercy Rachel Thompson, deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent's Testimony, Part 3, pages 238–40, 263–64, questions 23–31, 512, 522.

he did and I remaind there as Wife the same as my Sister to the day of his Death All this I am ready to testify to.⁵⁰

Mercy Rachel Thompson stated that she was privileged to keep the written revelation “some four or five days. Something like that.”⁵¹ She also recalled: “I saw that revelation on polygamy, and had it in my hands — saw what kind of paper it was written on. It was written on foolscap paper.”⁵² Writing in 1886 she added that Hyrum “put it into my hands and left it with me for several days. I had been sealed to him by Brother Joseph a few weeks previously.”⁵³

Aroet L. Hale left a report describing how the Prophet promoted plural marriage for very practical, family-related reasons:

Another incident that occurred in my hearing that I never shall forget: The Prophet Joseph was at our house at Nauvoo on a visit. Uncle Henry Harriman, wife, & others was there. In the evening Joseph was talking on the Order of Celestial Marriage. All at once he turned towards Uncle Henry Harriman: Says he, Brother Henry, your wife Clarisa is barren & will never have any children. You must take another wife. Without posterity your name will be lost. You are of the seed of Joseph, & the only one of the Harriman family that is of that lineage & the only one that will join the Church. The Prophet commanded Uncle Henry to rise up and take heed to this command that he had made of him. He then turned to Aunt Clarisa. Says he, Clarisa, if you will assist Henry in doing as I have commanded, the God of Heaven will bless you and you share these blessings in common with your husband.⁵⁴

50 Mercy R. Thompson, letter to Joseph Smith III, September 5, 1885, copy forwarded to Joseph F. Smith, Joseph F. Smith Collection, MS 1325, fd. 12, CHL. See also “Letter from Mercy R. Thompson,” September 5, 1885, *The Saints Herald*, 8/12 (June, 1886): 641–42.

51 Mercy Rachel Thompson, deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent’s Testimony, Part 3, page 250, questions 244.

52 Undated quotation in Joseph Smith III, “Plural Marriage in America,” *The Arena* 23/5 (May 1903): 460.

53 “An Important Testimony,” letter of Mercy R. Thompson to A. M. Musser, January 31, 1886, *Deseret News*, Salt Lake City, February 6, 1886.

54 Aroet L. Hale, “Reminiscence,” (ca. 1882), MS 1509, 28–29, CHL; spelling and punctuation standardized. See also Aroet L. Hale, “Journal of Aroet L. Hale,” typescript, USHS A 554, pages 8–9.

Henry was sealed to Eliza Elizabeth Jones polygamously on January 16, 1846, in Nauvoo and together they had ten children. Nauvoo Church member Charles Lambert recounted:

The Prophet used to hold meetings in a Log house of his sometimes twice a week I donot [*sic*] remember missing one when I had a chance at one of these he said he wished he had a people that he could reveal to them what the Lord had shown to him but one thing I will say there are thousands of Spirits that have been waiting to come forth in this day and generation their [*sic*] proper channel is through the Priesthood a way has to be provided but the time has come and they have got to come anyway and thus left me in a fix. Some time after this Wm Clayton told me if I would come down into the basement of the Temple he wanted to show me something and that I might bring Stephen Hales⁵⁵ with me we went into a little place boxed of[f] for a paint shop for Wm Pitt he been present there Br Wm C. read unto us the Revelation on Plural Marriage. This explained the above I believed it yet did not obey the same until 1872. I think it was on or about the 6th of May 1844 the Prophet Joseph came up to the Temple and clasping his arms arround [*sic*] me and lifted me of[f] my feet then said the Lord bless thee and I bless thee.⁵⁶

Malissa Lot testified:

Q. Did you read that revelation [discussing plurality of wives] when you were at Nauvoo? ...

A. Yes sir.

Q. Where did you get it?

A. I got it from Joseph Smith.

Q. Now you are sure of that?

A. I am.

Q. Was it in print, or was it in manuscript? Just answer that question?

55 This is the author's great-great-great-grandfather or his great-grand uncle.

56 Charles Lambert, "Autobiography [ca. 1885]," typescript, MS 1130, Folder 1, page 16, CHL.

A. Well it was in writing — it was in manuscript.⁵⁷

In addition, Lucy Walker testified that she saw the revelation “at the Nauvoo Mansion” where she was living.⁵⁸

In a limited way, Snuffer acknowledges that evidences like those presented above exist (pp. 4–5), but his willingness to ignore them is surprising. It is true that late, secondhand narratives are not as reliable as contemporaneous firsthand accounts. However, thorough scholars investigate all pertinent evidences to evaluate them based upon their individual credibility and validity. Thereafter, researchers may not agree at their significances, but eliminating an entire category of evidence simply based upon one characteristic is seldom, if ever, justified. In this case, Snuffer essentially ignores anything but firsthand accounts, which are very few in number. This approach is inherently less effective in discovering historical truth, but may be useful if an author is driven by a specific agenda that would not be better served by casting a wider evidentiary net.

Declarations from dozens of Nauvoo polygamists are available in documents posted at MormonPolygamyDocuments.org and are charted in “Yes, Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph Smith Practiced Polygamy.”⁵⁹ Denver Snuffer might claim that the available testimonies describe *non*-physical spiritual unions, but in doing so he would be manifesting ignorance of the statements themselves. These witnesses declared they practiced plural marriage like Abraham and Jacob in the fullest sense. They agree Joseph Smith taught plural marriage, practiced plural marriage, and authorized others to do so.

Historical Reality or Unreality?

Denver Snuffer's treatment of Joseph Smith and plural marriage suffers from two primary weaknesses. First, his scholarly treatment is inadequate. He examines three historical considerations to defend his interpretation, initially by discussing Fanny Alger, but she is a tangential issue at best. Next he implies that Nauvoo polygamy rumors were

57 Malissa Lott, deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent's Testimony, Part 3, page 101, questions 165–69.

58 Lucy Walker, deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent's testimony, Part 3, page 452, questions 66–68.

59 See also Brian C. Hales, “Yes, Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph Smith Practiced Polygamy,” accessed June 19, 2015, <http://josephsmithspolygamy.org/yes-abraham-jacob-and-joseph-smith-practiced-polygamy/>.

traceable to John C. Bennett. Lastly, he tries to pin the responsibility for later polygamy squarely on Brigham Young. There is no way to get to the heart of the issue through such tactics.

The second problem involves the volume of evidences he ignores, evidences that contradict his reconstruction. In 1770, John Adams observed: "Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passion, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence."⁶⁰ By largely ignoring the available manuscripts, Snuffer frees himself to take the storyline in his own direction, largely unfettered by historical data. But in doing so, he risks creating, not documented history but rather historical fiction. He may like it and his followers may believe it, but it will not constitute truth, which Joseph Smith defined as "things as they really are" (Jacob 4:13; see also D&C 93:24).

Hopefully these evidences demonstrate plainly that Denver Snuffer's theory that "It would be bigamy to marry another woman for this life while having an existing wife" and that "If he added others, it was for the afterlife and not for bigamy" (p. 2) are incomplete. The references quoted above and others that could be provided demonstrate undeniably that Joseph was the initial source of all teachings regarding eternal plural marriage. While some of his sealings were non-sexual, eternity-only unions, most were time-and-eternity plural marriages. It is also clear that the Prophet facilitated time-and-eternity plural marriages for Latter-day Saints of the Nauvoo period. It appears the only way to sustain Denver Snuffer's position on Joseph Smith and plural marriage is to *deny* the evidence. In its place Snuffer has substituted an alternate reality that removes polygamy as an historical reality, instead relegating it to rumors of John C. Bennett or adulteries of Brigham Young.

As we will see in Part 2 of my response, this process repeats itself in other historical interpretations promoted by Snuffer. He embraces selective manuscript details to produce a new historical reconstruction that opens the way for his authoritative voice. Clearly in Snuffer's world, the restoration sputtered and needs a jumpstart, and he seems to have positioned himself as the man to accomplish this perceived work. The problem is that if he is working from a foundation of half-truths (as is seen in his treatment of plural marriage), then he has bound himself to things unreal. And false teachings do not lead to truth.

60 John Adams, John Adams Quotes, accessed June 19, 2015, <http://www.thefederalistpapers.org/founders/john-adams>.

Brian C. Hales, *is the author of six books dealing with polygamy, most recently the three-volume, Joseph Smith's Polygamy: History and Theology (Greg Kofford Books, 2013). His Modern Polygamy and Mormon Fundamentalism: The Generations after the Manifesto received the "Best Book of 2007 Award" from the John Whitmer Historical Association. He has presented at numerous meetings and symposia and published articles in The Journal of Mormon History, Mormon Historical Studies, and Dialogue as well as contributing chapters to The Persistence of Polygamy series. Brian works as an anesthesiologist at the Davis Hospital and Medical Center in Layton, Utah, and has served as the President of the Utah Medical Association.*

A RESPONSE TO DENVER SNUFFER’S ESSAY ON PLURAL MARRIAGE, ADOPTION, AND THE SUPPOSED FALLING AWAY OF THE CHURCH

PART 2: FAÇADE OR REALITY?

Brian C. Hales

Abstract: Part 2 of this response to Denver Snuffer’s essay entitled “Plural Marriage” posted on March 22, 2015, will primarily address non-plural marriage issues as discussed in the last twenty pages.¹ Snuffer’s portrayal of adoption teachings and practices is analyzed and shown to be in error, along with his interpretation of presiding priesthood quorums as described in the Doctrine and Covenants. His primary thesis, that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is in apostasy, is also examined including Snuffer’s personal need for the Church to have fallen away in order to create an opening for his new visionary voice. The lack of evidence supporting such an apostasy is also reviewed including the obvious absence of any prophesied latter-day “dwindling in unbelief.” Snuffer is compared to other dissidents who have come and gone over the past century showing his claims are not unexpected or original. While the Latter-day Saints could be more obedient, a core group of righteous members and leaders has always existed in the Church through which the Lord could perform His restorative works.

Despite the title of Denver Snuffer’s “Plural Marriage” essay, the article’s focus shifts away from polygamy on page 28, devoting the last twenty pages to other topics, which are addressed below.

Sealing to Our “Fathers in Eternal Glory”

Snuffer first discusses a related topic — that of adoption — alleging: “Joseph knew it would do no good to seal ourselves to our dead ancestors” (p. 29). This declaration is apparently based upon Snuffer’s unique interpretation of Joseph Smith’s March 10, 1844, discourse. Wilford Woodruff recorded his instructions given that day:

¹ Denver Snuffer, “Plural Marriage,” accessed June 19, 2015, <http://denversnuffer.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Plural-Marriage.pdf>.

Again the doctrin [sic] or *sealing power* of Elijah is as follows if you have power to seal on earth & in heaven then we should be Crafty, the first thing you do go & *seal on earth your sons & daughters unto yourself, & yourself unto your fathers in eternal glory*, & go ahead and not go back, but use a little Craftiness & seal all you can.²

Here Joseph tells us to be sealed to our “fathers in eternal glory,” but who are these fathers? Are they our biological fathers who are now dead or someone else? Snuffer’s answer may be surprising: “The ‘fathers in eternal glory’ are not your kindred dead in the spirit world. They are Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. ... The family of man needed to reconnect to the family of ‘the fathers’ who had risen from the dead and become exalted” (p. 29). Snuffer interprets the “fathers in eternal glory” as resurrected and exalted beings. He argues that they could not be our deceased biological fathers because they now reside as unresurrected spirits in the spirit world.

Fortunately, on January 21, 1844, Wilford Woodruff also wrote the Prophet’s instructions, which clarify the identity of the “fathers”:

The gospel to be establiished the Saints of God gatherd Zion built up, & the Saints to Come up as Saviors on mount Zion but how are they to become Saviors on Mount Zion by building thair temples erecting their Baptismal fonts & going forth & receiving all the ordinances, Baptisms, Confirmations, washings anointings ordinations & *sealing powers* upon our heads *in behalf of all our Progenitors who are dead* & redeem them that they may Come forth in the first resurrection & *be exhalted to thrones of glory* with us.³

Joseph taught that the “sealing powers” are for our “progenitors who are dead” who will “be exhalted to thrones of glory with us.” There is no mention of Abraham or other patriarchs.

Additional evidence discounting Snuffer’s view is found by investigating all of the known references of Joseph Smith to the fathers, their children, and Elijah’s mission. The Prophet mentioned Malachi’s

2 Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, comps. and eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, 1980), 331–32 (Wilford Woodruff Diary, Sunday, March 10, 1844); italics added.

3 Ibid., 318; italics added.

prophecy in multiple revelations, writings, and discourses. In none of these did he indicate that the “fathers” were patriarchs like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In fact, it can be argued that in every case Joseph Smith’s audiences would have understood that the “children” and “fathers” he mentioned were direct biological relatives. Their hearts were to turn toward each other resulting in the performance of sealing ordinances to bind them eternally together.

Joseph Smith’s References to the Fathers and Children	
Malachi 4:6	“hearts of the children to their fathers”
D&C 2:2	“turn to their fathers”
D&C 27:9	“children to the fathers”
D&C 98:16	“hearts of the children to their fathers”
D&C 110:15	“the children to the fathers”
D&C 128:17	“the heart of the children to their fathers”
D&C 128:18	“welding link of some kind or other between the fathers and the children”
Joseph Smith History 1:39	“the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers”
<i>Words</i> * 11	“hearts of the children will have to be turned to the fathers, & the fathers to the children living or dead to prepare them for the second coming of the Son of Man”
<i>Words</i> 241-42	“the hearts of the children to the covenant made to their fathers”
<i>Words</i> 244	“covenants to seal the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers”

Joseph Smith's References to the Fathers and Children	
Words 318	"our progenitors who are dead & redeem them that they may Come forth in the first resurrection & be exalted to thrones of glory with us"
Words 327	"sealing of the hearts of the children unto the fathers & the hearts of the fathers unto the children even those who are in heaven"
Words 334	"to seal or bind or turn the hearts of the fathers to their children"
Words 336	"to seal the hearts of the Fathers to the children – and the children to the Parents"

*Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*.

Abraham, of course, would be somewhere in the links, but creating a chain back to Adam was the primary focus. Joseph explained there needs to be a "welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories should take place, and be revealed from the days of Adam even to the present time" (D&C 128:18). We must be linked back to Adam because he was a son of God (Luke 3:38). Through a chain of sealings leading back to him, we, too, are sealed to God.

Nauvoo Adoption Sealings

Snuffer's view of adoption sealings is problematic in other ways. Sealing records from the Nauvoo Temple show that a total of 82 individuals were sealed to their own biological parents through child-to-parent sealings.⁴ Importantly, five of Hyrum Smith's own children were sealed to him by proxy — a plain case where a living person was sealed to a dead biological father in contradiction to Snuffer's declaration.

4. Extracted from Lisle Brown, *Nauvoo Sealings, Adoptions, and Anointings: A Comprehensive Register of Persons Receiving LDS Temple Ordinances, 1841–1846* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2006). See also Devery S. Anderson and Gary James Bergera, *The Nauvoo Endowment Companies, 1845–1846: A Documentary History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2005), 399–400), 410, 423, 493–94, 497, 505–06, 516–17, 536, 549, 551, 565, 581, 583, 585–86, 609.

In addition, 211 people were sealed to non-parents, generally prominent Church leaders.⁵ No person was sealed to Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob or any of the Old Testament patriarchs, which would indicate that they did not interpret the meaning of “fathers” as Snuffer does.

Adoption Sealings Performed in the Nauvoo Temple, Jan. 11-Feb. 6, 1846⁶					
Dates in 1846	Father	Leadership Position	Non-Biological Children	Biological Children	Mother
Jan. 28	Bent, Samuel	-	1	-	Kilborn, Mary
Jan. 31	Cutler, Alpheus	-	4	8	Lethrop, Lois
Feb. 6	Farr, Winslow	-	7	3	Freeman, Olive Hovey
Jan. 11	Hyde, Orson	Apostle	-	2	Johnson, Nancy Marinda
Jan. 12, 25, Feb. 1	Kimball, Heber C.	Apostle	38	6	Murray, Vilate
Feb. 5	Lee, John D.		22	-	Woolsey, Aggath Ann
Jan. 25	Lyman, Amasa M.	Apostle	3	3	Tanner, Mariah Louisa
Jan. 25	Miller, George	Bishop	3	3	Fry, Mary Catherine
			-	5	Bouton, Elizabeth
			-	4	Wallace, Sophia

5. Lisle Brown's totals differ from mine. He lists 202 adoption sealings and 92 child-to-biological parent sealings. *Nauvoo Sealings, Adoptions, and Anointings*, 361. The reasons for the discrepancies are unclear.

Adoption Sealings Performed in the Nauvoo Temple, Jan. 11-Feb. 6, 1846 ⁶					
Dates in 1846	Father	Leadership Position	Non-Biological Children	Biological Children	Mother
Feb. 3	Morley, Isaac	-	3	6	Gunn, Lucy
Jan. 17	Pratt, Orson	Apostle	-	2	Bates, Sarah Marinda
Jan. 25	Richards, Willard	Apostle	11	2	Richards, Jennetta
Jan. 30	Smith, Don Carolos		-	2	Coolbrith, Agnes Moulton
Jan. 25	Smith, George A.	Apostle	-	2	Bigler, Bathsheba W.
Jan. 26	Smith, Hyrum*	Church Patriarch - Associate President	13	5	Barden, Jerusha
Jan. 25	Smith, John	Patriarch	4	3	Lyman, Clarissa
Feb. 3	Smith, Jr. Joseph	President	1	-	none listed
Jan. 31	Spencer, Daniel	-	-	1	Pomeroy, Sophronia Eliza
			-	1	Lester, Sarah
			-	1	Spencer, Mary
Jan. 27	Spencer, Orson	-	-	5	Curtis, Catherine

Adoption Sealings Performed in the Nauvoo Temple, Jan. 11-Feb. 6, 1846 ⁶					
Dates in 1846	Father	Leadership Position	Non-Biological Children	Biological Children	Mother
Jan. 17, Feb.	Taylor, John	Apostle	26	3	Cannon, Leonora
Jan. 26	Thompson, Robert	-	2	-	Fielding, Mercy Rachel
Jan. 12, 26, Feb. 1	Whitney, Newel K.	Bishop	6	8	Smith, Elizabeth Ann
Jan. 11, 25, Feb. 1	Young, Brigham	Apostle	59	7	Works, Miriam
Feb. 2			6	-	Adams, Augusta
Totals			211	82	

* Italics denote the sealings were performed by proxy

No additional adoption sealings were performed by the Saints after the Nauvoo Temple closed on February 6, 1846, until the opening of the St. George Temple in 1877. In Utah temples two types of adoptions were performed, some to non-kindred “fathers” (like Church leaders but never Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob) and others to biologically related progenitors. Sealings to non-relatives were discontinued in 1894 when Wilford Woodruff clarified that we should all be sealed to our biological parents as far back as the genealogical records would allow.

Snuffer states that because of a vision Brigham Young received on February 17, 1847, “The practice of adoption came to an end” (p. 31). This is ironic for a couple of reasons. First, as discussed above, adoptions

6. Extracted from Lisle Brown, *Nauvoo Sealings, Adoptions, and Anointings: A Comprehensive Register of Persons Receiving LDS Temple Ordinances, 1841–1846* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2006). See also Devery S. Anderson and Gary James Bergera, *The Nauvoo Endowment Companies, 1845–1846: A Documentary History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2005), 399–400, 410, 423, 493–94, 497, 505–06, 516–17, 536, 549, 551, 565, 581, 583, 585–86, 609.

were only performed in the Nauvoo Temple between January 11 and February 6, 1846 — less than a month. Either they ended at that time or decades later after 1877 when they were again performed in the St. George Temple. The second irony is that Snuffer treats Brigham Young's vision as genuine even though he paints him as an adulterer leading the Saints into whoredoms at that time (p. 41).

Confusion about Priesthood Keys and Presiding Quorums

On page 40 Snuffer changes the topic by criticizing the organization of the Church after Joseph Smith's death:

The First Presidency under Joseph Smith was a quorum equal to the quorum of the 12. ... [T]he Quorum of the 70 formed a quorum equal in authority with the quorum of them and therefore with the First Presidency also. None of the equality survived Brigham Young! The standing High Councils of Zion formed a quorum equal in authority with the First Presidency and the quorum of the 12. All the "keys" (if that term is used) were held 100% by the First Presidency, 100% by the Quorum of the 12, 100% by the Quorum of the 70, and 100% in the High Councils. This meant that there was no primacy in the twelve. (p. 40)

In this statement Snuffer teaches multiple falsehoods regarding several of the Prophet's teachings. It is true that section 107:21–26, 36–37, explains that the First Presidency, the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the Seventy, the standing high councils, and the high council in Zion all form quorums that are "equal in authority." However, God's house is a house of order (D&C 20:68; 28:13; 58:55; 132:8, 18). Those verses were not saying that there are five presiding quorums who function independent of each other. Rather, they hold similar authority to build up the Church and receive revelation to fulfill their individual stewardships.

Integral to the order of God's house is *presiding* authority. The First Presidency presides over the Quorum of the Twelve: "The Twelve are a Traveling Presiding High Council, to officiate in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Presidency of the Church" (D&C 107:33). Together, these two quorums preside: "For unto you, the Twelve, and those, the First Presidency, who are appointed with you to be your counselors and your leaders, is the power of this priesthood given" (D&C 112:30). The Seventy act under the Twelve: "The Seventy are to act in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Twelve" (D&C 107:34). The

other two councils mentioned, “the standing high councils, at the stakes of Zion” and “the high council in Zion,” are not discussed further.

Snuffer states that each of these quorums holds “all the ‘keys,’” which contradicts D&C 132:7. In that verse we learn that “there is never but one on the earth at a time on whom this power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred.” The “one” is not a quorum, but a man who controls all the keys: “I have appointed unto my servant Joseph to hold this power in the last days” (v. 7).

The President of the Quorum of the Twelve presides when the First Presidency is not available. The Lord explained to Thomas B. Marsh, President of the Twelve in 1837:

Verily I say unto you, my servant Thomas, thou art the man whom I have chosen to hold the *keys of my kingdom, as pertaining to the Twelve*, abroad among all nations.

That thou mayest be my servant to unlock the door of the kingdom *in all places* where my servant Joseph, and my servant Sidney, and my servant Hyrum, cannot come. (D&C 112:16–17; italics added)

Upon the death of the keyholder, the First Presidency is dissolved and is no longer capable of presiding. The “keys of the kingdom” pass to the President of the Quorum of the Twelve because at that point, he presides “in all places.”

Contrary to Snuffer’s allegation, Brigham Young did not change Joseph Smith’s teachings regarding presiding priesthood authority and keys. He fulfilled them exactly. At the time of the martyrdom, Brigham Young was President of the Quorum of the Twelve. Upon learning of the death of the Prophet, Brigham recalled: “Brother Orson Pratt sat at my left; we were both leaning back in our chairs. Bringing my hand down on my knee, I said, ‘the keys of the kingdom are right here with the church.’”⁷

It is also clear that Joseph Smith had prepared Brigham Young to preside. Just a few months earlier, in January of 1844, the Prophet instructed the senior apostle in the Quorum of the Twelve regarding the administration of the highest temple ordinances and then authorized him to administer them to other members of the quorum.⁸ The Quorum

7 “History of Brigham Young,” *Millennial Star*, 26 (June 4, 1864): 359.

8 Andrew F. Ehat, “Joseph Smith’s Introduction of Temple Ordinances and the Mormon Succession Question,” (master’s thesis, Brigham Young University,

of the Twelve was the only priesthood quorum of general authority status that had received all temple ordinances.⁹ Brigham explained: “No man can put another between the Twelve and the Prophet Joseph. Why? Because Joseph was their file leader and he has committed into their hands the keys of the Kingdom for all the world.”¹⁰

“Joseph Left an Incomplete Building”

The observations above illustrate an ongoing weakness in Denver Snuffer’s works. It appears he quotes specific scriptures and statements, often giving a novel interpretation, but he fails to deal with numerous contradictory evidences to his ideas. Sometimes it appears he is trying to rewrite LDS Church history to comply with his own ideas rather than trying to document what actually occurred and what was actually taught. Toward the final pages of Snuffer’s plural marriage essay, he continues this process by going on the attack, not against polygamy but against Joseph Smith and the Church over the past decades.

A consistent theme in Snuffer’s writings is that the Restoration is incomplete, lacking, unfinished, and inadequate. God’s efforts to establish the gospel in this dispensation have sputtered. According to Denver, “Joseph left an incomplete building and an incomplete family or house of God” (p. 28):

Joseph Smith was working backward in restoring the earliest teaching, scripture, covenants and ordinances as part of his brief ministry. That ended abruptly with his death. The still-not-completed restoration of the Gospel must return again the original body of teaching, covenants and ordinances revealed in the beginning to the first fathers, who are now resurrected, and in heaven.

There was such haste and foolishness in Joseph’s day that it hindered God’s work. (pp. 31–32)

We know almost nothing at this point of the full scope of the original body of teachings, revelations, ordinances and rites. Even all that came through Joseph is but a glimpse. (p. 34)

1982), 145.

⁹ Ibid., 192.

¹⁰ Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, 1833–1898*, 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983–85), 2:437 (August 8, 1844).

Joseph Smith was beginning to work ... in Nauvoo but never finished. (p. 47)

Contradicting this view are God's words to Joseph Smith in 1843: "I am the Lord thy God, and I gave unto thee, my servant Joseph, an appointment, *and restore all things*" (D&C 132:40; italics added). Is it possible that he died before God was able to complete this restoration? Joseph explained: "I know what I say, I understand my mision & business God Almighty is my shield & what Can man do if God is my friend *I shall not be Sacrafised untill my time Comes* then I shall be offered freely."¹¹ This statement declares that Joseph would live until his time was come and the Lord stated that through the Prophet He would "restore all things." After the Martyrdom, Joseph Fielding wrote the following in testimony of this fact:

All had been done. Joseph and Hyrum had done all that they could have done and the foundation of the great work of the last days was laid so that it could be finished by the Twelve Apostles who had been instructed in all things pertaining to the kingdom of God on the earth.¹²

The Prophet taught: "We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God" (Articles of Faith, 9), so additional revelations are expected. However, to allege that God did not restore everything that He wanted to restore through Joseph prior to the martyrdom is unsupported.

"The History of the Church Has Been A Long, Downward Path"

Perhaps the leading message of Denver Snuffer's more recent writings and discourses deals with the alleged apostasy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. According to Snuffer, the apostasy unfolded in parallel with the earliest efforts of the Restoration: "The jarring and contention, envying and strife of Joseph's time was so toxic. Heaven weeps at us when it might instead rejoice over us" (p. 36). To support his

11 Ehat and Cook, comps. and eds., *Words*, 158 (Wilford Woodruff Diary, Sunday, January 22, 1843); italics added.

12 Ehat, Andrew F. "'They Might Have Known That He Was Not a Fallen Prophet' — The Nauvoo Journal of Joseph Fielding," *BYU Studies* 19/2 (Winter 1979): 153; spelling modernized.

view, he emphasizes in his writings multiple events that either initiated or perpetuated an apostasy:

1832 — D&C 84 — Treating lightly the Book of Mormon¹³

1838 — “Expulsion from Missouri” (p. 39)

1841 — D&C 124 the five-year building time of the Nauvoo Temple¹⁴

1846 — “Forced exodus from Nauvoo” (p. 39)

After 1847 — “The afflictions, judgments and wrath of God at the Saints, at the their pride, lying, deceit, hypocrisy, murders, priestcrafts, and whoredoms” (p. 39)

After 1847 — “Inquisitorial abuse of the population” (p. 40)

1857 — “Mass-murders” (p. 40)

1890 — The Manifesto¹⁵

1900s — “Contradictions in ‘fundamental’ teachings, changes to the ordinances” (p. 40)

1978—“Changes to temple rites” (p. 40)

2000s—“Quest for popularity” (p. 40)

It seems that without missing any opportunities for criticism, Denver points his finger of scorn at any perceived imperfection or imperfect behavior manifested by Church members over the decades, contending that this event or that event caused the Church to lose its favor with God (and apparently the authority to perform valid ordinances and receive inspiration). His vitriol reaches its height on pages 39 and 40:

You can see them [signs of apostasy] all along the way, from the condemnation in 1832, to the expulsion from Missouri, the forced exodus from Nauvoo, the suffering during and following the exodus, the afflictions, judgments and wrath of God at the Saints, their pride, lying, deceit, hypocrisy, murders, priestcrafts, and whoredoms (as Christ foretold),

13 Denver C. Snuffer, Jr., *Passing the Heavenly Gift* (Salt Lake City: Mill Creek Press, 2011), 376–85.

14 Ibid., 96–119, 265–87.

15 Ibid., 166–84.

inquisitorial abuse of the population once isolated from the US, mass-murders, contradictions in “fundamental” teachings, changes to the ordinances including the temple rites, quest for popularity and centrally-controlled, tightly correlated rejection of teachings — the history of the LDS Church has been a long, downward path. It has walked away from the light, and increasingly embraced darkness. Its members are now ruled by traditions that contradict the scriptures and commandments of God. They are asleep and cannot be awakened. God will now do something new and leave them to make their own way. (pp. 39–40)

In Denver Snuffer's version of Church history, unrighteousness overwhelmed the Saints from the very first years after the organization of the Church, leaving the entire movement in paroxysms that prevented it from ever gaining spiritual traction on earth.

LDS leaders acknowledge that through the decades since the Church's 1830 organization, there were groups of Latter-day Saints who were unrighteous and merited condemnation. But that is not Snuffer's message. He implies not only errant members but also severe transgressions among core leaders in the highest councils. In his reconstruction, there is no critical mass of obedient Saints to keep inspired guidance and authority in the Church.

The Need for an Apostate Church

Snuffer's rhetorical offensive against the Church is not unexpected. Whether his readers recognize what is happening, his denunciations fulfill a critical need in his overall theology. He must demonstrate that a huge void exists on the Restoration landscape.

Snuffer's efforts are impressive. He eloquently describes a religious organization that has been, from the earliest days, compromised in its mission. The apostasy began early and has experienced additional convulsions since the 1830s. By his accounting, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has simply limped along spiritually to the twenty-first century.

The overwhelming question generated throughout Snuffer's writings is simply, “What are the Latter-day Saints living today to do?” The answer in his view is also just as obvious. The Saints must find a new visionary voice that can save the entire endeavor. The apostasy as described by Snuffer creates a wide opportunity for a new reformer who

is in some ways just like Joseph Smith, only he will be more successful and apparently more righteous.

In other words, there would be no need for Denver Snuffer's declarations and ideas if the Church established by Joseph Smith still held the priesthood keys and prophetic leadership. Anyone wishing to garner influence among the Latter-day Saints must foment the belief that something is now missing in that organization and that an antidote for the described mess exists.

Denver Snuffer: A New Visionary and Seer?

In my first general response to Denver Snuffer's claims that was posted on <http://JosephSmithsPolygamy.org> in April 2015, I predicted that at some point in the future he would make claims to priesthood authority:

Denver Snuffer's situation is even more distanced from Joseph Smith's teachings as he struggles to deal with his lack of priesthood authority. Joseph taught that genuine authority was always needed. No exceptions. But Snuffer doesn't have any authority and has yet to claim a new dispensation of authority. That may yet come as his condemnation of the Church rises in pitch and volume. Many other dissenters in the past have followed this course and gathered a following around them claiming new revelation and eventually even new priesthood powers. Time will tell.

Ironically, we did not need to wait long for this assertion. Evidently, it can be found in Denver's essay on plural marriage. On page 38 he provides a modified drawing originally penned by Orson Hyde where he identifies a line of priesthood authority. Snuffer then writes in the names of early patriarchs who held the priesthood in a continual line from Adam to Melchizedek. Then he writes: "After the days of Shem, who was given the new name 'Melchizedek,' the direct line of the Patriarchs fell unto apostasy and lost the birthright. There was no continuation of the line of government because it was broken by apostasy and had to be restored again (p. 38)."

Snuffer posits an apostasy between Melchizedek and Abraham, which is puzzling since they were contemporaries. Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek: "For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all" (Hebrews 7:1–2; see also Alma 13:15). Regardless, Snuffer expounds how

Abraham sought for “a restoration”: “Abraham sought it out after his fathers ‘turned from their righteousness ... unto the worshipping of the gods of the heathen.’ He sought for a restoration of the kingdom of God. He wanted a restoration of this right or ‘blessing of the fathers,’ which only one man on the earth can hold at a time (p. 38).”

Apparently this is also a reference to a restoration of the sealing keys, which God explained: “There is never but one on the earth at a time on whom this power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred” (D&C 132:7).

Snuffer continues to explain that God directly “cured” the apostasy Abraham experienced.

When there is a living man who is in possession of that there is no problem for him to ask God and get an answer. It was the right belonging to the fathers. After a period of apostasy, and the break of this line, Abraham received it by adoption across generations who were dropped from the government or family of God. Therefore, God has the ability to cure the break in generations by restoring us again. (p. 39)

The inferences are clear: If God could cure an apostasy in Abraham's time, then God can cross “generations” and restore again the “blessing ... which only one man on earth can hold.” Snuffer asserts a similar apostasy today. But who is the new Abraham? Who is the recipient of Abrahamic-level blessings? Snuffer tells us that he is the new “witness” who has been appointed: “All that was left at the end was for a witness to be appointed, to come to declare, ‘Now it has come to an end.’ In the last talked [sic] in the 10 lecture series I said, the witness has now come, and I am he (p. 39).”

Elsewhere, on page 42 he writes: “I was shown ...” This is the language of a *seer*. While I am not privy to Snuffer's additional teachings on this subject. He has encouraged rebaptism, which could not occur without priesthood (D&C 22:1–4). I do not wish to misrepresent Denver Snuffer's messages, but the overall implication is that the Lord has cured the reported apostasy by giving him new truths and new authority just like Abraham received. As a result, Snuffer is the “one man on the earth” holding priesthood keys.

Is Denver Snuffer Unique?

As a researcher who has studied Mormon dissenting groups for over two decades, I can attest that Denver Snuffer's claims are not unique.

During the 1990s, researchers Bruce Lawrence, Martin E. Marty, and Scott Appleby studied many different dissenting groups and their leaders throughout the world.¹⁶ They have identified several factors that are common to most dissenting movements:

1. They advocate a minority viewpoint.
2. They see themselves as a righteous remnant.
3. They demonize their opposition.
4. They are usually led by a charismatic, authoritarian male.
5. They are selective regarding their traditions and beliefs, emphasizing specific tenants while ignoring others of equal historical importance.

In these things, Denver Snuffer and his followers seem very consistent. However, they are not alone in LDS history. That is, they are not the first and will certainly not be the last to break away from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, claiming their own revelations and divine mandates.

Dozens of similar individuals can be identified in the historical record in just the twentieth century alone:

Lorin C. Woolley (1920–1930) claimed multiple visits with Jesus Christ, even having “seen him laugh” in one of their conversations.¹⁷ He claimed priesthood authority given under the direction of a resurrected Joseph Smith who was physically present.¹⁸

16 See Martin Marty and R. Scott Appleby, *The Fundamentalism Project*, Vols. 1–5 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1991–95); Bruce Lawrence, *Defenders of God: The Fundamentalist Revolt Against the Modern Age* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina, 1989); Martin Marty and R. Scott Appleby, *Fundamentalisms Observed* (Chicago: University Of Chicago, 1991); Martin Marty and R. Scott Appleby, *The Glory and the Power: The Fundamentalist Challenge to the Modern Age* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992).

17 Mark J. Baird and Rhea A. Kunz Baird, *Reminiscences of John W. and Lorin C. Woolley*, 5 vols. (N.p.: N.d.), 5:34.

18 The event was first recorded in 1929 and published five years later. Joseph White Musser and J. Leslie Broadbent, *Supplement to a New and Everlasting Covenant of Marriage* (N.p.: 1934), 56–62. Available at <http://mormonpolygamydocuments.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/MF0054.doc>.

John T. Clark (1920s) claimed to be the “one mighty and strong” of D&C 85:7 and reported that he had “seen the Savior several times also Joseph Smith and his successors in office.”¹⁹

Maurice Glendenning (1930s–1960s) heard voices in the “Adamic language,” a language that was taught to him in the “twinkling of an eye.”²⁰ He claimed new Aaronic priesthood authority and revelations.

Leroy Wilson (1930s) reported a vision in 1933: “I came to a belief in this because God revealed it to me. I have seen the Savior, I have conversed with my Father in Heaven, and I have seen my glorious Heavenly Mother.”²¹

Joseph W. Musser (1930s–1950s) reported divine prophecies and revelations and described a priesthood organization that existed independent of the Church.²²

Elden Kingston (1940s–1950s) reported that after seeking divine guidance in a cave in Davis County, an angel visited him and appointed him to lead.²³ He organized the Davis County Cooperative and his own Church.

Ben LeBaron (1950s) wrote: “The world is the wickedest ever in the history. Yea, about 20%. I am sure. The Lord has told me. ... The Mormon people are so wicked and stiff-necked that three fourths will have to be destroyed. They have apostatized

19 Joseph W. Musser Journals, May 24, 1922, CHL. Available at <http://mormonpolygamydocuments.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/MF0131.pdf>. See Brian C. Hales, “John T. Clark: The ‘One Mighty and Strong,’” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 39/3 (Fall 2006): 46–63. Available at <http://mormonpolygamydocuments.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/MF0135.pdf>.

20 Hans A. Baer, *Recreating Utopia in the Desert: A Sectarian Challenge to Modern Mormonism* (Albany: State University of New York, 1988), 49.

21 LeRoy A. Wilson, “John W. Taylor — Fact or Fable,” unpublished manuscript, 9. Copy in possession of the author. Available at <http://mormonpolygamydocuments.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/MF0253.pdf>.

22 Joseph W. Musser, *Joseph W. Musser or Journal of Joseph White Musser, 1872–1954* (N.p.: N.d. [1948]). Available at <http://mormonpolygamydocuments.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/MF0140.pdf>.

23 Joseph W. Musser Journals, August 1, 1935; original CHL. Available at <http://mormonpolygamydocuments.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/MF0132.pdf>.

to be a friend of the world and do not follow the Holy Spirit.”²⁴ Ben and several of his brothers claimed to hold the priesthood keys.

Gerald Peterson (1970s) reported angelic visitations of a deceased individual: “Within an hour, after Rulon C. Allred was killed, he was seen entering my office. ... This happened about 5:00 p.m. on 10 May 1977. He came to where I was sitting in my chair, and spoke to me, very clearly and plainly” (1 Gerald 1:59).

James D. Harmston (1980s–2000s) described that in response to a prayer circle he held in his home, the heavens were opened and he and his wife received visits from divine messengers including the Father and the Son.²⁵ He also reported that on November 25, 1990, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Moses appeared to him to bestow priesthood keys they had allegedly taken from LDS Church leaders.²⁶

Robert C. Crossfield (1960s–present) has dictated numerous revelations from Jesus Christ currently compiled as *The Second Book of Commandments*.²⁷

Brian David Mitchell (1990s–2000s) quoted God in a revelation dated February 9, 2002, stating: “I have raised up my servant Immanuel David Isaiah, even my righteous right hand, to be a light and a covenant to my people ... in my servant, Immanuel David Isaiah, is the fullness of the gospel, which I, the Lord brought forth out of obscurity and out of darkness through my servant Joseph Smith, Jr.”²⁸

Addam Swapp (1980) received a revelation on December 26, 1987, stating “Thus saith the Lord unto my servant, Addam

24 Ben LeBaron, letter to Samuel W. Taylor, December 9, 1957. Available at <http://mormonpolygamydocuments.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/MF00032.pdf>.

25 Elaine Harmston (James Harmston’s first wife), telephone interview by Brian C. Hales, March 16, 1991.

26 John R. Llewellyn, *Polygamy Under Attack: From Tom Green to Brian David Mitchell* (Scottsdale, Ariz.: Agreka Books, 2004), 58.

27 To learn more see <http://www.2bc.info/onias/Home.html>.

28 Brian David Mitchell, *The Book of Immanuel David Isaiah*, unpublished manuscript, April 6, 2002, 1. Copy in possession of the author.

... this generation is a most wicked generation. It is the most wicked ever to inhabit the face of the earth.”²⁹ Three weeks later Addam Swapp placed a bomb in the LDS Stake Center in Kamas. Exploding at 3:00 a.m., it did considerable damage, but no one was physically harmed.

Further research would identify many, many more alternate voices, primarily men, who have proclaimed their own revelations and divine visions including those that arose in Joseph Smith's day and later in the nineteenth century. Is Denver Snuffer's message significantly different from those of the men mentioned above? The details may be different, but generally speaking, he is not alone in the types of claims and teachings he proclaims.

Why Would God Allow an Apostasy after the Restoration?

A critical issue is why God would have allowed an apostasy to occur after the 1830s Restoration. The heavenly anticipations for that restoration were immense. There were premortal preparations, prophesies of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon through a “choice seer” named Joseph, the creation of the small plates of Nephi to compensate for the 116 pages of the Book of Lehi that would be lost by Martin Harris, and many other things. To posit another falling away after such an elaborate restorative effort would not be expected unless it was unavoidable in God's arithmetic.

Evidently the driving force for the apostasy described by Snuffer is the principle of “common consent,” which, according to him, binds God to the unrighteous decisions of Church members: “And all things shall be done by common consent in the church, by much prayer and faith” (D&C 26:2). In other words, if the majority of members “consent” to a wayward path or an uninspired leader, even if they don't realize it, God is going to respect their agency and allow them to lead the Church astray.

To justify this interpretation, dissenters cite scriptural examples where God gave an individual or a group of his followers what they wanted, not what they needed spiritually. Included are references to the Israelites receiving a king in the time of Samuel (1 Samuel 8:6–10),³⁰ of

29 Addam Swapp, “Revelation to Addam Swapp 26 December 1987,” *Sunstone* 12/6 (November 1988): 12. Available at <http://mormonpolygamydocuments.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/MF0239.pdf>.

30 Joseph W. Musser, “Slandorous Statements Refuted,” *Truth* 2/8 (January 1937): 130; emphasis in original. See also David W. Jeffs, “Fulfillment of Isaiah's

Joseph Smith giving Martin Harris the first 116 pages of the Book of Mormon even though many previous requests by Joseph had been denied (D&C 3, 10),³¹ and of the Lord giving the Israelites in the desert the Law of Moses when they rejected the higher law (JST Exodus 34:1–2).³²

However, God has made it clear that He is not bound to unrighteous choices: “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise” (D&C 82:10). In July of 1828, the Lord first introduced this principle to Joseph:

For God doth not walk in crooked paths, neither doth he turn to the right hand nor to the left, neither doth he vary from that which he hath said, therefore his paths are straight, and his course is one eternal round.

Remember, remember that it is not the work of God that is frustrated, but the work of men. (D&C 3:2–3)

Here we learn that God’s work will not be “frustrated” by the “work of men.” Men’s choices and decisions will not cause God to “vary from that which he hath said.” Concerning evil men, the Lord instructed: “I will not suffer that they shall destroy my work; yea, I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil” (D&C 10:43).

But how can God assure that the Church stays on the right path? He told Joseph Smith: “All things are present before mine eyes,” (D&C 38:2; see also Isaiah 46:9–10). God’s foreknowledge guarantees that nothing will happen within the Church or outside of it that will surprise Him.

In the premortal world, the Lord selected the individuals that would be His “rulers” in the Church here on earth; “Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones; And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the

Words,” *Truth* 6/1 (June 1940): 21; Gilbert Fulton, *The Most Holy Principle*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Gems, 1970–75), 4:66.

31 Heber Bennion, *Gospel Problems* (N.p.: N.d.), 43, 49–50; Gilbert Fulton, *The Most Holy Principle*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Gems, 1970–75), 4:66.

32 Dennis R. Short, *Questions on Plural Marriage With a Selected Bibliography and 1600 References* (Salt Lake City: Dennis R. Short, 1974), 25; Joseph W. Musser, “The Aftermath of Compromise,” *Truth* 18/10 (March 1953): 315; Joseph W. Musser, “What Authority Sanctioned the Manifesto,” *Truth* 20/6 (November 1954): 201; Editor [Joseph W. Musser], “Editor’s Comments,” *Star of Truth* 3/7 (July 1955): 276; Joseph W. Musser, *Marriage – Ballard/Jenson Correspondence* (n.p.: 1935), 76.

midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers" (Abraham 3:22–23). Joseph Smith explained: "Every man who has a calling to minister to the Inhabitants of the world, was ordained to that very purpose in the grand Council of Heaven before this world was — I suppose that I was ordained to this very office in that grand Council."³³

Certainly a man could have received a premortal ordination and then fail to magnify that office after receiving it in mortality. However, Snuffer's view is that Joseph Smith failed to be valiant, Brigham Young failed to be valiant, and virtually every Latter-day Saint he mentions failed, even though they would have been ordained before birth to fulfill their callings. Snuffer's version of premortal foreordination conflicts with the scriptures and the Prophet's teachings. If God, who knows "the end from the beginning" (Abraham 2:8), knew these men would fail, why did He call them, one right after another?

Denver quotes from D&C 138 on page 41, so he apparently believes the revelation is genuinely from God. Verses 53–54 name several Church leaders — Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, and Wilford Woodruff — saying they were "reserved to come forth in the fulness of times to take part in laying the foundations of the great latter-day work, including the building of the temples and the performance of ordinances therein." In Snuffer's version of Church history, these men were reserved to come forth and preside in their unrighteousness over a stumbling church that has consistently failed to progress as God intended. It doesn't appear these men were very special since according to Snuffer, they accomplished so little.

An alternate view is that God called valiant premortal spirits who, although imperfect and presiding over imperfect Church members, have guided the Church just as God knew it could progress. If a leader apostatized in his or her feelings, they were released by God's hand: "For verily thus saith the Lord, that inasmuch as there are those among you who deny my name, others shall be planted in their stead and receive their bishopric" (D&C 114:2; see also D&C 64:40). This has already happened to Denver Snuffer who no longer serves in any calling in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The callings he held in the past are now fulfilled by other Church members.

On April 6, 1861, Apostle John Taylor assured his listeners that if a "corrupt man" should preside, he would be removed according to God's time:

33 Ehat and Cook, comps. and eds., *Words*, 366 (Thomas Bullock Report, Sunday Morning, May 12, 1844).

Suppose a corrupt man is presiding in a certain place, his corruptions are soon known. People need not strive to turn good into evil because they think that some man does wrong. They need not turn calumniators and defamers, for all will come right in its turn. Then attend to your own business, work the works of righteousness, sustain the constituted authorities of the Church until God removes them, and he will do it in his own time.³⁴

The design of the Church is for callings to be issued in an orderly way through bishops who are inspired judges in Israel (D&C 58:17). God's house is a "house of order" (D&C 132:8, 18). The Prophet explained:

I will inform you that it is contrary to the economy of God for any member of the church, or any one, to receive instruction for those in authority, higher than themselves, therefore you will see the impropriety of giving heed to them: but if any have a vision or a visitation from a heavenly messenger, it must be for their own benefit and instruction, for the fundamental principles, government, and doctrine of the church is vested in the keys of the kingdom.³⁵

In more extreme cases, God could "remove" a leader by calling him or her home through death. For example, David W. Patten, President of the Quorum of the Twelve in 1838 died on October 25 in the battle of Crooked River. Was God responsible for his death? Without explaining why, the Lord told Joseph Smith plainly: "David Patten I have taken unto myself" (D&C 124:130). Brigham Young agreed that God holds this power:

The Lord Almighty leads this Church, and he will never suffer you to be led astray if you are found doing your duty. You may go home and sleep as sweetly as a babe in its mother's arms, as to any danger of your leaders leading you astray, for if they should try to do so the Lord would quickly sweep them from the earth.³⁶

This is not to say that Patten would have apostatized, but it shows that God's omnipotence and omniscience assure that His Church on

34 John Taylor, in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:14.

35 "History of the Church," *Times and Seasons*, 5 (January 1, 1844): 752.

36 Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:289.

earth will be led by men and women who will accomplish His will. These observations are very important in interpreting Denver Snuffer's message. They mean that if an apostasy occurred after 1830 when Joseph Smith established the Church, it could only have occurred if God had intended it to happen.

Scriptural Predictions of an Apostasy Four Hundred Years after Christ's Visit

We are promised: "Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). Therefore, if a latter-day apostasy was a future part of the restoration started by Joseph Smith, we might expect God's prophets to have revealed a warning to His followers who were going to apostatize. It is clear that the scriptures predicted an apostasy that would occur four hundred years after Christ's visit to the Americas. Alma explained: "Behold, I perceive that this very people, the Nephites, according to the spirit of revelation which is in me, in four hundred years from the time that Jesus Christ shall manifest himself unto them, shall dwindle in unbelief" (Alma 45:10). Many other prophets referred to an apostasy.³⁷ That the truth would be lost from the Lehites and they would "dwindle in unbelief" was a huge issue for God's leaders in the Book of Mormon.

A restoration was also predicted:

Yea, even if they should dwindle in unbelief the Lord shall prolong their days, until the time shall come which hath been spoken of by our fathers, and also by the prophet Zenos, and many other prophets, concerning the *restoration of our brethren*, the Lamanites, again to the knowledge of the truth. (Helaman 15:11; italics added)

And it shall come to pass that the Lord God shall commence his work among all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, to bring about the restoration of his people upon the earth. (2 Nephi 30:8)

The Church was established to accomplish this restoration:

Yea, the word of the Lord concerning his church, established in the last days for the restoration of his people, as he has

37 See 1 Nephi 12:12–22, 13:35; 2 Nephi 1:10; Alma 45:12; Helaman 13:5, 9–10, 15:11, 3; Nephi 21:5; Mormon 8:6, 9:20; Moroni 10:1.

spoken by the mouth of his prophets, and for the gathering of his saints to stand upon Mount Zion, which shall be the city of New Jerusalem. (D&C 84:2; received in 1832)

Anciently the Lord explained to Joseph, one of the twelve sons of Jacob, concerning a “choice seer” that would be raised up to do the work of the restoration:

A choice seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins; and he shall be esteemed highly among the fruit of thy loins. And unto him will I give commandment that he shall do a work for the fruit of thy loins, his brethren, which shall be of great worth unto them, even to the bringing of them to the knowledge of the covenants which I have made with thy fathers. ... And his name shall be called after me; and it shall be after the name of his father. And he shall be like unto me; for the thing, which the Lord shall bring forth by his hand, by the power of the Lord shall bring my people unto salvation.” (2 Nephi 3:3, 15)

Without ambiguity, the Book of Mormon predicts both an apostasy of the Lehites and a restoration through a prophet named Joseph.

No Prophecies of a Latter-day Apostasy and Restoration

A weighty question is whether the scriptures also prophesy of a latter-day apostasy and restoration, one occurring after Joseph Smith performed his work? Denver Snuffer and other critics allege that they do. Perhaps, the most popular verses quoted are Jesus Christ’s words in 3 Nephi 16:10–11:

And thus commandeth the Father that I should say unto you: At that day when the Gentiles shall sin against my gospel, and shall reject the fulness of my gospel, and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations, and above all the people of the whole earth, and shall be filled with all manner of lyings, and of deceits, and of mischiefs, and all manner of hypocrisy, and murders, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, and of secret abominations; and if they shall do all those things, and shall reject the fulness of my gospel, behold, saith the Father, I will bring the fulness of my gospel from among them.

While critics may affirm this is a prophecy of a latter-day apostasy, the language is certainly indefinite when compared to the prediction of a “dwindling of unbelief” of the entire church four hundred years after Christ. While the Savior refers to a time where “the Gentiles shall sin against my gospel, and shall reject the fulness of my gospel,” the identity of the “gentiles” is less clear.

Snuffer and his followers affirm those “gentiles” are the Latter-day Saints (and their leaders) in the twenty-first century, not just a portion, but the entire Church membership. The argument goes that they are the only ones who have received the “fulness of the gospel,” so they are the only ones who could reject it. To support this view, they further allege that currently Church members are guilty of pride, lyings, deceits, mischiefs, hypocrisy, murders, priestcrafts, and whoredoms.

An alternate interpretation is that the gentiles who reject the fullness of the gospel do not need to have first embraced it. If someone offers me an apple, I don't need to first take a bite out of it before I can reject it. I can simply look at the apple and say, “No, thank you.” Similarly, investigators who reject the message of the missionaries today simultaneously reject the ordinances of baptism and the fullness of the gospel, which the missionaries also offer. They don't have to be baptized and attend the temple before they can “reject the fulness of the gospel.”

George Q. Cannon explained the Gentile's rejection would lead to the gospel being preached to the descendants of Nephi: “The Gospel would be revealed, and that it should be received by some of the Gentiles; that when it should be received by the Gentiles, it should be carried by them to the descendants of Nephi and his brethren, As they have rejected the gospel message, missionaries have been called to other lands to preach to those who are not of the house of Israel.”³⁸

Consistent with this view are the Savior's comments two verses earlier. “But wo, saith the Father, unto *the unbelieving of the gentiles*” (3 Nephi 16:8; italics added). Christ condemned the unbelievers without addressing the believers, which are not mentioned any time in the discourse. Verse 10's condemnation of the “gentiles” is just a continued discussion of the gentiles He identified in verse 8. To interpret this as saying that all Church members in the latter-days were gentiles, and they would apostatize is not warranted. There would be unbelieving and believing gentiles in that day. The believers would continue missionary work and building up the Church.

38 George Q. Cannon, in *Journal of Discourses*, 25:123.

Other scriptures are also advanced by critics as containing prophecies of latter-day apostasy including 2 Nephi 28:11–15 and Mormon 8:32–33. I have addressed them in other writings, but the verses are not specific.³⁹ Multiple valid interpretations of these verses are possible with Snuffer's being less defensible.

To summarize, the Book of Mormon predicts a dwindling in unbelief four hundred years after Christ's visit and a restoration through a "choice seer" centuries later. The language is plain and unmistakable. However, there is no parallel prophecy of latter-day apostasy and second restoration. Ambiguous language found in a few verses can be recruited and narrowly interpreted in order to support Snuffer's assertions, but his allegations of a complete apostasy necessitating a new dispensation in our day are without scriptural support.

Prophecy Supports that the Restored Church Will Continue to the Millennium

If the scriptures do not prophesy of a later apostasy, what do they predict? Multiple revelations and statements from Joseph Smith support that the church he established will persist to the millennium. One of the plainest was uttered in October of 1831 in Hiram, Ohio: "The keys of the kingdom of God are committed unto man on the earth, and from thence shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth (D&C 65:2)." Snuffer's version is apparently that the gospel would not roll forth in 1831 but would wobble forth through a "long downward path" (p. 40) until after 2010 when a new visionary would arise to reset the gospel rolling.

Several other revelations plainly acknowledge that the church established through Joseph Smith is the "last kingdom" (D&C 88:70, 74; 90:6; see also D&C 24:19, 27:12–13). That is, it would not apostatize or be given to another people.

Therefore, thou art blessed from henceforth that bear the keys of the kingdom given unto you; *which kingdom is coming forth for the last time.* (D&C 90:2)

39 Brian C. Hales, "Dissenters: Portraying the Church as Wrong So They can be Right Without It," accessed June 22, 2015, <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/dissenters-portraying-the-church-as-wrong-so-they-can-be-right-without-it/#comment-14075>.

For unto you, the Twelve, and those, the First Presidency, who are appointed with you to be your counselors and your leaders, is the power of this priesthood given, *for the last days and for the last time*, in the which is the dispensation of the fulness of times. Which power you hold, in connection with all those who have received a dispensation at any time from the beginning of the creation; For verily I say unto you, the keys of the dispensation, which ye have received, have come down from the fathers, and *last of all*, being sent down from heaven unto you. (D&C 112:30–32)

Other revelations reflect the same expectation. In March of 1829, the Lord described the Joseph Smith's efforts as "the beginning of the rising up and the coming forth of my church out of the wilderness — clear as the moon, and fair as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners" (D&C 5:14; see also D&C 33:5, 109:73). The Snuffer version depicts a bannerless Church that is not "clear like the moon" or "fair like the sun" and never has been.

Similarly, the Prophet taught: "'The Kingdom of Heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but, when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.' *Now we can discover plainly that this figure is given to represent the Church as it shall come forth in the last days.*"⁴⁰ Was that "coming forth" to begin in 1830 or 2010?

Although the Church was very small in the beginning, Joseph Smith had a prophetic sense of its grand destiny. Wilford Woodruff recalled a priesthood meeting at Kirtland, Ohio, in April 1834:

The Prophet called on all who held the Priesthood to gather into the little log school house they had there. It was a small house, perhaps 14 feet square. But it held the whole of the Priesthood of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who were then in the town of Kirtland, and who had gathered together to go off in Zion's camp. That was the first time I ever saw Oliver Cowdery, or heard him speak; the first time I ever saw Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball, and the two Pratts, and Orson Hyde and many others. There were no

40 Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (rpt; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1977), 98.

Apostles in the Church then except Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery.⁴¹

After the meeting had begun, the Prophet tried to awaken the brethren to a realization of the future state of God's kingdom on earth:

When we got together the Prophet called upon the Elders of Israel with him to bear testimony of this work. Those that I have named spoke, and a good many that I have not named, bore their testimonies. When they got through the Prophet said, "Brethren I have been very much edified and instructed in your testimonies here tonight, but I want to say to you before the Lord, that you know no more concerning the destinies of this Church and kingdom than a babe upon its mother's lap. You don't comprehend it." I was rather surprised. He said "it is only a little handful of Priesthood you see here tonight, but this Church will fill North and South America — it will fill the world."⁴²

How Can the Church Be True When the Latter-day Saints Manifest Unrighteousness?

The negative vitriol directed at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Snuffer's writings and in his "Plural Marriage" essay contains a kernel of truth: *The Latter-day Saints have not been as righteous as they should have been*. Ever since 1830, Church leaders have been concerned and have consistently admonished members to improve.

Today the problem persists. Attendance at Church meetings is far lower than it should be and many adults who participate are not spiritually engaged. The percentage of adults holding temple recommends is small, and those who qualify for sacred ordinances could honor them better. The youth sometimes struggle with distractions and moral issues. Nevertheless, these observations do not validate Snuffer's claims nor justify his harsh criticisms. Why? Because his standard of requisite obedience is vastly different from the Lord's. "God does not look on sin with allowance, but when men have sinned there must be allowance made for them."⁴³ Our Heavenly Father does not require near-perfection

41 Wilford Woodruff, *Conference Report*, April 1898, 57.

42 Ibid.

43 Joseph Smith, *Teachings*, p. 240–41. Cf. D&C 1:31–33.

that Snuffer implies is needed in order to qualify to assist with God's work and receive His blessings.

To Joseph Smith the Lord explained His standard and His method of dealing with imperfections:

Behold, I am God and have spoken it; these commandments are of me, and were given unto my servants in their weakness, after the manner of their language, that they might come to understanding.

And inasmuch as they erred it might be made known;

And inasmuch as they sought wisdom they might be instructed;

And inasmuch as they sinned they might be chastened, that they might repent;

And inasmuch as they were humble they might be made strong, and blessed from on high, and receive knowledge from time to time. (D&C 1:24-28)

God deals with the Saints "in their weakness," not "in their perfection." If they "erred," the penalty was to make it known. If they "sinned," they would be chastened so they would repent. In either case, the consequence was not abandonment by the Lord. And if they were humble, they would be blessed and inspired.

The scriptures describe our Lord as filled with "loving kindness and long-suffering" towards his children (1 Nephi 19:9) who is a God of "compassion" (D&C 64:2), who is "pitiful" (1 Peter 3:8; D&C 133:53), and who is "merciful and gracious unto those who fear me, and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end" (D&C 76:5). To ancient Israel, His hands remained "stretched out still" (2 Nephi 19:12, 17), despite their transgressions.

Through the Prophet, this loving Heavenly Father described the standard of compliance that must be met if mortals are to receive knowledge, revelation, prophecy, and other spiritual gifts. Those blessings are "for the benefit of those who love me and keep all my commandments, and *him that seeketh so to do*" (D&C 46:9; italics added). *Keeping* all the commandments is not required, but *seeking to keep* all the commandments is required.

Similarly, Joseph Smith prayed in 1836: "O Lord, remember thy servant, Joseph Smith, Jun., and all his afflictions and persecutions

— how he has covenanted with Jehovah, and vowed to thee, O Mighty God of Jacob — and the commandments which thou hast given unto him, and that he *hath sincerely striven to do thy will*” (D&C 109:68). Again, perfection was not the expectation, but sincerely striving to do God’s will was the requirement.

So the Lord is willing to bless those who seek to keep the commandments and sincerely strive to do His will. However, has a core group of believers always existed among the members and leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who were doing that? Critics like Snuffer may answer no, but a simple review of Church history shows that they are in error.

The willingness of early Saints to make sacrifices, like practicing polygamy, building temples stone-by-stone, and migrating to the West, supports that they were sincerely striving and seeking to be obedient. In the past century, different indicators like fulfilling mission calls, keeping the word of wisdom, attending the temple, serving in Church callings, paying tithing and offerings, and trying to become Christ-like have always existed. It is an undeniably fact that among the leadership and within each congregation, some Latter-day Saints have fulfilled the Lord’s requirements. Even if the number of sincere seekers has been small in the eyes of the critics, it has never been zero. The Latter-day Saints may have faltered in their quests for perfection over the past 170 years; however, they have never “dwindled in unbelief” as the Lehites did after about 400 AD.

The continued presence of seekers and strivers within the Church and especially among its priesthood leadership supports that God has never had a reason to abandon the Latter-day Saints. Since the beginning of the Restoration, the Church has continued to expand its membership, increase missionary work, build temples that now dot the earth, and establish a tradition of conservative moral values among its members. These areas of growth are consistent with the prediction that the Church has left the “wilderness” (D&C 33:5) to become an “ensign for the nations” (Isaiah 11:12). The actions of the Church literally fulfill prophecies:

And righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten; his resurrection from the dead; yea, and also the resurrection of all men; and righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth.” (Moses 7:62)

Denver Snuffer has depicted the Church as a “vast wasteland” of immorality (p. 41), but this is because he needs this façade in order to legitimize his position as a new visionary among the people. He is like many other dissenters who have come and gone in the past. Latter-day scripture and the history of the Church both witness to the fact that the restored Kingdom of God that started rolling in 1830 continues with an accelerated pace in its onward motion today.

Brian C. Hales *is the author of six books dealing with polygamy, most recently the three-volume, Joseph Smith's Polygamy: History and Theology (Greg Kofford Books, 2013). His Modern Polygamy and Mormon Fundamentalism: The Generations after the Manifesto received the “Best Book of 2007 Award” from the John Whitmer Historical Association. He has presented at numerous meetings and symposia and published articles in The Journal of Mormon History, Mormon Historical Studies, and Dialogue as well as contributing chapters to The Persistence of Polygamy series. Brian works as an anesthesiologist at the Davis Hospital and Medical Center in Layton, Utah, and has served as the President of the Utah Medical Association.*

CARELESS ACCOUNTS AND TAWDRY NOVELTIES

Louis Midgley

Review of Lofte Payne. *Joseph Smith the Make-Believe Martyr: Why the Book of Mormon Is America's Best Fiction*. Victoria, BC, Canada: Trafford Publishing, 2006. xxi + 331 pp., with appendix and index. \$23.10 (paperback).

Abstract: The faith of Latter-day Saints is rooted in Joseph Smith's recovery of the Book of Mormon, which presents itself as an authentic ancient text and divine special revelation. Book-length efforts to explain away these two grounding historical claims began in 1834, and have never ceased. They are often the works of disgruntled former Saints. In 1988 Loftes Tryk self-published an amusing, truly bizarre, seemingly countercult sectarian account of the Book of Mormon. In 2006, now under the name Lofte Payne, he again opined on Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon. He discarded the notion that Joseph Smith was a demon. He now claims that the Book of Mormon was Joseph's sly, previously entirely unrecognized covert effort to trash all faith in divine things. In this review, Payne's explanation is compared and contrasted with books by Alan D. Tyree, a former member of the RLDS First Presidency, and Dale E. Luffman, a recent Community of Christ Apostle, as well as that of Robert M. Price, a militant atheist, and Grant Palmer, and also the Podcraft of John Dehlin, all of whom have in similar ways opined that the Book of Mormon is frontier fiction fashioned by Joseph Smith from ideas floating around his immediate environment.

The notorious Doctor Philastus Hurlbut in 1834 set in motion book-length explanations of the supposed mundane origin of the Book of Mormon¹ and also thereby began a long tradition of deeply disgruntled former Latter-day Saints making war on their former faith. Hurlbut's

1. See E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled: or, a faithful account of that singular imposition and delusion, from its rise to the present time. With sketches of the characters of its propagators, and a full detail of the manner in which the famous Golden Bible was brought before the world. To which are added, inquiries into the probability that the historical part of the said Bible was written by one Solomon*

controversial “affidavits,” along with the previously published letters written by the disaffected Ezra Booth, formed the basis of Howe’s famous book, which also established the once popular but now moribund Spalding-Rigdon explanation of the Book of Mormon.² These endeavors, often but not always generated or promoted by former Latter-day Saints, are a staple of both secular and sectarian criticisms of the faith of Latter-day Saints.³ I will examine one recent attempt to explain the Book of Mormon away as nineteenth-century fiction. And I will provide some additional context for and critical commentary on these endeavors.

Some “Secrets” and the “Perils of Innovation”

In 1988, Loftes Tryk (b. 7 May 1945) self-published a book entitled *The Best Kept Secrets in the Book of Mormon*.⁴ For somewhat addled, shadowy reasons, which is to say that they are not entirely unclear,⁵ after having been baptized at age thirteen and then for a decade or so appearing to

Spalding, more than twenty years ago, and by him intended to have been published as a romance (Painesville, OH: By the Author, 1834).

2. See Matthew Roper, “The Mythical ‘Manuscript Found,’” *FARMS Review* 17/2 (2005): 7–140. This is a devastating review of a recent attempt to breathe life back into the moribund Spalding theory written by Wayne L. Cowdrey, Howard A. Davis, and Arthur Vanick, entitled *Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon? The Spalding Enigma* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2005). See also Roper’s essay entitled “Myth, Memory and ‘Manuscript Found,’” *FARMS Review* 21/2 (2009): 179–223.

3. The first such collection of these items was made by Francis Kirkham. See *New Witness for Christ in America* vol. I, enlarged third ed. (Independence, MO: Zion Publishing Co., 1951). Kirkham was able to locate and reproduce about forty-five items published during Joseph Smith’s lifetime that were critical of the Book of Mormon. The entire inventory of items published on the Book of Mormon during this same period has been assembled by Matthew Roper and is now available under the title “19th-Century Publications about the Book of Mormon (1829–1844)” (<http://lib.byu.edu/collections/19th-century-publications-about-the-book-of-mormon/>) to those interested in its immediate reception history. See Matthew Roper, “Early Publications on the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 18/2 (2009): 38–51.

4. Loftes Tryk, *The Best Kept Secrets in the Book of Mormon* (Redondo Beach, CA: Jacob’s Well Foundation, 1988). Hereafter cited as *Best Kept Secrets*.

5. For some additional biographical details on Tryk, see Louis Midgley, “Playing with Half a Decker: The Countercult Religious Tradition Confronts the Book of Mormon,” *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 5 (1993): 116–71 at 145–58. In this essay I review Dean Maurice Helland’s 1990 Oral Roberts University doctoral dissertation entitled “Meeting the Book of Mormon Challenge in Chile.” Dr. Helland had somehow encountered Loftes Tryk’s writings and accepted them uncritically, since they seem to have fit his own understanding of demonic things.

be at least a nominal Latter-day Saint, Tryk suddenly went missing. His rather secretive career is somewhat, though not entirely, shrouded in mystery. What is clear is that in 1988 he self-published a swarm of truly bizarre explanations of the Book of Mormon and of Joseph Smith, whom he pictured as its deviously devout but also presumably Satanic author. Some of these were included under the title *Best Kept Secrets*, while other explanations, coupled with evidence of their author's troubled past, were circulated in leaflet form under the generic name *Jacob's Well Reports*.⁶

In 1991, in a spunky and genuinely amusing review of Tryk's *Best Kept Secrets*, Daniel C. Peterson pointed out that "even in anti-Mormonism, tradition may well have a legitimate place." He illustrated this point by calling attention to the many truly bizarre assertions made by Loftes Tryk, which provide "a spectacular illustration of the perils of innovation."⁷ How so? A portion of Professor Peterson's concluding assessment of *Best Kept Secrets* reads as follows:

Loftes Tryk may well have written the worst volume ever published on the Book of Mormon. His arbitrary textual readings, his wholly unjustified dogmatism, his Luciferian obsessions, his rambling and impressionist style, his lack of interest in anything that can truly be termed evidence, the utter absence in his book of rigor or discipline, all of these appear to put him in a class with the infamous fifteenth-century manual for the persecution of witches, the *Malleus maleficarum*.⁸

Two years later, Massimo Introvigne, a Roman Catholic expert on sectarian countercult antics, placed Loftes Tryk among some truly outlandish "New Age" sectarian anti-Mormons — a category in which he included Ed Decker, William (Bill) Schnoebelen, and James Spencer.⁹ Each of these critics of the faith of Latter-day Saints seemed to Introvigne to have been heavily impacted by some version of Pentecostal "spiritual warfare" struggles against what are considered instances of demonic

6. This also explains Tryk self-publishing his first book in 1988 with what he called the "Jacob's Well Foundation," which seems to have existed only in his imagination.

7. Daniel C. Peterson, "A Modern *Malleus maleficarum*," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 3 (1991): 260. This is a review of Loftes Tryk's *Best Kept Secrets*.

8. Peterson, "A Modern *Malleus maleficarum*," 260.

9. See Massimo Introvigne, "The Devil Makers: Contemporary Evangelical Fundamentalist Anti-Mormonism," *Dialogue* 27/1 (1994): 153–69.

possession. Earlier I had tentatively placed Dean Helland in this same category.

However, partly as a result of an exchange of correspondence with Tryk, it became clear that he did not really fit neatly into what Introvigne considered the most bizarre branch of the countercult camp. Instead, I argued that, despite pretensions and much additional confusion, and still with a taste for Satanic explanations, Tryk actually operated within an essentially cynical, secular religious ideology; he only pretended to be a Protestant countercult critic of the Book of Mormon in the hopes of attracting an audience for his opinions.¹⁰ Tryk was essentially a secular humanist who merely posed as a Christian.

The by now petulant reader must be wondering why I have begun with this extended digression on Loftes Tryk. The reason is that the one now publishing under the name Lofte Payne is actually Loftes Tryk, who after an extended leave from public view is now back opining under a new name.

Loftes Tryk Assumes a New *Persona*

After disappearing for a spell, the enigmatic and elusive Loftes Tryk surfaced again in 2005 under a new *nom de guerre* — Lofte Payne — and this time with another self-published secular sequel to his *Best Kept Secrets*.¹¹ In *Joseph Smith the Make-Believe Martyr*¹² he has now shed both his former name and his sectarian countercult *persona*. He has dropped the *s* from his given name because, he insists, it is silent, like the *s* in the French name *Descartes*, and hence is confusing to English-speaking

10. For some juicy details, see Midgley, “Playing with Half a Decker,” 150–58.

11. Lofte Payne’s “publisher” indicates that, “added to more than a dozen continuous years of study” of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon, “Lofte also claims benefit of two previous decades as past member of the Latter-day Saint community. His experiences include extensive ward leadership, graduation from the church’s Institute of Religion, and earlier missionary service.” See <http://bookstore.trafford.com/Products/SKU-000132213/Joseph-Smith-The-MakeBelieve-Martyr.aspx>.

12. There is confusion over exactly when *Make-Believe Martyr* was first self-published. It is sometimes advertised as having been issued either on 4 March 2005 or on 18 March 2005 but with a somewhat different title. The printed version I have indicates that it was issued on 30 June 2006. Print-on-demand publishers seem to facilitate even major changes in books without listing new editions. There are, it seems, no editorial standards in place in much of the currently flourishing electronic self-publishing (“vanity press”) industry.

readers of his work. And he has also dropped Tryk, his original Danish surname. But these technicalities are of minor concern.

What is now clear in Lofté Payne's most recent self-published book is that his is an overtly secular reading of the Book of Mormon. He pictures Joseph Smith not as a demon-infested monster but as a devious religious skeptic who packed the Book of Mormon with hidden double messages, including disguised biblical satire, wonderful fiction, presumably clever New England humor, and so forth. Primarily, Payne insists that his "Joseph Smith" had a secretive but profoundly secular distaste for belief in God. Lofté Payne's "Joseph" is a projection of his own world.

Payne's proclivity for sly, secretive tomfoolery gets him into difficulties. For example, he even attributes to his "Joseph" a truly remarkable prescience, since the secretive one now calling himself Lofté Payne claims to have found autobiographical hints carefully hidden throughout the Book of Mormon. Drawing upon what he insists are previously entirely unnoticed clues, Payne insists that Joseph Smith created a previously unnoticed and hence entirely untapped sketch of what would eventually happen to him — a terrible tragedy of Shakespearean proportions. Payne's "Joseph" actually scripted his own end in the Book of Mormon, since "Joseph" worked hard to become a "make-believe martyr." (But the fact is that the actual Joseph Smith was shot and killed by a real mob; there was nothing "make believe" about his death.)

Payne's "Joseph" even planned it that way right down to the small details. According to Payne,

His most amazing feat of all, and which, curiously, has never previously been detected, is shown in elaborate preparations for setting himself up as the church's foremost martyr, initially by establishing a blueprint and exact timing for his dramatic exit, in ink a full fourteen years prior to the event. Along the way he generated volumes of public correspondence that generously substantiate his superhuman struggle to capture immortality.¹³

Planning to get himself murdered was Payne's "Joseph's" way of keeping his name alive for future generations — perhaps as a kind of symbolic "immortality" appropriate to an entirely secularized extension of Payne's own secularized religious imagination.

13. This is Lofté Payne's own description of his book. See <http://bookstore.trafford.com/Author/Default.aspx?BookworksSID=SKU-000132213>.

None of this, according to Payne, has “previously been detected.” Why not? His novel explanation is that “all of this would have been common knowledge by now except for Joseph’s peculiar strategy of convincing followers and critics alike that he was an unlearned backwoodsman who had been visited by angels.” From Payne’s new wholly secular perspective, the Book of Mormon “never acquired respect as serious fiction; it wastes away — read occasionally, misunderstood invariably. His work has been excluded from every anthology of American Literature, even after being translated into 45 languages, worldwide.” But Payne has now presumably corrected this unfortunate literary lacuna. Hence, he proclaims: “No more. I’ve spent the past couple of decades researching and reconstructing Joseph’s original intent. His work is examined in my new non-fiction literary biography, *Joseph Smith the Make-Believe Martyr*. I unmask his deceptions, solve his riddles.” Now, read the Lofte Payne way, the Book of Mormon, among other wonders, “reveals a legacy of Deist enlightenment that influenced American religion well into the 19th century.”¹⁴

Payne seeks to be taken seriously. Much like Loftes Tryk, his original *persona*, he offers his words as a guide to presumably profoundly confused readers of the Book of Mormon. In doing so he is again eccentric, but much more pedantic than he was in *Best Kept Secrets*. Unfortunately, he is not more accurate, and much less amusing. Payne now claims that the Book of Mormon is a literary nostrum — a kind of panacea now known only to those who are inclined to accept Payne’s wild speculation set out in his second self-published book. Is his “Joseph,” and hence his reading of the Book of Mormon, fresh and insightful? *Make-Believe Martyr* is merely a overtly secularized version of his original truly amusing *Best Kept Secrets*, this time set out in even more pretentious, extravagant language.

Secular Naturalistic Explanations of the Book of Mormon

If I am even close to being right about Payne, why give *Make-Believe Martyr* any attention? At least part of the reason is that Lofte Payne’s most recent effort is in some important ways similar to some other recent secular efforts to find nineteenth-century literary sources for the Book of Mormon, as well as the story of how Joseph Smith came to recover the

14. <http://bookstore.trafford.com/Author/Default.aspx?BookworksSID=SKU-000132213>.

Book of Mormon.¹⁵ One crucial similarity between these secular (and hence essentially atheist) accounts and Lofte Payne's account, is that they both recognize that the explanation of Joseph Smith must be such that it also accounts for his being able to fashion the Book of Mormon out of presumably readily available nineteenth-century literature. Sectarian accounts must make the links between the Book of Mormon and the sources Joseph is thought to have used in fashioning his fiction.

Explanations of the Book of Mormon by dissident or cultural Mormons make essentially the same move by rejecting even the possibility of the Book of Mormon being an authentic ancient text and in that sense a genuine divine special revelation, and thereby also the Word of God. Some may, however, strive to see something in the Book of Mormon that might perhaps be "inspiring" when it is read as nineteenth-century fiction, while not overtly ignoring the implications of such a reading on how one must understand Joseph Smith, and divine revelation, as well as Priesthood keys. One simply cannot read the Book of Mormon as his frontier fiction without thereby unraveling Joseph Smith's place as Seer and Prophet.

Some Sectarian Endeavors

One deeply flawed and also truly bizarre bit of woolly speculation about Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon can be found in Grant Palmer's effort to find a previously unknown literary source for Joseph Smith's story of his encounter with a heavenly messenger who made possible his recovery of the Book of Mormon. In 2002, Signature Books published a much polished and refined version of Palmer's earlier claim that the bizarre tale entitled *Der goldne Topf* ("The Golden Pot") written by E. T. A. Hoffmann (1776–1822) — a famous polymath German Romantic fantasy writer, music composer and critic — was the actual source for Joseph Smith's story of his encounter in 1823 with Moroni. Please note that Hoffmann's tale, which was first published in German in 1814, was only available in an English translation by Thomas Carlyle in 1827, long after the Moroni story was already circulating.¹⁶

15. For a detailed critical assessment of attempts to view Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon — from an essentially secular humanist (atheist) perspective, see Louis Midgley, "Atheist Piety: A Religion of Dogmatic Dubiety, *Interpreter* 1 (2012): 111–43; accessible at mormoninterpreter.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/midgley-atheists-v1-2012-pg111-143-PDF.pdf.

16. For details, see Louis Midgley, "Prying into Palmer," *FARMS Review* 15/2 (2003): 365–410 at 368–71.

Palmer was captivated by Mark Hofmann's forged "Salamander Letter." And also by the fact that E. T. A. Hoffmann's tale invokes a Salamander (standing for fire). Without that forged letter, Palmer's appeal to E. T. A. Hoffmann's "The Golden Pot" is absurd. Nothing else links Joseph Smith with the obsession of high European culture with such things.¹⁷ Salamanders in fire are not part of folk magic. In addition, Palmer was unable to find anything in the Book of Mormon that he could attribute to E. T. A. Hoffmann's influence.

Palmer is not, however, a secular atheist. Sectarian critics of Joseph Smith, as Palmer's central argument and his one original idea, illustrate, could easily have been fitted snugly into an essentially secular, functionally atheist criticism of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon, since both seek to challenge Joseph Smith's prophetic truth claims by trying to explain how he fabricated the Book of Mormon. The fact is that authors with sectarian religious sentiments, including cultural Mormons with revisionist proclivities, also strive to explain the Book of Mormon away by turning it into nineteenth-century fiction authored by either Joseph Smith (or others) out strictly of nineteenth-century literary sources.

Two Other Sectarian Examples

In addition to Grant Palmer's seriously flawed endeavor, popular with both secular and sectarian critics of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon, there are other sectarian efforts to read the Book as nineteenth-century fiction. Two books published in 2013 by authors who represent the Community of Christ, the new name for the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS), are intended to train the professional ministry of that denomination. Both books provide different but closely related examples of this same proclivity. One was written by Alan D. Tyree, a retired former member of the RLDS First Presidency,¹⁸ while the other was written by Dale E. Luffman, recently a Community of Christ Apostle.¹⁹ Both argue vigorously, though in somewhat different

17. A frog is not a Salamander and hence not artistically a symbol for fire. It was once popular in high culture literary circles to draw upon presumed elementary categories or powers of nature (fire, air, water and earth), each represented by a figure: Salamander, Sylph, Undines, and Gnomes. But doing this was artistic entertainment and hence neither science nor folk magic.

18. See Alan D. Tyree, *Millions Call It Scripture: The Book of Mormon in the 21st Century* (Independence, MO: Seminary Press, 2013).

19. See Dale E. Luffman, *The Book of Mormon's Witness to Its First Readers* (Independence, MO: Seminary Press, 2014).

ways, that the Book of Mormon is not an authentic ancient history — that is, that there were no Lehites, and hence no Moroni acting as a heavenly messenger making available to Joseph Smith engraved metal plates and Interpreters (seer stones).

These accounts also logically entail that the Witnesses to the plates either fibbed because they witnessed nothing out of the ordinary or were hallucinating. The Book of Mormon in these accounts is strictly nineteenth-century fiction fashioned by Joseph Smith, though it is still part of the RLDS/Community of Christ canon and can even be read as “scripture,” if one is so inclined. The argument in both books is derivative, relying very heavily upon discredited literature and seriously flawed arguments. For example, while Tyree ignores Grant Palmer, Luffman describes him as “a most credible scholar, extremely competent in Book of Mormon research, and a man of faith.”²⁰

There is, it seems, a certain close affinity between secular and sectarian efforts to explain the Book of Mormon away as merely nineteenth-century fiction, perhaps for some possibly “inspiring” but certainly not genuinely inspired by God, and radically secular treatments of the Book of Mormon such as offered by Lofte Payne who flatly denies that anything can be genuinely inspired. There are, however, a number of even more radical versions of this kind of literature.

When the Price is Clearly Not Right

The Reverend Dr. Robert M. Price provides a remarkable example of a secular atheist fundamentalist who brushes aside all genuine belief in divine things. Though he came from a Protestant fundamentalist background, he has become what he describes as a radical atheist. Price does not share Lofte Payne’s secretive background, but both came from similar fundamentalist grounding ideologies. Price eventually began

20. Luffman, *Book of Mormon’s Witness*, 165. In addition to my own essay, cited in note 16, above, for devastating reviews of Palmer’s *An Insider’s View of Mormon Origins*, see Davis Bitton, “The Charge of a Man with a Broken Lance (But Look What He Doesn’t Tell Us),” *FARMS Review* 15/2 (2003): 257–72; Steven C. Harper, “Trustworthy History?,” *FARMS Review* 15/2 (2003): 273–308; Mark Ashurst-McGee, “A One-sided View of Mormon Origins,” *FARMS Review* 15/2 (2003): 309–64; and James B. Allen, “Asked and Answered: A Response to Grant H. Palmer,” *FARMS Review* 16/1 (2004): 235–86. Luffman, unfortunately, seems either unaware of the critical responses to Palmer’s *An Insider’s View of Mormon Origins*, or has chosen to ignore them. This is typical of his work; he draws on only the critics and carefully ignores the competing literature.

arguing that, in addition to there being no God, there never was a Jesus of Nazareth, and hence Christianity is a raw fabrication. There is no sin and no divine mercy or ultimate hope beyond the grave. Price has made a living out of preaching this ideology. In addition, he has also made an effort to explain, from the same set of secular grounding assumptions, how Latter-day Saints ought to understand Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon.²¹

John Dehlin: Podcraft ...

In a time where the attention span seems to have decreased, and virtually any persons, no matter how uninformed or inarticulate, deem themselves both authorities on whatever even momentarily draws their attention, and hence also “authors,” there are now a host of even less plausible, careful, accurate accounts of the Book of Mormon being advanced on the Internet, where there is exactly no quality control. These are often less plausible, even amusing efforts to brush aside the Book of Mormon for mercenary and/or personal reasons.

Such critical ideologies are now being spread by “bloggerati,” one of whom has even managed to make a living both servicing and generating crises of faith among the Saints by engaging in what can be called Podcraft, which is now popular among Internet critics of The Church of Jesus Christ. One of these, without knowing it, has even managed to imitate the Reverend Price by finding no reason for believing that there was a Jesus of Nazareth or God and thus also ridiculing as rubbish the atonement for sin as well as trashing the Book of Mormon.

... and Revisionist History

Even some LDS scholars oppose and condemn efforts to defend the historical authenticity of the Book of Mormon. They neglect to explain how Joseph Smith could have fashioned it out of strictly nineteenth-century sources, which they may insist must be the default position of Latter-day Saint historians, despite such accounts being highly implausible. Such opinions are not grounded in an understanding of

21. For a detailed account on how Price has become a player on the fringes of the LDS scholarly world, see Midgley “Atheist Piety,” 123–30. For Price’s effort to explain the Book of Mormon, see his *Latter-day Scripture: Studies in the Book of Mormon* (Self-published e-book, 2011 (<http://www.eBookIt.com>), and my review of this collections of essays in Louis C. Midgley, “Book Review: Latter-day Scripture: Studies in the Book of Mormon, by Robert M. Price,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 1 (2012): 145–150.

historical method, and hence are even less intellectually interesting than the most recent effort of Lofte Payne.

Some suggest that it is not now proper to set out reasons for the historical authenticity of the Book of Mormon. They may believe that efforts to do so have failed or that it cannot be done. Or they sense that they are not themselves able to contribute much to such an endeavor, and want to change the direction of relevant historical endeavors. Some assume that defending the Book of Mormon may offend non-LDS historians with whom they seek to court credibility. They tend to write in cautiously set out, naturalistic, secular terms in the hope that this will earn credibility and thereby open professional doors.

For these and other similar reasons they refuse to defend the historical authenticity of the Book of Mormon. They have become ardent apologists for explaining it as a nineteenth-century work of fiction fashioned by Joseph Smith out of bits and pieces found in his immediate environment. They sometimes begin with the dogma that real historians must exclude divine things — defined as the miraculous — from their accounts of the past, except perhaps as the illusions or delusions of those about whom they write.

Not entirely unlike Payne, there are, I believe, some who now seem to me to have chosen to become cynical self-appointed delineators who mark and show the way to a currently fashionable form of what I also believe is a secular soul-destroying darkness quite bereft of faith or hope, and so also of genuine love.

Louis Midgley (*PhD, Brown University*) is an emeritus professor of political science at Brigham Young University. Dr. Midgley has had an abiding interest in the history of Christian theology. He wrote his doctoral dissertation on Paul Tillich, the then-famous German-American Protestant theologian and political theorist/religious-socialist activist. Midgley also studied the writings of other influential Protestant theologians such as Karl Barth. Eventually he took an interest in contemporary Roman Catholic theology, and was also influenced by the work of important Jewish philosophers, including especially Leo Strauss and his disciples. In 1980 he turned his attention on the place of the Book of Mormon in the faith of the Saints.

THE PRODIGAL'S RETURN TO THE FATHER: *HOUSE OF GLORY AND REDISCOVERY*

Timothy Guymon

Review of S. Michael Wilcox. *House of Glory: Finding Personal Meaning in the Temple*, 1995. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book. 146 pp. with bibliography and index. \$14.99 (paperback).

Abstract: The temple of God is a new experience with any visit, but its wonders are nigh astonishing to someone who has lost the privilege for a long time. Wilcox's House of Glory is more than a guidebook to the House of God, it is a camera panning from the physical (such as the meanings of symbols and the appearances in and outside of temples) to the intensely personal (like the requirements and rewards of temple work, its ancient history, its powers of protection, and so on). Essentially a book for the experienced temple goer (one no longer stunned by the newness of it all), Wilcox's prize-winning book fills in the blank spaces and answers questions. And awes the Prodigal Son.

*H*ouse of Glory: Finding Personal Meaning in the Temple is a book S. Michael Wilcox wrote in only eight days, a book building inside him after many lectures on the subject. It won the 1996 Frankie and John Kenneth Orton Award for Latter-day Saint (LDS) Literature.¹ A best seller, it comes trailing clouds of reader approval, but at only 146 pages, is it “a lot about a little” or “a little about a lot”?

As a prodigal member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, my reading of *House of Glory* was a matter of recovering information atrophied away — if I ever knew it at all — not a reading for exegesis or apologist counterargument. The book's title itself implies therapeutic words rather than doctrinal fiat and makes clear the focus is arm-around-the-shoulder, not voice-from-the-lectern. It deals with symbols in learning and the endowment, with the processes of pondering

1 Jerry Johnston, “House of Glory’ Wins LDS Writing Award,” Deseret News (15 September 1996), <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/513295/HOUSE-OF-GLORY-WINS-LDS-WRITING-AWARD.html?pg=all>, accessed 14 Feb. 2015.

and understanding, with solving problems, with refuge from the world, and of course with proxy work for the dead.

Essentially, Wilcox's thesis is the subtitle of the book: "Finding Personal Meaning in the Temple." Through seeking to understand the symbolism in the temple, forging and polishing new attitudes, and the conclusion that the temple truly is the center of our universe (to use Joseph Smith's words, the temple is "this most glorious of all subjects belonging to the everlasting Gospel"), one can discover eternal meanings that resolve contradictions in life.

A Book of Discoveries

House of Glory is a book worth reading in that it is not assimilated in a single exposure. "The temple ordinances, like the scriptures, are worth thousands of readings, and even then we shall not have sounded the depths of their possibilities."³ I found one eyebrow-raiser after another (but then, to the recalcitrant, everything about the Iron Rod is unfamiliar — even amazing). For example, "We have been promised that in the temple, if we are 'pure in heart,' we 'shall see God.' (Doctrine & Covenants [D&C] 97:16.) There are many ways of seeing, and some of the most profound do not require our natural eyes."⁴

My (and I think "the usual") understanding is that we must be transfigured to "see God," as was Moses, Enoch, *et al.*, but indeed Joseph Smith explained that "All things ... God ... has seen fit ... to reveal to us ... are revealed to us in the abstract and independent of affinity of this mortal tabernacle but are revealed to our spirits precisely as though we had no bodies at all."⁵

The inference is that in the temple, the abode of God, we may perceive the presence of God and "see" Him through spiritual experiences and insights. As Hyrum L. Andrus wrote:⁶

Joseph Smith held that a true understanding of the nature of Deity must be firmly rooted in the central fact that God

² D&C 128:17.

³ Wilcox, S. M., *House of Glory*, SLC, UT: Deseret Book, 1995, 39, hereafter *HofG*.

⁴ *HofG*, 124.

⁵ J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, ed. Joseph Fielding Smith, 7 April 1844, SLC, UT: Deseret Book, 1969, 355; cf. Job 19:25-26: "yet in my flesh shall I see God."

⁶ Andrus, Hyrum L. *God, Man, and the Universe*. SLC, UT: Bookcraft, 1968, 110-111.

is a distinct, tangible being with a corporeal body similar in form and stature to that which man possesses. "There is no other God in heaven but that God who has flesh and bones," he declared.⁷ Of the form and stature of God, he explained: "If the veil were rent today, and the great God who holds this world in its orbit, and who upholds all worlds and all things by his power, was to make himself visible, ... you would see him like a man in form — like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form of a man."⁸ According to the Prophet, man is a theomorphic being, in that he possesses a physical body that is formed in the very likeness and image of God.⁹ Though God, like man, is a corporeal being, He is free from the corrupt elements that are associated with man's physical body, by which the latter is subject to the many weaknesses and deficiencies of mortal existence. God's body of flesh and bones is spiritual and immortal in its organization, whereas man's body is temporal and mortal. God is perfect in all His bodily attributes and powers, while man is imperfect in his physical being. And God is a divine being, but man in his natural, mortal state possesses only limited characteristics of divinity.

With our limited characteristics of divinity, we are incapable of perceiving sound frequencies dogs can hear¹⁰ or color wavelengths familiar to bees.¹¹ We have not the skin sensitivities of sharks, which can

7 J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 181.

8 *ibid.*, 345.

9 J. Smith, Jr. 1902-1932. *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Documentary History)*. 7 vols. SLC, UT: Deseret Book, 1978, 6:305.

10 "Dogs hear at a wider range of frequencies than humans. The low end of the range is similar to humans (humans hear down to about 20 Hertz, or cycles per second, dogs are at about 40 Hz). But at the high end, they are quite different. Humans hear to about 23 KHz or 23,000 Hz (kilohertz = 1000 x Hz) but dogs can hear up to 45 KHz!" <http://scienceline.ucsb.edu/getkey.php?key=596>, accessed 13 Mar. 2015.

11 "Humans are trichromats, meaning that we experience color through three types of photoreceptors tuned to different wavelengths: short (blue), medium (green), and long (red); and the combinations of activity of these receptors give us the perception of color. However, it turns out that the tuning curve of the red receptor in bees is shifted up such that they are red-blind, but see ultraviolet light. This means that UV light is their version of red (try to imagine). That change in color gives nature another way to evolve its marketing campaign and attract

detect minute electrical discharges from prey in the water.¹² Not only that, biologists once thought humans use only ten percent of their brains (actually, now the consensus is 100%),¹³ but even so the difference between an earthly and a heavenly body and brain is infinite. Nonetheless, as children of a Heavenly Father, a human being has an innate, infinite capacity for improvement and development. In the temple, these powers are suggested and in some cases touched upon.

“The true teaching in the temple is not group instruction.”¹⁴ With this point of view, one’s attitude changes from sauntering into the classroom to absorb another lecture, to preparing for a one-to-one with a professor who will know how much (or little) one has prepared — and He will ask the most telling questions.

This also corresponds with the required, “You must ask.” Modern society leads us (unfortunately so easily) into a concept of entitlement, a posture of victimization, and the unfair, “if you really loved me, you would (whatever) ... I shouldn’t have to ask.”

more business. For instance, flowers have evolved to provide bright UV petals surrounding a dark region contrasting containing glowing UV pollen. Although we can't see it, bees must find this irresistible!” http://www.nature.com/scitable/blog/the-artful-brain/alternate_realities, accessed 13 Mar. 2015.

12 “Sharks may be more sensitive to electric fields than any other animal, with a threshold of sensitivity as low as 5 nV/cm. That is 5/1,000,000,000 of a volt measured in a centimeter-long ampulla. Since all living creatures produce an electrical field by muscle contractions, it is easy to imagine that a shark, such as the lemon shark of the family Carcharhinidae, may pick up weak electrical stimuli from the muscle contractions of animals, particularly prey. On the other hand, the electrochemical fields generated by paralyzed prey were sufficient to elicit a feeding attack from sharks and rays in experimental tanks; therefore muscle contractions are not necessary to attract the animals. Sharks and rays can locate prey buried in the sand, or DC electric dipoles that simulate the main feature of the electric field of a prey buried in the sand.” (“Ampullae of Lorenzini,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ampullae_of_Lorenzini, accessed 13 Mar. 2015).

13 “Although it’s true that at any given moment all of the brain’s regions are not concurrently firing, brain researchers using imaging technology have shown that, like the body’s muscles, most are continually active over a 24-hour period. ‘Evidence would show over a day you use 100 percent of the brain,’ says John Henley, a neurologist at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. Even in sleep, areas such as the frontal cortex, which controls things like higher level thinking and self-awareness, or the somatosensory areas, which help people sense their surroundings, are active, Henley explains.” <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/do-people-only-use-10-percent-of-their-brains/>, accessed 13 Mar. 2015.

14 *HofG*, 12.

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Matthew 7:7). On one hand, this seems so simple — ask and ye shall receive. On the other, to ask for help is to relinquish command, to admit frailty, to become humble — this is not so simple. To enter the temple with open heart, open mind, and meek attitude puts the temple experience into a process of change on many levels.

Symbols

Books have been written about the temple's symbols, and indeed, as I recognized one, the “circle in the square” motif in the interior moldings, I congratulated myself. In reference to the symbol of the circle in the square:

In a temple context, these symbols establish the building “as the center, with the world tree at its axis, uniting the three main levels of the universe and sanctifying the four world regions.”¹⁵ A succinct list of examples from Nibley evidences the ubiquity of the symbol of the circle and the square in ancient design: “The Roman *quadrata* represents the four corners of the earth, and the center of everything... But it's also the picture of a wheel. The Babylonians combined the two very neatly in their cosmic design. It's the wheel that goes round and round but never moves ... It represents the dome of the heavens, and you find it everywhere as the common shape of churches. And the square church accompanies it [e.g., as in the common form of the basilica of the Roman Catholic Church].¹⁶

But then, *what am I to make of that symbol?* In all honesty, precisely that design can be seen in many Victorian, Art Nouveau, antebellum, and neo-colonial houses, and the interior designers were unlikely to have had earth, sky, and the universe in mind — they just wanted a design fillip to decorate a drawer-pull. On the other hand, the circle in the square has well-known links to Freemasonry¹⁷ (which was, in

15 J. M. Lundquist, *The Temple: Meeting Place of Heaven and Earth* (Art and Imagination), 16; 1993, Thames & Hudson, London.

16 H. W. Nibley, “The Early Christian Prayer Circle,” 144, 1978, *Brigham Young University Studies* 19: 144.

17 “The Square and Compasses (or, more correctly, a square and a set of compasses joined together) is the single most identifiable symbol of Freemasonry.

turn, lifted from earlier usages)¹⁸ but perhaps a consideration even more powerful is that when one learns *God's* meaning in these symbols, to see them in secular situations is to see a "secret message from God," a world-outside reminder that All belongs to the Lord. Perhaps God's meaning in the circle and square is a subtle reminder of heavenly influence in every balustrade and bannister.

Even *not* understanding the symbols is a blessing of sorts: "The symbols are different so we will not become so accustomed to seeing them that we cease asking the questions. If you are puzzled by the symbols of the temple, perhaps that is as it should be. It is all right to keep on puzzling over them and pondering them and studying them, allowing the Spirit to reveal their power one by one."¹⁹

Another eye-opener:

The temple endowment is scripture, the highest form of scripture, not written down for all to read and see but engraved in the minds of those whose efforts and attendance show the depth of their desires. It is written on our hearts, not in the pages of a book. Occasionally we read of people who are shown truths or are taught principles they are forbidden to reveal or write down. Jesus prayed with the Nephites, for example, and 'the things which he prayed cannot be written.' (3 Nephi 17:15). The moment was too sacred, too holy and profoundly beautiful to commit to paper. As an English major, I used to wish I could see or hear something so wonderful it could not

Both the square and compasses are architect's tools and are used in Masonic ritual as emblems to teach symbolic lessons. Some Lodges and rituals explain these symbols as lessons in conduct: for example, Duncan's *Masonic Monitor* of 1866 explains them as: "The square, to square our actions; The compasses, to circumscribe and keep us within bounds with all mankind".^[1] However, as Freemasonry is non-dogmatic, there is no general interpretation for these symbols (or any Masonic symbol) that is used by Freemasonry as a whole" (Peter Gilkes, "Masonic ritual: Spoilt for choice," *Masonic Quarterly Magazine*, July 2004, 10. Retrieved May 7, 2007 by Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Square_and_Compasses, accessed April 9, 2015).

18 "[The Square and Compass] is ... from about 3200 BCE, but probably even earlier, more than two thousand years before." Donald H.B. Falconer, *The Square and Compasses*, Volume 2, 20; <http://pictoumasons.org/library/Falconer%20Don%20~%20The%20Square%20And%20Compasses%20-%20Volume%202%20%5Bpdf%5D.pdf>, accessed April 9, 2015.

19 *HofG*, 14.

be written. Then, one day, the Spirit whispered, "You have, many times, in the Lord's house."²⁰

Continuing the idea of heavenly symbols everywhere, "An excellent example is the book of Exodus. In a way, it is a Mosaic endowment. It is a small microcosm of life, just as the endowment is a microcosm of life. Almost everything that happens in it, from the freeing of the children of Israel to their entry into the promised land, can be symbolically applied to our own lives."²¹ For example, (1) The Children of Israel moved on when the cloud or the pillar of fire was taken up from above the tabernacle. "In our own lives, we must never journey without the direction of the Spirit."²² (2) "Moses tells us in Deuteronomy that the manna symbolized the word of God. (See Deuteronomy 8:3.) Should we not gather the words of God from the scriptures 'every day'?"²³ (3) The secular world: "During their wanderings in the wilderness, Israel frequently desired to return to the 'fleshpots' of Egypt. Egypt suggests the captivity and restraining power of the world and the adversary. Do we not also struggle to remain separate from the world, to feast continually on the manna of the Lord's word and not the 'fleshpots' of worldly entertainments and appetites?"²⁴

"Pondering" is deep concentration of thought and focus, most often appearing in cramming for exams or trying to be objective about choosing between a Volkswagen or a Corvette. But in following threads of logic and inspiration regarding temple things, "We can do this [pondering] with the temple ordinances only if they are written in our minds and in our hearts, for we cannot study them on a printed page. ... At times, while listening to the endowment, we may want to pause and reflect about some insight we are discovering. We wish we could stop the session from continuing so we could reflect a little deeper ... Of course, we can neither write ourselves notes nor stop the session. ... We are told to pray for understanding."²⁵

Protection

The temple is also a place of refuge. "Sometimes the truths we learn in the temple are not taught through symbols. Often they come through the

20 *HofG*, 20.

21 *HofG*, 22.

22 *HofG*, 23.

23 *HofG*, 23.

24 *HofG*, 24.

25 *HofG*, 29.

whisperings of the Spirit because our souls have been calmed through the serenity of the Lord's house. We cry out to the Lord in our anxiety, but most frequently he answers us when our minds and hearts are quiet."²⁶

Every father since the invention of dance bands has told his teenaged children their music is nothing but noise, and as that appraisal is passed from generation to generation, a greater significance becomes apparent: the world indeed is getting worse. But how can that be? We have modern media that place the standard works in the hands of anyone who has a telephone. We have construction methods and international communications that have temples built all over the world. We have an international infrastructure that has turned earth into a global village. But Satan is also active in the earth. Wars (and rumors of wars) have not grown less frequent since World War I, the War to End All Wars.

Except for the brief blip between Vietnam and Grenada, there has not been a time since the Korean War that members of the US military have had no possibility of being sent to a war zone. America itself, once too far away and too well guarded, is now not only involved in endless foreign military commitments but also subject to terrorism and threats from abroad.

Where to flee from the wrath to come? Flee unto Zion, of course, but whereas that once meant the valleys of Utah, now the interpretation is "the stakes of Zion," meaning one's homeland and home congregation — and ultimately one's family home. But temples themselves are a powerful protection. "... the Spirit simply whispered, 'This is the sacrifice I ask of you. Be in this house *frequently, constantly, and consistently*, and the promised protection you seek, which this house has the power to bestow, will be extended to those you love.'"²⁷ According to Pres. Ezra Taft Benson, "This temple will be a standing witness that the power of God can *stay the powers of evil in our midst*. Many parents, in and out of the Church, are concerned about protection against a cascading avalanche of wickedness which threatens to engulf Christian principles. ... There is a power associated with the ordinances of heaven — even the power of godliness — which can and will *thwart the forces of evil* if we will be worthy of those sacred blessings. This community will be protected, our families will be protected, *our children will be safeguarded* as we live the gospel, visit the temple, and live close to the Lord."²⁸

²⁶ HofG, 37.

²⁷ HofG, 47.

²⁸ Ezra Taft Benson, 2014, *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, 256; SLC, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; emphasis added.

“According to the midrash, Sodom itself could have been a place of safety had there been a circle of as few as ten righteous individuals in the city to ‘pray on behalf of all of them.’”²⁹

“In the last days each ‘dwelling place’ will have the promised protection if we are worthy of it through faithfulness to our covenants. If we have the eyes to see, we can stand in front of our homes and know that, spiritually speaking, the Lord’s glory, his pillar, is above them and will defend them. This is also true of our wards and stakes.”³⁰

What if it is *our* responsibility to live righteously enough that our prayers might save our own cities? Wilford Woodruff said, “Ye sons of men, I say unto you, in the name of Israel’s God, those very principles that God has revealed are what have stayed the judgments of the Almighty on the earth. Were it not for these principles, you and I would not be here today.”³¹

In the days of Hezekiah, King of Judah, Sennacherib, King of Assyria, brought his army, the most powerful on earth, to conquer Judah, as had already been done to Samaria.

But the people, renewed by their worship and the example of Hezekiah, ‘held their peace’ and waited for the Lord’s deliverance (2 Kings 18:36). When Hezekiah heard the words of the Assyrian messenger and knew there was no logical way he could hold out against the might of the Assyrian army, he ‘went into the House of the Lord’ and there offered a deeply touching prayer in behalf of his people. The Lord responded by assuring Hezekiah that the Assyrians would not ‘shoot an arrow’ against the city. That night ‘the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand. ... So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed’ (2 Kings 19:1, 32, 35-36).³²

That is sobering — 185,000 Assyrian dead in one night without a single loss on the Judean side. If all scripture is for our benefit and can be applied to our problems, what can be expected today? “The sobering lesson of Hezekiah’s day is being repeated. For the Saints who come

29 Jeffrey R. Bradshaw, et al., *Ancient Temple Worship*, 2014, SLC, UT: Eborn Books Pubs., 93.

30 *HofG*, 57.

31 Wilford Woodruff, *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, 1995, SLC, UT: Bookcraft Pubs., 154.

32 *HofG*, 64.

to the sanctuary, the Lord's miraculous deliverance from sometimes overwhelming odds and forces can also be expected. Might we also not have reason to hope that the enemy will not 'shoot an arrow' to strike at the foundations of our families?"³³

The Iron Rod

(As an aside) one of the tenets of Alcoholics Anonymous is that no one is perfect, anybody can slip — fall off the wagon — but success is in keeping on the path of recovery, to "Keep coming back!" The influence of God dwells in all good on the earth (the Gospel of Jesus Christ was an inspiration for and is an unmentioned part of the Alcoholics Anonymous program). The message is the same:

We may not be perfect in obeying our covenants, but we must make a steady effort to be true. Nobody 'lives up to his ideals,' Heber J. Grant said, 'but if we are striving, if we are working, if we are trying, to the best of our ability, to improve day by day, then we are in the line of our duty. If we are seeking to remedy our own defects, if we are so living that we can ask God for light, for knowledge, for intelligence and above all for His spirit, that we may overcome our weaknesses, then, I can tell you, we are in the straight and narrow path that leads to life eternal; then we need have no fear.'³⁴

Proxy Work for the Dead

The "dead" are more a part of our lives today than in the past — think about it: many of them joined the Church before we did and now are eager for us to play our parts for their salvation. Elder Melvin J. Ballard taught: "Why is it that sometimes only one of a city or household receives the Gospel? It was made known to me that it is because the righteous dead who have received the Gospel in the spirit world are exercising themselves, and in answers to their prayers elders of the Church are sent to the homes of their posterity ..., and that descendant in the flesh is then privileged to do the work for his dead kindred."³⁵ Elder David B. Haight agreed: "I believe that when you diligently seek after your

33 *HofG*, 65.

34 *Conference Report*, April 1909, 111; in *HofG*, 79.

35 Melvin J. Ballard, *Crusader for Righteousness*, 219; 1966, Bookcraft Pubs.: SLC, UT.

ancestors — in faith — needed information will come to you *even when no mortal records of their lives are available*.³⁶

The importance of temple work cannot be exaggerated. “[The] coming forth [of modern labor-saving inventions] in such rapid succession in the latter days was not an accident and was not accomplished without the inspiration and direction of the Lord.”³⁷ Modern technology is an expertise growing exponentially — to the bad as well as the good.

Today, genealogy ranks second only to porn as the most searched topic online. According to a January 2012 report by market research firm Global Industry Analysts, an estimated 84 million people around the world spend anywhere from \$1,000 to \$18,000 a year in search of their ancestors ... It’s a demographic projected to grow 36 percent by 2020, three times as fast as any other group.³⁸

Conclusion

S. Michael Wilcox created a valuable little book. It is certainly “a lot about a little” — that “little” being a close focus on the subject of the temple, and “a lot” of insights and confirming retellings. I loved this book. I will keep it forever. I recommend it to anyone. It keeps me “coming back.”

Timothy Guymon graduated from West Virginia University with a communications degree and an MA in foreign languages. He had a broadcasting career in the US Army and in commercial radio, worked as an editor/photographer for various magazines, taught Spanish at West Virginia University, and English at Utah Valley University and the University of Phoenix. He was a missionary in Uruguay 1966-68. He now lives in Florida.

36 Conference Report, *Ensign*, May 1993, 25. Emphasis added.

37 *HofG*, 117.

38 Bruce Falconer, “Ancestry.com’s Genealogical Juggernaut,” Bloomberg Business Online, <http://www.bloomberg.com/bw/articles/2012-09-20/ancestry-dot-coms-genealogical-juggernaut>, accessed April 9, 2015.

THE DEUTERONOMIST REFORMS AND LEHI'S FAMILY DYNAMICS: A SOCIAL CONTEXT FOR THE REBELLIONS OF LAMAN AND LEMUEL

Neal Rappleye

Over the last few years, several Latter-day Saint scholars have commented on how the socio-religious setting of Judah in the late-seventh century BC informs and contextualizes our reading of the Book of Mormon, especially that of 1 and 2 Nephi. Particular emphasis has been placed on how Lehi and Nephi appear to have been in opposition to certain changes implemented by the Deuteronomists at this time, but Laman's and Lemuel's views have only been commented on in passing. In this paper, I seek to contextualize Laman and Lemuel within this same socio-religious setting and suggest that, in opposition to Lehi and Nephi, they were supporters of the Deuteronomic reforms.

In his book *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, Grant Hardy observed, “In the Book of Mormon, Laman and Lemuel are stock characters, even caricatures. They don’t develop much, and it seems that their sole mode of communication is complaining.” Hardy argues that Nephi does this deliberately; he “flattens his older brothers by treating them as a single unit rather than as individuals.”¹ Nephi, in other words, creates a context (or lack thereof) wherein his brothers merely become oppositional props in his own repeated successes. Using modern scholarship on the religious and social milieu of Judah just before the Babylonian exile, we can create a different context for Laman’s and Lemuel’s actions and attitudes that will flesh out what Nephi flattens.²

1 Grant Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader’s Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 33.

2 On the role of the historian or scholar as a *creator* of context, see Sam Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 2001), 17–22.

Socio-Religious Tension in Seventh Century BC Jerusalem

Lehi raised his family in Jerusalem in the late-seventh century BC before taking his family from that world to the deserts of Arabia early in the sixth century BC (see 1 Nephi 1:4). The seventh century BC was a time of social unrest and uncertainty in Judah. According to John W. Welch and Robert D. Hunt, “This has been a time of momentous turmoil. Civil wars, international conflict, rising and falling fortunes, and shifting cultural pressures and loyalties have raised anxieties and uncertainties throughout the region.”³ Both the political and religious landscape were being transformed in ways that heightened certain social tensions — tensions that were reflected in the family dynamics described in 1 Nephi.

In the mid-seventh century BC, King Josiah instituted sweeping political and religious reforms throughout Judah. “During this turbulent period,” explains Mordechai Cogan, “Josiah’s home-front reputation was made.” Cogan proceeds to summarize Josiah’s reforms, as portrayed by the biblical authors:

Our sources depict Josiah as deeply moved by the message of the “book of law,” when it was read to him, that violators of Israel’s covenant with God would be severely punished. After due consultation and encouragement from the prophetess Huldah, he convoked a kingdomwide assembly to renew the covenant between Judah and God based on the “law.” This commitment in hand, Josiah ordered a thoroughgoing purge of all non-Israelite forms of worship — the residue of centuries-long accommodation and influence. Everything associated with these rituals was removed and burned, and the priests who attended them banned. And, like Hezekiah in his day, Josiah outlawed worship at the local shrines and high places, redirecting all ritual to the newly cleansed Temple.⁴

According to Margaret Barker, “One generation before Zedekiah there had been the great upheaval in the reign of King Josiah, something now regarded as the turning point in the history of Jerusalem and its

3 John W. Welch and Robert D. Hunt, “Culturegram: Jerusalem 600 BC,” in *Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem*, ed. John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, and Jo Ann H. Seely (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2004), 22.

4 Mordechai Cogan, “Into Exile: From the Assyrian Conquest of Israel to the Fall of Babylon,” in *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, ed. Michael D. Coogan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 345.

religion.”⁵ Because the book of Deuteronomy is believed to be the “book of law” associated with this reform, the movement is often called the Deuteronomic Reform, and those who agreed with it are called Deuteronomists. Again, Barker explains, “We now recognize that King Josiah enabled a particular group to dominate the religious scene in Jerusalem about 620 BC: the Deuteronomists. Josiah’s purge was driven by their ideals, and their scribes influenced much of the form of the Old Testament we have today, especially the history in 1 and 2 Kings.”⁶ All of this is likely within the lifetime of Lehi, and the efforts at reform, and the social tensions they created no doubt would have continued into the reign of Zedekiah in 597 BC.

The many scholarly attempts at reconstructing the full nature and extent of these reforms often differ in details. Barker laments, “We can never know for certain what it was that Josiah purged or why he did it. No original versions of the actual texts or records survive from that period, but even the stories as they have come down to us in various sources show that this was a time of major upheaval that was not forgotten.”⁷ It is from these sources that a context for the differing perspectives of members of Lehi’s family can be created. As other Latter-day Saints have noticed, the specific context woven by Barker, though regarded by some scholars as idiosyncratic, proves particularly illuminating for the Book of Mormon.

It is important to realize that Lehi may not have been in complete agreement with Josiah’s reforms. Lehi’s heritage goes back to the northern Israelite Kingdom, to which these reforms showed a certain degree of hostility. Gardner writes, “The antagonism of the Deuteronomic history to the northern kingdom and the Book of Mormon’s affiliation with that kingdom should suggest at least the possibility that Lehi might resist some of Josiah’s Deuteronomic reforms.”⁸ This is not to say that Lehi was *completely* opposed to the reforms. In fact, Lehi and Nephi do appear to be positively influenced in some ways by the Deuteronomic

5 Margaret Barker, “Joseph Smith and Preexilic Israelite Religion,” in *The Worlds of Joseph Smith: A Bicentennial Conference at the Library of Congress*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 2006), 70.

6 Barker, “Joseph Smith and Preexilic Israelite Religion,” 71.

7 Margaret Barker, “What Did King Josiah Reform?” in *Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem*, 538.

8 Brant A. Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Greg Kofford Books, 2007–2008), 1:36.

ideology.⁹ Thus, the way Josiah's reforms were seen in Lehi's eyes might be compared to how the Protestant Reformation is viewed by Latter-day Saints today — the work of inspired and well-intended individuals who are, nonetheless, misguided in some (often many) respects.

Significantly, Barker notes, "Remnants of the older faith survived in many places, preserved by the descendants of those who fled from Josiah's purge."¹⁰ Although Lehi leaves after Josiah's day, his persecutors who "sought his life, that they might take it away" (1 Nephi 1:20) were likely supporters of the reform (see below). Hence, Gardner applies this to Lehi.

Lehi and his family fit into Barker's category of people who left Jerusalem who did not agree with the reforms. The Book of Mormon represents Israelite religion in the pre-exilic period and particularly elements of a time when there were differing ideas and probably heated differences in the direction that religion was to take in addition to the political turmoil imposed by conquering armies, Lehi also experienced a major shift in Judah's public religion, directed by the king. No change comes without resistance, and many crucial themes of the Book of Mormon emphasize some elements of the pre-reform religion lost to the biblical record, although there are indications that Nephite religion was not opposed to all of the Deuteronomistic agenda.¹¹

Gardner and other Latter-day Saint commentators have used this context productively to shed light on Lehi and Nephi, but this context has been applied to Laman and Lemuel only in passing. These older sons of Lehi seem to have fully bought into the reformers' ideology, and this is reflected in their reactions to Lehi and Nephi.

Laman and Lemuel As Deuteronomists

"Whatever else they may have been," reasons Hardy, "Laman and Lemuel appear to have been orthodox, observant Jews. Nephi — who has a vested interest in revealing their moral shortcomings — never accuses them

9 See Kevin Christensen, "Paradigms Regained: A Survey of Margaret Barker's Scholarship and Its Significance for Mormon Studies," *FARMS Occasional Papers* 2 (2001): 9–11; William J. Hamblin, "Vindicating Josiah," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, 4 (2013): 165–76.

10 Barker, "What Did King Josiah Reform?" 534.

11 Gardner, *Second Witness*, 1:41.

of idolatry, false swearing, Sabbath breaking, drunkenness, adultery, or ritual uncleanness.”¹² Hardy’s argument is one from silence, but the silence is significant. Indeed, Nephi says Laman and Lemuel were “like unto the Jews who were at Jerusalem, who sought to take away the life of my father” (1 Nephi 2:13). The gate-keepers of Jewish “orthodoxy” just prior to the exile were the Deuteronomists. Kevin Christensen explains, “Laman and Lemuel demonstrate sympathy for the Jerusalem party, the same group of people who caused problems for Jeremiah and Ezekiel.”¹³ Brant Gardner more explicitly links them to the Deuteronomic reforms.

The situation in Jerusalem after Josiah’s reforms may shed some light on understanding Laman and Lemuel as well as illuminating some of the religious conflict that runs throughout the Book of Mormon. ... Lehi’s family may be a microcosm of the conflict in Jerusalem between those who espoused Josiah’s Deuteronomic reforms and the pre-reform religion. Lehi’s theology had affinities with the older religion. What if Laman and Lemuel were believers in the reform?¹⁴

Though posing the question, Gardner does not explore the possibilities it opens up. Taking a number of case studies from Nephi’s record, the actions and attitudes of Laman and Lemuel do in fact become believable as those of a pair of believers in the Deuteronomic reforms.

Murmuring At the Altar

When Lehi first arrived at his first camp site, “he built an altar of stones, and made an offering unto the Lord” (1 Nephi 2:7). While alternative interpretations of the legal codes were likely available,¹⁵ strict interpretation of the legal codes by Deuteronomists prohibited the

12 Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 39.

13 Kevin Christensen, “The Temple, the Monarchy, and Wisdom: Lehi’s World and the Scholarship of Margaret Barker,” in *Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem*, John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, and Jo Ann H. Seely, eds. (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2004), 497.

14 Brant A. Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Greg Kofford Books, 2007–2008), 1:92.

15 The Dead Sea Scrolls, though later than Lehi’s time-period, provide an example of an interpretation which is consistent with Lehi’s actions. See David Rolph Seely, “Lehi’s Altar and Sacrifice in the Wilderness,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 10/1 (2001): 62–69.

sacrifice and offerings by non-Levites outside the temple.¹⁶ It therefore seems significant that it is immediately *after* Lehi sacrifices at the altar that Nephi first mentions Laman and Lemuel, “murmur[ing] against their father” (1 Nephi 2:11–12). Read against the backdrop of the reforms, the timing would suggest the possibility that it was Lehi’s perceived violation of Deuteronomic law which evoked, or at least contributed to, the complaints from his oldest sons.

“Visionary Man”

One of the accusations Laman and Lemuel make against Lehi at this time is that he was a “visionary man,” who followed the “foolish imaginations of his heart” (1 Nephi 2:11; cf. 1 Nephi 5:9; 17:20). According to Kevin Christensen, the Deuteronomist ideology rejected visions as a means of knowing the Lord’s will, and not only did Lehi receive visions, but some of the content of his visions specifically reflected old beliefs the Deuteronomists were trying to eradicate.¹⁷

Both John A. Tvedtnes and Matthew Roper have noted that “visionary man” is an appropriate translation of the Hebrew *hōzeh* (חֹזֶה). Roper adds that the pejorative usage of “visionary man” by Laman and Lemuel was more than mere ridicule or name-calling — it was actually the strong accusation that he was a false prophet.¹⁸ Deuteronomists would have regarded a prophet like Lehi — who claimed to have seen the divine council and received the mysteries (see 1 Nephi 1:8–14) — as a false prophet. Thus Laman and Lemuel calling their father a “visionary man” would be a direct result of their acceptance of the Deuteronomistic interpretation of what a proper prophet should be. They were declaring that their father, by definition of seeing visions, should not be accepted as a true prophet.

Nephi appears to counter, however, by proof-texting from Numbers 12:6,¹⁹ which explicitly declares “If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and *will speak unto him in a dream*” (emphasis added). Nephi, it seems, draws on this

16 See *ibid.*, 66–67.

17 See Christensen, “The Temple, the Monarchy, and Wisdom,” 452–457.

18 See John A. Tvedtnes, “A Visionary Man,” in *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon: The FARMS Updates of the 1990s*, ed. John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1999), 29–31; Matthew Roper, “Scripture Update: Lehi as a Visionary Man,” *Insights* 27/4 (2007): 2–3.

19 I greatly appreciate the insight of an anonymous reviewer who pointed this out to me.

passage just before introducing his brothers' complaints, writing, "the Lord spake unto my father, yea, even in a dream" (1 Nephi 2:1). Hence, as Nephi sets up the narrative, he has already subtly refuted the charge that his father was a false prophet by the time the reader is exposed to it.

"Jerusalem, That Great City"

According to Nephi, Laman and Lemuel did not "believe that Jerusalem, that great city, could be destroyed according to the words of the prophets" (1 Nephi 2:13). In this, again, Laman and Lemuel were aligned with the Jerusalem elite. David Rolph Seely and Fred E. Woods note that this was the common attitude in Jerusalem at the time and identify six contributing factors.²⁰ One such factor was the heightened sense of self-righteousness connected with the reforms and manifest in Laman and Lemuel (see 1 Nephi 17:22). "The recent reforms of Josiah (640–609 BC) ... had given certain people of Judah an undue sense of self and community righteousness that they believed would surely preserve them from any threatened destruction."²¹

Seely and Woods also explain, "The reforms of Josiah — in conjunction with Judah's perception of the invincibility of their city promised in the Davidic covenant and the miraculous deliverance of the city during the reign of Hezekiah — reinforced the people's belief that the great city of Jerusalem could not be destroyed."²² Hezekiah, who instituted reforms similar to Josiah's about a century earlier, is Josiah's most immediate ideological forbears. Meanwhile, in the Deuteronomist history, Josiah "is depicted as a second David" and "touted as the ideal Davidic king."²³ Laman and Lemuel, "like unto the Jews who were at Jerusalem," did not believe that their father's prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem could ever happen.

Rebellion in the Desert and "Murderous" Intent

Deuteronomic ideals also provide a context within which Laman and Lemuel's rebellion, and even attempt to kill Nephi, in 1 Nephi 7 can

20 See David Rolph Seely and Fred E. Woods, "How Could Jerusalem, 'That Great City,' be Destroyed?" in *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem*, 595–610.

21 Seely and Woods, "How Could Jerusalem 'That Great City,' be Destroyed?" 596.

22 Seely and Woods, "How Could Jerusalem 'That Great City,' be Destroyed?" 605.

23 Cogan, "Into Exile," 342, 345.

make sense. Believing the Deuteronomists were right, and thus the Lord would protect the holy city, “they were desirous to return unto the land of Jerusalem” (1 Nephi 7:7). As Nephi tries to persuade them to rejoin their father at his camp, he reiterates the prophecies of destruction and adds to them his own prophetic pronouncement, “Now behold, I say unto you that if ye will return unto Jerusalem ye shall also perish with them,” words which Nephi insists were given to him by “the Spirit of the Lord” (1 Nephi 7:15, see vv. 13–15). Now Nephi, like Lehi, was in their minds a “visionary man,” that is, a false prophet. Grant Hardy explains how this would appear to “orthodox Jews” at that time. “Laman and Lemuel would have been aware that the scriptural penalty for false prophets was death (Deut. 18:20; cf. 13:1–11). . . . The brothers might well have recalled that the Deuteronomic judgment on false prophets required a summary execution, even for ‘thy brother, the son of thy mother’ (Deut. 13:6).”²⁴ This could also explain their later attempts to kill both Nephi and Lehi (see 1 Nephi 16:37–38).

Nephi As Joseph

At various points in his narrative, Nephi uses allusions to the conflict between Joseph and his brothers to set himself up as a type of Joseph, a younger brother chosen to rule over his older siblings. The Deuteronomists opposed traditions grounded in the old “wisdom literature,” which portrayed prophets as men of visions and dreams. Joseph is one of two biblical figures (the other is Daniel) most prominently portrayed as “wise men” (the prophets of the wisdom tradition).²⁵

That Joseph was a prominent figure in an ideology opposed by the Deuteronomists perhaps adds a layer of subtext to Nephi’s use of Joseph, particularly in the narrative of 1 Nephi 7.²⁶ Here, parallels are most pronounced during Laman and Lemuel’s first rebellion, in which his older brothers take him and bind him with the intent to kill him and let his body “be devoured by wild beasts” (1 Nephi 7:16). Joseph’s older brothers also bound him with the intent to kill him, and told their father he had been devoured by an “evil beast” (see Genesis 37:20, 33). Thus, in the height of his opposition with his brothers, Nephi portrays himself as a second Joseph, one of the heroes of the old wisdom tradition. Laman’s

24 Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 40.

25 See Christensen, “Paradigms Regained,” 20–21; Christensen, “The Temple, the Monarchy, and Wisdom,” 492–495.

26 See Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 42–43; Gardner, *Second Witness*, 148–149.

and Lemuel's affiliation with the Deuteronomists and their opposition to that tradition heightens the symbolism of Nephi's allusions and imbues them with further meaning: not only Nephi's brothers, but the movement which they represent, the Deuteronomic reforms, are likened unto Joseph's brothers and thus given a negative connotation.

Laman, Lemuel, and the Law

The clearest evidence of their Deuteronomic sensibilities is their expressed commitment to the law. The Deuteronomists heavily emphasized the law. "The first wave of activity," reports Kevin Christensen, "came with Josiah's decade of reform, the composition of the Deuteronomist edition of the history, and the reemphasis on Moses and the Law in Israelite religion."²⁷ Christensen explains that the reforms supplanted the older wisdom tradition, to which Nephi and Lehi appear to be affiliated, with a near veneration of the law.²⁸

Laman and Lemuel also hold the law up as the final arbiter of "righteousness."

And we know that the people who were in the land of Jerusalem were a righteous people; for they kept the statutes and judgments of the Lord, and all his commandments, according to the law of Moses; wherefore, we know that they are a righteous people. (1 Nephi 17:22)

It was the Deuteronomic movement that placed this kind of emphasis on the law. While Nephi is clearly committed to living the law as well, for Nephi the law is not the end itself (see 2 Nephi 11:4; 25:24). "The picture in the Book of Mormon," writes Christensen, "strikes a balance between the Law and the wisdom traditions. The Law in the Book of Mormon never closes the door on revelation but rather promises more. The Law in the Book of Mormon is never seen as an end in itself, but as a type and shadow of Christ."²⁹

At issue, then, is not the question of whether the law is important, but rather the role that the law should play. Nephi's "soul [was] rent with

27 Kevin Christensen, "Paradigms Regained: A Survey of Margaret Barker's Scholarship and Its Significance for Mormon Studies," *FARMS Occasional Papers* 2 (2001): 11.

28 Kevin Christensen, "Prophets and Kings in Lehi's Jerusalem and Margaret Barker's Temple Theology," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 4 (2013): 177–193.

29 Christensen, "Paradigms Regained," 19.

anguish” after Laman’s and Lemuel’s insistence that the law was all that made men righteous (1 Nephi 17:47), and he held out “great hopes” that Laman and Lemuel would eventually repent (1 Nephi 16:5). Nephi may have used the law as “type and shadow of Christ,” as Christensen puts it, specifically in effort to appeal to Laman’s and Lemuel’s Deuteronomist sensibilities.

Lehi As Moses

All theories are best tested by how well they can account for possible counter-indications. One such potential counter-argument to the thesis I have sketched above is the positive use of Deuteronomy by Nephi and Lehi themselves. I will attempt to deal with one significant example of this, found in how Lehi’s farewell address is structured.

Noel B. Reynolds has argued that here Lehi (or, perhaps Nephi in how he records Lehi’s speech) has framed himself as a type of Moses,³⁰ who was the central hero in the minds of the Deuteronomists. Reynolds notes that this is a common technique used by ancient Israelite (Deuteronomist) authors.

Recent scholarly analyses of the Old Testament show that ancient Israelites expected true prophets to draw such comparisons, at least implicitly. ... Old Testament texts consciously portrayed great prophets and heroes in ways that would highlight their similarities with Moses, the prophetic predecessor whose divine calling and powers were not questioned.³¹

Most examples of this pattern come from the Deuteronomist history (Joshua–2 Kings).

As a rhetorical technique, the intent was to convey the message that the later prophet or hero was as significant, in at least some respects, as Moses himself. “By constructing the account of a second figure to evoke the readers’ memories of a prominent earlier figure, a writer can suggest strongly to the readers that the later person plays a similar role in God’s theater, as did the first.”³² Reynolds has argued that in Lehi’s final

30 See Noel B. Reynolds, “Lehi as Moses,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9/2 (2000): 26–35; Noel B. Reynolds, “The Israelite Background of Moses Typology in the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies* 44/2 (2005): 5–23.

31 Reynolds, “The Israelite Background,” 14.

32 Reynolds, “The Israelite Background,” 15.

address to his sons and their families (see 2 Nephi 1), he patterned his speech after Moses' ceremonial farewell address in Deuteronomy.

Lehi's last address to his people appears consciously to invoke at least 14 important themes and situational similarities from the final address of Moses as recorded in Deuteronomy. In so doing, Lehi added the weight of the testimony of Moses to his own. This is especially important because, as is often the case with the living prophet, his people were more accepting of the teachings of the long-dead Moses than of the living Lehi and his successor, Nephi.³³

How can we make sense of this apparently positive use of Deuteronomy? First, it should be clarified that Lehi was not, as mentioned earlier, completely opposed to the reforms. Second, being against parts of the *ideology* of a particular group who uses Deuteronomy as a foundation is not the same thing as being opposed to that text itself.³⁴ Lehi and Nephi were not anti-Deuteronomy, and certainly were not anti-Moses.

Moreover, the family dynamics may have also played a role. Laman and Lemuel are heavily targeted in Lehi's farewell address (see 2 Nephi 1:2, 12–27). Here, Lehi, who has previously “exhort[ed] them with all the feeling of a tender parent” (1 Nephi 8:37), is making his final plea to his rebellious sons. As Deuteronomists, they would have especially revered Moses as the lawgiver. Thus, in an effort to be as persuasive as possible, Lehi patterned his address after that of the one figure he knew his older sons would most revere.³⁵

It is important to point out, however, that while Lehi used Moses in an effort to persuade his wayward sons, as Reynolds stresses, he nonetheless did not consider his own authority as derivative from Moses but rather appealed to his own special revelations.

33 Reynolds, “Lehi as Moses,” 35.

34 Latter-day Saints should understand this well, since many self-proclaimed “biblical Christians” have similarly created ideologies we disagree with that are founded, at least loosely, on biblical citations. Our disagreement does not mean, however, that we dismiss the Bible itself.

35 What I am suggesting here is not unlike what tends to happen when Latter-day Saint missionaries bump into zealous evangelicals while tracting. In an effort to be persuasive, the missionaries will often proof-text the Bible to teach (or, more often, argue for) doctrines unique to LDS believers, in preference to using modern LDS scriptures that often teach these doctrines more clearly and fully.

Lehi used Deuteronomy only as a parallel and not as a foundation for his teaching and blessing. He had experienced the same kinds of visions and revelations that Moses had received. In a vision, God showed Lehi the mixed future of his people and the salvation of all mankind. He had beheld the future birth and ministry of the Messiah, the Son of God. He had seen the triumph of God and his people in the last days, and he had beheld God himself on his throne. The last thing Lehi would have wanted to communicate was that Moses' writings were the sole source of his understanding. ... But he knew that his rebellious older sons specifically rejected his visions, calling him a visionary man (1 Nephi 2:11), and he therefore took advantage of Moses as support. Thus Lehi phrased his message in terms that should have repeatedly reminded his hearers of Moses' similar message delivered on a similar occasion.³⁶

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

Conclusion

I have attempted to illustrate how the social context surrounding the Deuteronomic reforms, as reconstructed by Margaret Barker, not only explains the actions of Lehi and Nephi, as other commentators have observed, but also illuminates our understanding of Laman and Lemuel and their interactions with the prophetic duo formed by their father and younger brother. To be clear, it must be remembered that Nephi and Lehi are *not* anti-law nor anti-Deuteronomy nor even anti-Josiah. Rather, they stand in contrast to parts of the *ideological agenda* of the Deuteronomists. Laman and Lemuel appear to have adopted, perhaps deliberately as rebellious and resentful teenagers often do, the very parts

36 Reynolds, "The Israelite Background," 11–12.

of that ideology that their father rejected. Many of the same conflicts going on in Jerusalem at the time emerge as points of tension between the older brothers and their father and obnoxious little brother. The paradigm juxtaposing Lehi and Nephi as “wise men” of the old tradition and Laman and Lemuel as supporters of the Deuteronomic ideology might thus be used to explain some of the dynamics of Lehi’s family. In saying this, I do not wish to justify Laman’s and Lemuel’s actions — Nephi and Lehi, after all, were true, not false, prophets. Yet this view helps make sense of their actions against Nephi and Lehi.

The examples cited above are merely a sampling of ways this paradigm could enlighten our reading of the Book of Mormon. Much more could be done, for instance, to explore how this perspective might change our reading of Lehi’s vision of the tree of life,³⁷ the place of Laman and Lemuel within that dream, and their struggle to understand the vision. In this article, I have merely provided a few relatively simple “case studies” which I feel serve to build the foundation for seeing Laman and Lemuel as Deuteronomists.

Contextualizing Laman and Lemuel, of course, carries certain consequences. No longer can they be seen as the flat caricatures Nephi makes out of them. The contrast between Lehi and Nephi on one hand, and Laman and Lemuel on the other, no longer stands as the stark and obvious difference between good and evil. Instead, it represents two competing religious ideologies. This isn’t too different from our own world today, and we can now more fully appreciate how Laman and Lemuel could have been led to think, “like unto the Jews who were at Jerusalem” (1 Nephi 2:13), that the indignation they directed at their father and brother was justified.

Neal Rappleye is a history student who actively pursues research interests in early Church history and the ancient setting of the Book of Mormon. He blogs about Latter-day Saint topics at <http://www.studioetquoquefide.com>

37 While others, most notably Daniel C. Peterson in “Nephi and His Asherah,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9/2 (2000): 16–25, have used the backdrop of Pre-exilic religion and the Josian reforms to discuss the aspects of Lehi’s vision, they have not explored how these dynamics might have played out within his family.

THE DOCTRINE OF RESURRECTION IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

A. Keith Thompson

Abstract: The doctrine of resurrection was taught by Lehi and Jacob among the first Nephites but was not mentioned again in the record until the time of Abinadi, perhaps 350 years later. In the court of King Noah that doctrine and the idea of a suffering Messiah who would bear the sins of his people and redeem them, were heresies and Abinadi paid for them with his life. While Abinadi's testimony converted Alma₁, and the doctrine of the resurrection inspired Alma₂ after his conversion, it was a source of schism in the church at Zarahemla along lines that remind us of the Sadducees at Jerusalem. The doctrine of the resurrection taught in the Book of Mormon is a precursor to the doctrine now understood by the Latter-day Saints in the light of modern revelation. One example is that the Nephite prophets used the term first resurrection differently than we do. But perhaps the most remarkable thing about the way that the doctrine of resurrection develops in the Book of Mormon, is that it develops consistently. That consistency bears further testimony to the prophetic mission of Joseph Smith. He could not have done that by himself.

The Book of Mormon narrative does not focus upon heretical teachings. However, anecdotal references to the teachings of anti-Christ and others among the Zoramites, Nehors, and Amalekites demonstrate to modern readers that the doctrines that the Book of Mormon editors considered heretical had a distinctly Jewish or rabbinical flavor. Sherem's insistence that Jacob had perverted the Law of Moses into "the worship of a being which ye shall say shall come many hundred years hence" (Jacob 7:7) is a case in point. Nephi, Jacob, and King Benjamin all taught that the Messiah prefigured in the Law of Moses would be a suffering Messiah, that he would be named Jesus Christ, and that He would take upon Himself the sins of the world. Nephi said that he had purposely avoided teaching his people "concerning the manner of the Jews" because their works were "works of darkness" (2 Nephi 25:2, 6), but still a rabbinical view of the Messiah surfaced among the Nephites and was

perpetuated by the Zoramites among others. Perhaps this should not surprise us since both these Old and New World peoples aspired to live their lives in accordance with the Law of Moses. But where did those ideas come from if the Nephite prophet leaders tried to suppress them? Did they develop in parallel because “the author of all sin” (Helaman 6:30) simply used the same successful strategy among both Old and New World peoples, or did these heretical ideas come to the New World with Zoram¹ or the Mulekites? Is there more to this correlation than the Book of Mormon editors have admitted or than current Book of Mormon scholarship has considered?

One example concerns the resurrection from the dead. This is a fundamental teaching among the Book of Mormon peoples where the heretical treatment may have a connection with the Old World doctrinal development. All Christians are familiar with the theological difference between the Pharisees and the Sadducees concerning the resurrection of the dead. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all recount the question that the Sadducees brought to the Savior concerning Levirate marriage. All three of those gospel authors report that the Sadducees “say there is no resurrection” (Matthew 20:23; Mark 12:18; Luke 20:27). Jesus’ answer confirmed that there is a resurrection at the same time as he confirmed that the Sadducees’ question about marriage proceeded from some mistaken assumptions. When did the Sadducees’ denial of the resurrection (Luke 20:27) originate? How sincere were the religious beliefs of the Sadducees if they denied the resurrection? And are there any traces of this Sadduceean heresy in the Book of Mormon? This last question is poignant since Abinadi was martyred for his religious teachings concerning the Messiah and the resurrection (Mosiah 18:2), which were interpreted as a form of sedition in King Noah’s court (Mosiah 17:8).

Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery are said to have completed their translation of the Book of Mormon in sixty-five days.² That calculates to a little more than eight printed pages a day. This article reiterates the view that their work was authentic. Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery could not have maintained the consistency of all the threads in the narrative and the doctrine developed if they did it themselves in sixty-five days. By

1 Thompson, A. Keith, “Who was Sherem?” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture*, 14 (2015): 1–15.

2 “How long did it take Joseph Smith to translate the Book of Mormon”, *Ensign*, January 1988, 47.

now someone would have demonstrated inconsistency not only on the balance of probabilities, but beyond reasonable doubt.

The doctrine of resurrection as taught to Alma₁ by Abinadi and then developed by Alma₁'s personal descendants in their prophetic ministries here traced is a very good example of that internal consistency.

In Part I, I will discuss the debate about the doctrine of the resurrection in rabbinical teaching before Christ. In Part II, I will discuss what other Latter-day Saint scholars have observed about the doctrine of resurrection in the Book of Mormon. In Part III, I observe that although Lehi and Jacob taught the doctrine of resurrection, it was not mentioned in the Large Plates of Nephi until Abinadi taught the people of King Noah that the redemption to be worked out by the Messiah included the resurrection of the physical body from the grave. In this part, I will explain that King Benjamin may not have known that the atonement to be worked out by the Messiah included the free gift of bodily resurrection from the grave. While this suggestion may run contrary to reader expectation, if we are to correctly understand how much of the gospel that we take for granted was understood in earlier dispensations, we must be careful not to impute to those earlier dispensations, knowledge that they did not have. While Latter-day Saint readers in the twenty-first century may think of the words, redemption, atonement and resurrection as synonyms, it should not be assumed that the ancients understood them in the same way that we do. In Part IV, I will explain the aspects of the doctrine of resurrection that Abinadi clarified beyond what was included in the Small Plates of Nephi and how that knowledge is less than we have in the last dispensation by virtue of latter-day revelation in Sections 76 and 88 of the Doctrine and Covenants. In Part V, I discuss other contributions made to the development of the doctrine of resurrection in the Book of Mormon after Abinadi, noting that it is unlikely that Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery would have been able to maintain the consistency of that development in the short sixty-five day translation period. I conclude that a deepened understanding of the nature of the possible loss, restoration, and development of the doctrine of resurrection in the Book of Mormon shows that we have only begun to scratch the surface of the depths of this sacred record.

Part I — Origins of the Sadduceean Denial of the Resurrection

Arthur Marmorstein wrote that “teaching and belief [in the resurrection] existed among the Israelites when they settled on Jewish soil.”³ He cited Isaiah (Isaiah 26:14, 19) and Ezekiel (Ezekiel 37:12–14) as his authorities⁴ but interpreted these passages to mean that the “wicked ... will never leave their homes in the dust.” Daniel (Daniel 12:2) confirmed his belief in the same doctrine and Marmorstein thus said that “in the last two or three centuries before Jesus it was a part of the Jewish belief,”⁵ though “we cannot state that there was no opposition.”⁶ He quoted Abot de R. Nathan and Baneth for his belief “that the Sadducees were the successors of an older school opposing the doctrine of a future life as a part of the reform of the old religion of Israel.”⁷ Their doctrine was not only that there was no “revival after death, but also [that there was no] ... blessed future life.”⁸

Other scholars have tried to pinpoint the origin of the Sadduceean doctrine more exactly, and an uneasy consensus holds that it likely originated with a schism in the school of one Antigonus, a Rabbi around 264 BC, which is well after Lehi, Zoram, and the Mulekites left Jerusalem.

One of Antigonus’ disciples named Sadoc (or Zadok) was said to have derived the falsity of the resurrection doctrine from Antigonus’ instruction that “they should not serve God through hope of reward but through love and filial reverence only.”⁹ Sadoc is said to have elaborated,

3 Arthur Marmorstein, “The Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Dead in Rabbinic Theology,” in *Studies in Jewish Theology*, J. Rabinowitz and M.S. Lew eds., Oxford University Press, London, 1950, 577.

4 Note, however, that both Isaiah and Ezekiel postdate the arrival of the Israelites on Jewish soil.

5 Marmorstein, *The Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Dead*, 578.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 See <http://lavistachurchofchrist.org/LVanswers/2007/10-21a.html>, quoting Adam Clarke’s commentary on Matthew 16:1. See also <http://www.livius.org/saa-san/sadducees/sadducees.html> where the learned commentators add that Antigonus’ school broke in two — the Sadducees who followed Zadok and the Boethusians who followed Boethus like Marmorstein quoting Avot de Rabbi Nathan. The Rabbi Nathan also said that both groups withdrew from the study of the oral Torah because it was unreasonable of their ancestors to have believed that the reward for a day’s labors should be delayed beyond the evening. However, though they state that “the historical value of this anecdote is questionable,” the date of the schism (two generations after Antigonus, circa 140 BCE) does neatly

“There were neither rewards nor punishments after this life, and, by consequence, that there was no resurrection of the dead, nor angel, nor spirit in the invisible world; and that man is to be rewarded here for the good or evil he does.”¹⁰ These inferences were justified by the refusal of Sadoc’s disciples to receive any scripture other than the five books of Moses, which do not explicitly refer to the resurrection at all.

Marmorstein quoted later rabbis who answered the absence of resurrection teaching in the written Torah with the statement that “there is no commandment in the Torah of which the reward for fulfilling it being mentioned, where the doctrine of resurrection is not implicit.” References to a blessed future following the judgment of God are among abundant proofs for the doctrine in Genesis, Numbers, Deuteronomy, the Psalms, Proverbs, Isaiah, and Hosea.¹¹

A natural question arises for all modern Jews and Christians when they ponder the Sadducees’ denial of the resurrection: if the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection, then what did they believe? In a Jewish theology that denied the resurrection, what justification remained for a life of faith and good works? Were the Sadducees anything more than nominal religionists who professed religion for political benefit?

Though all scholars acknowledge that we only know of the Sadducees and their doctrine from hostile sources,¹² and though some infer that the Sadducees merely professed belief to protect their aristocratic political power,¹³ most accept that their acceptance of the written Torah or first five books of Moses was genuine. “The Sadducees maintained that the only way for truly pious behavior was to live according to the written Law. ... [They] stressed the importance of the priests in the Temple cult” and in their jurisprudential *Book of Decrees*, they insisted on a literal eye for an eye where the Pharisees would allow the payment of damages in

correlate with the likely origin of the Sadducee movement. See also <http://bible.org/seriespage/sadducees>, where Allen Ross also discusses the origin of the Sadducees but suggests the Boethusians became the Herodians and the followers of Zadok in this schism, the Sadducees.

10 See <http://lavistachurchofchrist.org/LVanswers/2007/10-21a.html>, quoting Adam Clark’s commentary on Matthew 16:1.

11 Marmorstein, *The Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Dead*, 581.

12 See <http://lavistachurchofchrist.org/LVanswers/2007/10-21a.html>. See also Deacon Duncan, “Life after Death, as the Sadducees saw it,” 8 November 2009, <http://blog.evangelicalrealism.com/2009/11/08/life-after-death-as-the-sadducees-saw-it/>.

13 John Piippo, “Why Did the Sadducees Deny the Idea of the Resurrection?,” 18 November 2010, <http://www.johnpiippo.com/2010/11/why-did-sadducees-deny-idea-of.html>.

lieu of a lost organ.¹⁴ In Acts 23:6–9, the Sadducees are said to have denied not only the resurrection but also the existence of angels, but reasonable commentators believe Luke (or Paul) was exaggerating since the written law is replete with accounts of angelic ministers, though perhaps not of the winged variety.¹⁵ Other commentators observe that the Sadducees did believe in an afterlife, though not in a resurrection of the body since they believed in the benighted dominion of Sheol.¹⁶

Josephus has stated that the Sadducees did not believe in fate, but instead they attributed human achievement to the choice and works of men.¹⁷ But Josephus is more explicit in his *Jewish War* where he stated that “the Sadducees ... take away fate entirely entirely, and suppose that God is not concerned in our doing or not doing what is evil; and they say, that to act what is good, or what is evil, is at men’s own choice, and that the one or the other belongs so to every one, that they may act as they please.”¹⁸

Whatever the origin and exact nature of Sadduceean theology, there is some correlation between their reported rigor in observance of the written law and Sherem’s insistence in Jacob 7:7 that “the right way of God” was to keep the law of Moses. Similarly, the Sadduceean insistence that men prosper in this life according to their works corresponds to Korihor’s insistence in Alma 30:17 that “every man fared in this life according to the management of the creature.” This *correlation* allows the suggestion that there may have been older origins for Sadduceean theology than has yet been traced by modern scholars.¹⁹ What of the Sadduceean insistence that there is no literal bodily resurrection? Would that idea have been familiar to some of the peoples of whom we read in

14 See <http://www.livius.org/people/sadducees/>.

15 Ibid.

16 Deacon Duncan, “Life after Death, as the Sadducees saw it,” quoting John C. Meyers’s book, *Christian Beliefs and Teachings*. C.S. Lewis is also here said to have stated that the Sadducees believed in Sheol.

17 Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 13:172–173. See also <http://bible.org/seriespage/sadducees>.

18 Josephus, *Jewish War* 2:162–166.

19 Note the writer’s essay suggesting earlier origins for the Jewish synagogue than have been generally contemplated by the scholars of Judaism. In part those earlier origins are justified by the existence of synagogues among Book of Mormon peoples who could not have brought this institution with them if had not originated until the Babylonian captivity (*Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 3 (2013) 155–195).

the Book of Mormon — and does that infer older origins for an anti-resurrection theology in Judaism than the second or third century BC?

Part II — Resurrection in the Book of Mormon

Robert J. Matthews notes that information about the resurrection “is rather uneven in the Book of Mormon.”²⁰ He notes no mention of the resurrection when Nephi₁ received an extended version of his father’s vision of the tree of life,²¹ no mention of the resurrection in quotations from the prophets Zenock, Neum, and Zenos even though they gave detailed prophecies concerning the Messiah’s crucifixion and burial,²² and no express reference to resurrection in King Benjamin’s valedictory sermon, “though it is certainly implied.”²³ “Lehi speaks mostly in broad general terms,”²⁴ “Jacob is more explicit ... than any of his predecessors,”²⁵ but Abinadi is a major if not the “major contributor to our knowledge of the resurrection”²⁶ in the Book of Mormon. For though Alma₂ and Amulek clearly added to and expounded on the teachings of resurrection that came to Alma₂ through his father from Abinadi, it was Abinadi who restored this doctrine in Nephite teaching after an absence of between 300 and 400 years.

Matthews points out that despite the later teachings of Samuel the Lamanite and Moroni, and the appearance and ministry of the resurrected Christ, which demonstrated and explained the physical resurrection, the Book of Mormon “does not define or distinguish between the quality of resurrected bodies.”²⁷ Nor does the Book of Mormon teach about the degrees of glory in the resurrection. That knowledge came to us through one of Paul’s letters to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 15) and in the latter-days through the revelations that comprise Sections 76 and 88 of the Doctrine and Covenants. The Book of Mormon prophets, to the extent that they discuss the matter at all, distinguish between only “the most wicked and the most righteous”²⁸ when they discuss resurrection.

20 Robert J. Matthews, “The Doctrine of Resurrection as Taught in the Book of Mormon”, *BYU Studies* 30:3, 41, 42.

21 Ibid., 42.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid., 45–46.

24 Ibid., 43.

25 Ibid., 45.

26 Ibid., 46.

27 Ibid., 52.

28 Ibid.

In their statistical study of the use of the word “resurrection” in the Book of Mormon, which “can help us focus our attention on what we can learn from the emphasis that a speaker places (or does not place) on resurrection,”²⁹ Hilton and Johnson confirm that:

- King Benjamin (among others) did not use the word at all.³⁰
- Although Alma₂ used the word more than any other in the Book of Mormon text, Abinadi used it more frequently.³¹
- The reason for Abinadi’s more frequent use of the word “may lie in [his] testimony that ‘redemption cometh through Christ the Lord’ (Mosiah 16:15).”³²

None of these authors appear to have considered the possibility that the lack of use of the word resurrection between Jacob and Abinadi may have been the result of what Jarom, Omni, and their successors Amaron, Chemish, and Abinadom described as stiffneckedness (Jarom 1:3, 4), wickedness (Omni 1:2), and the gradual departure of a culture of receiving revelation among the Nephites.³³ During this period of perhaps 350–400 years, those who wrote the Small Plates of Nephi suggest that the spirit of the Lord declined among the Nephites in various ways. Jarom said that he had nothing to add to what his fathers said (Jarom 1:2), though not all were “stiffnecked” (Jarom 1:3). Omni, his son, said that he had lived a wicked life (Omni 1:2) and had only dealt with the plates to pass them on to his son in accordance with his father’s command. Jarom’s grandson Amaron recounted that 320 years after Lehi came to the promised land, “the more wicked part of the Nephites had been destroyed ... because the Lord” would not preserve them when they did not keep his commandments (Omni 1:5–7). And though the apostasy word favored by Latter-day Saints in describing the gradual loss of priesthood authority and truth among the early Christians is not used, the words of those record keepers suggest that the work of the Holy Spirit among the Nephites had fallen away since there was nothing of “preaching of prophesying” among them that was worthy of record

29 John Hilton III and Jana Johnson, “Who Uses the Word *Resurrection* in the Book of Mormon and How Is It Used?,” *BYU Studies* 21:2, 30, 32 (2012).

30 Ibid, 32.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid, 33.

33 Jarom says that in his day, there were many among the Nephites who received revelations (Jarom 1:4). But three generations later, Abinadom “know[s] of no revelation save that which has been written” (Omni 1:11).

until the time of King Mosiah₁ (Omni 1: 10–13). In fact Abinadom says quite bluntly that he “know[s] of no revelation save that which has been written, neither prophecy” (Omni 1:11).

Part III — Abinadi’s Teaching About Resurrection

Because Abinadi’s teaching about resurrection is central to understanding the doctrine of resurrection in the Book of Mormon, it is set out in full so that the detail may be appreciated:

Yea, and have they [all the prophets (Mosiah 13:33)] not said also that he [the Messiah/God (Mosiah 13:33, 34)] should bring to pass the resurrection of the dead, and that he, himself, should be oppressed and afflicted? (Mosiah 13:35)

For were it not for the redemption which he hath made for his people, which was prepared from the foundation of the world, I say unto you, were it not for this, all mankind must have perished. But behold, the bands of death shall be broken, and the Son reigneth, and hath power over the dead; therefore, he bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead. And there cometh a resurrection, even a first resurrection; yea, even a resurrection of those that have been, and who are, and who shall be, even until the resurrection of Christ – for so he shall be called. And now, the resurrection of all the prophets, and all those that have believed in their words, or all those that have kept the commandments of God, shall come forth in the first resurrection; therefore, they are the first resurrection. They are raised to dwell with God who redeemed them; thus they have eternal life through Christ, who has broken the bands of death. And these are those who have part in the first resurrection; and these are they that have died before Christ came, in their ignorance, not having salvation declared unto them. And thus the Lord bringeth about the restoration of these; and they have a part in the first resurrection, or have eternal life, being redeemed by the Lord. And little children also have eternal life. But behold, and fear, and tremble before God, for ye ought to tremble; for the Lord redeemeth none such that rebel against him and die in their sins; yea, even all those that have perished in their sins ever since the world began, that have wilfully rebelled against God, that have known the commandments of God, and would not keep

them; these are they that have no part in the first resurrection. (Mosiah 15:19–26)

And if Christ had not risen from the dead, or have broken the bands of death that the grave should have no victory, and that death should have no sting, there could have been no resurrection. But there is a resurrection, therefore the grave hath no victory, and the sting of death is swallowed up in Christ. He is the light and the life of the world; yea, a light that is endless, that can never be darkened; yea, and also a life which is endless, that there can be no more death. Even this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruption shall put on incorruption, and shall be brought to stand before the bar of God, to be judged of him according to their works whether they be good or whether they be evil — If they be good to the resurrection of endless life and happiness; and if they be evil, to the resurrection of endless damnation, being delivered up to the devil, who hath subjected them, which is damnation. (Mosiah 16:7–11)

While it was Abinadi's denunciation of the wickedness of King Noah and his people that saw him bound, cast into prison, and then tried by King Noah and his priests (Mosiah 11:20–29), it was his teaching that "God himself should come down among the children of men" (Mosiah 17:8) that King Noah's court fixed upon as a crime worthy of the death penalty. While in a modern court we might have expected that Abinadi would have been charged with sedition or treason in suggesting that the established government was the cause of their Lamanite war, the court settled upon the death penalty because of a religious offence.³⁴

It is well known that Alma₁ was the only officer of King Noah's court who believed the words of Abinadi. That appears from his own record and from what the voice of the Lord said to him later when he inquired concerning how he should deal with transgressors in the Church.³⁵ His summary of what he learned from Abinadi and subsequently taught

34 This is one among many other aspects of Abinadi's ministry and teaching that typified Christ. See also Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997, 171–172).

35 Mosiah 17:2; 26:15. We are justified in believing that Alma₁ was the source of the material on the large plates of Nephi from which Mormon abridged the account that has come down to us in the Book of Mormon since he presents as the only person who would have known the fact of his singular belief.

believing subjects of King Noah outside the court is set out in Mosiah 18:2. He taught “the words of Abinadi”

concerning that which was to come, and also concerning the resurrection of the dead, and the redemption of the people, which was to be brought to pass through the power, and sufferings, and death of Christ, and his resurrection and ascension into heaven.

Alma₁ made a distinction between Abinadi’s teaching about the resurrection and his teaching concerning the redemption, which we now also call the atonement. That same distinction appears in Mormon’s summary of what Abinadi taught in King Noah’s court. There Mormon summarized that Abinadi had said that Moses prophesied of “the coming of the Messiah” and “that God should redeem his people” (Mosiah 13:33). Abinadi had gone on to say that “all the prophets” had said “that God himself should come among the children of men, and take upon him the form of man, and go forth in mighty power upon the face of the earth” (Mosiah 13:33–34). Abinadi had continued that “all the prophets” (Mosiah 13:33) had also said that the Messiah “should bring to pass the resurrection of the dead” (Mosiah 13:35).

Abinadi’s teaching of how the Messiah “should be oppressed and afflicted” (Mosiah 13:35) was then set forth in Mosiah chapters 14 and 15 along with explicit detail as to how the Messiah would redeem the faithful through his atonement and redemption. This redemption, which saves “all mankind” from perishing spiritually, required that “the bands of death ... be broken” (Mosiah 15:20). For Abinadi, the “first resurrection” was “of all the prophets, and all those that have believed in their words, or ... kept the commandments of God” (Mosiah 15:22) who have lived on the earth “until the resurrection of Christ” (Mosiah 15:21). While this meaning of the *first resurrection* phrase is different than the way most Latter-day Saints now use that phrase, when we think of the audience of Abinadi and Alma₂, we understand why they and others who spoke of resurrection before the coming of Christ would not have considered our modern use of that phrase, which encompasses those who have lived righteously down to the final judgment as forming part of that same generic *first resurrection*.

Fasting and prayer about this detailed teaching concerning the *first resurrection* later led Alma₂ to further revelation about resurrection.³⁶ But it had also been the cause of some contention in the Church at

36 See below in Part V.

Zarahemla before Alma₂ succeeded to the office of high priest. Indeed, Alma₂ seems to have been part of the source of that contention for he and the sons of Mosiah₂ were part of the “rising generation” (Mosiah 26:1) who “did not believe what had been said concerning the resurrection of the dead, neither did they believe concerning the coming of Christ” (Mosiah 26:2).

Mormon’s abridgement, here from the Large Plates of Nephi, does not say that they did not believe in the law of Moses. Rather it says that the rising generation rejected what had been taught by King Benjamin in his sermon at the temple and what had been taught, probably by Alma₁ following Abinadi, concerning the resurrection of the dead and the coming of Christ. And Mormon summarized that “they would not be baptized; neither would they join the church” (Mosiah 26:4).

Mormon’s abridgement does not make clear whether King Benjamin or Abinadi was the source of these teachings (the resurrection of the dead and the coming of Christ³⁷), but it is clear that the rising generation rejected what had been taught by both of these modern prophets. That problem was in part solved by the conversion of Alma₂ and the sons of Mosiah₂ as influential members of that rising generation recorded in the following chapter. But the core problem of apostasy from the doctrine taught in the church of God, established by Alma₁ following the teaching of Abinadi, led to unprecedented discussion between the first officers of the divided Nephite church and state (Mosiah 26:6–12). Before that time,³⁸ the King of the combined people of Mosiah₁ and Zarahemla had been a theocratic ruler and Benjamin as the second king of that combined people had been their leader in military, political, theological and liturgical matters. But from soon after the time Alma₁ brought his people to live as fellow citizens with the people of Zarahemla, Mosiah₂ had either delegated or abdicated his former religious functions in favor of Alma₁.

The rising generation were not alone in their dissent. Their dissent seems to have struck a chord among the Nephites at Zarahemla. They were not atheists, but rather, those who “would not be baptized ... [nor] join the church” (Mosiah 26:4), “were a separate people as to their faith, and remained so ever after” (Mosiah 26:4). While the keeper of the Large Plates of Nephi considered that these people were “carnal and sinful”

37 Note that Abinadi also knew that the Messiah to come would be called Christ though there is no statement of how he knew that (Mosiah 15:21).

38 Perhaps from the time that Amaleki delivered the Small Plates of Nephi to King Benjamin as discussed below.

(Mosiah 26:4) and were not given to prayer (Mosiah 26:4), he does not say that they were not people of faith. Their faith was simply different and for a time, Alma₂ and the sons of Mosiah₂ were numbered among them.

It is not surprising that Mormon has not given us a record of the script Alma₂ and the sons of Mosiah₂ used in their efforts to “deceive” those “who were in the church” (Mosiah 26:6) and who believed in the coming of Christ and in the resurrection. But it is not reasonable to surmise that their approach was completely areligious. It is more likely that they followed a version of the pre-existing faith of the people of Zarahemla, before either King Benjamin or Abinadi had taught them concerning the ministry of Christ and the resurrection.

When Alma₁ received his revelation of how to deal with those who did not follow the teachings of the church (Mosiah 26:14–32), the Lord reiterated the truthfulness of what he had been teaching and the validity of his establishment of a church in consequence (Mosiah 26:15–17). The Lord confirmed to Alma₁ that baptism was required of all who should join the church (Mosiah 26:21, 22) and that He would take upon Himself the sins of the world (Mosiah 26:23) and redeem and bring them forth to live “eternally at [His] right hand” (Mosiah 26:24). When Alma₂ and the sons of Mosiah₂ were met on the road by the angel of the Lord, they were essentially taught that the church established by Alma₁ was the Lord’s church and by implication that its teaching that they had opposed, were true and correct. They thus knew that Christ would come down among men, that He would redeem the faithful and resurrect them in a glorious first resurrection at the time that He, the Christ, would be resurrected.

Alma₂ and the sons of Mosiah₂ then tried to reclaim all the members of the church who had been lost because of their teaching of a different faith, but they were not entirely successful (Mosiah 27:32, 35–36). It thus appears that after Alma₁ was given authority by King Mosiah₂ to establish the Church of Christ among the people of Zarahemla, that there were at least two sorts of religion among them. The church led by Alma₁, a church or faith followed by those who followed the law of Moses but who did not believe in the coming of Christ and the resurrection from the dead, and perhaps some others who subscribed to an older perhaps Mulekite religion that existed before the people of Zarahemla and the people of Nephi were combined under Mosiah₁.³⁹

39 Others have written concerning the joinder of the Nephite and the Mulekites (e.g., John L. Sorenson, “The Mulekites”, *BYU Studies*, Volume 30:3, Summer 1990, 6, <https://ojs.lib.byu.edu/spc/index.php/BYUStudies/article/viewFile/5873/5523>).

Because this article is focused on the nature and development of the doctrine of resurrection in the Book of Mormon, I will not look further into the nature of Nephite/Mulekite religion before and after Alma₁ established a church among them. For current purposes it suffices to observe that the resurrection doctrine taught by Alma₁ was considered unorthodox by some at Zarahemla. But so was King Benjamin's teaching concerning the coming of a suffering Messiah to be called Jesus Christ. Did King Benjamin also teach his people about the resurrection from the dead so that the Church of God in Zarahemla perfectly combined the almost identical teachings of these two great Book of Mormon prophets, or was Abinadi the sole source of the resurrection doctrine that was later developed by Alma₂ and Samuel the Lamanite?

King Benjamin's Teaching Omits the Doctrine of Resurrection

The only explicit references to the doctrine of resurrection in the Book of Mormon before Abinadi fulfilled his mission are connected with the life and ministry of Nephi₁'s younger brother Jacob. Nephi₁ recorded Lehi's final patriarchal instructions and blessing to Jacob, including:

The teaching that the Messiah would enable the redemption of man by offering himself as a sacrifice for sin for all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit (2 Nephi 2:6, 7).

- The connected good news that the Messiah would take his life again by the power of the Spirit as the firstfruits of the resurrection (2 Nephi 2:8, 9; Jacob 4:11).

And then in his later ministry Jacob expanded what he had learned when he additionally taught that:

- Death and resurrection came as related parts of "the merciful plan of the great Creator" (2 Nephi 9:6).
- The great Creator would make an infinite atonement to enable all flesh to rise from the grave (2 Nephi 9:5, 7–11).

While the Book of Mormon glosses over the political issues that were involved saying little more than that the Nephite leader was appointed King of the combined people because of the literacy of the latter (Omni 1:13–19), there are suggestions that this joinder was not happy after two generations with the Amlicites possibly rejecting the Nephite aristocratic leadership perhaps because they descended from Mulek who had the greatest claim upon the kingship. It has also been observed that the Amalekite religion may have been a carry over from Mulekite times.

- The resurrection enabled the restoration of the captive bodies and captive spirits to one to another respectively from death and hell in an incorruptible form (2 Nephi 9:12, 13).
- This resurrection of individuals would include the restoration of a perfect knowledge of their earthly existence and choices in preparation for the judgment day (2 Nephi 9:13–15, 22; Jacob 6:9, 10).

But after those teachings of Jacob, there is no mention of the doctrine of resurrection taught by Jacob until Abinadi refreshed it. Now partly that may be because there is no record of anything much between Jacob and King Benjamin (perhaps between 550 and 130 BC). But it may be significant that Benjamin did not teach the doctrine of resurrection despite his detailed exposition of the doctrine of atonement in his final address when he proclaimed his son Mosiah₂ as the new king around 124 BC. While it is possible, as the Rabbi Marmorstein and Robert Matthews quoted above suggest, that Benjamin simply took for granted the fact that his people understood that there would be a resurrection of at least the righteous or that their resurrection was implicit, still Benjamin's omission is surprising since his explanation of the atonement was so detailed. Indeed, it seems unlikely that Benjamin would have left the doctrine of resurrection out of his lengthy final address if he knew and understood that doctrine. Thus it is appropriate to detail exactly what King Benjamin did teach about the atonement.

Benjamin told the people that he had served them “walking with a clear conscience before God ... that [he] might be found blameless ... when [he should] stand to be judged of God” (Mosiah 2:27). He used the language of atonement to explain his desire for a clear conscience. He had lived a life of righteousness and had summoned his people to listen to his final conference address “that [their] blood should not come upon [him]” (Mosiah 2:27). He spoke of his desire to “rid [his] garments of [their] blood, at [the] ... time when [he was] about to go down to [his] grave, that [he] might go down in peace, and [his] immortal spirit may join the choirs above in singing the praises of a just God” (Mosiah 2:28).

There was no mention of a hope of a glorious resurrection in an incorruptible body. He only spoke of dying with a clear conscience and a desire that his spirit would join the choirs above. While King Benjamin may have taken the knowledge of the doctrine of resurrection for granted in his people, it is surprising that he did not mention it since the

resurrection doctrine is such a powerful generator of hope and faith in hearers in any age.

It appears that Benjamin was in possession of the Small Plates of Nephi containing Jacob's teachings at the time of this last address since Amaleki infers that he passed them on to Benjamin when he was still king (Omni 1:25). It also seems likely that Benjamin did not retain possession of these sacred things after he passed along the keys of his office to his son Mosiah₂, who was thereafter recognized as a seer in his father's place (Mosiah 8:12–18). A practice of passing on the plates and interpreters seems to have been followed when Alma₂ passed his keys along to his son Helaman₁ (Alma 37:1–12). If Benjamin had received Nephi's Small Plates by the time of his final address and was familiar with their contents, it is surprising that he needed a separate revelation to learn from an angel that the name of the coming Messiah would be Jesus Christ (Mosiah 3:2–8) since that was already recorded in the Small Plates of Nephi. (2 Nephi 10:3).

Nephi and Jacob [and later Abinadi (Mosiah 15:21)] both knew that the Messiah would be called Christ, for Jacob had that name revealed to him in the first century after Lehi arrived in the promised land (2 Nephi 10:3), and he and his immediate successors used that name frequently.⁴⁰ While King Benjamin taught his sons “all the language of his fathers” (Mosiah 1:2) so that they might “know concerning the prophecies ... spoken by the mouths of their fathers” (Mosiah 1:2) and “concerning the records which were engraven on the plates of brass” (Mosiah 1:3), it does not appear that he taught them the language in which the brass plates were written (Mosiah 1:3, 4). And when he testified of the truthfulness of the “plates of Nephi” (Mosiah 1:6) with an admonition that his sons “search them diligently” (Mosiah 1:7), it is probable that he was referring to the Large Plates of Nephi, which had been kept in the royal line in accordance with Nephi's original direction (1 Nephi 9:4; 2 Nephi 5:31–33), rather than the Small Plates, which had only recently been given to him by Amaleki and which had come down through Nephi's younger brother Jacob who never succeeded to the kingship.⁴¹

40 Note also that Nephi is still the record keeper at this point. See also 2 Nephi 25:19–29; 26:1, 8, 12; 27:11; 30:5, 7; 31:2–21; 32:3, 6, 9; 33:6–7, 9–12; Jacob 1:4, 6–8; 2:19; 4:4–6, 11–12; 6:8–9; 7:2–3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 17, 19; Enos 1:8, 15, 26–27; Omni 1:26 for prophetic reference to Jesus Christ in the record known as the Small Plates of Nephi.

41 2 Nephi 5:18; Jacob 1:10, 11, 14–15. In both of these chapters there is an inference that the priesthood keys and the authority of the king may have been separated when Nephi died since most of 2 Nephi after chapter 5 was recorded

There are various reasons why King Benjamin may not have read the Small Plates of Nephi including: first, that they covered the same period as the Large Plates of Nephi to that time (1 Nephi 6 and 9) and were less detailed (1 Nephi 6 and 9); second, they may have been written in a priestly language that was unfamiliar to those who had not been schooled to understand them⁴² or who did not have access to Urim and Thummim;⁴³ and finally, it is possible that the Small Plates contained sacred priestly knowledge that was purposely withheld from the generality of the people, awaiting revelation by a later foreordained prophet in a day of greater faith.⁴⁴

If King Benjamin only became able and entitled to read and understand the Small Plates when Amaleki handed them to him at the end of his life, it is possible that he had not had time to read them before he gave his sermon. If that is correct, then it is not surprising that he required a separate revelation from an angel to authorize him to reveal the Messiah's mortal name to his people, perhaps so that he would not break a commandment of priestly secrecy that protected the contents of the priestly record given to him by Amaleki.

There are ample templates for this possibility, both in the Book of Mormon record that has come down to us⁴⁵ and elsewhere in scripture

by Jacob as Nephi's priestly successor, and the reference in Jacob 1 immediately follows the explanation that Jacob's role was to minister to the people at the temple and was separate from the office of King or Nephi. If these offices were separated after Nephi's death, perhaps they came together again when Amaleki handed the Small Plates of Nephi to King Benjamin resulting in his delivery of an atonement day sermon at the temple rather than the seedless Amaleki (Omni 1:25) as Jacob's priestly successor. Nephi₁ also alludes to a separation between his spiritual and his temporal role when he refers to the primary spiritual purpose of the Small Plates (1 Nephi 9:2, 3).

42 Above, n 41.

43 Mosiah₁ and Mormon both refer to their written language as having changed with the passage of time (Omni 1:17, 18; Mormon 9:34). Nephi₁ also seems to have appreciated that written language changes with time (1 Nephi 3:19). Zeniff seems to have taken particular pride in the fact that he had been "taught in all the language of the Nephites" (Mosiah 9:1). He may thus have been a member of a priestly class, one of whose reasons for returning to the city of Nephi-Lehi was to reclaim the temple Nephi had built and which the Nephites had abandoned when they followed Mosiah₁ down to the Mulekite land of Zarahemla.

44 Below, n 45 and supporting text.

45 For example, in Alma 12, when Zeezrom showed signs of repentance at Ammonihah and asked Alma₂ whence came this knowledge of the doctrine of resurrection, Alma₂ responded by saying that "it is given unto many to know the mysteries of God; nevertheless, they are laid under a strict command that they

that the Latter-day Saints hold as canonical.⁴⁶ The suggestion that King Benjamin might not have read the Small Plates of Nephi is difficult for Latter-day Saints to accept since that record was so important to Nephi₁ (1 Nephi 6 and 9) and has become similarly important to us because of the loss of the first 116 pages of the Book of Mormon manuscript. But the possibility that this record was not accessible to the generality of the Nephite people, and that King Benjamin did not know from the scriptures that the Messiah would be named Jesus Christ on earth and may not have known that the Messiah's atonement would bring to pass the resurrection from the dead, suggest the possibility that Benjamin had not read the Small Plates when he gave his sermon at the temple. It also seems likely that Mormon had not read the Small Plates of Nephi before he was well engaged in his grand abridgement of the Large Plates of Nephi for the record that we know as the Book of Mormon (Words of Mormon 1:3–7).

If Benjamin had already read the Small Plates of Nephi and knew the name of Christ, then perhaps what happened the night before he delivered his sermon at the temple is that he was given angelic dispensation to reveal knowledge of the Messiah's personal name to his people at approximately the same time as Abinadi unfolded a knowledge of the suffering Messiah to be named Christ, and the doctrine of the resurrection to King Noah's priests. That timing would seem to accord with the Lord's purposes since the time of Messiah's mortal birth and the resurrection were rapidly approaching.

Using the text of what has been recorded of King Benjamin's sermon at the temple, I now set out the passages that suggest to me that King Benjamin may not have understood the nature and doctrine of the resurrection when he gave his sermon at the temple. Some will ask how he could have believed in the atonement without the resurrection. That should be a relatively simple question for a modern Latter-day Saint to answer since there are many modern Christians who do not believe that Christ has a body even though they believe He was resurrected, and there are many Christians and Jews who do believe in a bodily resurrection

shall not impart, only according to the portion of his words which he doth grant unto the children of men" (Alma 12:8–10). A similar pattern of withholding sacred knowledge can be seen in Alma₂'s instructions to his son Helaman detailing what he could and could not reveal when he made him custodian of the sacred records and passed on to him the office of High Priest over the people of Nephi (Alma 37:11, 13–15, 21–33).

46 For example, in Moses 1:42 and in the Savior's use of parables during his earthly ministry (Matthew 13:33–34).

but who do not believe that it is universal. It is also clear from the Book of Mormon text, that there were many Nephites who did not believe that there would be a bodily resurrection or that there should be a Christ, even though they still believed in the law of Moses.⁴⁷

Even when Benjamin taught his people what the angel had taught him about the coming Messiah including the name by which He would be known in the flesh, Benjamin still did not directly teach the resurrection. He taught:

- In a not far distant time, the Lord Omnipotent shall come down from heaven among the children of men and in a tabernacle of clay shall work mighty miracles (Mosiah 3:5).
- He shall be tempted and tried even more than other men such that blood will come from every pore of his body (Mosiah 3:7).
- He shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, and His mother shall be called Mary (Mosiah 3:8).
- He shall be scourged and crucified and rise the third day and thereafter judge the world (Mosiah 3:9, 10).

There is no use of the word *resurrection* in connection with Christ's rising nor suggestion that anyone else would rise or be resurrected either. Everything Benjamin said was focused upon the need for his people to be cleansed by atonement. All their Mosaic ordinances were revealed anew by King Benjamin's instructing angel as a type and prefiguring of Christ who would atone for their sins. There is no use of the word *redeem* or *redemption* in King Benjamin's address. The closest Benjamin came to teaching such a doctrine was his statement that Christ would rise the third day after He was crucified, though such rising does not infer a bodily resurrection.

Part IV — Abinadi and the Doctrine of Resurrection

Where then did Abinadi learn the doctrine of resurrection? Had he read the Small Plates of Nephi that contained Jacob's teaching? Did he perhaps belong to a priestly class that had access to protected sacred

47 See for example, Alma₂ and the sons of Mosiah₂ in Mosiah 26:1–2 and Sherem in Jacob 7. Zeezrom may have also believed in the law of Moses though not in the coming of Christ and the resurrection from the grave, before his conversion (Alma 12:8).

knowledge, or had he received a separate revelation, like King Benjamin, in preparation for the Savior's approaching birth in the flesh?

At the time Abinadi declared repentance among the people of King Noah, the Small Plates of Nephi were still in the custody of either Amaleki or his father Abinadom. But it is possible that Abinadi was a member of Zeniff's party that went up to reclaim their land of inheritance (Omni 1:27–30; Mosiah 7, 9–10) — indeed, Amaleki says that he had a brother who went with that group and who had not returned, perhaps implying that he expected that missing brother to have returned and become custodian of the records (Omni 1:30).⁴⁸ If Abinadi was not familiar with the contents of the Small Plates of Nephi before Zeniff's party departed for the land of Lehi-Nephi, his knowledge of the doctrine contained in the Small Plates might also be explained by some low-level perhaps priestly interaction between the people of King Noah in the land of Nephi and the people of King Mosiah, and King Benjamin in the land of Zarahemla. However, such contact seems unlikely since there is no reference to such interaction in the records kept by Zeniff's colony and none of the various Nephite groups in the land of Lehi-Nephi seem to have been able to find their way back to the land of Zarahemla without help.⁴⁹ What seems more likely is that Abinadi belonged to a family who

48 Note that it is unlikely that Abinadom is the same person as Abinadi since his small contribution to the book of Omni speaks only of his personal involvement in war with the curious addition that “the record of this people is had by the kings, according to the generations; and I know of no revelation save that which has been written, neither prophecy” (Omni 1:10, 11). The curiosity is that he discounts these plates compared with those kept by the kings. Perhaps there were additional wise purposes why these plates became separate from those kept by the kings — including that they became an additional and separate witness of the name of Christ and of the doctrine of resurrection. See also Roger Terry's suggestion that Abinadi was Amaleki's missing brother (Roger Terry, “Scripture Notes: Unearthing Abinadi's Genealogy,” *Sunstone Magazine*, 11 June 2013, <https://www.sunstonemagazine.com/scripture-notes-unearthing-abinadis-genealogy/>).

49 Mosiah 8 (verse 7 in particular) documents King Limhi's unsuccessful efforts to find the way back to the land of Zarahemla, finding instead the records of the extinct Jaredite civilization (see also Mosiah 21:25, 26, 36). Initially, the Amulonites had no interest in finding either the land of Lehi-Nephi or the land of Zarahemla, but sought a passage back to the land of Lehi-Nephi when that knowledge enabled them to make peace with the armies of the Lamanites who found them when unsuccessfully following the people of King Limhi who had escaped to Zarahemla through Ammon's guidance (Mosiah 23:30–37). The people

had preserved the knowledge of Jacob's teaching in some way⁵⁰ — or that he had received a separate and more detailed revelation of the doctrine of atonement, redemption, and resurrection than had been provided even to King Benjamin by the angel that appeared to him on the eve of his sermon at the temple.⁵¹

However Abinadi knew the doctrine, it was controversial, compelling, and converting in at least one case when he taught it. No sooner had Alma₁ escaped from King Noah than he began teaching the words of Abinadi (Mosiah 18:1). What Alma₁ taught from Abinadi was

That which was to come, and also concerning the resurrection of the dead, and the redemption of the people, which was to be brought to pass through the power, and sufferings, and death of Christ, and his resurrection and ascension into heaven. (Mosiah 18:2)

It appears from this summary of Alma₁'s teaching that the part of Abinadi's teaching that most caught Alma₁'s attention was his teaching about redemption and resurrection. If King Benjamin's people did not know any more than to keep the law of Moses for the sake of keeping their consciences clear, then that was likely the extent of the most detailed doctrinal teaching that King Noah's priests could provide as well. Small wonder that any people with less than half a knowledge of the plan of salvation should have need of a prophet to call them to repentance. The hope of a resurrection is the best and most inspiring part of the plan.

What additional insights did Abinadi provide into the doctrine of resurrection that do not exist in Jacob's more general teaching, and how was the doctrine of resurrection taught among the Nephites and Lamanites once Abinadi had refreshed it? The doctrine of resurrection flows after Abinadi from Alma₁ to Alma₂ to Helaman₁ and Corianton,

of Alma₁ were also eventually able to escape their Amulonite/Lamanite bondage to the land of Zarahemla but required divine guidance to do so (Mosiah 24:16–25).

50 If Abinadi was Amaleki's lost brother and another son of Abinadom who had become hereditary custodians of Nephi₁'s sacred record of priestly ministry among the people, then Abinadi was likely himself a priest and may have been one of the priests of Zeniff who was displaced when King Noah succeeded him. If so, he may have been familiar with Alma₁ or even related to him making it more understandable why King Mosiah₂ should have passed the records over to Alma₁ when he divided church and state and allowed Alma₁ to establish a church among the people of Zarahemla.

51 Alma₂ taught that many who qualified themselves by worthiness and careful study, received revelations that the Lord kept from the generality of the people (Alma 12:9–11; 13:8–20; 37:43–46; 40:3, 15, 20–21).

through Helaman₂, his son Nephi₂ to Samuel the Lamanite, and then to Nephi₃ in time for the very first resurrection.

Abinadi Provides More Detail About the Doctrine of Resurrection Than Jacob

Abinadi provided five insights into the doctrine of resurrection that were not previously recorded in the writings of Nephi₁ and Jacob that have come down to us in the Book of Mormon:

1. The concept of a first resurrection.
2. The idea that the righteous will be resurrected before the wicked.
3. The idea that the righteous till the time of Christ will be resurrected almost simultaneously with him.
4. The idea that those who died in ignorance of the gospel will have part in the first resurrection.
5. The idea that little children will be automatically resurrected.

When President Joseph F. Smith received his revelation of the redemption of the dead, it came as a response to his questions about the meaning of passages discussing the spirit world in the New Testament (D&C 138:1–10). For example, he wondered how Christ could have taught all the disembodied spirits in paradise in the three days while he was there, which was his understanding from what Peter had taught in his first epistle (D&C 138:28). In the revelation that President Smith received, he learned that Christ's three-day ministry among the disembodied spirits was spent instructing prophet leaders there how that work was to be done now that the gates of the prison house had been opened (D&C 138:29–36).

When Abinadi taught the doctrine of resurrection, his focus was upon its genesis for there had not yet been any resurrection. In essence what he taught the people was if you want to be resurrected first with Christ, then you need to be counted among the righteous for the wicked will not have that opportunity. And then he listed those who counted as the righteous:

- The prophets (Mosiah 15:22).
- All those who believed on their words, or all those who kept the commandments (Mosiah 15:22).
- Little children (Mosiah 15:25).

But Abinadi generalized and that generality led to questions in Alma₂, and questions from holy men with inquiring minds lead to new and additional revelations (Alma 5:46–48; 40:3). What questions arise from Abinadi's teaching about those who would have part in the first resurrection?

Abinadi's use of the word *or*, between those who believed the prophets and those who kept the commandments in his list of those who would have part in the first resurrection, raises a question. It suggests that while he knew there would be a resurrection of people who died in ignorance, he was not sure how they qualified for resurrection if they did not know the gospel so as to live it. Surely participation in the first resurrection was not the simple product of ignorance of the gospel and principles of righteousness. If the generally wicked and rebellious were excluded from resurrection at the time of Christ, then surely those who were ignorant and wicked would not be resurrected.

This is the very same question that occurred to Joseph Smith and which was answered in the revelation now recorded as D&C 137. But questions about the resurrection of little children also arise from Abinadi's summary. Clearly innocent children qualify for eternal life and will be resurrected among the righteous, but when? Abinadi seems to use the phrases *first resurrection* and *eternal life* interchangeably, but he retreats from using both expressions together in connection with little children. We can now surmise that is because little children may have to wait to be resurrected until their righteous parents can raise them as they have been promised by Joseph Smith among others.⁵²

Most interesting in Abinadi's teaching and certainly most interesting to Alma₂ was the question of timing that comes from Abinadi's idea of a first resurrection. In the latter-days, our patriarchs bless us all, if righteous, that we will have part in the first resurrection. In our context, the first resurrection means the resurrection of the just that happens before any unjust persons are resurrected. But for Abinadi, the focus was upon the resurrection that happened at the same time that Christ was resurrected. He wanted his listeners to want to be part of that resurrection and so he told them how to qualify. But his generality left unanswered questions when Alma₂ pondered his father's record of Abinadi's words.

52 Joseph F. Smith, "Status of Children in the Resurrection," *Improvement Era*, May 1918, 571.

Part V — The Doctrine of Resurrection in the Book of Mormon After Abinadi – Alma₂

We learn of Alma₂'s further questions about the resurrection in his record of his disciplinary discussion with his son Corianton following the latter's moral transgression during missionary service (Alma 39–42). Corianton had sought to justify his transgression to his father by expressing doubts about what he was teaching concerning the resurrection.⁵³ These same questions had occurred to his father who had previously made them the subject of diligent inquiry (Alma 5:46–48; 40:3). Alma₂'s further insights into the doctrine of resurrection are listed below:

- No one is resurrected until after the coming of Christ (Alma 40:2).
- There is a specific time appointed when every person will be resurrected, but only God knows that time (Alma 40:4, 9).
- There will likely be multiple times of resurrection since there will be righteous people who live and die after Christ dies and is resurrected (Alma 40:5, 8).
- Alma₂ believed that the righteous till Christ would be resurrected with him (Alma 40:20).⁵⁴

Alma₂ also discussed with Corianton what was meant by the phrase *first resurrection*, which raised some of the ambiguities I have mentioned above.⁵⁵ Alma₂ conceded a third possible meaning for the phrase *first*

53 There is an irony here that was surely not lost of Alma₂ since he would have remembered his own disbelief in the doctrine of resurrection had been part of his own justification for sin before his conversion (Mosiah 26:1–4).

54 Note that Samuel the Lamanite evidently received more revelation in answer to this question since he prophesied that “many graves shall be opened, and shall yield up many of their dead; and many saints shall appear unto many” (Helaman 14:25) as a sign of Christ's death. Though our record of Samuel's words does not speak of this as resurrection, Christ seems to have so characterized it among the Nephites (3 Nephi 23:9–13), which is a little odd since one would not have expected them to rise until Christ had first been resurrected, which was after the three days of tumult had subsided.

55 Note also that the resurrection of Christ and those resurrected with him is one way to understand the phrase “first resurrection.” The other common meaning is to distinguish the resurrection of the just from the unjust, the former being the first.

resurrection — namely the restoration of the disembodied souls of the righteous to a state of happiness between death and the resurrection (Alma 40:15). And while Alma₂ could understand why some of his contemporaries might have thought that was what the phrase meant, he said that what Abinadi intended by the phrase was “the reuniting of the soul with the body, of those from the days of Adam down to the resurrection of Christ” (Alma 40:18), which is not the normal use of the phrase among Latter-day Saints.

Alma₂ had also taught others the doctrine of the resurrection before his discussion with Corianton. He saw and used it as a powerful missionary tool that would encourage all his hearers to repentance. That he had taught it to Amulek, his missionary companion before their preaching at the city of Ammonihah, is evident in Amulek’s detailed exposition of the doctrine in response to Zeezrom’s efforts to cross him in his words:

And he shall come into the world to redeem his people; and he shall take upon himself the transgressions of those who believe on his name; and these are they that have eternal life, and salvation cometh to none else. Therefore the wicked remain as though there had been no redemption made, except it be the loosing of the bands of death; for behold, the day cometh that all shall rise from the dead and stand before God, and be judged according to their works. Now, there is a death which is called a temporal death; and the death of Christ shall loose the bands of this temporal death, that all shall be raised from this temporal death. The spirit and the body shall be reunited again in its perfect form; both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame, even as we now are at this time; and we shall be brought to stand before God, knowing even as we know now, and have a bright recollection of all our guilt. Now, this restoration shall come to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, both the wicked and the righteous; and even there shall not so much as a hair of their heads be lost; but every thing shall be restored to its perfect frame, as it is now, or in the body, and shall be brought and be arraigned before the bar of Christ the Son, and God the Father, and the Holy Spirit, which is one Eternal God, to be judged according to their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil. Now, behold, I have spoken unto you concerning the death of the mortal body, and also concerning

the resurrection of the mortal body. I say unto you that this mortal body is raised to an immortal body, that is from death, even from the first death unto life, that they can die no more; their spirits uniting with their bodies, never to be divided; thus the whole becoming spiritual and immortal, that they can no more see corruption. (Alma 11:40–45)

This is the clearest explanation of the physical nature of the resurrection that exists in scripture. It goes into detail well beyond that provided by Abinadi and suggests that either Alma₂ or Amulek or both of them, had been given more detailed answers to questions that occurred to them as they prepared for their missionary work among the Ammonihahites.

Samuel the Lamanite

The next person to have received revelation in connection with the doctrine of the resurrection was Samuel the Lamanite. While Alma₂ had certainly anticipated the doctrine Samuel taught when he opined to his son Corianton that the souls and bodies of the righteous would be reunited at the time of Christ's resurrection (Alma 40:20), Samuel spoke with the authority of one ordained to impart a specific message. Detailing to the wicked Nephites no more than 6 years before Christ's birth, the signs that would attest his birth and those that would attest his death, he included among the latter the statement that "many graves shall be opened, and shall yield up many of their dead; and many saints shall appear unto many" (Helaman 14:25).

This passage is a little awkward since it seems to suggest that the graves were opened and the resurrected dead appeared before the end of the three days darkness, which would have been before Christ was resurrected.⁵⁶ But the passage is most significant because mention of its fulfillment had been omitted from the canonized version of the Nephite scriptures of which Nephi₃ was custodian at the time Christ came and ministered personally among the Nephites. It is the more memorable for two reasons. Firstly, that Christ directed that it be included in the scriptural record of which Nephi₃ was custodian (3 Nephi 23:9–13) to ensure that there was a record kept of the fulfillment of this prophecy.⁵⁷

56 It seems more likely that the dead were seen after the darkness lifted else how could they have been seen?

57 Apparently Christ was disappointed that this fulfillment of prophecy had not been recorded in the year that elapsed between the signs of His death and His

And second, because our translation of that account still does not include the correction — so that we only know about it because Nephi₃ faithfully recorded all he was allowed to record of the Savior's personal ministry, even when his record revealed his faults.⁵⁸

References to Resurrection After Samuel

The remaining references to the doctrine of resurrection in the Book of Mormon do not add to our understanding. For while Christ expounded all things from the beginning including the resurrection in 3 Nephi 26, Mormon has only given us an abridged account⁵⁹ which restates that

all people ... shall stand before God, to be judged of their works ... [if] they be good, to the resurrection of everlasting life; and if they be evil to the resurrection of damnation ... according to the mercy, and the justice, and the holiness which is in Christ, who was before the world began. (3 Nephi 26:4–5)

Mormon knew more than he wrote since he had the unabridged account of Christ's ministry and teaching before him, but he was instructed to add no more (3 Nephi 26: 8–11), though he did reference the doctrine in passing in one of his pastoral letters to his son Moroni (Moroni 7:41). Moroni also added a little when he referred to the universal resurrection being hailed by a trump (Mormon 9:13; D&C 88:94–102), and his expectation of being “brought forth triumphant through the air” (Moroni 10:34).

Internal Consistency of the Book of Mormon

There are a number of matters that arise from this discussion that tend to prove the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. They include that:

personal appearance among the Nephites (3 Nephi 8:2; 10:18).

58 The correction of records made by inscription on metal plates is difficult if not impossible. When that difficulty is recognized, it seems that Nephi₃'s simple addition that this had been omitted satisfies the witness purpose required by Christ when He ministered among the Nephites. That is, it was not possible for Nephi to go back and add a few extra lines at the relevant place in the chronological record upon the large plates of Nephi later abridged by Mormon.

59 This by instruction from Christ (3 Nephi 26:11). He recorded the “lesser part of the things which he taught among the people ... first, to try their faith, and if it shall so be that they shall believe these things then shall the greater things be made manifest unto them” (3 Nephi 26:8, 9).

- The doctrine develops consistently.
- If Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery had perceived that King Benjamin did not teach the doctrine of resurrection after Lehi and Jacob had already done so, they would likely have tried to correct King Benjamin's sermon or would have tried to explain the omission.
- Alma₁ was impressed by Abinadi's teaching of the doctrine of resurrection. He would not have been so impressed if he had known Jacob's teaching on the same subject.
- The doctrine impressed Alma₂ in exactly the places where Abinadi had added to Jacob's teaching.
- It is hard to imagine Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery coming up with such a subtle doctrinal sub-plot if the Book of Mormon was their fictional creation.

Conclusion

The development of the doctrine of resurrection in the Book of Mormon is a story of great subtlety. Though it seemed well established and elementary in Jacob's teaching during the first century after the Lehi colony arrived in the promised land, it was heretical and perhaps even seditious when Abinadi restored it in his teaching in the land of Lehi-Nephi and particularly in the court of King Noah and his priests. But it was also inspirational and motivational. It was part of the reason why Alma₁ left King Noah's court and established the first Church of Christ among the Nephites. From Abinadi's ministry onwards, this doctrine coupled with the doctrine of the suffering servant Messiah formed the core of orthodox Nephite teaching. A desire to learn more about the doctrine of resurrection led Alma₂ to detailed reflection and the further revelation that followed, enabled him to establish the Church in Zarahemla and the surrounding lands. It provided the people of the church, which he and his father established, a stronger reason to live righteous lives. Alma₂ also used the doctrine of resurrection to strengthen his teaching of the need for repentance to his wayward son Corianton.

While it appears that the Nephites knew less about the doctrine of resurrection than the Latter-day Saints even after the revelations received by Abinadi, Alma₂, and Samuel the Lamanite, those inspired leaders used their new doctrinal insights to motivate those whom they led to better lives of righteousness. The gap between what the Nephites knew

about resurrection and what the Latter-day Saints now know suggests that we live below our privileges. These differences in understanding also attest the authenticity of the Book of Mormon translational process. For if Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were not themselves learning these doctrines as they proceeded, it would have been very hard for them to avoid correcting the gaps in understanding that appear in the story, particularly in King Benjamin's atonement day sermon.

These insights into doctrinal development within the Book of Mormon, also suggest that this book has barely begun to do its work in convincing Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ.

A. Keith Thompson LLB (Hons); M Jur; PhD is the Associate Dean at the University of Notre Dame Australia School of Law, Sydney. He also practices commercial and property law in New South Wales and Victoria, Australia. He formerly served twenty years as International Legal Counsel for the Church in the Pacific and Africa Areas and has also served in the Church as Bishop, Stake President, and Mission President. He and his wife Anita have eight children and eight grandchildren so far.

NOT LEAVING AND GOING ON TO PERFECTION

Matthew L. Bowen

A Review of Samuel M. Brown's First Principles and Ordinances: The Fourth Article of Faith in Light of the Temple, Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, 2014. 167 pp., index. \$16.95.

In his most recent book, *First Principles and Ordinances: The Fourth Article of Faith in Light of the Temple* (hereafter *First Principles*), Samuel M. Brown observes that “the Plan of Salvation [is] fundamentally about relationships.”¹ This recognition drove the prophet Joseph Smith and early Church members to “forge communities [of saints] that could endure beyond the veil of death” (151). Today, the importance of the temple and its ordinances to family relationships, eternal in their design, are clear to most Latter-day Saints. However, our collective view of the meaning of the principles and ordinances that precede the temple — and lead us to it — is somewhat murkier. Brown demonstrates that what Latter-day Saints sometimes perfunctorily regard merely as “the first principles and ordinances of the gospel” (Articles of Faith 1:4) are — every bit as much as the temple itself is — about relationships. In fact, one cannot fully contextualize the temple and its ordinances unless one understands this aspect of the first principles and ordinances of the gospel.

The Relationship of Relationships to Perfection

One of the more gratifying aspects of reading Samuel Brown's excellent book has been its creating in me a deepening awareness of the enormous implications that the first principles and ordinances of the gospel have for our approach to individual relationships — especially marriage and family but also friendships and community. Before I review the content

1 Samuel M. Brown, *First Principles and Ordinances: The Fourth Article of Faith in Light of the Temple* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, 2014), 151. Page numbers for quotations from Brown's book appear in parentheses following the quotation.

of *First Principles*, however, I wish to share an insight regarding the relationship of relationships — and not leaving them — that this book has suggested to me.

From the outset of my reading this book, Brown's loving and thorough (but not exhaustive) approach to the gospel's first principles and ordinances called to mind Hebrews 6:1–2, which states, "Therefore leaving [*aphentes*] the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection [*teleiōtēta*]; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment." The prophet Joseph Smith in his inspired revision of the text of the King James Version of the Bible (the Joseph Smith Translation, hereafter JST) changed the first part of 6:1 to read: "Therefore **not** leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ."²

The verb rendered "leaving" by the KJV translators, Greek *aphiēmi*, can have a much stronger sense: for example, "abandon." In fact, this word was used as a technical term for "divorce" (compare Hebrew *ʾāzab* = "forsake," "abandon," "divorce"). The emendation of "leaving" to "not leaving" reflects the prophet Joseph Smith's correct understanding that we — individually and collectively as a church — can never "abandon" or "divorce" the "principles" or "beginning" (*archēs*) of the doctrine of Christ, including the first principles and ordinances of the gospel and still "go on" or "advance" unto perfection any more than a building can leave its foundation and "go on" or "advance." If faith itself is, as Brown suggests, "a kind of marriage" (23), then it is not something that we can well divorce or abandon, but it "is an active relationship that requires attention, effort, and, as Alma notes, nourishment (Alma 32:37)" (24).

2 In a later sermon dated October 15, 1843, the Prophet Joseph Smith declared: "The first principles of the Gospel, as I believe, are, faith, repentance, baptism for the remission of sins, with the promise of the Holy Ghost. Look at Heb. vi:1 contradictions—'therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection.' If a man leaves the principles of the doctrine of Christ, how can he be saved in the principles? This is a contradiction. I don't believe it. I will render it as it should be — 'Therefore not leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.'" *History of the Church*, 6:57–58; paragraph divisions altered; from a discourse given by Joseph Smith on Oct. 15, 1843, in Nauvoo, Illinois; reported by Willard Richards; see also *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 328. Hereafter cited as *TPJS*.

In other words, the journey to “perfection” is not merely one that *sets out from* the first principles and ordinances, but a journey that is attended *by them* — or really, a journey that attends unceasingly *to them*. Here it is worth noting that in the phrase “let us go on unto perfection,” we find one of the most important “temple” terms in the New Testament: *teleiosis*. The adjectival form of this word, *teleios* — used by Jesus in Matthew — denotes “perfect”; “full-grown, mature, adult” and as pertaining to one who has received all the rites or ordinances, “initiated” — that is, “fully initiated.”³ Jesus himself uses this term to describe the perfection of God the Father to which his disciples were expected and even commanded to attain: “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). After his resurrection, Jesus would use a similar term to describe the perfection or full ritual and experiential initiation to which he himself had attained: “Therefore I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect” (3 Nephi 12:48).

The word *teleios* together with its cognate forms serve as a *Leitwort* (a lead-word or guiding word)⁴ throughout the Letter to the Hebrews.⁵ Not only is this a key term in Hebrews 6:1 (as we have already seen), but just as importantly in Hebrews 11:40: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be **made perfect** [*teleiōthōsin*]. When Joseph Smith revisited this verse⁶ later in life, after his harrowing experiences in Liberty Jail, he did so in the context of temple. The Prophet adapted Hebrews 11:39–40 as a basis for the vicarious ordinance of the temple:

And now, my dearly beloved brethren and sisters, let me assure you that these are principles in relation to the dead and

3 Cf. Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament and Other Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 995.

4 Martin Buber (“Leitwort Style in Pentateuch Narrative,” in *Scripture and Translation* [ed. Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig; trans. Lawrence Rosenwald and Everett Fox; ISBL; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994] 114) coined the term *Leitwort* (“lead-word,” or “guiding word”) and defined it as follows: “By *Leitwort* I understand a word or word root that is meaningfully repeated within a text or a sequence of texts or complex of texts; those who attend to these repetitions will find a meaning of the text revealed or clarified, or at any rate made more emphatic. As noted, what is repeated need not be a single word but can be a word root; indeed the diversity of forms strengthens the overall dynamic effect.”

5 See, e.g., Hebrews 2:10; 5:9, 14; 6:1; 7:11, 19, 28; 9:9, 11; 10:1, 14; 11:40; 12:2, 23.

6 Contrast the JST version of Hebrews 11:39–40.

the living that cannot be lightly passed over, as pertaining to our salvation. For their salvation is necessary and essential to our salvation, as Paul says concerning the fathers — that **they without us cannot be made perfect — neither can we without our dead be made perfect.** (D&C 128:15)

This is why “not leaving” rather than “leaving” makes for a more felicitous and doctrinally correct rendering of Hebrews 6:1 — the impossibility of “perfection” *without*, or apart from, relationships. The Prophet recognized that “perfection” or “full initiation” and the rites that lead thereto were inseparable from relationships. Moreover, he recognized that the rites or ordinances that lead to perfection or full initiation into the kingdom of Heaven helped forge and made possible the sealing of family relationships. On this basis the Prophet then quoted 1 Corinthians 15:29 (“Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?”) and Malachi 4:5–6. He then continued thus:

I might have rendered a plainer translation⁷ [of Malachi 4:5–6] to this, but it is sufficiently plain to suit my purpose as it stands. It is sufficient to know, in this case, that the earth will be smitten with a curse unless there is a welding link of some kind or other between the fathers and the children, upon some subject or other — and behold what is that subject? It is the baptism for the dead. For we **without them** cannot be **made perfect**; neither can they **without us** be **made perfect**. Neither can they nor we be **made perfect without** those who have died in the gospel also; for it is necessary in the ushering in of the dispensation of the fulness of times, which dispensation is now beginning to usher in, that a whole and complete and **perfect** union, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories should take place, and be revealed from the days of Adam even to the present time. And not only this, but those things which never have been revealed from the foundation of the world, but have been kept hid from the wise and prudent, shall be revealed unto babes and sucklings in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times. (D&C 128:18)

7 See especially D&C 2 and JS-H 1:36–39; cf. D&C 138:48.

Regarding the prophet Joseph Smith's use of Hebrews 11:40 in the context of laying the foundation of the temple (see D&C 128), Brown writes: "God is trying to save each of us as individuals, but he is simultaneously trying to save us into the heaven of family, to save us as interconnected groups of people who are connected to him and each other" (87).

From the beginning, the restored gospel has been about *not* leaving and yet advancing.

As the prophet Joseph Smith articulated it on another occasion, "if a man [or woman] leaves the principles of the doctrine of Christ, how can he [or she] be saved in the principles?"⁸ This, of course, has pragmatic implications for all Latter-day Saints: if one leaves the first principles and ordinances or the Saints, how does one "go on" or advance unto "perfection"? What caused Lehi such "exceeding fear" when he received his dream/vision of the tree of life was the distance or gulf between him and his sons — the prospect of severed relationships within his family and among his posterity (see 1 Nephi 8:3–4, 35–38), this after partaking of the most sublime symbol of family and everlasting relationships, the fruit of the tree of life.

Nephi, reflecting on his and his father's shared vision of the tree of life, formulates the "not leaving, yet advancing" principle this way: "Wherefore, ye must press forward with a **steadfastness** in Christ, having a perfect brightness of **hope**, and a **love** of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life" (2 Nephi 31:20). In my reading of Nephi's words, "steadfastness in Christ" is reiterative faith in Christ and continual progressive repentance. The Hebrew word for *faith* *ʾēmûnâ* derives from the root **ʾmn* denotes "to be firm, trustworthy, safe";⁹ that is, "steadfastness" or "reliability," not simply a one-time act of faith (see Habakkuk 2:4).

Nephi may have had additional lexical associations in mind that correlate the virtues of hope and charity to the first principles and ordinances. "Hope" — Hebrew *miqveh*¹⁰ or *tiqvâ*¹¹ — corresponds to

8 *History of the Church*, 6:58; from a discourse given by Joseph Smith on Oct. 15, 1843, in Nauvoo, Illinois; reported by Willard Richards; see also *TPJS*, 328.

9 HALOT, 63. Cf. all the **ʾmn* entries, pp. 63–65.

10 See, e.g., Jeremiah 14:18; 17:13; Ezra 10:2; 1 Chronicles 29:15; cf. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 626.

11 HALOT, 1782.

baptism, if we remember the *miqveh* “collecting place” or *miqvâ* the “collecting pool, reservoir” where ritual ablutions often took place and still take place, their possibly root(s) denoting to be “taut” (that is, be tight, controlled) and thus “await, hope” and “collect” (compare Genesis 1:9), “assemble,” (that is, as in “holding together”).¹² We might make an additional comparison here between the grave and the font—i.e., “**the place underneath** where the living are wont to **assemble**, to show forth the living and the dead” (D&C 128:13) described by the Prophet Joseph Smith—and Joseph F. Smith’s description of the collecting place of paradise in the spirit world, “**and there were gathered together in one place** an innumerable company of the spirits of the just ... [who] had departed the mortal life, firm in the **hope** of a glorious resurrection, through the grace of God the Father and his Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ ... [spirits who] were assembled **awaiting** the advent of the Son of God into the spirit world, to declare their redemption from the bands of death” (D&C 138:12-16; compare also “this vast multitude **waited** and conversed,” v. 18). Moreover, to have “a love of God and of all men” — beyond a fulfillment of what Jesus later called the two great commandments — achieves a divine and interpersonal relationship ideal made possible only by the gift of the Holy Ghost (compare, 1 Nephi 11:22; Romans 5:5).

In any case, “pressing forward” in faith, hope, and charity is what Nephi meant when he exhorted Laman and Lemuel to “hold fast” to the rod of iron/word of God (see 1 Nephi 15:24), that is, the doctrine of Christ,¹³ as the righteous faithful who had “pressed forward” and successfully partaken of the fruit of the tree of life had done (see 1 Nephi 8:30). Thus, at a time in which some Latter-day Saints have allowed themselves to be pulled away from the doctrine of Christ, having let go of the rod of iron, Brown’s focus on relationships — how the first principles and ordinances of the gospel impact our relationships — is timely, relevant, appropriate, welcome, and one of the best possible approaches to truly living the gospel of Jesus Christ and applying its principles.

12 HALOT, 1082. It is, moreover, possible that these proposed lexical associations are based on phonological similarity rather than an actual philological relationship.

13 Jared T. Parker, “The Doctrine of Christ in 2 Nephi 31–32 as an Approach to the Vision of the Tree of Life,” in *The Things Which My Father Saw: Approaches to Lehi’s Dream and Nephi’s Vision* (2011 Sperry Symposium), ed. Daniel L. Belnap, Gaye Strathearn, and Stanley A. Johnson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2011), 161–167.

An Autobiographical Introduction

Glimpses into Sam Brown's personal life (for example, his relationship with his father) and experiences constitute some of the best parts of book. He begins with a recollection of his encounter with church discipline as a youth. There is, of course, always risk in delving into one's past. Bringing up one's own or another's sins and transgressions frequently invites a spirit of negativity. I am grateful in this instance, however, for Brown's judicious candor in telling his personal story. He admits that during his late adolescence, he became "atheist and then agnostic" (9) and that his "life was not on a good path and [stood in need of] a course correction" (1). Subsequently, however, he "came to faith on the verge of adulthood through a process of repentance and intense spiritual experience" (9).

The prospect of church discipline (disfellowshipment) (1) as a young man might have set the author's life on an entirely different trajectory had he allowed it. Instead, he decided *not* to leave. Brown's reminiscence of his feelings and experiences the night previous to the Sunday that marked his return to full fellowship and his blessing of the sacrament with his friend Tyler, "who had prayed countless times" (2) on his behalf, are alone worth more than the price of this book. Words rarely do these kinds of experiences justice. Brown, however, succeeds here and elsewhere. It was this encounter (or reencounter) with the first principles and ordinances of the gospel that, according to the author, "launched [him] on a life of believing" (3).

On a very personal level, Brown's reminiscence of his youthful spiritual struggles and their resolution took me back to my own experiences as a spiritually struggling 15- to 18-year-old. Like Sam Brown, I was eventually able to resolve these struggles through the atonement of Jesus Christ. By returning to activity and thus to partaking of the sacrament, I returned to the first principles and ordinances of the gospel. I will never forget the personal revelation through the Holy Ghost that flowed into my life during that reformative — and formative — time, revelation that included one of the clearest and most unmistakable answers to prayer (regarding potential mission service) I have ever received.

Through it all, Sam Brown has become — and remains — a "practicing, believing, temple-going Latter-day Saint Christian who is sealed by temple ordinances to his family, ... a scientist, a spouse, a parent, a child, a physician, a believer, a starry-eyed wonderer, and a sometimes melancholy remorseful human being who is struggling to make his way in a fallen world" (23). The richness of Brown's book

consists in his thoughtful use of all of these very personal perspectives. I suspect that every Latter-day Saint shares at least one, and most likely several, of these descriptions and perspectives and will thus find this book a rewarding read.

“Faith, Fidelity, Faithfulness”

As the first principle of the gospel, Brown, recommends faith in Jesus Christ “as a kind of marriage of our souls to the community of the saints has the same character as marriage itself.” Thus, “when ... vexed by a particular doctrine or cultural understanding, the practice of my faith is to acknowledge that tension or conflict or discomfort in my mind and then place it into the balance of my entire relationship with the church.” In severe cases this of necessity will involve “actively supplement[ing] those negative experiences with many positive ones,” just as “paying extra attention to pleasure and kindness will help maintain the health of [a stressed] relationship” (23). Brown’s sage advice is similar to Elder Jeffrey R. Holland’s recent counsel:

When problems come and questions arise, do not start your quest for faith by saying how much you do not have, leading as it were with your “unbelief.” That is like trying to stuff a turkey through the beak! Let me be clear on this point: I am not asking you to pretend to faith you do not have. I am asking you to be true to the faith you do have. Sometimes we act as if an honest declaration of doubt is a higher manifestation of moral courage than is an honest declaration of faith. It is not! ... Be as candid about your questions as you need to be; life is full of them on one subject or another. But if you and your family want to be healed, don’t let those questions stand in the way of faith working its miracle.¹⁴

We will have to exercise faith in Jesus Christ within our relationships within the Church, especially when those relationships become strained. Brown writes:

There will be times in our practice of faith when we disagree with or find our fellow saints disagreeable. Those down times will come as inevitably as they do in any relationship. In faith, we can balance those negative experiences with

14 Jeffrey R. Holland, “Lord, I Believe!” *Ensign*, May 2013, 94.

more positive experiences. At times we may feel ourselves frustrated by political disagreements with other saints, or we may struggle with stressful relationships within our ward, or we may have difficulty making sense of events in church history or particular LDS teachings. Those are times to reach for the things we have loved about God, the church, and the community of the saints. (25)

In the most difficult times, we must never lose sight of the “relationship” aspects of our faith in Jesus Christ and the relationship nature of faith. I suspect that is one reason why the promise to “always remember him” follows closely on our “witness[ing]” to the God, our Eternal Father (kinship terminology!) our “willing[ness] to take upon [us] the name of [his] Son” (D&C 20:77, 79; see also Moroni 4:3; 5:2) in the sacrament prayers. Our membership in the Church of Jesus Christ is first and foremost about our relationship with Jesus Christ and our family relationships but also about our relationships with our fellow Saints. Having faith in Jesus Christ is to be faithful in these relationships.

To those who murmur or gripe on any given Sunday, “Oh no! Not another lesson on faith!” I have been tempted to respond, “Until we have the faith to *literally* command the mountains, like the brother of Jared commanded mount Zerin in Ether 12:30, we have not begun to know enough about faith or how to exercise it.”¹⁵ The realization of this aspect of faith — what some might consider one of its more “theoretical” — is one that few men or women attain in this life, though men and women move metaphorical mountains constantly through faith. And yet, as Brown demonstrates, there are marvelous, practical aspects to faith that we seldom think about. He writes: “Faith is just as necessary to love ourselves as it is to love other people. In faith, we can imagine that we are worth saving, that we are divine beings with a glorious future” (38). Moreover, “Faith isn’t about the specific outcomes of a life. Faith is about a relationship with Christ. Through faith in Christ we are able to imagine ourselves as Christ sees us” (39). These aspects of faith we can never *leave* if we have any hope of salvation. Rather, they beg our continual practice unto perfection. An unrelenting practice of this kind of faith — imagining ourselves as not only worth saving but divine by design as Christ surely sees us — leads unavoidably to repentance (compare Amulek’s “faith unto repentance,” Alma 34:15–17; see also Helaman 15:7).

15 See also Matthew 17:20; Luke 17:6; Jacob 4:6.

“Repentance, Atonement, Community”

Brown suggests that *repentance* is a word that “should embrace a cloud of meanings” (61). The Greek term *metanoia*, as he notes (and as is widely known), denotes a “changed mind” or a “change of mind” — in Book of Mormon language, a “mighty change of heart.”¹⁶ Repentance is a “change in the nonphysical elements of a person, a change in identity made possible by Jesus” (45). He additionally notes that our English word *repentance*, which comes to us by way of French (originally from Latin *paenitere*), denotes the “regret” or “sorrow” that should precede and precipitate the change implied in *metanoia*.

Such a change of mind — repentance — “takes place within the context of Christ’s atonement” (47). That atonement “represents our hopes for a better world against the disappointing reality we actually live” (45). Understanding the nature of repentance and Christ’s atonement can help us bridge the gap between the extreme forms of the doctrine of original sin and the notion that human beings have divine potential. We recognize that “we are a mixture of the human and the divine, consciousness existing in the productive tension between aspiration and accomplishment” (46). In fact, according to Brown, “in a very real sense, mortality is the adolescent phase of our immortal existence, a time for us to mature toward what we will one day become, ... a time when we exert our independence, make mistakes, puzzle through our relationship with our parents and our ancestors, and create new relationships with people who are not our blood kin” (47).

Since communities are a nexus of relationships, repentance and forgiveness are necessarily “communal” experiences and undertakings. Brown observes that “our failings become most apparent in communities; in relationships our minor foibles become intolerable.” Thus, “we cannot really live or sin or repent all by ourselves. These actions happen within communities of other people” (55). He cites examples of communal repentance like Yom Kippur (the “Day of Atonement”) and Thanksgiving. For Latter-day Saints, the preparation for the Kirtland Temple dedication was such a time. He further suggests that President Gordon B. Hinckley led the Saints in an expression of communal repentance in April 2006 when he denounced racism of any form in the Church and mandated

16 See Mosiah 5:2; Alma 5:12-14; cf. also Mosiah 5:7; Alma 5:7, 26; 19:33; Helaman 15:7.

its elimination (56).¹⁷ To Brown's insights here, I would add that, like the holy festivals that occurred in the spring and autumn in ancient Israel — spring Pesach and the autumn trifecta of Sukkot (Feast of the Tabernacles), Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), and Rosh Hashanah (the New Year) — which were times of repentance and renewal, spring and fall general conference can and should always be times of renewal — times of personal as well as communal repentance and forgiveness. Like the ancient Israelite Sabbath, our sacrament meetings can be such experience for our ward families. All of us, collectively and individually, should be engaged in what Professor Hugh Nibley called “perpetual, progressive repentance.”¹⁸

Brown's own view of repentance is deeply informed by experiences with his father and becoming reconciled to him through the Atonement. Like faith, true repentance involves “seeing with the eye of Christ” because such seeing “requires that we overcome the natural biases of our own eyes” (58). We come to recognize the “sinners and saints” paradox: that “we are all of us broken and all of us glorious.” In other words, that “we are glorious, and we are fallen, we are imperfect mimics, and we are the image of Christ” (59). Faith helps us to see our divine potential as Saints, while repentance “grounded in relationships” helps us “imagine

17 See Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Need for Greater Kindness,” *Ensign*, May 2006, 58–61.

18 Hugh W. Nibley, *Approaching Zion* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: FARMS, 1989), 164. He states: “Do what Peter tells us to do: Have faith that there is more than you know; repent of all your present shallowness and silliness; wash off everything of this world in the waters of baptism, and be reborn, not in the self-congratulatory one-shot manner of pop religion, but to a course of action requiring perpetual, progressive repentance. Then ‘ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost’ and get the guidance you need (Acts 2:37-38). Q: Perpetual repentance? A. At least until you are full of grace and truth, which is nowhere within the foreseeable future. Meanwhile, ‘an unexamined life is not worth living,’ as Socrates said.” Elsewhere (*Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, Volume 3, Lecture 66), Nibley stated: “Problem-solving ability is necessary for repentance. Intelligence is a process of progressive repentance. You repent of your mistakes you make. You repent of your stupidity, and you have to keep doing that all the time, because we don't get to first base. Otherwise, you'll never break through to anything. Remember, the great scientist when he finally sees the light almost invariably says, ‘What a fool I've been. It has been staring me in the face all this time and I didn't see it.’ The stars have been sending us the same hints for thousands of years, and we fail to respond to them. They are there all the time. It just depends on your being able or willing to see them” (online: <http://publications.maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1137&index=10>).

the sinner as a close friend who happens to have made a mistake” while “not confus[ing] our distaste for sin with a right to judge another person” (54). Such repentance can help us mend broken relationships with broken people, since we recognize that we in our own way share that brokenness (we are all imperfect)¹⁹ and that we and those with whom we must reconcile (such as a flawed parent) are “deeply and permanently loved by Christ.” Thus, “through faith and repentance we move a few steps closer to a Zion society and the promise of a heaven on earth” (65).

“Ordinances: The Power of God Is Manifest”

Brown’s third chapter “contains a transition between the principles of faith and repentance — remembering that [these principles] are actions as much as they are states of mind — and the ordinances of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost” (68). Here he insightfully observes that the “struggle” of many people to “understand the significance and meaning of ordinances ... stems from unappreciated cultural changes that have separated us from our rich history of religious rituals” (68).

Ordinances often seem strange to people, especially those with a modern western mindset. However, the prophet Joseph Smith’s use of the language of Obadiah 1:21 helps us to appreciate the “communal” nature of salvation as reflected in ordinances: “And saviours [Heb. *môši ‘im*] shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the Lord’s” (compare D&C 103:9–10).²⁰ Another potential translation for Hebrew *môšîa* ‘ could be “rescuer.” The Latter-day Saints are (or should be) “rescuers” — rescuers of others (perhaps especially of the *other*) and of each other.

As Brown put it, “ordinances force us to rely on others.” In other words, one cannot perform an ordinance on oneself. Thus, “we are saviors on Mount Zion for one another” (86). As Latter-day Saints, performing ordinances in the name of the Lord and by his authority on one other binds us to each other, and performing ordinances for and on behalf of those who have preceded us in death transcends the veil and binds us to them in everlasting relationships.

19 See especially Romans 3:23.

20 This concept is actual evident fairly early in the revelations given to the Prophet Joseph Smith: “For they were set to be a light unto the world, and to be the **saviors of men; And inasmuch as they are not the saviors of men, they are as salt that has lost its savor**, and is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men” (D&C 103:9–10). The wordplay on “saviors” and “savor” here is striking.

Far from being a theology of “salvation by works,” ordinances immerse us (and keep us immersed) in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ: “Ordinances are essential for our salvation not merely in and of themselves but as constant reminders that we cannot save ourselves. In this, ordinances always point to Christ” (86). Moreover, ordinances are “equalizers” in the building of society that is supposed to become “equal in the bonds of heavenly things, yea, and earthly things also, for the obtaining of heavenly things” (D&C 78:5).²¹

Regarding the equalizing force or effect of ordinances, Brown observes, “There is no separate temple endowment for the titans of industry or the smartest or most righteous among us. In requiring that we all perform the same ordinances at some point in our lives, God sends the message that no one is better than anyone else where it matters — in our capacity to be exalted.” He continues, “Jesus taught that message of essential equality when he explained why it was that he, the greatest prophet and the Messiah, had to condescend to be baptized by a lesser prophet like John the Baptist (see Matthew 3:13–15)” (85–86). Brown’s insights thus help us better appreciate the depths of meaning in Nephi’s angelic guide’s question to the former in 1 Nephi 11:16 “knowest thou the condescension of God?” Christ “condescended” to be baptized;²² moreover, he “descended below all things”²³ in order to exalt even “the least of these,”²⁴ his brothers and sisters.

21 D&C 78:3-5: “For verily I say unto you, the time has come, and is now at hand; and behold, and lo, it must needs be that there be an organization of my people, in regulating and establishing the affairs of the storehouse for the poor of my people, both in this place and in the land of Zion — For a permanent and everlasting establishment and order unto my church, to advance the cause, which ye have espoused, to the salvation of man, and to the glory of your Father who is in heaven; That you may be equal in the bonds of heavenly things, yea, and earthly things also, for the obtaining of heavenly things. For if ye are not equal in earthly things ye cannot be equal in obtaining heavenly things; For if you will that I give unto you a place in the celestial world, you must prepare yourselves by doing the things which I have commanded you and required of you. And now, verily thus saith the Lord, it is expedient that all things be done unto my glory, by you who are joined together in this order.”

22 In addition to 1 Nephi 11:16 and 26; Nephi and his brother Jacob use an expression rendered “condescension” in 2 Nephi 4:26; 9:53; and Jacob 4:7.

23 See D&C 88:6; 122:8.

24 See Matthew 25:40, 45; D&C 42:38; cf. D&C 88:47.

“Baptism and the Hosts of Heaven”

In this chapter, Brown offers a brief history of baptism in its Judaic context. He recalls the *tevilah* (or *ṭēbîlâ*), from the root **ṭbl* (“dip,” “immerse,” “bathe”) and the freshwater font called the *mikveh* in which full-immersion ritual ablutions took place. The pre-Christian Greek use of the verb *baptō*, whence the noun *baptism* derives, originally referred to the sinking (that is, full immersion) of ships (99).

As to the symbolism of baptism, Latter-day Saint children usually become familiar with the metaphor of “washing clean” first. Though this is a beautiful and useful metaphor, Brown, notes that this symbol is “very limited” (94) and, in fact, potentially limiting. Baptism as a metaphor of death and resurrection — of Christ’s death and resurrection and of ours — is layered with rich symbolism. But perhaps most importantly, baptism is an adoption: Through baptism we are adopted — or reborn — as sons and daughters of Christ, we become members of Christ’s family, the family of heaven. It reminds us that “a relationship — the relationship between us and Christ — is our salvation” (104).

Earlier in his book, Brown remarks how “in a way that few others understood, Joseph Smith taught that baptism was an ordinance for creating and sustaining relationships that could survive death” (8), that is, as adoption into the heavenly family. Indeed, Alma the Elder’s covenant speech at the waters of Mormon (see Mosiah 18:8–10) reminds us that the baptismal covenant is about relationships:²⁵ our relationship with God (“come into the fold of God and be called his people,” v. 8; “stand as witnesses of God,” v. 9; “redeemed of God,” v. 9; “enter[ing] into a covenant to serve him and keep his commandments,” v. 10); and our relationships with each other (belonging to a “fold” with others, v. 8; being “willing to bear one another’s burdens,” v. 8; being “willing to mourn with those that mourn ... and comfort those that stand in need of comfort,” v. 9; being “numbered with those of the first resurrection,” v. 9).

Insights gained from his study and practice of medicine are perhaps no better or more appropriately evident than in his description of the symbolism of the water into which we are baptized as a symbol of death and rebirth:

²⁵ Thanks to my student Erika Hill (personal communication) for reminding me of this important fact.

Water carries with it the specter of death. On the other hand, life in the desert makes clear how fragile life is without water. Just a day or so without access to water, and we begin to die a miserable death. Water, like baptism, contains opposites. Water also mediates between the worlds of the living and the dead as we transition from life within our mothers to independent life in the outside world. We float in amniotic fluid, nourished through our navels by our mothers' blood and with a rush of water and maternal pain, we draw breath into our lungs, changing ourselves from something like fish to something like human beings. Water marks transitions and changes its status. Immersion in water carries with it these ancient images and associations with life and death, with birth and passage, drowning and the quenching of thirst. Baptism by immersion fruitfully engages the cloud of meaning surrounding water and other sacred liquids. (99–100)

In spite of the frequency of the ordinance of water baptism in the Church, these are symbols that we seldom if ever think about but should. And yet, there is still much more to water baptism than the symbols of the water.

Citing Romans 8:14–17, Brown suggests that “baptism contains the power to create the family of heaven.” The prophet Joseph Smith understood this, as is evident in D&C 128:12–13, where in clarifying the meaning of baptism for the dead, he clarified the meaning of baptism for the living, that is, “baptism for the dead is the method by which we will form a chain of belonging in which we are bound together with those who have left mortality before us” (102–3). The heavenly family — the Church — existing on both sides of the veil, is thus linked together in relationships by eternal bonds through baptism and other vicarious ordinances. Nevertheless, water baptism is only the first baptism that is primarily concerned about relationships.

“The Gift of the Holy Ghost”

The Gift of the Holy Ghost and the ordinance of confirmation whereby this gift is bestowed are also fundamentally about relationships. As Brown suggests, “The Holy Ghost represents a kind of spiritual cement that binds us together — a cement made from us, our fellow saints, and the divine beings who care deeply about us” (111). Brown begins this chapter by recalling “the Mormon Pentecost of 1836” (110) in Kirtland

with the outpouring of the Holy Ghost and the attendant theophanies, visions, and blessings — many of them shared — that bound these early Saints together and prepared them for the European missions that would buttress the Church in the face of the Kirtland Banking Crisis and for generations thereafter. Brown here attempts to “expand our thinking” about the Holy Ghost in three specific ways: first, by showing how the Holy Ghost functions as “the spirit of God’s church”; second, by exploring the Holy Ghost as a “window into the mystery of embodiment”; and third, by demonstrating the “strong communal implications” of our reception of the Holy Ghost through an ordinance (111).

Brown traces the history of the terminology that stands behind the title “Holy Ghost,” *holy* with its “notion of something set apart,” and *ghost* as “an image of breath or wind.” Moreover, he notes that semantic range for both Greek *pneuma* and Hebrew *ruach* (or *rûah*) that include “wind” or “breath” (111).²⁶ Brown further observes:

For early Christians the word *pneuma* represented a way to express at least two key concepts. First is the close association between our breath and our lives. To live is to breathe, to breathe is to live. At the moment when we die, a moment our ancestors knew all too well, our breath dissipates as our chest stills. It is natural to connect breath and the spark of life, not least because breathing is the activity that distinguishes a sleeping body from a corpse. Second is the image of the wind, something powerful that is visible only by its effects. *Pneuma* subsequently carried with it a sense of invisible efficacy. Wind cannot be seen directly, but its awesome effects are easily witnessed; the same is true of the power or influence of God. When we breathe we draw into and expel from our bodies the wind that circulates around us. (112)

We might note in this vein that the Egyptian word *snsn*, sometimes rendered “breathings,” rather denotes “fellowship.”²⁷ Understanding the gift of the Holy Ghost as “interhuman connection, the Holy Ghost facilitates reaching across the boundaries that are imposed by embodiment.” Thus, “in one way of thinking, the Holy Ghost also

26 The wordplay on “wind”/“spirit” (*pneuma*) in Jesus’s dialogue with Nicodemus is an illustrative example of the range of meaning of both Greek *pneuma* and Hebrew *rûah*.

27 See John Gee, “Some Puzzles from the Joseph Smith Papyri,” *FARMS Review* 20/1 (2008): 135.

represents the spirit of Christ's church. We individual saints are the body of Christ, and a collective spirit that matches that collective body" (116). If the Holy Ghost is the symbol *par excellence* of the spirit/breath that gives life to Christ's church or body, the paramount symbol of the body — Christ's and ours — is the temple.

“Everything Speaks of the Temple”

Too frequently as Latter-day Saints, we forget that the first principles and ordinances are also “temple ordinances.” The temple, in a very real way, puts the first principles and ordinances into the proper context. For example, it was revealed to the prophet Joseph Smith that “the baptismal font was instituted as a similitude of the grave” and as such “was commanded to be in a place underneath where the living are wont to assemble, to show forth the living and the dead, and that all things may have their likeness, and that they may accord one with another” (D&C 128:13). Confirmation, likewise, becomes a temple ordinance that prepares us for the endowment.

Brown observes an important parallel between baptism and the endowment of which Latter-day Saints ought to become cognizant: “In baptism we pass from life to death to new life with Christ, immersed in his water. In the temple we pass through the veil from life to death to new life with Christ, enfolded in divine love. In both baptism and endowment we offer up our tiny wills and fragile agency through covenants that allow our wills to merge with Christ's” (143).

Indeed, the temple constitutes “an entire method for understanding the gospel and our relationships to each other” (133). And yet, as Brown also notes, “The forms and symbols of the temple differ starkly from the ways we have tended to see the principles and ordinances of the gospel, so our prior understanding [after we receive the additional ordinances of the temple] may require revision.” Brown admits to feeling, like David O. McKay and many other Latter-day Saints, “disoriented” on his “first encounter with the temple.” He notes that “unfortunately, some people even find the temple so disconcerting that they withdraw from the fellowship of the saints.” Since “go[ing] on unto perfection,” according to JST Hebrews 6:1, requires “*not* leaving,” much more must be done by the Latter-day Saints collectively and individually to solve this problem. In this vein, Brown recommends that “we as a community could better prepare people for the temple experience, but we as individuals could also stand to be more resilient” (132). We can, in fact, “improve our relationship with the temple” by recognizing that “the theology and

ordinances of the temple do at least three things. First, the temple liturgy consists of sacraments, ordinances, saving rituals. Second, the temple is a vessel for doctrine. Third, the temple clarifies our relationships with each other and with Christ” (133–34).

There are clear affinities between baptisms and confirmations and initiatory washing and anointings that require little elucidation. However, beyond baptism as “a pledge of adoption and permanent connection,” washings offer, as anciently, “a way to prepare for specific types of encounters with the divine” (136). The anointings that follow the washings evoke royal²⁸ and priestly²⁹ anointing in ancient Israel and elsewhere.³⁰ Both washings and anointings have their antecedents in the Hebrew Bible and early Christian rites. Brown notes that what we refer to as the “endowment” grew from the earliest washings and anointings at Kirtland in the School of the Prophets and the “endowment of power” (that is, the reception of spiritual power) “into something even greater” with the building of the Kirtland temple and into something still greater at Nauvoo (136–38). Describing the Nauvoo endowment in general terms, Brown concludes that “endowment is and has always been a story about relationships. Relationships are the solution to death, the bedrock of the gospel” (138).

Nothing, of course, is more pertinent to relationships in the restored gospel and in temple worship than the temple sealing ordinance. In his sixth chapter, Brown offers a helpful overview of the ancient practice of using seals to mark cherished possessions as one’s own,³¹ a secular practice that serves as a useful type of an eternal reality ritualized in the temple (much of ancient “atonement” language is drawn from the language of commerce, and yet it describes aspects of transcendent, supernal, and eternal reality that is the atonement of Jesus Christ). A crucial point is that “the temple sealing acts as the seal of Christ — it marks us as belonging to him. His seal acts as a kind of birth certificate for us” (139). This, interestingly, is the fundamental point of King

28 See, e.g., Judges 9:8, 15; 1 Samuel 2:10; 10:1; 15:1, 17; 35; 26:16; 2 Samuel 1:21; 2:4, 7; 3:39; 5:3; 17; 12:7; 19:10; 22:51; 1 Kings 1:39, 45; 5:1; 19:15–16; 2 Kings 9:3, 6; 11:12; 1 Chronicles 4:8; 11:3; 29:22; 2 Chronicles 23:11; Psalm 2:2; 18:50; Jacob 1:9.

29 See, e.g., Exodus 28:40–43; 30:30; 40:12–15; Leviticus 4:5, 16; 6:22; 7:35; 16:32; 21:10; Numbers 3:3; 35:25; 1 Chronicles 29:22.

30 Cf., e.g., Ether 6:22, 27; 9:4, 14; 10:10, 16; Isaiah 45:1.

31 On the ancient sealing practices, see John Gee, “Book of Mormon Word Usage: ‘Seal You His,’” *Insights* 22/1 (2002): 4; idem, “On the Practice of Sealing in the Book of the Dead and the Coffin Texts,” *Journal of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities* 35 (2008): 105–22.

Benjamin's speech at the Zarahemla temple with its concluding remarks on "sealing" ("that Christ, the Lord God Omnipotent may seal you his," Mosiah 5:15).³²

Brown, in words that echo and articulate my own deep feelings of gratitude, acknowledges the debt that Latter-day Saints owe Hugh Nibley for calling our attention to the relational and representational nature of the temple to the cosmos:

I'm grateful to Hugh Nibley for reminding us as Latter-day Saints that temples have long served as maps of the cosmos. This was true in ancient Mesopotamia, and it is true for us as Latter-day Saints. When we worship in the temple we are locating ourselves in the universe, in the interlocking networks of particles, people, and planets. The ancients understood those maps in terms of the concept of the great chain of being and the metaphysical law of correspondence. There were clues to the meaning of the universe in many little things ... the human body, human society, scriptures, the temple. (145)

It is in this cosmic setting of the temple that, sitting together, "we pledge that we love each other as ourselves" (150); indeed, even to love each other as God the Father and his son Jesus Christ love us.³³ Moreover, in this setting, "we promise the universe that when we are asked we will see the royalty in each other. We promise God and Christ that we will carry their atonement — the limitless promise of divine reconciliation — from them to other human beings as secondary saviors on mount Zion" (150). Not only is our participation in this atoning work the meaning of the temple, in a very real sense this is the meaning of the entire gospel of Jesus Christ, including and perhaps especially its "first principles and ordinances."

32 On which, see Matthew L. Bowen, "Becoming Sons and Daughters at God's Right Hand: King Benjamin's Rhetorical Wordplay on His Own Name," *Journal of Book of Mormon and Restoration Scripture* 21/2 (2012): 2–13. John Gee ("Seal You His," 4), in addition to noting King Benjamin's positive use of this idiom in Mosiah 5:15, calls our attention Amulek's negative use of this idiom in Alma 34:35, where he states that the devil can also "seal us his" ("he doth seal you his").

33 See John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"; Ephesians 5:25: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." See also 1 John 4:10 and 1 Nephi 11:17–23.

Conclusion

Brown's stated aim for his book was to "allow the various facets of [his] personality and experience to inform each other in order to cultivate an attitude of wonder in the face of the familiar and deceptively simple principles of the fourth article of faith" (10). In this aim, I think he succeeds most brilliantly. Moreover, he succeeds in showing that the "simple principles" and ordinances of the gospel are endlessly rich in their meaning. For these reasons, and for all of the others cited throughout this review, I wholeheartedly recommend Sam Brown's *First Principles* as a study and a resource that will benefit every Latter-day Saint from those in their early teenage years to those of advanced years. I cannot imagine any young adult or adult in (or even out of) the Church that would not learn much from this book. It has forever changed my view of the relational nature of the gospel in all its facets.

If a mortal lifetime of studying the first principles and ordinances of the gospel will not yield an adequate (let alone "perfect") understanding of them, our work as Latter-day Saints is cut out for us not only here but hereafter. Brown's book certainly helps that cause. Recalling the language of JST Hebrews 6:3, eternal perfection is ever our goal ("And we will go on unto perfection if God permit"). However, we must do so not forsaking the Savior, the first principles and ordinances (JST Hebrews 6:1) of his gospel, the temple, or each other. Salvation, after all, consists of and in relationships. This is one truth (of many) that we should contemplate when we partake of the sacrament in remembrance of the Savior and his suffering.

Matthew L. Bowen was raised in Orem, Utah, and graduated from Brigham Young University. He holds a PhD in Biblical Studies from the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC, and is currently an Assistant Professor in Religious Education at Brigham Young University-Hawaii. He and his wife (the former Suzanne Blattberg) are the parents of three children: Zachariah, Nathan, and Adele.

LEARNING NEPHI'S LANGUAGE: CREATING A CONTEXT FOR 1 NEPHI 1:2

Neal Rappleye

Nephi's Language Without Context: An Enigma

It was not long after the Book of Mormon was published before Nephi's statement that he wrote using "the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians" (1 Nephi 1:2) started raising eyebrows.¹ It has continued to perplex even the best LDS scholars, who have put forward no fewer than five different interpretations of the passage.² Some have even pointed out that there seems to be no logical reason for Nephi's statement, since anyone who could read the text would know what language it was written in.³

1 For just one example, which is relatively tame, see Gimel, "Book of Mormon," *The Christian Watchman* (Boston) 12/40 (October 7, 1831): "The plates were inscribed in the language of the Egyptians, see page 5. As Nephi was a descendant from Joseph, probably Smith would have us understand, that the Egyptian language was retained in the family of Joseph; of this, however, we have no evidence." Some more inflammatory examples could be cited.

2 These include: (1) Nephi was writing in Hebrew with an Egyptian script (Stephen D. Ricks, John A. Tvedtnes, among others); (2) Nephi's writings were not just in Hebrew, but reflected Jewish culture while using an Egyptian script (John L. Sorenson); (3) Nephi wrote in both Egyptian language and script, but after a manner of learning taught in Israelite scribal schools (Hugh Nibley); (4) Nephi was using a writing system unique to his father Lehi, which somehow combined Jewish learning with Egyptian language (John S. Thompson); (5) Nephi was conveying the sacred concepts of the Jewish sacral language in Egyptian (presumably both script and language) (LeGrand Baker). I lay these out in detail in Neal Rappleye, "Nephi the Good: A Commentary on 1 Nephi 1:1–3," *Interpreter Blog*, January 3, 2014, online at <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/nephi-the-good-a-commentary-on-1-nephi-11-3/> (accessed March 6, 2015). My own views, argued in the blog post and in this article are essentially aligned with (3).

3 An example is Brant A. Gardner, "Another Suggestion for Reading 1 Nephi 1:1–3," *Interpreter Blog*, January 18, 2014, online at <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/another-suggestion-for-reading-1-nephi-1-1-3/> (accessed March 6, 2015).

I suggest that the reason the phrase has remained hard to interpret is that Nephi's statement continues to be interpreted without any context. And this is so *despite* the fact that Egyptian writing by Israelite scribes has been known and attested to in Nephi's very time period since at least the 1960s. Though Latter-day Saint scholars have known and written about these writings, they have generally used them just as evidence for the Book of Mormon or to bolster support for preexisting theories about Nephi's language, rather than using those texts to create a context in which Nephi's statement can be interpreted.⁴

On "Context" and Its Creation

Sam Wineburg, a cognitive psychologist who studies historical learning, explains, "Contexts are neither 'found' nor 'located,' and words are not 'put' into context. Context, from Latin *contexere*, means to weave together, to engage in an active process of connecting things in a pattern." Following Wineburg, I intend to create a context for 1 Nephi 1:2. In such an endeavor, Wineburg explains, "questions ... are the tools of creation."⁵ There are a number of questions to ask about the Israelites' use of Egyptian writing. What we need to understand is how, exactly, were Israelite and Judahite scribes using Egyptian writing ca. the seventh century BC? What kind of Egyptian scripts were they using, and when did they adopt them? Also, was there anything different about the way they used Egyptian scripts versus how the Egyptians themselves were writing at the time?

4 See, for example, Stephen D. Ricks and John A. Tvedtnes, "Notes and Communications — Jewish and Other Semitic Texts Written in Egyptian Characters," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5/2 (1996): 156–163. This is not to say that the materials they use *cannot* be employed in the creation of context. Some of the texts they mention are ostraca from the same collection as those discussed in this paper, and in fact they will be cited later for a specific detail they provide. They also cite other ancient texts which could be used to create a context more consonant with option 1 (see n. 2, above); however these come from a different time period, and are generally from Egypt, not Israel. In creating a context for 1 Nephi 1:2, I have chosen to focus on materials from Judah in the late seventh century BC—very close to Nephi's own time, and certainly within Lehi's.

5 Sam Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2001), 21.

Creating the Context From Hieratic Texts in Seventh Century BC Judah

David Calabro, though not writing about the Book of Mormon, had some of these same questions in view while working on his MA thesis, which was on the use of hieratic during the period of the late monarchy.⁶ In an article summarizing his findings, he carefully examines Judahite ostraca that include hieratic writing to see what can be determined about the use of hieratic (an Egyptian script) by Israelite, and more specifically Judahite, scribes. He finds that the data “point to the development within Judah of a unified, extensive hieratic tradition. Further, from a paleographic standpoint, this tradition appears to have been independent of those attested in Egypt during that time.”⁷

On one ostrakon, which contains an intermixture of Hebrew and hieratic, Calabro notices that “the use of hieratic signs here extends beyond simply inserting them as symbols to substitute for Hebrew words.”⁸ In other words, this is not simply Hebrew written with an Egyptian script. Still, Calabro points out something interesting: he detects that in some places, the order of hieratic signs is “contrary to common Egyptian practice ... but in accordance with expected Hebrew word order as well the probable word order in spoken Egyptian.”⁹

On another ostrakon from the same collection, which is fully written in hieratic, Calabro observes key differences in the paleography of the hieratic signs and contemporary hieratic from Egypt, noting that the examples from Judah appear more similar to earlier Egyptian writing, “which again points to an independent Judahite development of hieratic script.”¹⁰ Calabro finds that the writing is closer to New Kingdom scripts (ca. 1550–1070 BC), and more specifically the eighteenth dynasty (ca. 1543–1292 BC). This may suggest that the use of hieratic in Israel began close to that time, and subsequently developed independently.

A third ostrakon containing a mixture of Hebrew and hieratic appears to be a scribal exercise. As Calabro interprets it, it contains

6 See David Calabro, “The Hieratic Scribal Tradition in Late Monarchic Judah,” (University of Chicago, MA thesis, 2005).

7 David Calabro, “The Hieratic Scribal Tradition in Preexilic Judah,” in *Evolving Egypt: Innovation, Appropriation, and Reinterpretation in Ancient Egypt*, ed. Kerry Muhlestein and John Gee, BAR International Series 2397 (Oxford, Eng.: Archaeopress, 2012), 77.

8 Ibid., 79.

9 Ibid., 78.

10 Ibid., 80.

specific use of hieratic alphabetic signs, rather than merely numerals and measurements. Hence, this offers “the first example of hieratic uniliteral signs in late monarchic Judah, thus strengthening the assertion that the hieratic signs in use there were part of a basically complete system.”¹¹ Some hieratic signs from this inscription also “match fairly well the examples from the New Kingdom.”¹² Calabro concludes that the evidence on this ostracon points to “an extensive hieratic component in the scribal education of Judahites, at least in the place where the ostracon was composed.”¹³

From all of this, Calabro reaches some important conclusions about the use of hieratic in Judah in the seventh century BC.

All three of the ostraca discussed in this paper seem to belong to a single tradition of hieratic writing. ...

Paleographically, this tradition appears to have been separate from the script traditions of contemporary Saite Egypt. Some of the signs on the ostraca from Judah ... do not resemble any known forms from Egyptian papyri. In the case of the *šm'* sign, the form of the sign more closely resembles the hieroglyphic form. ...

The Judahite hieratic tradition, developing independently from the contemporary scribal traditions in Egypt, must have diverged from them at an earlier period. ... It is therefore not inconceivable that the tradition of hieratic writing in the southern Levant has its ultimate roots in a period even before the New Kingdom, perhaps being used on documents now lost to us. This does not, however, exclude the possibility of New Kingdom (and later) influence on this tradition.

The extent of the hieratic system used in this tradition, Arad 25, 34, and the ostracon from Tell el-Qudeirat indicate that the hieratic tradition in Judah lasted in a fuller form than only the isolated use of numbers and units of measurement. In particular, it included hieratic alphabetic signs, logographic signs ... and Egyptian conventions of sign sequence. ...

11 Ibid., 82.

12 Ibid., 82.

13 Ibid., 82. Calabro explains that the place of composition “may have been at Tell el-Qudeirat [where it was found], although this is not certain.” (p. 82, brackets mine).

All three of the ostraca discussed here come from the Negev region in the southern part of Judah. ... In view of the unity of script forms mentioned above, the wide distribution of hieratic numerals and other isolated hieratic signs in Judah indicates a widespread presence of scribes educated in this Judahite variety of Egyptian script.¹⁴

The same ostraca Calabro examines are among the samples of Hebrew/Egyptian hybrid writing appealed to by Latter-day Saint writers. They also make observations that are useful in our attempt to create context. For example, discussing an ostrakon from the same Arad collection that two of Calabro's three examples come from, Stephen D. Ricks and John A. Tvedtnes reported, "The text on the ostrakon is written in a combination of Egyptian hieratic and Hebrew characters, but can be read entirely as Egyptian. Of the seventeen words in the text, ten are written in hieratic and seven in Hebrew."¹⁵ The significance here is that the underlying language was Egyptian, not Hebrew.

At least brief mention should be made of Stefan Wimmer, who has carefully studied the hieratic texts from Israel and Judah.¹⁶ Wimmer reasoned, based on some chronological changes in Israelite hieratic texts consistent with changes in Egyptian script, that there was "continued contact of some sort between Egyptian and Hebrew scribes, probably over several centuries."¹⁷ This observation is driven by Wimmer's view that "the hieratic of these texts does not differ from the cursive script used in contemporary Egypt."¹⁸ Such views differ from that of Calabro, although he does insist that his own analysis "does not exclude the possibility of New Kingdom (and later) influence on this tradition."¹⁹ Calabro found that certain signs appear to be closer to older forms of hieratic, but that

14 Ibid., 82–83.

15 Ricks and Tvedtnes, "Jewish and Other Semitic Texts," 161.

16 See Stefan Wimmer, *Palästinisches Hieratisch: Die Zahl- und Sonderzeichen in der althebräischen Schrift* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008).

17 William J. Hamblin, "Palestinian Hieratic," at *Interpreter Blog*, September 1, 2012, online at <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/palestinian-hieratic/> (accessed March 6, 2015). Hamblin is summarizing Wimmer's views, which are published in German. I don't read German, so I am dependent on Hamblin's English summary.

18 Wimmer, *Palästinisches Hieratisch*, 11; translation by Stephen O. Smoot. My appreciation goes to Smoot for translating relevant excerpts from Wimmer for my benefit.

19 Calabro, "The Hieratic Scribal Tradition," 83.

does not preclude others (possibly found on other ostraca) from being influenced by latter conventions of writing found in Egypt.

Other scholars, however, have made observations more consistent with Calabro's finding. For example, biblical scholars Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager similarly explain, "Documents from the kingdoms of both Israel and Judah, but not the neighboring kingdoms, of the eighth and seventh centuries [BC] contain Egyptian hieratic signs (cursive hieroglyphics) and numerals that had ceased to be used in Egypt after the tenth century [BC]."²⁰ John S. Thompson said something very similar while discussing 1 Nephi 1:2:

The kind of Egyptian script being employed on those artifacts dating around the time of Lehi is hieratic, but since Demotic was the script of the day in northern Egypt and "abnormal hieratic" was predominant in southern Egypt, the normal hieratic tradition in Canaan must have been adopted from an earlier time — possibly ... during the reigns of David and Solomon or even earlier in the tenth century BC — and was in continued use in Israel.²¹

Like Calabro, these scholars find that the hieratic in Palestine appears to be from an earlier, not contemporary, form of the Egyptian script. Calabro's work further illuminates the roots of this practice, suggesting it goes back even earlier than the tenth century BC, into the New Kingdom, in Egyptian periodization. This corresponds with the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1550–1200 BC) in Canaan. Concurring with Calabro in this regard is Seth L. Sanders, who writes, "The style of hieratic prominent in Iron Age Israel and Judah shows strongest contact not with contemporary Iron Age Egypt but with archaic Late Bronze Age forms."²² Sanders connects this persistence of archaic forms with the perpetuation of the tradition

20 Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 311, brackets mine.

21 John S. Thompson, "Lehi and Egypt," in *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem*, ed. John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, and Jo Ann H. Seely (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004), 266. On abnormal hieratic, John Gee, "Notes and Communications—Two Notes on Egyptian Script," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5/1 (1996): 163, explains, "An adaptation of hieratic characterized by 'wild orthography,' abnormal hieratic in its second phase was used in Egypt mainly for legal and administrative purposes during the Twenty-fifth and Twenty-sixth Dynasties (727–548 BC)."

22 Seth L. Sanders, *The Invention of Hebrew* (Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 90.

“below the radar of state bureaucracy,”²³ opening up the possibility that such scribal practices were part of familial traditions passed on by successive generations. Such an absence of a state-sponsored scribal training may also explain why, according to Sanders, “The hieratic evidence shows that Hebrew scribes were taught complex *techniques*,” yet lacks “any remains of a complex *curriculum*.”²⁴

Returning to Calabro's work, his careful scrutiny also discovers that though the signs read as Egyptian, they sometimes came in word orders more akin to Hebrew writing. This verifies Matt Bowen's assertion that “Hebraisms can exist in an Egyptian text.”²⁵ According to Ricks and Tvedtnes, the hieratic is sometimes intermixed with Hebrew signs, though the whole text may still be read as Egyptian; other times, it appears from Calabro's analysis, both Hebrew and Egyptian script *and* language are intermixed.

Nephi's Language With Context: A Sensible Interpretation

Having woven together a context, primarily using Calabro, but also drawing on Thompson, King and Stager, Ricks and Tvedtnes, Wimmer, and Sanders, how should we interpret Nephi's language, “consist[ing] of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians”? It is reasonable to suggest that Nephi's language is part of a centuries-old and widespread scribal tradition in Judah of writing in hieratic Egyptian. Nephi calls it “the language of my father” (1 Nephi 1:2), and evidence suggests that rather than being perpetuated by the state for bureaucratic interests, this tradition was passed on within the family. By Nephi's day, the hieratic script was often intermixed with Hebrew script, incorporating Hebrew word orders and scribal habits, thus differing from Egyptian as it was written in Egypt. Calabro calls it a “Judahite variety of Egyptian script”; Wimmer calls it “*Palästinisches Hieratisch*” (“Palestinian Hieratic”). Both of these seem functionally equivalent to Nephi's “learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians.” It is, as Sydney B. Sperry hypothesized 80 years ago, “a Hebraized Egyptian.”²⁶

23 Ibid., 90.

24 Ibid., 129.

25 Matthew L. Bowen, “‘Most Desirable About All Things’: Onomastic Play on Mary and Mormon in the Book of Mormon,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 13 (2015): 33.

26 Sidney B. Sperry, “The Book of Mormon as Translation English,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4/1 (1995): 209; originally published in *The Improvement Era* 38/3 (March 1935): 140.

Within this context, it is not likely that Nephi's writing was Hebrew language in an Egyptian script. The awkwardness of such an arrangement was long ago pointed out by Hugh Nibley.²⁷ Now, we know this is not how hieratic was being used in Nephi's day. Since Calabro specifically notices what could be called Hebraisms (Hebrew word orders) in the hieratic writing, the presence of Hebraisms not typically found in Egyptian²⁸ — as the *Egyptians* write — is insufficient evidence to assert that the underlying language is Hebrew as opposed to Nephi's statement that it is Egyptian. Indeed, the most natural interpretation of Nephi's statement is that he was writing Egyptian the way the Jews had learned to write it; that is, according their own, independent scribal tradition, which had some natural syncretism with Hebrew, but was nonetheless Egyptian.

It is impressive how well these findings accord with views expressed by Nibley several decades ago. Nibley staunchly insisted that "Egyptian could be written in less space than Hebrew because in Lehi's day demotic was actually a shorthand, extremely cramped and abbreviated. ... It could be used very economically for writing Egyptian, but not for any other language."²⁹ Lehi and his sons, Nibley argued, "had no other reason for learning Egyptian characters than to read and write Egyptian."³⁰ Nibley also reasoned that Lehi would have learned Egyptian *not* in Egypt, but "in Palestine, of course, before he ever thought of himself as a record-keeper,"³¹ thus hinting at the idea that Lehi (and subsequently, Nephi) would have learned Egyptian from an Israelite scribal tradition, something Nibley says "had been in progress long before Lehi's day."³² Nibley even suspected some syncretism with Hebrew, pointing to an inscribed dagger "which neatly combines Egyptian and Hebrew in a process of fusion for which a great deal of evidence now exists."³³ The only substantive difference is that Nephi's most immediate context supports the use of hieratic, rather than demotic. While many of Nibley's

27 See Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert/The World of the Jaredites/There Were Jaredites* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 14–17.

28 See, for example, John Gee, "La Trahison des Clercs: On the Language and Translation of the Book of Mormon," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6/1 (1994): 95; Kerry Muhlestein, "Insights Available as We Approach the Original Text," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 15/1 (2006): 63.

29 Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert*, 15.

30 Ibid., 16.

31 Ibid., 15–16.

32 Ibid., 14.

33 Ibid., 14.

old hypotheses have fallen to further findings of scholarship, this one has largely been strengthened by new findings.

That Nephi specifies his writing is according to “the learning of the Jews” indicates that he has some awareness that there are differences in how the Egyptians themselves write and use their language. He may be referring to the differences in script, in word order, in the incorporation of some Hebrew linguistic elements, or most likely all of the above. The awareness of these differences could come only from having some contact with “pure” Egyptian scribal practices, as Wimmer’s findings suggest. This awareness of Egyptian according to the “learning of the Egyptians,” to adapt Nephi’s phrase, could explain why Nephi makes a statement about his language at all: familiar with both traditions of Egyptian writing, Nephi may have felt a need to specify that his was the Judahite variety. Readers of the Egyptian variety would probably still be able to read the Palestinian hieratic but may have struggled. Perhaps Nephi was hoping to help such potential readers avoid confusion from the Hebraized elements of his Egyptian writing by telling them up front that this was the Judahite variety of hieratic.

The context created from late preexilic scribal practice in Judah allows for a sensible interpretation of 1 Nephi 1:2 that resolves its ambiguity. The data allow us to see just what the “language of the Egyptians,” according to “the learning of the Jews,” actually consisted of and interpret Nephi’s statement accordingly. No such explanatory context can reasonably be fashioned out of Joseph Smith’s world, where the reaction of contemporaries indicates that the phrase was as perplexing to readers then as it is now.

Neal Rappleye is a history student who actively pursues research interests in early Church history and the ancient setting of the Book of Mormon. He blogs about Latter-day Saint topics at <http://www.studioetquoquefide.com/>

THE TREASON OF THE GEOGRAPHERS: MYTHICAL “MESOAMERICAN” CONSPIRACY AND THE BOOK OF MORMON

Matthew Roper

Abstract: The claim that God revealed the details of Book of Mormon geography is not new, but the recent argument that there was a conspiracy while the Prophet was still alive to oppose a revealed geography is a novel innovation. A recent theory argues that the “Mesoamerican theory” or “limited Mesoamerican geography” originated in 1841 with Benjamin Winchester, an early Mormon missionary, writer, and dissident, who rejected the leadership of Brigham Young and the Twelve after 1844. This theory also claims that three unsigned editorials on Central America and the Book of Mormon published in the Times and Seasons on September 15 and October 1, 1842 were written by Benjamin Winchester, who successfully conspired with other dissidents to publish them against the will of the Prophet. Three articles address these claims. This first article addresses two questions: Did Joseph Smith, as some have claimed, know the details of and put forth a revealed Book of Mormon geography? Second, what is a Mesoamerican geography and does it constitute a believable motive for a proposed Winchester conspiracy?

The Lost City of Zarahemla: From Iowa to Guatemala and Back Again is the latest manifestation of an ideological movement currently popular on the periphery of Mormon culture.¹ John Neville, an attorney and part-time novelist, has spun a tale of conspiracy that may tantalize some readers but is more fiction than history. The argument that

1 See Matthew Roper, “Losing the Remnant: The New Exclusivist ‘Movement’ and the Book of Mormon,” *FARMS Review* 22/2 (2010): 87–124; Roper, “Joseph Smith, Revelation, and Book of Mormon Geography,” *FARMS Review* 22/2 (2010): 15–85.

Joseph Smith knew the details of Book of Mormon geography through revelation is not new, but the claim that there was a conspiracy while the Prophet was still alive to oppose a revealed geography is a notable innovation. Neville claims that what he calls the “limited Mesoamerican geography” originates in dissident Mormon circles beginning with Benjamin Winchester, an early convert and writer who left the Church after the death of Joseph Smith.² He claims that three unsigned editorials on Central America and the Book of Mormon published in the *Times and Seasons* on September 15 and October 1, 1842, were written by Winchester rather than Joseph Smith and close associates, as some scholars believe.³ According to Neville, “the articles are momentous because they place Book of Mormon events in Mesoamerica, specifically Guatemala. ... The articles are unusual because the Central American identification is at variance with other statements Joseph made placing Book of Mormon events in North America” (5). The publication of these articles was part of an elaborate scheme to get Winchester’s controversial ideas about the Book of Mormon in print:

In March 1841, the Prophet Joseph Smith received a revelation naming the area of Iowa across from Nauvoo as Zarahemla. That same month, a man Joseph described as rotten at heart, who would injure the Church as much as he could, began a scheme to move Zarahemla to Guatemala. His efforts culminated in an article in the Church’s *Times and Seasons* on 1 October 1842. From that date until now, this man’s scheme has succeeded.⁴

Neville claims that Winchester — motivated by excessive zeal and convinced that his new idea would win more converts to the

2 See David J. Whittaker, “Early Mormon Pamphleteering.” (PhD Diss., Brigham Young University, 1982); Whittaker, “East of Nauvoo: Benjamin Winchester and the Early Mormon Church,” *Journal of Mormon History* 21/2 (Fall 1995): 31–83; Stephen Fleming, “Discord in the City of Brotherly Love: The Story of Early Mormonism in Philadelphia,” *Mormon Historical Studies* 5/1 (Spring 1994): 3–28.

3 See Matthew Roper, Paul J. Fields, and Atul Nepal, “Joseph Smith, the *Times and Seasons*, and Central American Ruins,” *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 22/2 (2013): 84–97.

4 John Neville, *The Lost City of Zarahemla: From Iowa to Guatemala and Back Again* (New York: Let Me Read It.com 2015), Back cover. As will be discussed in this article, there is no evidence that Joseph Smith ever believed that the Book of Mormon city of Zarahemla was in Iowa.

Church — conspired to get his ideas accepted and published. This new interpretation, Neville insists, contradicted Joseph Smith's revelations that established that the Book of Mormon took place in North America and not Central or South America. He claims that the "Mesoamerican theory" of Book of Mormon geography has resulted in a number of "evils" that have "hurt" the Church, undermined faith in Joseph Smith's prophetic calling, and continues to have a baleful effect on its members.⁵ "The negative impact of Winchester's Mesoamerican approach — 'the evils that may result therefrom' — may have started in the 1840s, but it continues today, perhaps more than ever" (191). It "permeates Church publications" including the *Ensign* and Church manuals (1, 191, 331). Neville decries "the widespread depiction of a Mayan influence, such as the Friberg paintings ... and numerous related books, videos, and even packaged tours" (5). "Other evils include essays addressing challenging

5 Neville hijacks the term *evils* from the words of George Q. Cannon, "The Book of Mormon Geography," *Juvenile Instructor* (1 January 1890), 18–19, and misapplies the apostle's words to the Mesoamerican approach to Book of Mormon geography. This is misleading. Cannon explained why the Church did not give official sanction to any map of Book of Mormon lands and noted that official endorsement of individual opinions might lead to confusion by giving them a stamp of approval that was not intended. No official map was to be adopted, while careful individual study Book of Mormon geography was encouraged. Neville complains that while the Church has no official position on the matter, that policy is undermined by artwork that depicts the Book of Mormon in a Mesoamerican setting (191). Ideas and images from Mesoamerica have certainly influenced Book of Mormon art, but this hardly constitutes official endorsement of any map. Under the old hemispheric view, Latter-day Saints assumed that Mesoamerica was always at least a *part* of the land spoken of in the Book of Mormon, so one can understand why it was commonly represented. Art can be a powerful influence, but it may or may not reflect accurate history and is not always intended to. More importantly, the question of which artwork is used in Church settings likely has more to do with the artist's perspective and what appeals to the viewer than any attempt by Church leaders to sponsor geographical theories. In any case, I am not aware of any Church policy that would discourage or prohibit LDS artists from portraying North American Mound Builder settings. The artist, of course, cannot expect that his work will be accepted or appreciated. The key factor will always be its quality and the artist's ability to influence the viewer. For an informative introduction to some of the challenges faced by artists see Anthony Sweat, "By the Gift and Power and Art." In Michael Hubbard MacKay and Gerrit J. Dirkmaat, *From Darkness Unto Light: Joseph Smith's Translation and Publication of the Book of Mormon* (Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University and Deseret Book, 2015), 229–43; Richard Oman, "Lehi's Vision of the Tree of Life: A Cross-Cultural Perspective in Contemporary Latter-day Saint Art," *BYU Studies* 32/4 (Fall 1992): 5–34.

issues on the Book of Mormon recently made available on the Church website which make reference to the unsigned *Times and Seasons* editorials on Central America and the work of LDS scholars who support a Mesoamerican interpretation, and also “Church-approved artwork” depicting the resurrected Savior’s visit to the Nephites in a Mesoamerican setting (191).⁶ “Even today, 174 years later in the year 2015,” the negative influence of Mesoamerican ideas “is seen inside every one of the Church’s thousands of chapels around the world” (1). But not to fear, writes Neville, “replacing Mesoamerica with North America will strengthen the faith of members, encourage missionaries, and remove an unnecessary stumbling block for investigators” (357).

Lost City reflects a “Heartland” ideology in need of a villain, and Neville seeks to make Winchester the scapegoat for what he considers an original sin of Mesoamerican geography. “Although this is not a criminal case,” Neville writes, “I pretended it was” (7). Neville’s placement of his arguments within the adversarial context of a courtroom invites the case for the defense. This requires a wider range than the specifics of Neville’s conspiracy theory and an examination of the assumptions he has made about the nature of revelation and Joseph Smith that do not fit the known historical facts. I will cover the important background in three articles. Each will examine a different facet of Joseph Smith’s connection with ideas about Book of Mormon geography and correlations with Central America.

1. Neville presents his case under the presumption that a crime was committed. In order to commit a crime against a revealed geography, there should be evidence for such a revelation. If not, there was no crime to begin with and the effort to establish means, motive, and opportunity is irrelevant. This article will address two issues. First, what did Joseph Smith believe about

6. In a post on his blog, “Book of Mormon Wars,” dated July 31, 2015, Neville stated that his goal is “to replace the article on lds.org titled ‘Book of Mormon and DNA Studies.’” He also wrote, “If it wasn’t on lds.org, this article could be on an anti-Mormon site.” <http://bookofmormonwars.blogspot.com/2015/07/the-goal.html>. According to Michael Otterson, the head of the Public Affairs Department, “Although highly competent LDS scholars prepared the initial drafts, they had extensive review by Church History staff and other scholars. Their review was followed by a rigorous reading for accuracy and balance by the Twelve before approval by the First Presidency.” <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/full-transcript-michael-otterson-address-at-fair-mormon-conference>

Book of Mormon geography?⁷ Were Joseph Smith's *views*, insofar as they can be known to us, based upon revelation, his own opinions, or a combination of both? Second, what exactly is a "Mesoamerican geography"? Does it constitute a believable motive for Winchester's theoretical "scheme"? Neville's argument rests on a fundamental misunderstanding of early geographical interpretations that requires correction and clarification.

2. Once the background context has been established, I will discuss the implications for Neville's theoretical conspiracy. A second article will discuss the influence of Stephen's and Catherwood's 1841 publication of *Incidents of Travel in Central America* on early thinking about the Book of Mormon, including that of Joseph Smith.
3. Having laid this historical foundation, a third article will then revisit the question of who authored the unsigned editorials in 1842. We will expand our pool of potential candidates for the authorship of those articles to include Benjamin Winchester and others in order to evaluate Neville's claims and then discuss the implications of our findings.

A Revealed Book of Mormon Geography?

Neville argues that the idea that Joseph Smith may not have been an expert on geographical information in the text of the Book of Mormon, that he may have had and expressed opinions and drew his own deductions about some matters such as geography, is "evil" and "undermines faith in the Prophet's calling as prophet, seer, and revelator" (192). He insists that because the Prophet spoke with angelic messengers, translated the Book of Mormon, and later went through the manuscript and made corrections to the text, that he was an expert on the *meaning* of the text. The issue of "what Joseph knew" about Book of Mormon geography ought to be approached as a research question, not a theological given. Neville insists that Joseph knew, but did not tell, or perhaps could not tell (164). But how can Neville know what Joseph knew if Joseph didn't say?

Latter-day Saint scripture suggests that prophets and seers received many revelations, but sometimes, for various reasons, did not always fully understand what the Lord had given them. Lehi saw the Tree of Life and much else in vision. Nephi saw the things that his father saw. When

7 For a previous discussion of this issue see Roper, "Joseph Smith, Revelation and Book of Mormon Geography," 15–70.

his brothers asked Nephi to explain one of the geographical features of the vision — the river — Nephi said it represented filthiness and “so much was his [father’s] mind swallowed up in other things that he beheld not the filthiness of the water” (1 Nephi 15:27). Nephi’s comment clarifies that even those who receive revelations may not fully understand or be prepared and able to interpret every aspect of them. Alma’s teachings to Corianton about resurrection of the body provide additional insight (Alma 40:3–10, 16–22). Alma was careful to distinguish between what the Lord had revealed to him and what he had not. He knew of certain things only because he had made them a matter of diligent and persistent inquiry. He did not know the times appointed for resurrection of the body, but in the absence of more detailed information from God on the matter, saw nothing improper about expressing an opinion about it (Alma 40:20).

Writing with the wisdom of personal experience, Joseph Smith taught the Saints that “it <is> a great thing to enquire at the hand of God, or to come into his presence and we feel fearful to appro[a]ch him on subject[s] that are of little or no consequen[ce], to satisfy the enqueries of individuals.”⁸ There is nothing wrong with the study of Book of Mormon geography, and careful study of the text rewards the reader as many can attest, but in the Lord’s eyes, the need for *revelation* on the location of Zarahemla may not fall high on the spectrum of our eternal priorities. One might even be inclined to apply Alma’s teachings on faith to the geography of the Book of Mormon, “How much more cursed is he that knoweth ... than he that only believeth, or only hath cause to believe, and falleth into transgression” (Alma 32:19). The privilege we have to read the Book of Mormon, to carefully study the text and even develop our tentative and often faulty opinions, is a blessing if it leads us to follow its teachings.

Speaking of her husband’s activities during the translation of the Book of Mormon, Emma Smith remembered:

One time while he was translating he stopped suddenly, pale as a sheet, and said, “Emma, did Jerusalem have walls around it?” When I answered, “Yes,” he replied “Oh! I was afraid I had been deceived.” He had such a limited knowledge of history

8 Joseph Smith Jr. and F. G. Williams to John S. Carter, 13 April 1833, in Gerrit J. Dirkmaat, ed., *The Joseph Smith Papers: Documents Volume 3: February 1833–March 1834* (Salt Lake City: The Church Historian’s Press, 2014), 63.

at that time that he did not even know that Jerusalem was surrounded by walls.⁹

The passage is interesting for what it suggests about the difference between a text, even a text revealed through the gift and power of God, and its meaning. Joseph is reading the text of the Book of Mormon from the seer stone to his scribe. He sees the words on the stone, and then wonders if there was some mistake when it speaks of the “walls” of Jerusalem. He only knows about the walls of the city because the text says so. He has not seen a vision of the walls of Jerusalem. He is a first-hand witness of the revealed text but has no knowledge of its geographical accuracy beyond the report of Emma, who has heard of or read about the walls of Jerusalem but never been there herself. The text is divinely revealed, but for geographical understanding Joseph is dependent on a potentially fallible human source. “It is asserted by one of his principle followers,” wrote one critic with amazement, “that Jo, even at this day is profoundly *ignorant of the meaning of many of the words contained in the Book of Mormon*.”¹⁰ For the critic this seemed scandalous, but for Emma and the Saints, these intellectual limitations were evidence that the Book of Mormon translation was the work of God, not a fictional product of Joseph Smith’s imagination.

When left to his own, Joseph Smith was just as prone as any of us to make mistakes and sometimes express faulty opinions. Sometimes the Lord would correct him. Sometimes he did not. According to one report, “Joseph Smith said to D Ells, & to the Congregation that he for a length of time, thought on phreknoleagee [phrenology], & that he had a Revelation. the Lord Rebuking him sharply in Crediting such a thing; & further said there was no Reality in such a science But was the works of the Devil.”¹¹ In an interview with a reporter in 1843, the Prophet shared additional insight relating to his role as a prophet and revelator.

Speaking of revelations, he stated that when he was in a “quandary,” he asked the Lord for revelation, and when he could not get it, he “followed the dictates of his own judgement, which were as good as a revelation to him; but he never gave

9 Emma Smith interview with Edmund Briggs, 1856, in Dan Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents* 1:530–31.

10 “Gold Bible, No. 3,” *The Reflector* (Palmyra, New York), 1 February 1831, 92, emphasis added.

11 McIntire Minute Book, 5 January 1841, in Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Orem: Grandin Book Company, 1991), 61.

anything to his people as revelation, unless it was revelation, and the Lord did reveal himself to him.”¹²

Joseph received revelations from God, but he did not always get a revelation when he asked for one. There would be no need for the Prophet to call attention to divine communication if everything he said was revelation. At those times when revelation on a question was not forthcoming he used “the dictates of his own judgement,” which generally served him well, but were of course still “his own” not God’s.

Jesse Crosby, an early convert, said that he once went with some friends to ask Brother Joseph his opinion on a public matter. “He told them he did not enjoy the right vouchsafed to every American citizen, that of free speech. He said to them that when he ventured to give his private opinion on any subject of importance his words were often garbled and their meaning twisted and then given out as the word of the Lord because they came from him.”¹³ The fact that most of what Joseph said does not come to us first-hand but through the accounts and recollections of others suggests the need for caution in our interpretation of secondary historical sources.

Neville cites the account of Joseph Smith’s mother Lucy Mack Smith suggesting Joseph Smith’s revelatory knowledge of some aspects of Nephite culture. This account, he writes, “remains the most comprehensive description of Joseph Smith’s familiarity with Book of Mormon culture and setting.” (265). Lucy’s wrote her recollection of these evening conversations just over two decades after the events they describe. She recalled,

In the course of our evening conversations Joseph would give us some of the most amusing recitals which could be imagined he would describe the ancient inhabitants of this continent their dress their maner of traveling the animals which they rode The cities that were built by them the structure of their buildings with every particular of their mode of warfare their religious worship—as particularly as though he had spent his life with them.¹⁴

12 “The Prairies, Nauvoo, Joe Smith, the Temple, the Mormons, etc.,” *The Pittsburgh Weekly Gazette* 58 (15 September 1843): 3.

13 Mark L. McConkie, *Remembering Joseph: Personal Recollections of Those Who Knew the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 99.

14 Lavina Fielding Anderson, ed., *Lucy’s Book: A Critical Edition of the Lucy Mack Smith Family Memoir* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2001), 345. Spelling

If the Lord revealed certain things to the Prophet about ancient Book of Mormon people and culture, did this include the details of Book of Mormon geography? It is worth observing that while Lucy wrote of some cultural elements that Joseph seemed to be familiar with, geography is not one that she mentioned. Being the translator, even an inspired translator of an ancient text, does not necessarily make one an expert on the geography of that text. Joseph was surprised when he learned that Jerusalem had walls. This suggests that he could be as surprised by the text as we might be. If the Lord saw fit to reveal the details of geography to Joseph Smith, He could of course do so, yet one could also conceivably see a rock, a tree, a building, a city, or a man in vision and yet not know or fully understand the surrounding geographical details.

At the time the Book of Mormon came forth, it conflicted with popular perceptions of native American culture. David Whitmer, one of the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon, remembered the challenge this seemed to pose. As reported in an interview with a reporter for the *Chicago Times*:

When they were first commanded to testify of these things, they demurred and told the Lord the people would not believe them for the book concerning which they were to bear record told of a people who were *educated* and *refined*, dwelling in *large cities*; whereas all that was then known of the early inhabitants of this country was the filthy, lazy, degraded and ignorant savages that were roaming over the land. “The Lord told us, in reply that he would make it known to the people that the early inhabitants of this land had been just such a people as they were described in the book, and he would lead them to discover the *ruins of the great cities*, and they should have *abundant evidence* of the truth of that which is written in the book, all of which,” said Mr. Whitmer, “has been fulfilled to the very letter.”¹⁵

Whitmer’s recollection is of interest in light of Mother Smith’s comments about Joseph Smith’s “evening conversations.” The earliest Latter-day Saints referred to “mounds” and what some took to be the

in the original.

15 David Whitmer Interview with James H. Hart, 21 August 1883, *Deseret Evening News*, 4 September 1883, in Lyndon W. Cook, ed., *David Whitmer Interviews: A Restoration Witness* (Orem, Utah: Grandin Book, 1991), 98. Emphasis added.

remains of Indian “forts,” small buildings, and other structures as evidence for pre-Columbian civilization. No Latter-day Saint writer mentioned large pre-Columbian “cities” until 1833 when W. W. Phelps published a brief report of the ruins of Otolum (Palenque) in “Central America.” That report described the ruins of the city as extending twenty miles (a claim later proved to be exaggerated) and the remains of a “palace” and other buildings with sculptured human figures. “The neighboring country for many leagues distant, contains remains of ancient labors of its people, bridges, reservoirs, monumental inscriptions, subterraneous edifices, &c.”¹⁶ It is reasonable to assume that Whitmer, who lived in Jackson County, Missouri, knew of this report. This article and subsequent discoveries by Stephens and Catherwood would have confirmed the Lord’s promise to the Book of Mormon witnesses. In this context, Lucy’s reference to “the cities that were built,” “the structure of their buildings,” and “their mode of warfare” could explain Joseph Smith’s later interest in *Incidents of Travel in Central America*.

Groundhog Day and Zelfh

Neville cites the 1834 account of Zelfh from the published *History of the Church* as evidence that Joseph Smith opposed placing Book of Mormon events in Mesoamerica (54). In citing that account, Neville gives no historical background for this story or the sources it is based on. There is, for example, no reference to Ken Godfrey’s essential study.¹⁷ The entry on Zelfh in the published *History of the Church* was not written by Joseph Smith and is not a contemporary account but is a hodgepodge of seven documents written by other men in Zion’s Camp who wrote about the event. When examined, these sources leave many issues unclear, including who exactly Zelfh was, whether he had anything to do with the lands or events described in the Book of Mormon text, or if he lived at a much later time. As historian Ken Godfrey concludes:

If the history of the church were to be revised today using modern historical standards, readers would be informed that Joseph Smith wrote nothing about the discovery of Zelfh, and that the account of uncovering the skeleton in Pike County is based on the diaries of seven members of Zion’s Camp, some

16 “Discovery of Ancient Ruins in Central America,” *Evening and Morning Star*, 1/9 (February 1833): [p. 71].

17 Kenneth W. Godfrey, “The Zelfh Story,” *BYU Studies* 29/2 (Spring 1989): 31–56.

of which were written long after the event took place. We would be assured that the members of Zion's Camp dug up a skeleton near the Illinois River in early June 1834. Equally sure is that Joseph Smith made statements about the deceased person and his historical setting. We would learn that it is unclear which statements attributed to him derived from his vision, as opposed to being implied or surmised either by him or by others. Nothing in the diaries suggests that the mound itself was discovered by revelation.

Furthermore, readers would be told that most sources agree that Zeph was a white Lamanite who fought under a leader named Onandagus (variously spelled). Beyond that, what Joseph said to his men is not entirely clear, judging by the variations in the available sources. The date of the man Zeph, too, remains unclear. Expressions such as "great struggles among the Lamanites," if accurately reported, could refer to a period long after the close of the Book of Mormon narrative, as well as to the fourth century AD. None of the sources before the Willard Richards composition, however, actually say that Zeph died in battle with the Nephites, only that he died "in battle" when the otherwise unidentified people of Onandagus were engaged in great wars "among the Lamanites."

Zeph was identified as a "Lamanite," a label agreed on by all the accounts. This term might refer to the ethnic and cultural category spoken of in the Book of Mormon as actors in the destruction of the Nephites, or it might refer more generally to a descendant of the earlier Lamanites and could have been considered in 1834 as the equivalent of "Indian" (see, for example, D&C 3:18, 20; 10:48; 28:8; 32:2). Nothing in the accounts can settle the question of Zeph's specific ethnic identity.¹⁸

The issue again is not whether Joseph Smith received revelation on the warrior named Zeph (that much seems clear from the historical sources), but if what he learned in that revelation had anything to do with the geography of the scriptural text. On that question precise language

18 Kenneth W. Godfrey, "What is the Significance of Zeph in the Study of Book of Mormon Geography?" *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8/2 (1999): 70–79; See also Roper, "Joseph Smith, Revelation and Book of Mormon Geography," 62–70.

of the Prophet would make a difference, but the historical sources do not allow us to determine with clarity his precise language, or if some of the language recorded in these secondary sources reflected Joseph's own opinions or those of others.

Neville was fully aware of this background on Zeph, including what I had written about it in 2010, well before the publication of *Lost City* in late February 2015.¹⁹ It is very disappointing that he only cites the passage on Zeph from the *History of the Church* without addressing the work and arguments of historians. This is misleading but follows an unfortunate pattern set by others in the so-called Heartland movement.

In 2007 Rodney Meldrum began distributing DVDs promoting his so-called Heartland theory of the Book of Mormon. In the series he cited statements from Ken Godfrey, John Sorenson, and me, which he characterized as undermining Joseph Smith's inspired prophetic teachings. In 2008 a detailed response to Meldrum's claims was made available through FAIR, which included a discussion of the Zeph issue.²⁰ In 2009 Meldrum published a book, *Prophecies and Promises: The Book of Mormon and the United States of America*, in which he repeated much of what he taught in his DVDs and continued to cite the Zeph story in the *History of the Church* to support his claims that Joseph Smith's revelations included the details of Book of Mormon geography.²¹

On March 11, 2010, I wrote to Rod Meldrum and asked him why he continued to cite the current *History of the Church* version of the Zeph story as authoritative and supportive of his claims, without addressing or acknowledging that it was not written by Joseph Smith. I referred him to the articles written by Ken Godfrey discussing the sources on Zeph. "Why," I asked, "do you claim, based upon what he has written, that Godfrey questions or attempts to discredit the inspired

19 Since June 2014, Neville has run a blog devoted to attacking proponents of a Mesoamerican interpretation of the Book of Mormon, including me. In a post on December 7, 2014, he describes what I have written about Zeph as "deceptive" and falsely characterizes my writings as undermining the faith of Church members and "casting doubt on the early brethren." His comments were originally made on Daniel Peterson's Patheos blog "Sic et Non" under the handle MKeys, an allusion to his novel *Moroni's Keys*. <http://bookofmormonwars.blogspot.com/2014/12/the-tone-of-discussion.html>

20 <http://www.fairmormon.org/reviews-of-dna-evidence-for-book-of-mormon-geography>

21 Bruce H. Porter and Rod L. Meldrum, *Prophecies and Promises: The Book of Mormon and the United States of America* (New York: Digital Legend, 2009).

words of Joseph Smith and cast doubt on the validity of Joseph Smith's inspiration?" I then explained my concerns:

If you previously read Godfrey's work on the Zelph story you already know that the passage on Zelph in the current edition of the *History of the Church* has a complex history. For example, in the Manuscript History of Joseph Smith reference to "Cumorah" and several other words were crossed out in the original manuscript. When the *History of the Church* was first published in 1904 this was reflected in that edition where the crossed out words were omitted from the text. It was only later in the second edition that the crossed out words referring to the Hill Cumorah in the Zelph story were put back in without any explanation that the words had been crossed out in the original Manuscript History. This was also explained to you in the response to your 2007 DVD prepared by FAIR in section 3 pages 7–10 of that work. In your 2009 book *Prophecies and Promises* you again simply cite the most recent edition of the *History of the Church* on page 106 without any explanation of the history behind this passage, accusing those who disagree with you of dismissing Joseph Smith as Prophet. I must confess that I find this puzzling and a little troubling, as most of your readers would not know that there is more to the story here. Isn't this data important and relevant to the question of *what* Joseph Smith actually knew and *actually said* about Zelph and how it *may* or *may not* relate to Book of Mormon geography? Obviously people make mistakes, and nobody knows everything, but given the subject matter and how hard you come out against those who differ with your interpretations and the fact that you have been repeatedly provided with information on these questions, I find and I think that many other fair-minded people would find this omission troubling.²²

Meldrum responded the following day refusing to answer my questions unless I promised to keep his response private.²³ This I refused to do since the claims and accusations he was making were public and thus required a public explanation or correction. I responded:

22 Matthew Roper to Rodney Meldrum, 11 March 2010.

23 Rodney Meldrum to Matthew Roper, 12 March 2010.

In your public presentations, your DVDs, your website and publications you state certain things and make certain claims about what happened in Church history and what Joseph Smith knew about Book of Mormon geography. You are also on record stating certain things and making certain claims in public and making insinuations about myself and others and our loyalty to the Church, Joseph Smith, and his revelations. I do not take such accusations lightly, nor can I, given who I represent at BYU and the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship. I do not want to believe that you and your co-author have made these claims and accusations out of malice or other base motives, but some of your claims and statements frankly puzzle me, as they seem unsustainable and even reckless

I understand there may be circumstances in which it would be advisable and perhaps proper to keep correspondence confidential. I don't object to that under certain circumstances. As a general rule and a way of life, however, this is not wise. I am not interested in your personal life. My questions deal specifically with what you have publicly stated, presented, distributed, or published, some of it about me. I was seeking clarification of public things which relate to these issues which you should, I would think, be willing, perhaps even anxious, to justify or explain. Under such circumstances, why would you want to keep your answers to these rather simple questions confidential?

Since it is you and not I who have repeatedly made these things a public matter, it would, I think, be to your advantage to *openly* respond to my questions and justify why you have said the things that you have, that is, if they can be justified.²⁴

Afterwards I wrote an article published in the *FARMS Review* in which I responded to *Prophecies and Promises*.²⁵ There I discussed the Zeph issue in detail, but I did not make reference to the above correspondence at that time in the hope that he would address these concerns in any future work. The following year, however, Meldrum published another book, *Exploring the Book of Mormon in America's Heartland: A Visual*

24 Matthew Roper to Rodney Meldrum, 12 March 2010.

25 Roper, "Joseph Smith, Revelation, and Book of Mormon Geography," 62–69.

Journey of Discovery. The book contained colored pictures of the Illinois mound, again citing the same passage from current edition of the *History of the Church* without any further explanation or acknowledgement of Godfrey's work or my article in the *FARMS Review*.²⁶ Neville's work, now enthusiastically promoted by Rod Meldrum, continues this irresponsible and misleading pattern.

Nephite as a Cultural Term

Neville claims that Joseph Smith's letter to Emma Smith in June 1834 during Zion's Camp shows that Joseph Smith rejected a Central American geography (54). In a letter to Emma on June 4, 1834, Joseph wrote

The whole of our journey, in the midst of so large a company of social honest and sincere men, wandering over the plains of the Nephites, recounting occasionally the history of the Book of Mormon, roving over the mounds of that once beloved people of the Lord, picking up their skulls & their bones, as proof of its divine authenticity.²⁷

Neville assumes that "plains of the Nephites" is a geographical clue to the scriptural text. He reasons it may refer to "plains of Heshlon" (Ether 13:28) or the "plains of Agosh" (Ether 14:15), but that would make them the plains of *the Jaredites* rather than "plains of the Nephites" (54). As an alternative, he suggests linking Joseph's words to the "plains of Nephiah" (Alma 52:20; 62:18). This is of course total speculation. The "plains of the Nephites" and the "plains of Nephiah" may or may not be the same but certainly *need* not be. They could just as well be the "plains of Onandagus" or the "plains of Zelph" or something else entirely.²⁸ Any place where "Nephites" once lived *anywhere* in the Americas might qualify. Early Latter-day Saints viewed *all* native Americans in North and South America as descendants of the seed of Nephi and his brethren, so the words "plains of the Nephites" are useless as a clue to external Book

26 Rod. L. Meldrum, *Exploring the Book of Mormon in America's Heartland: A Visual Journey of Discovery* (New York: Digital Legend, 2011), 30, 32.

27 Joseph Smith to Emma Smith, 4 June 1834, in Jesse, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 345–46.

28 Matthew Roper, "Limited Geography and the Book of Mormon: Historical Antecedents and Early Interpretations," *FARMS Review* 16/2 (2004): 241–42; Mark Alan Wright, "Heartland as Hinterland: The Mesoamerican Core and North American Periphery of Book of Mormon Geography," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 13 (2015): 111–29.

of Mormon geography. Perhaps they were not intended to be. It makes more sense to read Joseph's use of "Nephite" in the letter as a cultural term rather than a geographical clue to the text.

In 1838 the Prophet received a revelation about Spring Hill in North Missouri, which is now included in Section 116 of the Doctrine and Covenants. A great deal of folklore has circulated in the past about the hill, based upon statements of some early associates of the prophet who visited the place. Were the remains of Adam's altar still there? Was there a Nephite altar on the site? Information on the naming of the hill at Adam-ondi-Ahman comes from a document written in Missouri by George W. Robinson, but was not written by Joseph Smith himself. That entry states:

We came to Col. Lyman Wight's who lives at the foot of Tower Hill, a name appropriated by Pres smith, in consequence of the remains of an old Nephitish Alter an Tower ... which was called Spring Hill a name appropriated by the bretheren present, But afterwards named by the mouth of [the] Lord and was called Adam Ondi Awmen [Adam-ondi-Ahman], because said he it is the place where Adam shall come to visit his people, or the Ancient of days shall sit as spoken of by Daniel the Prophet.²⁹

Note that the brethren present first found some archaeological remains on the hill that were thought to look "Nephitish." A revelation through the Prophet Joseph comes "afterwards" but says nothing about the validity of any previous "Nephitish" association, only that Adam once dwelt in the region (that would be long before the Book of Mormon anyway) and that one day there would be a future meeting prophesied by Daniel. Joseph Smith reportedly remarked later that Adam, when he dwelt there thousands of years before, had offered sacrifice but never appears to have associated any of the extant remains there with Adam, although later brethren speculated about this:

So what did Robinson mean when he said they discovered the remains of a "Nephitish" structure? It is important to note that the early Latter-day Saints clearly believed that the native North American tribes were descendants of the earlier Nephite-Lamanite civilization. With this belief, Robinson probably used the word "Nephitish" to indicate that the

29 *The Joseph Smith Papers: Journals. Volume 1:1832–1839*, 271.

structure or altar was built by, or originated with, the North American Indians. He may have also used “Nephitish” to mean that the altar was of ancient origin. Therefore, what Robinson was attempting to describe were the remains of what appeared to be a sacred altar structure erected by early Native Americans.³⁰

This perspective can be seen in the writings of the Prophet’s close associates from Zion’s Camp, those “social, honest, and sincere men” he wrote about to his wife. Orson Pratt, for example, in his brief summary of the Book of Mormon story, writes that the “arts and sciences flourished to a great extent” among *the Nephites* in their days of righteousness and that they “were a *civilized, enlightened* ... people.” The Lamanites, when they dwindled in unbelief, were not. Pratt described the Mulekites, who had a corrupted language and lacked any written records, as “only in a *partial state of civilization*,” which they rectified when united with Mosiah’s people.³¹ Pratt associated *Nephites* with arts and sciences, written language, and other elements of civilization.

Wilford Woodruff, whose journal provides a key source on the Zelph story, was another trusted associate of the Prophet. In later years he visited Arizona and New Mexico, where he encountered first-hand native American groups of the region. Observed cultural differences led him to think that some of these groups were more “Nephite” than “Lamanite.” In a letter to John Taylor and the Twelve he shared some of these observations.

I view my visit among the Nephites one of the most interesting missions of my life, although short. I say Nephites because if there are any Nephites on this continent we have found them among the Zunis, Lugumas [Lagunas], and Isletas, for they are a different race of people altogether from the Lamanites. I class the Navajoe [Navajo], Moquis [Hopi], and Apaches with the Lamanites, although they are in advance of many Indian tribes of America. I class the Zunis, Lagumas [Lagunas], and Isletas among the Nephites.

30 Alexander L. Baugh, “1838: Joseph Smith in Northern Missouri,” in Richard Holzapfel, ed., *Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2010), 305. See also 305–7.

31 Pratt, *Interesting Account*, 17–18, emphasis added.

The Zunis are in advance of the Navajoes, Apaches, or any other Lamanites. The Lagumas are much above the Zunis, and the Isletas are far above them all in wealth, in beauty, cleanliness, or order of their homes and persons, the adornment of their dwellings, their industry and indefatigable labors, and in their virtue, and in the purity of their national blood. Their bearing and dignity in their intercourse with strangers, and, above all else, the expansion of their minds and their capacity to receive any principle of the Gospel, such as endowments or sealing powers, fully equal the minds of any of the Anglo Saxon race. ...

They have their own laws, police courts, and judgement seat. They are very rich. ... They allow no white man or Mexican to mix with them in their blood; all their marriages are of their own tribe. ...

I look upon the Isletas as the most industrious and hard laboring people of any I ever met (the Latter-day Saints not excepted). This Nephite village has a field of corn ten miles in length and one in width. It lies north and south of their village and is irrigated. The corn is quite as good as any I ever saw in Utah and perfectly clean; not a weed could be found in a hundred acres. They have also twenty-one vineyards bordering on their city and a thousand vines to each vineyard, some of them sixty years of age, all kept perfectly clean and loaded with the finest of fruit and as heavy a crop as I ever saw in St. George. The vines stand from two to four feet in height and, in the fall of the year, each vine has a mound of earth formed around it until it is covered out of sight. In the Spring it is uncovered and the earth leveled. This is an immense work. They have also many apple, pear, and peach orchards, all ripe as well as the grapes. Isletas is occupied only by the Nephites themselves. There are no Mexicans or white men. The houses generally are made of adobe, cement, or concrete and plastered. The outside walls are as white as snow, and the floors are made of mortar of plaster, very smooth and many of them neatly carpeted. ... I found in Isletas and in other villages of the Nephites the same kind of crockery and stoneware

painted in all its brilliant colors that we find in the remains of their ancient cities, or in ruins of the ancient inhabitants. All of their water jugs and main crockery are of this material, for they still hold the art of making and painting it.³²

Woodruff's characterization of cultural elements he perceives as positive (fine buildings, industry, agriculture, cleanliness, laws, and government) are, from his perspective (that of a nineteenth-century, Connecticut-born farmer), "Nephite," while less positively perceived ones (nomadic lifestyle, warlike nature) are "Lamanite."

Mormon pioneers who explored the southwestern Rockies were fascinated by Anasazi ruins found in the mountain cliffs, some of which they supposed were built by the Gadianton robbers, "which the Book of Mormon describes as a wicked, savage, warlike and bloodthirsty people, who lived in the mountain fastnesses." They attributed others to the Nephites, "a civilized, industrious, enterprising people who feared God, dwelt in cities, cultivated the arts and sciences, and occupied a rich fertile land."³³ Nephites in mid-nineteenth century Mormon perception built cities, cultivated the arts and sciences, and engaged in agriculture.

Early settlers in the Salt River Valley region of Arizona encountered pre-Columbian remains of walls and irrigation canals of Hohokam culture. Mormons who settled near Mesa, Arizona, associated these remains with the Nephites. A collection of photographs in the Church History Library taken of undeveloped land near Mesa, Arizona, around 1900 by James W. LeSueur is called, "Ancient Nephite Ruins near Mesa Arizona." These show what appear to be the remains of old walls and irrigation canals. One of these is described as a "wall" surrounding a "Nephite castle." Another shows several levees of an "Old Nephite Canal" and notes, "Ancient Nephites had 123 miles of Canal Systems in Salt River Valley, Arizona." The photographs were taken not far from the early Arizona Mormon settlement of Lehi.³⁴ In light of this pattern of associating Nephite with civilization, Joseph's reference to the plains

32 Wilford Woodruff to President John Taylor and Council, 15 September 1879, in Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1964), 521–28.

33 "Ancient Ruins in America," *The Mormon*, 28 April 1855.

34 James LeSueur, "Ancient Nephite Ruins near Mesa, Arizona," photographs, PH 1455, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Church History Library, Salt Lake City; Richard Francaviglia, *The Mapmakers of New Zion: A Cartographic History of Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2015), 180, Figure 5.16 and 5.17. See also J. W. LeSueur, *Indian Legends* (Independence: Zion's Printing, 1927), 22, 79, 328–31.

of the Nephites seems more like a cultural reference than a geographical one.

Manti

Neville alludes to “third-hand accounts” in which “Joseph identified an area in southern Missouri as the ancient site of Manti,” which supports his argument for a North American location (334). This is based upon a diary entry from Samuel Tyler who traveled with the Kirtland Camp in 1838 to Missouri (not to be confused with the 1834 Zion’s Camp).³⁵ In his journal entry for September 25, 1838, Tyler wrote,

We passed thro Huntsville, Co. seat Randolph Co. Pop. 450 & three miles further we bought 32 bu. of corn of one of the brethren who resides in this place (66) There are several of the brethren round about here & **this is the ancient site of the City of Manti, which is spoken of in the Book of Mormon** & this is appointed one of the Stakes of Zion and it is in Randolph Co. Mo. 3 miles west of the Co. seat.³⁶

Historical analysis of the relevant documents show that Joseph Smith was not present when Tyler made this entry but was several counties away in Far West. The wording about Manti, if from Joseph Smith, is not contemporary with the journal entry and may or may not be influenced by hearsay. Tyler does not attribute this wording to Joseph Smith or revelation. A similar entry subsequently drafted for the Manuscript History of the Church seems to have been essentially based upon the Tyler entry but was not written until after the death of Joseph Smith and was not published until 1854 in the *Millennial Star*. When Andrew Jensen published the entry in the *Historical Record* in 1888, he added, without explanation, the words “which the Prophet said” immediately before the sentence about Manti, although this was not in the original manuscript.

In 1938 Joseph Fielding Smith published an article in the *Deseret News* citing the Tyler Journal and the published (*Millennial Star*) version of the Manuscript History entry to support an argument for a Missouri location. In 1956, that article, along with many of Smith’s sermons and writings were published without modification in a popular compilation,

³⁵ Alexander L. Baugh, “Kirtland Camp, 1838: Bringing the Poor to Missouri,” *Journal of Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 22/1 (2013): 58–61.

³⁶ Journal of Samuel D. Tyler, 25 September 1838, MS 1761, Church Historian’s Department, Salt Lake City, emphasis added.

Doctrines of Salvation, through which the idea for an ancient Manti location in Missouri became more widely known in LDS circles. He never spoke on or addressed the issue of Book of Mormon geography after he became President of the Church.

In an earlier study I discussed a second important contemporary source, the Elias Smith journal.³⁷ This entry written on the same day reads:

We came through Huntsville, the county seat of Randolph, where we were told before we arrived there we should be stopped but saw nothing of the kind when we came through the town and heard no threats whatever, but all appeared friendly. 1½ miles west of Huntsville we crossed the east branch of Chariton and 1½ miles west of the river we found Ira Ames and some other brethren near the place *where the city of Manti is to be built* and encamped for the night on Dark creek 6 miles from Huntsville.

Rather than suggest that the ancient site of Manti was in Randolph County Missouri, the Elias Smith entry indicates plans for a future settlement to be called by that name. B. H. Roberts in his compilation of the *History of the Church* incorporated the Elias Smith wording into the entry for that day and did not use either the Tyler Journal or the Manuscript History entry. This is how it still stands in the published *History of the Church* today in volume 3, page 144.

I would conclude, based upon the known evidence, that the Joseph Smith at some point designated the site in Randolph County as a settlement for a future stake that would be named Manti. The actual words, however, make a difference. The problem is not Joseph Smith's prophetic authority but *our* limitations due to the inability to recover what Joseph may have actually said on this point. Did Joseph say it was "the ancient site of Manti spoken of in the Book of Mormon," or did he say that it was "where the city Manti is to be built"? Do the words in these reports reproduce Joseph's statement word for word? How much does what Tyler and Smith reported in good faith reflect the ideas and speculation of local brethren with whom they interacted? Did they assume on their own, based on the proposed name of the settlement,

37 Matthew Roper, "How much weight can a single source bear? The case of Samuel D. Tyler's Journal entry," *Journal of Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 22/1 (2013): 54–57.

that it might have been the ancient site of Manti as well?³⁸ That seems reasonable to me, but who can say? Since Joseph Smith was not present at the time, and the two reports are not the same, *we* cannot simply put words into the Prophet's mouth and conclude that both sources are correct. And one cannot build a reliable geography on such uncertainties.

Zarahemla

In 1903, a large group of Latter-day Saint students, teachers, and General Authorities met in Provo, Utah, to discuss the question of Book of Mormon geography. The organizers thought it might be nice if the group could come to a unified view of the location of Zarahemla mentioned in the Book of Mormon. Differences of opinions were expressed. Some argued that Zarahemla was in South America; others thought it might have been in Honduras. The news report suggests that some had strongly held opinions about this and other geographical matters and argued forcefully for their respective positions. According to the report:

President [Joseph F.] Smith spoke briefly and expressed the idea that the question of the situation of the city was one of interest certainly, but if it could not be located, the matter was not of vital importance, and if there were differences of opinion on the question, it would not affect the salvation of the people, and he advised against students considering it of so vital importance as the principles of the Gospel.

Later he “again cautioned the students against making the union question — the location of cities and lands — of equal importance with the doctrines contained in the book.”³⁹ President Smith's counsel to not make issues of Book of Mormon geography, such as the location of Zarahemla, a matter of equal importance to the doctrines contained in the Book of Mormon is consistent with the counsel of current Church leaders and provides a notable contrast with advocates of the “Heartland” theory, such as Meldrum and Neville and others who falsely accuse those who disagree with their interpretations of dismissing or undermining the prophetic authority of Joseph Smith. In October 1929, Anthony W. Ivins of the First Presidency said:

38 Meldrum and Neville make the same assumption about Zarahemla.

39 “Book of Mormon Students Meet,” *Deseret Evening News*, 25 May, 1903. This was reprinted in the *Journal of Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 22/2 (2013): 108–10.

There is a great deal of talk about the geography of the Book of Mormon. Where was the land of Zarahemla? Where was the City of Zarahemla? And other geographical matters. It does not make any difference to us. There has never been anything yet set forth that definitely settles the question. ... As you study the Book of Mormon keep these things in mind and do not make definite statements concerning things that have not been proven in advance to be true.⁴⁰

Recently, some Latter-day Saints, finding a dearth of evidence for a revelation on Book of Mormon geography, have tried to squeeze one from Section 125 of the Doctrine and Covenants.⁴¹ This revelation invited the Saints to gather at appointed locations, including settlements in Iowa, where they might build up stakes of Zion. “And let them build up a city unto my name upon the land opposite the city of Nauvoo, and let the name of Zarahemla be named upon it” (D&C 125:31). The revelation says nothing about where the ancient Nephite city of Zarahemla was located, but Neville writes as if he really wished that it had (330, 332). He suggests that the revelation may have been “the Lord’s warning to Joseph about Winchester’s imminent promulgation of a Mesoamerican approach to promoting the Book of Mormon” (143, note 114). He claims that the

40 Anthony W. Ivins, *Conference Report*, April 1929, 15–16.

41 Porter and Meldrum, *Prophecies and Promises*, 115–17; Meldrum, *Exploring the Book of Mormon in America’s Heartland*, 78–81; Neville, *The Lost City of Zarahemla*, 180, 330, 332. It may be of interest to note that the publication of Neville’s *Lost City* in February 2015 coincided with the announcement of efforts promoted by Wayne May and Rod Meldrum to purchase land in Iowa to excavate what they suggest to followers may be the ancient temple of Zarahemla. The promoters seem to envision a kind of Disneyland-like historical park. “If the temple site is verified, the plan is to continue the archaeological excavations at the site and begin the development of a new Native American Cultural Center along the lines of the Polynesian Cultural Center in Hawaii, complete with Native American villages, cultural museums, attractions, stages for performances, river boat rides across the Mississippi between Zarahemla and Nauvoo, etc. We believe that this will also contribute to the revitalization of Nauvoo and bring further positive interest and attention to the Church and its mission.” Meldrum states, “This could be an opportunity of a lifetime to be a part of a project that may forever change the understandings of the ancient history of America as well as validate in an unprecedented way the historicity of the Book of Mormon itself, the Prophet Joseph Smith and the Church he restored. ... I would like to invite you to join with other fellow ‘Heartlanders’ to help us raise the funds for the purpose of conducting the archaeological studies and dig.” <http://www.bookofmormonevidence.org/feature.php?id=29>

Zarahemla editorials were “a direct challenge to the 1841 revelation in Section 125 about Zarahemla” (180). It is unclear how a Mesoamerican interpretation of Book of Mormon geography could directly challenge something that the revelation does not mention.

In a previous article I observed that the verse says nothing about the location of the ancient site of Zarahemla.⁴² That remains the case. As a secondary argument I had cited several journal entries that apparently called the Iowa settlement “Zarahemla” before the revelation in Section 125 was given. Based upon the information available to me at that time, this seemed a valid secondary argument. In May 2013 I learned of several apparent anomalies in those sources that suggest these entries, at least the parts mentioning Zarahemla, were likely written later than the dates had suggested to me. I hope at some point in the future to examine the originals myself and revisit the matter. For the present I will assume those sources do not support my earlier argument. Still, we lack certain specifics on how the revelation was received. Did Joseph Smith and his brethren discuss the matter beforehand? Had they previously considered the name Zarahemla as a possible designation and then submitted it to the Lord for confirmation? The name itself need not have been be a geographical clue to have hold significance.

The name Zarahemla would have reminded the Saints of the Book of Mormon and invited them to liken their experiences to those of Lehi’s people. When the Saints were driven from Missouri, they had to flee from danger and persecution. One of several places they found refuge was in Iowa. In the Book of Mormon, groups of refugees also found safety and refuge in Zarahemla. It was a place where those who believed in the scriptures and in the words of the living prophets could gather and receive protection, just as the Latter-day Saints who believed in the words of Joseph Smith and the words of Book of Mormon prophets could settle. As such, the name seems appropriate. Both Manti and Zarahemla were Book of Mormon cities, but perhaps significantly, they were *fortified* cites as well. The Lord characterized the first stake in Kirtland as a “*strong hold*” (D&C 64:21), a term that evokes the Iowa settlement’s namesake in the Book of Mormon (Helaman 1:20), a place that at times was well fortified (3 Nephi 3:23–26). Of course, most stakes in the past and today are not named after Book of Mormon or even biblical locations, but perhaps the Lord thought it fitting in Joseph Smith’s day to give these two settlements — Manti in Missouri and Zarahemla in Iowa — names that would remind them and future readers of what a stake of Zion is

42 Roper, “Joseph Smith, Revelation and Book of Mormon Geography,” 56–58.

intended to be: a defense and a refuge for the Saints (D&C 115:6). This admittedly reflects my own thinking and speculation, but it makes more sense than an approach that tries to force a revelation and geographical interpretation out of a passage where none exist.

Book of Mormon Geography and Winchester

Neville exaggerates the importance of Winchester's writings and underestimates the influence of earlier writers of whose works he seems unaware. In 1837 Parley P. Pratt published *A Voice of Warning*, which has been described as "the most important of all the non-canonical LDS books"⁴³ In 1839 Pratt published a second edition, revised and enlarged, which included an expanded section on the Book of Mormon. Givens and Grow note that this pamphlet, which "remained among the most widely read Mormon works for several decades after his death," also "proved exceptionally effective as a missionary tool. ... Pratt's writings, which deeply influenced other Mormon authors, particularly his equally prolific younger brother Orson, not only helped convert thousands to Mormonism but also shaped the Mormon theological system."⁴⁴ It was Pratt's "greatest theological contribution as a Latter-day Saint, ... a work that served the church as its most powerful proselytizing tool — after the Book of Mormon — for more than a century."⁴⁵ "For the first few years of the Church's existence, little besides the Book of Mormon could ground Mormon theology or expound doctrine, and early Latter-day Saints seldom used the Book of Mormon in that regard."⁴⁶ In fact, during this early period of Church history, "next to the Book of Mormon itself, Pratt's book soon became the principal vehicle presenting Mormonism

43 Peter Crawley, *A Descriptive Bibliography of the Mormon Church*. Volume One 1830–1847, 69. *Voice of Warning* was not the quite the first Mormon missionary tract or the first to outline the tenets of the Latter-day Saints, but it was the first to emphasize the differences between Mormonism and orthodox Christianity. It established a formula for describing the Church's basic doctrines, and it included biblical proof texts, arguments, and examples that would be used by Mormon pamphleteers for a hundred years. It was also an extremely effective missionary tract, and before the close of the century it would go through more than thirty editions in English and be translated into Danish, Dutch, French, German, Icelandic, Spanish, and Swedish," Crawley, 71.

44 Terryl L. Givens and Matthew J. Grow, *Parley P. Pratt: The Apostle Paul of Mormonism*, 6

45 Givens and Grow, 90.

46 Givens and Grow, 114.

to the Latter-day Saint faithful and the general public alike.”⁴⁷ “But for narrative exposition, one that aspired to lay out in readable format the essence of Mormonism for member and non-Mormon alike, *Voice of Warning* had no peer and, for many decades, little competition.”⁴⁸

The first publications Benjamin Winchester produced are two small pamphlets from 1840. Neither addresses the question of Book of Mormon geography. The first of these, *An Examination of a Lecture by the Rev. H. Perkins*, is unremarkable.⁴⁹ The second, *The Origin of the Spalding Theory*, had more lasting significance as a response to the Spalding theory and the information it provides on Doctor Philastus Hurlbut whom Winchester knew and claimed as a relative.⁵⁰ In 1841, while in Philadelphia, Winchester published a short-lived periodical entitled the *Gospel Reflector*. This periodical commenced in January 1841 and continued until the June 15, 1841, issue, after which it was discontinued. “Generally the *Gospel Reflector* treats a broad range of doctrinal subjects. The ideas themselves were not new to the Mormon printed record, but their defense marshaled a nearly comprehensive collection of biblical citations and examples, many appearing in a Latter-day Saint publication for the first time.”⁵¹ Some of the articles that appeared there were subsequently reprinted in other Latter-day Saint periodicals such as the *Times and Seasons*. It also was greatly influenced by earlier Latter-day Saint publications:

Like other Mormon periodicals, it borrowed liberally from its predecessors. For example, a chronology showing the creation of Adam exactly 6,000 years before (pp. 20–21) is reprinted from the third number of the *Evening and Morning Star*: the seventh Lecture on Faith (pp. 77–83) is from the Doctrine and Covenants ... Oliver Cowdery’s letters to W.W. Phelps (pp. 137–76) are taken from the first volume of the *Messenger and Advocate*; Sidney Rigdon’s article on the Millennium (pp. 287–93) and his letter to John Whitmer on the New Testament church (pp. 293–96) are republished from the second volume

47 Givens and Grow, 103–104.

48 Givens and Grow, *Parley P. Pratt*, 114–15.

49 Benjamin Winchester, *An Examination of a lecture delivered by the Rev. H. Perkins* ... (1840).

50 Benjamin Winchester, *The Origin of the Spaulding story, concerning the Manuscript Found: with a short biography of Dr. P. Hurlbert* ... (Philadelphia: Brown, Bickings & Guilbert, 1840).

51 Crawley, *Descriptive Bibliography*, 145.

of the *Evening and Morning Star* and the fourteenth number of the *Messenger and Advocate*; and the final issue (pp. 297–311) is largely made up of abstracts from the Doctrine and Covenants.

But Winchester wrote much of the text, and here the influence of Parley Pratt's *Voice of Warning* — explicitly acknowledged in the first number (p. 18) — is pervasive. Winchester's essays on spiritualizing the scriptures (pp. 29–32), the kingdom of God (pp. 37–42, 49–72), gospel dispensations (pp. 84–89), continued revelation (pp. 89–98), the Book of Mormon (pp. 105–36), the restoration of Israel (pp. 220–43), the Resurrection (pp. 244–46), and the millennium (pp. 246–72), all derive from the second edition of *Voice of Warning* ... occasionally borrowing from it verbatim.⁵²

Of particular interest to the question of Book of Mormon geography are two articles published in the March 1 and March 14, 1841, issues. Both of these cited biblical proof texts in support of the Book of Mormon and the necessity of modern revelation. In the March 1 article, Winchester introduced the Book of Mormon with a brief account of its recovery from the hill by Joseph Smith and then referenced reports of "various relics of antiquity" to prove that "America has been inhabited by an enlightened people, far in advance of the savage state of the red men of the forest." Winchester also quoted from the work of Elias Boudinot to support the idea that the North American Indians were of Israelite origin. In the March 15 issue, Winchester briefly describes Lehi's journey from Jerusalem into the wilderness, and then across the ocean to the American land of promise. Winchester indicates that in their final wars the Nephites fled Northward to the hill in New York where the Nephites were destroyed and Moroni buried the plates, adding that "the Indians of America are the descendants of the Lamanites."⁵³

In 1841 Winchester and Erastus Snow published *An Address to the citizens of Salem and vicinity*.⁵⁴ Neville attributes the ideas on the Book of Mormon in this pamphlet to Winchester (50, 57), when the Book of Mormon content was actually taken from Parley Pratt's 1840

52 Crawley, *Descriptive Bibliography*, 146.

53 Benjamin Winchester, "The Claims of the Book of Mormon Established—It also Defended," *The Gospel Reflector* 1/6 (15 March, 1841): 124–25.

54 Erastus Snow and Benjamin Winchester, *An Address to the citizens of Salem and vicinity* (Salem, 1841).

publication, *An Address by a minister of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. To the People of the United States*.⁵⁵

The bulk of the pamphlet (pp. 3–8) is a summary of Mormon beliefs taken primarily from Orson Pratt’s *Remarkable Visions* (item 82), and Parley Pratt’s *An Address to the People of the United States* (item 111), which is quoted directly at one point and which undoubtedly suggested the title. In its argument that not all of God’s revelations are in the Bible, it uses Parley’s list of prophetic books referred to but not included in the Bible (see item 80), which Winchester reprinted twice in the *Gospel Reflector* (item 95).⁵⁶

Winchester subsequently published two other works in 1842 and 1843. These included his reference tool, *Synopsis of the Holy Scriptures, and Concordance*,⁵⁷ and his 1843 book, *A History of the Priesthood from the beginning of the world to the present Time*.⁵⁸ Only the last chapter of *A History* dealt with the Book of Mormon and is a minor reworking of his earlier Book of Mormon writings from the *Gospel Reflector*.⁵⁹

What is a “Mesoamerican Geography”?

The limited Mesoamerican geography, according to Neville, was “first set out by Benjamin Winchester” (191). This is repeatedly emphasized by the author throughout his book and in fact provides the *primary* motive for Neville’s imagined conspiracy to get Winchester’s work surreptitiously published in the fall of 1842. Winchester summarized the Book of Mormon account in two articles, published in March 1841:

55 Parley P. Pratt, *An Address by the minister of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, to the people of England* (Manchester, 1840). Neville mistakenly attributes the words “flood of light” to Winchester when they actually come from his quotation of Pratt’s 1840 *Address*. The 1841 Snow and Winchester pamphlet introduced the discussion on the Book of Mormon with, “Elder P. P. Pratt writes upon this subject thus.”

56 Crawley, 172.

57 Benjamin Winchester, *Synopsis of the Holy Scriptures, and concordance, in which the synonymous passages are arranged together ...* (Philadelphia: Book and Job Printing Office, 1842).

58 Benjamin Winchester, *A History of Priesthood from the beginning of the world to the present time ...* (Philadelphia: Brown, Bicking & Guilbert, 1843).

59 Crawley, 229.

Six hundred years BC, according to the Book of Mormon, Lehi, who was a righteous man, was fore-warned of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonish captivity, who was commanded by the Lord, took his family and fled into the wilderness. ...

They set sail, and in a proper time they landed, as we infer from their record, somewhere on the Western coast of South America. They immediately commenced tilling the earth, and erecting mansions for dwelling places. ... They frequently had long and tedious wars with the Lamanites, and were often driven before them. They were constantly emigrating to the North. At length they commenced settlements in the region of country, not far from the Isthmus of Darien, and while in those parts they advanced farther in science and arts, than at any time previous; and built more spacious cities, and buildings than they did before.

The Lord foreseeing that they would not repent, commanded Mormon to collect the writings of his forefathers — their revelations and prophecies, &c., and make an abridgment of them, and engrave them upon new plates, (their manner of keeping records was to engrave them on metallic plates.) But in consequence of their wars, and their flight to the North, to escape the Lamanites, he did not live to finish this work; and when the final destruction of the Nephites drew near, he gave the records to his son Moroni, who lived to see their final extermination, or destruction by the hands of the Lamanites.

...

Moroni was then commanded to deposit this record in the earth. ... It remained safe in the place where it was deposited, till it was brought to light by the administration of angels, and translated by the gift, and power of God.⁶⁰

This deposit was made about the year four hundred and twenty, on a hill then called Cumora, now in Ontario County, where it was preserved in safety, until it was brought to light by no less than the ministry of angels, and translated by inspiration.⁶¹

60 Winchester, "Claims of the Book of Mormon Established, 124–26.

61 Winchester, "Claims of the Book of Mormon Established, 105.

Here, Neville writes, Winchester “establishes the outline of what would be the Mesoamerican theory of Book of Mormon geography” (29). This includes his “inference about where Lehi landed” (42), and what the author calls “the Isthmus of Darien theory” (183). Neville thinks Winchester’s approach was new and different because he was the first to make “specific ties between The Book of Mormon and archaeological findings not only in North America, but also in Central America” (43), including “Guatemala” (42), and is the first assert “a Mesoamerica setting” for the events in Mormon’s text (185) and “the first to link The Book of Mormon to specific Central American sites” (266).

All of this is wrong. What Winchester actually describes is not the “Mesoamerican” view but the traditional hemispheric interpretation of Book of Mormon geography. This theory placed events in the narrative throughout North and South America. Inherent in the hemispheric model is the obvious assumption that Central America was the narrow neck of land with the dividing line between the land northward and southward at the Isthmus of Darien in Panama. So the idea of Central America as a setting for at least some events described in the Book of Mormon was always a basic element of the old hemispheric theory. It was not an 1841 innovation of Winchester as Neville contends.

A representative example typical of this view can be found in Orson Pratt’s very popular 1840 missionary pamphlet, *Interesting Account of Several Remarkable Visions, and of The Late Discovery of Ancient American Records*.⁶²

Pratt briefly describes the Jaredite story.

We learn from this very ancient history, that at the confusion of languages, when the Lord scattered the people upon all the face of the earth, the **Jaredites**, being a righteous people, obtained favour in the sight of the Lord, and were not confounded. ... [T]hey were marvellously brought across the great deep to the shores of **North America**. Accordingly, in process of time, they became a very numerous and powerful people, occupying **principally North America**; building

62 Orson Pratt, *Interesting Account of Several Remarkable Visions, and of The Late Discovery of Ancient American Records* (Edinburgh: Ballantyne and Hughes, 1840). “The success of *Remarkable Visions* as a missionary tract is reflected in its numerous editions. Three times it was reprinted in New York, in 1841 and 1842. ... It was repeatedly published in English, Danish, Dutch, and Swedish,” Crawley, 129.

large cities in all quarters of the land; being a civilized and enlightened nation. ... [T]hey were entirely destroyed.⁶³

Pratt then gives an account of the migration of Lehi's colony and their settlement in the land of promise.

This remnant of Joseph were also led in a miraculous manner from Jerusalem. ... [T]hey came to the great waters, where, by the commandment of God, they built a vessel, in which they were safely brought across the great Pacific ocean, and ***landed upon the western coast of South America.*** ...

This remnant of Joseph, soon after they landed, separated themselves into two distinct nations. This division was caused by a certain portion of them being greatly persecuted, because of their righteousness, by the remainder. The persecuted nation emigrated towards the ***northern parts of South America***, leaving the wicked nation in possession of the ***middle and southern parts of the same***. The former were called ***Nephites***, being led by a prophet whose name was Nephi. The latter were called ***Lamanites***. ...

The Lord gave unto them ***the whole continent*** for a land of promise. ... Arts and sciences flourished to a great extent. Various kinds of machinery were in use. Cloths, of various kinds, were manufactured. Swords, cimeters, axes, and various implements of war were made, together with head-shields, arm-shields, and breastplates, to defend themselves in battle with their enemies. And in the days of their righteousness, they were a civilized, enlightened, and happy people. ...

[In their wars with the Lamanites] tens of thousands were very frequently slain, after which they were piled together in great heaps upon the face of the ground, and covered with a shallow covering of earth, which will satisfactorily account for those ancient mounds, filled with human bones, so numerous at the present day, ***both in North and South America.***⁶⁴

Pratt also describes the Mulekite colony.

63 Pratt, *Interesting Account*, 15–16.

64 Pratt, *Interesting Account*, 16–18.

Another remnant were brought out of Jerusalem; some of whom were descendants of Judah. They **landed in North America**; soon after which they **emigrated into the northern parts of South America**, at which place they were discovered by the remnant of Joseph, something like four hundred years after.

The second colony ... **landed in North America, and emigrated from thence, to the northern parts of South America**; and about four hundred years after, they were discovered by the Nephites. ...

They were called the **people of Zarahemla**. ... The Nephites united with them, and taught them the Holy Scriptures, and they were restored to civilization, and became one nation with them. And in process of time, the **Nephites began to build ships near the Isthmus of Darien**, and launch them forth into the western ocean, in which great numbers sailed a great distance to the northward, and began to colonize **North America**.⁶⁵

After the time of Christ, as described by Pratt, the people of Lehi fell into wickedness and were destroyed.

A great and terrible war commenced between them, which lasted for many years and resulted in the complete overthrow and destruction of the Nephites. **This war commenced at the Isthmus of Darien** and was very destructive to both nations for many years. At length, the **Nephites were driven** before their enemies, a great distance to the **north, and north-east**; and having gathered their whole nation together, both men, women, and children, they encamped on, and round about the hill Cumorah, where the records were found, which is in the State of **New York**.⁶⁶

Pratt's popular and influential pamphlet was published a year before Winchester published his own outline of the Book of Mormon narrative in the *Gospel Reflector*, but similar and earlier descriptions of the hemispheric view can be found in publications from 1830 onward as reflected in the following examples:

65 Pratt, *Interesting Account*, 18.

66 Pratt, *Interesting Account*, 21.

This new Revelation, they say is especially designed for the benefit, or rather for the christianizing of the Aborigines of America; who, as they affirm, are a part of the tribe of Manasseh, and whose ancestors **landed on the coast of Chili** 600 years before the coming of Christ.⁶⁷

[Lehi and his family] **landed on the coast of South America**, where they increased very fast, and the Lord raised up a great many prophets among them. They built cities, and encouraged the arts and sciences. ... The first battle was fought nigh to **the straits of Darien**, and the last at a **hill called Comoro**, when all the Christians were hewn down but one prophet.⁶⁸

Six hundred years before Christ a certain prophet called Lehi went out to declare and promulgate the prophecies to come; **he came across the water into South America**. ... **The last battle** was that was fought among these parties was on the very ground where the plates were found, but it had been a running battle, for they **commenced at the Isthmus of Darien and ended in Manchester**.⁶⁹

In the Book of Mormon ... a remnant of the branches or seed of Joseph are represented as crossing the sea, and settling this continent of **North and South America**.⁷⁰

[Lehi's family] sailed in a south east direction and **landed on the continent of South America** in Chile thirty degrees south Latitude.⁷¹

The prophets Lehi and Nephi came out with a colony from Jerusalem, in the days of Jeremiah the Prophet, and after

67 S. A., "The Golden Bible, or, Campbellism Improved," *Observer and Telegraph*, Hudson, Ohio, 18 November 1830, emphasis added.

68 "Mormonism," *Franklin Democrat*, Pennsylvania, reprinted in the *Fredonia Censor*, 7 March, 1832, emphasis added.

69 "The Orators of Mormon," *Catholic Telegraph*, 14 April 1832, emphasis added.

70 William Smith, "Evidences of the Book of Mormon," *Latter-day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 3/4 January 1837): 434.

71 Frederick G. Williams, *The Life of Dr. Frederick G. Williams Counselor to the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Provo: BYU Studies, 2012), 437. On the background of this statement see "Did Lehi Land in Chile? An Assessment of the Frederick G. Williams Statement," in Williams, 437–52.

wandering for eight years in the wilderness of Arabia, came to the sea coast, built a vessel ... and finally landed in safety on the coast of what is now called Chili in *South America*.⁷²

[Lehi's party] crossed the ocean, *landing on the west coast of Chile*, near the place where Valparaiso now stands. ... They went north and *settled in New Granada*, but in going north they found a people calling themselves the *people of Zarahemla* ... not far from where the city of Carthagená now stands near the Magdalena river, called in the Book of Mormon the Sidon. ... [Lamanites] *drove the Nephites out of Zarahemla, and the Isthmus of Darien became to dividing line between the two powers*. ... The Nephites were gradually *driven north*, and at last were totally destroyed near the hill of Cumorah, in the State of *New York*, about 400 years after Christ.⁷³

[Lehi's people] becoming divided into two nations had become spread over *both North and South America*, one of these divisions was called Lamanites and dwelt in the country of *South America*; and the other division called Nephite, in *North America*. ... This war commenced at the *Isthmus of Darien*, and was more or less destructive to both nations, until at length the Nephites were *driven* before their enemies *north and north-east* to a great distance; when gathering their whole nation together both men, women and children, they encamped on and round about the hill Cumorah near where Palmyra, *N. Y.*, now stands.⁷⁴

Winchester's 1841 reference to the "Isthmus of Darien" merely reflects a hemispheric view that was known from 1830 and throughout the nineteenth century. This idea was commonly held. Why would Winchester need to form an elaborate conspiracy to do something that everybody was doing and had been doing since the year the Book of Mormon was published?

72 Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology* (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855), 22–23.

73 "Ancient American History," *Millennial Star* 31/2 (11 January 1868): 22–23. This was a synopsis of a lecture delivered by George A. Smith at the Seventy's Hall in Salt Lake City on 4 December 1867.

74 William Smith, *William Smith on Mormonism* (Lamoni, Iowa: 1883), 36.

Central American Antiquities

In his March 1, 1841, article for the *Gospel Reflector*, Winchester discussed evidence of pre-Columbian antiquities in support of the Book of Mormon.

Now when the antiquarian traverses the Western wilds, he has the privilege to behold the relics of a once enlightened nation, who understood arts and sciences to some extent. He there can walk upon the ruins of once magnificent cities abounding in wealth and prosperity, but now depopulated, and lying in heaps of massive ruins. And if he is onward with his researches — he gazes upon numerous forts, mounds, obelisks, and catacombs, which he marks with wonder and amazement. When he surveys the Southern part of North America — he there can feast his mind upon the works of antiquity until it is absorbed in contemplating the scenes of destruction that have come upon this nation of the dead, and leveled their cities in ruins. In Guatemala he can survey the ruins of a once splendid, beautiful, and populous city, perhaps as ever was on the globe; (we allude to the city of Otolum near Pulenque,) and while wandering through these heaps of massive ruins, he beholds the remains of large temples, and palaces, which exhibit the work of human ingenuity. With a closer observation he discovers a fine display of architectural genius in the construction of these once splendid edifices. In viewing with more avidity still, he beholds in these huge buildings the works of science — an immense quantity of hieroglyphics. Hence he no longer doubts but what America was inhabited by an enlightened nation anterior to its discovery by Columbus. ...⁷⁵

For Winchester, the Book of Mormon account provided a reasonable explanation for questions that vexed the wondering observer of these ruins. He then cited a description from a report that described these ruins.

The ruins of a city in Central America are among the most striking of such. This city, called Palenque (the name of a town not far off; other antiquarians call it Otolum) lies two

75 Winchester, "Claims of the Book of Mormon Established," 106.

hundred and fifty miles from Tobasco, lat. about 15° N. And there were discovered not such buildings as those erected by the Druids, of rough and misshapen stones, but such as those in which kings dwell — built of *hewn* stones. The appearance of these ruins shows a nation once existed there highly skilled in mechanical arts, and in a state of civilization far beyond anything that we have been led to believe of the aborigines, previous to the time of Columbus. A distinguished antiquarian of New York has received from this city a beautiful specimen of the fine arts — an idol of pure gold. This has emphatically been called the Thebes of America. In surveying its ruins, the traveller is led to believe that it was founded at as early a period as the renowned cities of Egypt.

How immense this city! It is supposed to have been sixty miles in circumference, and that it contained a population of nearly three millions. Great were its commercial privileges — even now the broad and beautiful Otolum rolls along its desolated borders.” “One of the principal structures revealed to the eye of the antiquarian is the teaculi or temple. Its style of architecture resembles the Gothic. It is rude, massive and durable. Though resembling the Egyptian edifices, yet this and the other buildings are peculiar, and are different from all others hitherto known. The entrance of the temple is on the east side by a portico more than one hundred feet in length, and nine feet broad. The rectangular pillars of the portico have their architraves adorned with stucco work of shields and other devices.” “The antiquity of this city is manifest not only from its nameless hieroglyphics and other objects; but from the age of some of the trees growing over buildings where once the hum of industry and the voice of merriment were heard. The concentric circles of some of these trees were counted, which showed that they were more than nine hundred years of age. The antiquities of America spread from the great lakes of the North and the West to Central America, and the Southern parts of Peru on the South; from the Alleghany Mountains on the East, to the Rocky Mountains on the West, and even from the Pacific to the Atlantic Ocean.”⁷⁶

76 Winchester, “Claims of the Book of Mormon Established,” 108. Compare A. Davis, *Lecture on the Antiquities of Central America, and on the discovery of*

Winchester then cited another passage from Josiah Priest's *American Antiquities*:

This account which partly describes the ruins of a stone city seventy-five miles [108] in circuit (length 32 English miles, greatest breadth 12 miles,) full of palaces, monuments, statues, and inscriptions: one of the earliest seats of American civilization about equal to Thebes of Egypt, and well calculated to inspire me with hopes that they would throw a great light over American History, when more properly examined.⁷⁷

Winchester concludes this particular argument:

We might multiply a catalogue of extracts from different authors upon this subject; but we forbear, believing that enough has already been said to convince every candid mind that America has been inhabited, previous to its discovery by Europeans, by an enlightened and civilized race of people. However, if any one should wish to learn farther concerning the antiquities of America, we recommend him to A. Davis' "Discovery of America by the North-men." J. Priest's "American Antiquities," Mr. Hill's Do.; and Baron Humboldt's "Travels in South America."⁷⁸

According to Neville, "Benjamin Winchester was the first to link the Book of Mormon to specific Central American sites" (266), but this is not the case. He never linked those ruins to any city named in Mormon's account. Winchester's article mentioned the discovery of Otolum (Palenque) to prove "that America has been inhabited by an enlightened people, far in advance of the savage state of the red men of the forest."⁷⁹ Earlier writers had been making that argument long before 1841.

In April 1833, while preaching in Illinois, Parley P. Pratt and William McLellin reported several encounters with a local Reverend Mr. Peck.⁸⁰

New England by the Northmen five hundred years before Columbus (New York and Boston: Bartlett and Company, Dutton and Wentworth, 1840), 5–7.

77 Winchester, "The Claims of the Book of Mormon Established," 108–109. Compare Josiah Priest, *American Antiquities* (Albany: Hoffman and White, 1833), 241.

78 Winchester, "The Claims of the Book of Mormon Established," 109.

79 Benjamin Winchester, "The Object of a Continuation of Revelation," *The Gospel Reflector*, 1/5 (1 March 1841): 97.

80 William McLellin Journal III, April 14–21, 1833, in Jan Shipps and John W. Welch, eds., *The Journals of William E. McLellin 1831–1836* (Urbana and Chicago:

In his autobiographical recollection of the encounter written years later, Pratt described Peck as “a man of note, as one of the early settlers of Illinois, and one of its first missionaries.” He was also a man of some learning and edited a local newspaper at Rock Spring. In one meeting, Peck attacked the Book of Mormon. According to Pratt, “He said there were no ruined cities, buildings, monuments, mounds, or fortifications, to show the existence of such a people as the Book of Mormon described. ... He said further that the fortifications and mounds of this country were nothing more than works of nature.”⁸¹ The following year, Peck published his *Gazetteer of Illinois*, which described local features of the state including some of the mounds and fortifications that were the subject of local interest. We do not have the words he spoke to Pratt and McLellin during his 1833 lectures, but the following extracts from his 1834 work suggests the kinds of arguments Latter-day Saints might have expected from a relatively informed critic of the time when they mentioned Midwestern mounds as evidence for the Book of Mormon.

The existence of “Mounds” in this, and other western states, has been assumed as substantial proof, amounting to demonstration, of a race of men of enterprising habits, and far more civilized than the present race of aborigines. But it is now seriously questioned whether these mounds are the work of art. I know not that any writer ever ventures to attack this supposition till John Russell, esq. sent forth his essay in the Illinois Magazine, or March, 1831. Mr. Russell is a citizen of this state, and well known as a writer of considerable talents and literary acquirements. He has had opportunity of examining for himself, many of those mounds, of various dimensions. He maintains they are not artificial, and offers objections to their being productions of human art, not easily obviated.

But there are mounds in the west, that exactly correspond in shape with these supposed antiquities, and yet from their size most evidently were not made by man. ...

Of one thing the writer is satisfied, that very imperfect and incorrect data have been relied upon and very erroneous

University of Illinois Press, 1994), 114–17; Parley P. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 69–70.

81 Pratt, *Autobiography*, 69.

conclusions drawn, upon western antiquities. Whoever has time and patience and is in other respects qualified to explore this field of science, who will use his spade and eyes together and restrain his imagination from running riot amongst the mounds, fortifications, horseshoes, medals, and whole cabinets of relics of the “olden time,” will find very little more than the indications of rude savages, the ancestors of the present race of Indians.

Of ancient military works, I have long been convinced that not half a dozen such structures ever existed in the west before the visits of Europeans. Enclosures of various sizes, and perhaps for different purposes, with an embankment of earth, three or four feet high, and a trifling ditch out of which the earth was dug, undoubtedly were formed. In all probability some of these embankments unclosed their villages; others the residence of their chiefs or head men. But what people, savage, barbarous, civilized, or enlightened, even constructed a fortification around five or six hundred acres, with a ditch in the inside! Or what military people made twenty or thirty such forts, within two or three miles! At any rate I am confident these immense armies of military heroes never visited Illinois. ...

Those who are particularly desirous of information concerning the millions of warriors, and the bloody battles in which more were slain than ever fell in all the wars of Alexander, Caesar, or Napoleon, with a particular description of their military works, would do well to read the “Book of Mormon,” made out of the “golden plates” of that distinguished antiquarian Joe Smith! It is far superior to some modern productions on western antiquities, because it furnishes us with the names and biography of the principal men who were concerned in these enterprises, with many of the particulars of their wars for several centuries. But seriously, the attention of scientific men is invited to this subject.⁸²

Pratt recalls responding to Peck’s argument.

To do away with the Book of Mormon, we are called upon to believe that the temples, statues, pyramids, sculptures,

82 J. M. Peck, *A Gazetteer of Illinois* ... (Jacksonville: R. Goudy, 1834), 54–55, 53–54.

monuments, engravings, mounds and fortifications, now in ruins on the American continent, are all the works of Nature in her playful moments; that the bones of slumbering nations were never clothed upon with flesh, and that their sleeping dust was never animated with life. This is too monstrous; it is too marvelous, too miraculous for our credulity; we can never believe that these things are the works of Nature, unaided by human art; we are not so fond of the marvelous.⁸³

This rebuttal suggests that by 1833 Mormon arguments for pre-Columbian civilization were expanding to include evidence from Central America as well as the North American Midwest. Just months before the encounter, the February 1833 issue of the *Evening and Morning Star* published a report of the ruined city of Palenque. The report cited an extract from the *London Literary Gazette* describing “a city and its suburbs” with buildings and “statues of stone” and “monumental inscriptions” and other evidence of civilization “prior to the fourteenth century.” The editor, W. W. Phelps, considered it “good testimony” for the Book of Mormon. He also suggested that “should ruins of many cities be discovered, it would be no more than a confirmation of what was once on this land of the Lord.”⁸⁴ Pratt’s reference to statues, sculptures, monuments, and engravings is consistent with the content of that report and suggests he was familiar with the article in the *Star* and used it to supplement his rebuttal to Peck’s claim that there were no ruined pre-Columbian cities in America.

In his 1839 revised and expanded version of *A Voice of Warning*, Pratt introduced passages from Josiah Priest’s *American Antiquities*, which described the remains of Palenque, the same passage cited later by Winchester in the *Gospel Reflector* in 1841. Pratt’s 1839 edition, as noted already, was extremely popular and widely distributed. He also referenced another description of the ruined city published in the *Family Magazine* in 1833.⁸⁵

It is stated in the *Family Magazine*, No. 34, p. 266, for 1833, as follows: “Public attention has been recently excited respecting

83 Pratt, *Autobiography*, 70.

84 “Discovery of Ancient Ruins in Central America,” [71]. See also Mitchell K. Schaefer, ed., *William E. McLellin’s Lost Manuscript* (Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2012), 168–69.

85 “Ruins of an Ancient American City,” *Family Magazine* 1/34 (7 December 1833): 266.

the ruins of an ancient city found in Guatemala. It would seem that these ruins are now being explored, and much curious and valuable matter in a literary and historical point of view is anticipated. We deem the present a most auspicious moment, now that the public attention is turned to the subject, to spread its contents before our readers, as an introduction to future discoveries during the researches now in progress.”

The following are some of the particulars, as related by Captain Del Rio, who partially examined them, as above related, 1787: From Palanque, the last town northward in the province of *Ciudad Real de Chiapa*, taking a south-westerly direction, and ascending a ridge of highland that divides the kingdom of Guatemala from Yucatan, at a distance of six miles, is the little river *Micol*, whose waters flow in a westerly direction, and unite with the great river Tulijah, which bends its course towards the province of *Tabasco*. Having passed Micol, the ascent begins, and at half a league, or a mile and a half, the traveller crosses a little stream called Ololum; from this point heaps of stone ruins are discovered, which render the roads very difficult for another half league, when you gain the height whereon the stone houses are situated, being still fourteen in number in one place, some more dilapidated than others, yet still having many of their apartments perfectly discernible.

A rectangular area, three hundred yards in breadth by four hundred and fifty in length, which is a fraction over fifty-six rods wide, and eighty-four rods long, being, in the whole circuit, two hundred and eighty rods, which is three-fourths of a mile, and a trifle over. This area presents a plain at the base of the highest mountain forming the ridge. In the centre of this plain is situated the largest of the structures which has been as yet discovered among these ruins. It stands on a mound or pyramid twenty years high, which is sixty feet, or nearly four rods in perpendicular altitude, which gives it a lofty and beautiful majesty, as if it were a temple suspended in the sky. This is surrounded by other edifices, namely, five to the northward, four to the southward, one to the southwest, and three to the eastward — fourteen in all. In all directions, the fragments of other fallen building are seen extending along the mountain that stretches east and west either way

from these buildings, as if they were the great temple of worship, or their government house, around which they built their city, and where dwelt their kings and officers of state. At this place was found a subterranean stone aqueduct, of great solidity and durability, which in its course passes beneath the largest building.

Let it be understood, this city of Otolum, the ruins of which are so immense, is in North, not South America, in the same latitude with the island Jamaica, which is about 18 degrees north of the equator, being on the highest ground between the northern end of the Caribbean sea and the Pacific ocean, where the continent narrows toward the isthmus of Darien, and is about 800 miles south of New Orleans.

The discovery of these ruins, and also of many others, equally wonderful in the same country, are just commencing to arouse the attention of the schools of Europe, who hitherto have denied that America could boast of her antiquities. But these immense ruins are now being explored under the direction of scientific persons, a history of which, in detail, will be forthcoming, doubtless, in due time; two volumes of which, in manuscript, we are informed, have already been written, and cannot but be received with enthusiasm by Americans. ... We might fill a volume with accounts of American Antiquities, all going to show that this country has been peopled with a people, who possessed a knowledge of the arts and sciences; who built cities, cultivated the earth, and who were in possession of a written language.

The notion of a *ruined* city in Central America reminded Pratt of the account of destruction in 3 Nephi, which he suggested might provide a reasonable explanation.⁸⁶

In the spring of 1840, an anonymous critic who described himself as a “Philanthropist of Chester Co.” published a pamphlet attacking the Book of Mormon and the Mormons. “This Book of Mormon,” he wrote, “presupposes among the Indians, at the time of its compilation and engraving, a knowledge of the arts and sciences ... reading, writing, engraving, gold-beating, &c., but the present race of Indians have no

86 Parley P. Pratt, *A Voice of Warning* ... Second Edition, Revised (New York: J. W. Harrison, 1839), 126–143.

recollection or tradition of reading or writing ever being among them.” Shortly thereafter S. Bennett, a Latter-day Saint of Philadelphia, published a reply. “Anyone who has the slightest acquaintance with American antiquities, or Indian traditions, will find abundant evidence to establish the fact. (See Priest’s *American Antiquities*, also a work on the discovery of America, by the Northmen by A. Davis).”⁸⁷ The “Philanthropist” was unimpressed with Mound Builder evidence. “A thousand opinions, sir, concerning the aborigines of this country, is not proof of the truth of the book. ... But are there not mounds, forts, and the remains of towns, that show that the inhabitants of this country were once acquainted with the arts and sciences? I answer that these remains will not prove any greater degree of perfection in the arts, than that which was exhibited among the Mexicans, when first visited by the Spanish. No remains of antiquity, which can be proved to be the work of the inhabitants of this country, previous to its discovery, will constitute even so much as a shadow of proof, that the sciences of reading a writing ... were even known here.”⁸⁸ If the Indians were of Israel, he reasoned, they would not have forgotten the “arts and sciences” of civilization.

Winchester wrote several letters reporting his missionary activities in 1839,⁸⁹ 1840,⁹⁰ 1841,⁹¹ and two separate pamphlets in 1840,⁹² but none of these addressed the question of pre-Columbian antiquities. He never wrote about the subject until March 1841. At that time he mentioned reports of the ruins of Otolum as evidence for pre-Columbian civilization, like earlier writers, but drew no correlation between that site and any city named in the Book of Mormon text. Winchester’s 1841 writings show no awareness of Stephens and Catherwood’s discoveries, suggesting that he only learned of them later.

87 S. Bennett, *A Few Remarks by way of reply to an anonymous scribbler calling himself A Philanthropist disabusing the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints of the slanders and falsehoods which he has attempted to fasten upon it* (Philadelphia: Brown, Bicking & Guilbert, 1840), 3–4.

88 A Philanthropist of Chester County, *Mormonism Unmasked, showed to be an impious imposture, and Mr. Bennett’s Reply answered and refuted* (Philadelphia: T. K. & P. G. Collins, 1840), 4–5.

89 Benjamin Winchester to E. Robinson and Don Carlos Smith, 18 June 1839, *Times and Seasons* 1/1 (November 1839), 2–9.

90 Benjamin Winchester, 10 February 1840, *Times and Seasons* 1/7 (May 1840): 104.

91 Benjamin Winchester, 12 November 1841, *Times and Seasons* 3/2 (15 November 1841), 604–6.

92 Winchester, *An Examination*, 1840; *The Origin of the Spaulding Story*, 1840.

Neville thinks that Winchester may have co-authored several reports of George Adams lectures that were published in the *Bostonian* in 1842 and reprinted in the *Times and Seasons* (97–118). The most significant of these was reprinted in the September 1, 1842, issue. It reports that Adams “introduced an account of many American antiquities together with the discoveries lately made by Mr. Stevens that all go to prove that the American Indians were once an enlightened people and understood the arts and sciences, as the ruined cities and monuments lately discovered fully prove.”⁹³ If, as Neville suggests, Winchester wrote or co-authored this report, it is a description of Adams’s arguments not Winchester’s and Adams did not link specific Central American cities with those in the Book of Mormon. Winchester only reports that he mentioned Stephens to refute the civilization argument against the Book of Mormon, which missionaries had been doing for years.

The idea that Winchester would need to be secretive about getting his writings on the Book of Mormon into print also seems unlikely when we remember that he had no difficulty publishing books in 1842 and 1843. What was to stop him from expressing his views? *A History of Priesthood*, published in 1843, has an entire chapter on the Book of Mormon. Here was an excellent opportunity to disseminate his views, but the chapter is little more than a reworking of his 1841 writings with a few minor changes.⁹⁴ In 1841, he wrote that Lehi landed “somewhere on the western coast of South America.” In 1843 he wrote ambiguously that they “safely landed upon this land.” His 1843 geographical perspective, like that in 1841, is still broad and hemispheric. He mentioned Central American discoveries in both his 1841 and 1843 writings, but in 1841 he could only quote from the older less reliable reports about Otolum, not from Stephens and Catherwood’s more recent and accurate volumes. In 1843 he still wrote vaguely of “the remains of these cities and temples, [that] are to be seen in Central America, and elsewhere, in both the north and South parts of the continent; the discovery of which has excited the curiosity and astonishment of the learned so much of late.”⁹⁵ The ruins were evidence for civilization, but he drew no correlation between them and specific Book of Mormon cities.⁹⁶ His failure to mention Stephens

93 “[From the *Bostonian*] Mormons, or, ‘Latter Day Saints,’” *Times and Seasons* 3/21 (1 September 1842), 899–900.

94 Crawley, 229.

95 Winchester, *A History of the Priesthood*, 130.

96 “The recent discoveries of American antiquities, such as the remains of once splendid cities, spacious temples and edifices, an extensive quantity of

or Catherwood by name or reference any actual details from their 1841 and 1843 books, not even so much as a page number, suggests only superficial knowledge, and that even by 1843, Winchester's geographical conceptions of the Book of Mormon had not changed much since 1841. The 1842 report of the Boston lecture shows that he had heard of their discoveries, but never made much use of them if his writings are any indication. Neville, in fact, presents no evidence that Winchester owned or even so much as read Stephens and Catherwood. Yet this is the man who we are to believe wrote the unsigned 1842 editorials on Central America in the *Times and Seasons*! For the purported mastermind of the "Mesoamerican" idea of Book of Mormon geography, that seems odd to say the least. The evidence from Winchester's known writings strongly weigh against such a theory.

Neville's Winchester is a fairy-tale figure — the evil genius behind the limited Mesoamerican geography, an idea that originated in the rotten heart of a dissident, was promoted by apostates and beguiles our thinking about the Book of Mormon. "It has marked the Church, but hopefully not forever" (187). He pursues the accused with zeal, determination, and creativity to find means, motive, and opportunity for what turns out to be an imaginary crime, a "scheme" where none was needed to publish ideas that were never controversial. He really has no idea of what a Mesoamerican geography is. He just knows that he's against it.

Matthew Roper is a research associate at the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship. He received a BA in history and an MA in sociology from Brigham Young University. Matt has had a long and abiding interest in the Book of Mormon and has published on issues such as warfare, Lehiite social structure, interpretations of Book of Mormon geography, and other topics relating to the ancient pre-Columbian setting for the book. He also compiled and is responsible for the Harold B. Lee Library's electronic collection, *19th- Century Publications about the Book of Mormon (1829–1844)*. His current research and publication efforts focus on questions of Book of Mormon authorship, historical and contemporary interpretations, and the intellectual history of Latter-day Saint scripture.

hieroglyphics, catecombs, obelisks, aqueducts, viaducts, &c, &c., is sufficient to convince any rational person" not of the location of Zarahemla, but "that a nation existed upon this continent ... who were enlightened, and understood the arts and sciences," Winchester, *A History of Priesthood*, 137.

JOHN BERNHISEL'S GIFT TO A PROPHET: INCIDENTS OF TRAVEL IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND THE BOOK OF MORMON

Matthew Roper

Abstract: The claim that God revealed the details of Book of Mormon geography is not new, but the recent argument that there was a conspiracy while the Prophet was still alive to oppose a revealed geography is a novel innovation. A recent theory argues that the “Mesoamerican theory” or “limited Mesoamerican geography” originated in 1841 with Benjamin Winchester, an early Mormon missionary, writer, and dissident, who rejected the leadership of Brigham Young and the Twelve after 1844. This theory also claims that three unsigned editorials on Central America and the Book of Mormon published in the Times and Seasons on September 15 and October 1, 1842, were written by Benjamin Winchester, who successfully conspired with other dissidents to publish them against the will of the Prophet. Three articles address these claims. The first article addressed two questions: Did Joseph Smith, as some have claimed, know the details of and put forth a revealed Book of Mormon geography? Second, what is a Mesoamerican geography and does it constitute a believable motive for a proposed Winchester conspiracy? This second article provides additional historical background on the question of Joseph Smith’s thinking on the Book of Mormon by examining the influence of John L. Stephen’s 1841 work, Incidents of Travel in Central America, upon early Latter-day Saints, including Joseph Smith.

The claim that Joseph Smith opposed cultural, historical, and geographical connections between Central America (Mesoamerica) and the Book of Mormon is based on the assumption that the details of an external Book of Mormon geography had been revealed to him.¹

1 Jonathan Neville, *The Lost City of Zarahemla: From Iowa to Guatemala and Back Again* (New York: LetMERED.com, 2015). Neville engages in a great deal of unanchored speculation about what Joseph Smith and others thought and felt about the articles on Central America. “The Prophet *doesn’t agree*” with Winchester (3). “The Book of Mormon is a cause of conflict between [Winchester] and Joseph. It is

Proponents of the so-called “Heartland” interpretation claim that Joseph Smith’s usage of such terms as *this land*, *this continent*, or *this country* indicate a specialized usage that must and can refer only to territory within the United States.² Contrary to that view, the historical evidence suggests that Joseph Smith never considered that the question of Book of Mormon geography was settled by revelation, and that those terms, as applied to the Book of Mormon, do not reflect a specialized usage, but refer to the land, continent, and country of America, meaning North and South America, not only the United States.³ The interest of Joseph Smith and other early Latter-day Saints in the remains of pre-Columbian culture accessible to them does not justify the claim that he believed or taught an exclusive United States geography.⁴ Early usage of the

a direct challenge to Joseph’s role as prophet and accuracy — or sufficiency — of the translation of the Book of Mormon itself” (151). Where is the evidence that the Prophet didn’t agree with the articles or that he felt in the least threatened by them? Joseph “*thought* they [the articles] would be recognized for what they were” (8, emphasis added). William Smith “*doesn’t care* what Joseph *thinks*” about Book of Mormon geography “because he *knows* his brother won’t do anything about it, whether out of fear or loyalty” (141). When Joseph meets with John Taylor in the fall of 1842 they are really strategizing about William Smith and Winchester, although the record is silent (149). It is “easy to *imagine* that when the ‘Zarahemla’ article is published, *Joseph is furious*” (160, emphasis added). “Joseph did not *want* Winchester’s ideas to take hold” (190). How does Neville know what Joseph wanted? He claims that Joseph labeled the articles on Central America “mistakes” (8). Not true. He grants that Joseph “never expressly repudiates them” (145). That wording is misleading, because it suggests that he *did* repudiate them, just not *expressly*. In fact, there is absolutely no historical documentation that he repudiated them *at all* or was opposed to their content outside of the author’s imagination.

2 Bruce H. Porter and Rod L. Meldrum, *Prophecies and Promises: The Book of Mormon and The United States of America* (New York: Digital Legend, 2009); Rod Meldrum, *Exploring the Book of Mormon in America’s Heartland* (New York: Digital Legend, 2011).

3 Matthew Roper, “Joseph Smith, Revelation, and Book of Mormon Geography,” *FARMS Review* 22/2 (2010): 15–85; Roper, “Losing the Remnant: The New Exclusivist ‘Movement’ and the Book of Mormon,” *FARMS Review* 22/2 (2010): 87–124; Roper, “The Treason of the Geographers: Mythical Mesoamerican Conspiracy and the Book of Mormon,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 16 (2015). Descendants of Book of Mormon people may have become dispersed throughout the Americas even though the geographical setting for events described in the book was likely limited in scope.

4 Brigham Young refers to restrictions placed on Joseph Smith which kept him from visiting Lamanites in other places. Oliver Cowdery shared reports of the Navajo in the Rocky Mountains whom he described as “Lamanites.” See Roper, “Losing the Remnant,” 103–05.

term *Indian* and *American Indian* as applied to the Lamanites likewise reflected this broad usage, not a restrictive one.

The American hemispheric interpretation of the Book of Mormon was widely held from 1830 on and is additional strong evidence against the claim of a revealed external geography. It is highly unlikely that the Prophet would have allowed that view to receive such wide circulation for so long a time had he felt that it contradicted anything of significant doctrinal or revelatory significance to the Saints. Neville tries to set Joseph Smith against efforts to connect the Book of Mormon narrative with Mesoamerica, but Latter-day Saints had been making connections with that region since 1830.

In 1841, John Stephens and Frederick Catherwood published an account of their travels in Central America, along with a description and drawings of notable ruins they found in the region. Some Mormons, like Benjamin Winchester, heard of these discoveries, yet their ideas about Book of Mormon geography continued to reflect the traditional interpretation. Stephens's work did influence the writings of other Latter-day Saints whose interpretations show a growing recognition of the importance of Mesoamerica as a key center for the events in the Book of Mormon. These are best described as *antecedents* or modifications within the traditional hemispheric framework, rather than limited Mesoamerican geographies of the kind we know today.⁵ In light of the recent efforts of some to distance Joseph Smith from ideas about Mesoamerica and the Book of Mormon, his personal interest and evaluation of *Incidents of Travel in Central America* clearly provide historical evidence on the question of who wrote three unsigned editorials in the *Times and Seasons* in 1842. This article will show how Joseph Smith's 1841 letter to John Bernhisel reflects the Prophet's personal interest in, enthusiasm for, and assessment of the value of

5 Roper, "Limited Geography," 225-75. Orson Pratt thought that "a careful reader" of the Book of Mormon might be able to "trace the relative bearings and distances of many of these cities from each other; and, if acquainted with the present geographical features of the country" and "by the descriptions given in that book, determine, very nearly, the precise spot of ground they once occupied" (Orson Pratt, "Was Joseph Smith Sent of God?" *Millennial Star* 10/19 [1 October, 1848]: 289), but he never attempted it himself. We have no evidence, for example, that any Latter-day Saint addressed the implications of distances described in the text until the early twentieth century. Neville anachronistically attributes to Joseph Smith an antipathy toward a "limited Mesoamerican geography" (191), a theory that, as far as we can tell, did not exist in Joseph Smith's day.

Stephens's book, including correspondences between Central America and the Book of Mormon.

“Out of the Best Books”

Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan was published in 1841.⁶ The two-volume work by John Lloyd Stephens, with illustrations by Frederick Catherwood, describes the two explorers' experiences and discoveries in 1839 and 1840 as they traveled through the region. It was widely praised in the American press for their interesting description of pre-Columbian ruins and their excellent illustrations, which pointed to a level of civilization in the region previously unanticipated by most Americans. The two men returned to northern Yucatan in 1841 for a second expedition, described in another publication, *Incidents of Travels in Yucatan*, published in 1843.⁷ In 1844, Catherwood published his own work, *Views of Ancient Monuments in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan*, which included twenty-five hand-colored lithographs interspersed with his commentary.⁸

The books were enthusiastically received by American readers, including Latter-day Saints. Even before they were able to read the book, missionaries were citing reports of the travelers' lectures in New York City as evidence for and to refute criticism of the Book of Mormon. Parley P. Pratt reprinted one report from the *New York Express* in the September 1840 *Millennial Star*. The article reported Stephens and Catherwood's descriptions of numerous statues, monuments and obelisks “wholly covered with hieroglyphics and inscriptions” at the sites of Quirigua and Palenque.⁹ In November, 1840 Erastus Snow chided an anonymous critic who had insisted that there was no evidence of pre-Columbian writing: “Here is a specimen of your consummate ignorance of American Antiquities. ... Nearly all the principal papers of this country have of late published the results of the researches of Messrs. Stephens and Catherwood, in Central America. On the river Montagua, Monuments and Statues in abundance were found, many of

6 John L. Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1841).

7 John L. Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1843). Both this and the 1841 work was reprinted by Dover Publications in 1969.

8 F. Catherwood, *Views of Ancient Monuments in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan* (New York: Bartlett and Welford, 1844).

9 “Antiquities of America,” *Millennial Star* 1/5 (September 1840): 118.

which are covered with writings, and yet you say these are no proofs that the science of writing was ever known here. The system of Logic by which you arrive at your conclusion must be peculiar to yourself.”¹⁰ The June 15, 1841, issue of the *Times and Seasons* reprinted another article from the *New York Weekly Herald* reporting the substance of the travelers’ lectures. The Nauvoo editor who introduced the article thought the report “proved beyond controversy that, on this vast continent, once flourished a mighty people, skilled in the arts and sciences.”¹¹

In a letter to Joseph Smith in September 1841, John E. Page explained a “new course of argument” that he had adopted and found useful:

I have great access to the people in a new course of argument which I have adopted and that is this — I have lately availed myself of the purchase of Stevens [Stephens] and Catherwoods travels in Guatemala or central America in which those gentlemen have exhibited by seventy plates the antiquities of that count[r]y which when compared with The Book of Mormon so completely proves the truth and divinity of the Book of Mormon there is not a gentile dog left to stir a tongue in an attempt to put down the collateral testimony which those records afford me in proof of the Book of Mormon — Next or second argument is the fulfilment of the Prophetical sayings which are in the Book of Mormon itself.¹²

Neville repeatedly attributes this “new course of argument” to Winchester, and mis-characterizes it as one that used evidence from Mesoamerica to support the Book of Mormon (1, 3, 39, 42, 139, 151,

10 E. Snow, *E. Snow's Reply to the Self-Styled Philanthropist, of Chester County* (Philadelphia: 1840), 2-3. The bulk of the pamphlet consists of a letter from Snow to the anonymous critic dated November 1840.

11 “American Antiquities — More Proofs of the Book of Mormon,” *Times and Seasons* 2/16 (15 June, 1841): 440. At the time, Don Carlos Smith and Robert B. Thompson were editors.

12 John E. Page to Joseph Smith, 1 September, 1841, Philadelphia, PA, Joseph Smith Collection, Church Historian's Library. Page had previously used the fulfillment of prophetic promises in the Book of Mormon. On July, 1839, he spoke on the subject “and went on to show that no impostor would ever attempt to make such promises as are contained [in] pages 541 and 34th — which he did in a very satisfactory manner. <& then bore testimony>” Joseph Smith Journal, 7 July, 1839, in Dean C. Jesse, Mark Ashurst-McGee, Richard Jensen, eds., *The Joseph Smith Papers. Journals Volume 1: 1832-1839* (Salt Lake City: The Church Historian's Press, 2008), 345, 347. The promises to which page referred are those found in Ether 2:4-13 and Mormon 8:26-36 in the current edition of the Book of Mormon.

182, 189, 266), but there was nothing “new” about the appeal to Central American discoveries. Page’s approach (and it was *his*, not Winchester’s) consisted of actually using Stephens’s book in his defense of the Book of Mormon. Winchester never mentioned Stephens until 1842. And while this approach may have been new to Page, other missionaries, such as Parley P. Pratt and Erastus Snow, were referencing Stephens in 1840.

A Book Review from a Prophet

In September 1841, Wilford Woodruff, returning from an apostolic mission in Great Britain, passed through New York City. On September 8, John Bernhisel, a recent convert, wrote to Joseph Smith informing him that he was sending him a copy of *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan* “as a token of my regard for you as a Prophet of the Lord.”¹³ The next day he asked Woodruff to carry it with him to Nauvoo, along with the accompanying letter. On the long journey home, the apostle had time to read. On September 13, after completing the first volume, he wrote, “I felt truly interested in this work for it brought to light a flood of testimony in proof of the book of mormon in the discovery & survey of the city *Copan* in Central america A correct drawing of the monuments, pyramids, portraits, & Hieroglyphics as executed by Mr. Catherwood is now presented before the publick & is truly a wonder to the world. Their whole travels are truly interesting.”¹⁴ On September 16 he wrote, “I perused the 2d Vol of Stephens travels In Central America Chiapas of Yucatan & the ruins of Palenque & Copan. It is truly one of the most interesting histories I have ever read.”¹⁵ He arrived home on October 6, where the Prophet received Bernhisel’s gift.

On November 16, 1841, Joseph Smith responded to Bernhisel, thanking him for the gift:

I received your kind present by the hand of Er [Elder] Woodruff & feel myself under many obligations for this mark of your esteem & friendship which to me is the more interesting as it unfolds & developes many things that are of

13 John Bernhisel to Joseph Smith, 8 September 1841, in Dean C. Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, revised edition (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 533.

14 Wilford Woodruff Journal, 13 September, 1841, in Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal* (Midvale, UT: Signature Books, 1983), 2:126. Spelling in the original.

15 Wilford Woodruff Journal, 16 September, 1841, in Kenney, 2:126. Spelling in the original.

great importance to this generation & corresponds with & supports the testimony of the Book of Mormon; I have read the volumes with the greatest interest & pleasure & must say that of all histories that have been written pertaining to the antiquities of this country it is the most correct luminous & comprehensive.¹⁶

The letter to Bernhisel belongs to a class of historical documents that are only extant in the hand of scribes but are part of the Joseph Smith corpus.¹⁷ Dean Jesse identified the handwriting as that of John Taylor.¹⁸ The Joseph Smith Papers website indicates that the handwriting is at present unidentified.¹⁹ Based upon current information it appears that Smith either dictated the letter to a scribe, or that he directed him to write to Bernhisel on his behalf using the words he deemed proper. In either case, it would be unlikely for Taylor or any other of his scribes to knowingly attribute to Smith views and opinions that were not his own or that were inconsistent with revelatory teachings of the Prophet. As with several other letters of this kind, it is reasonable to see the content of the letter to Bernhisel as an accurate representation of Joseph Smith's intent, if not his own words. Joseph Smith's comments are notable in that they constitute a very brief but informative book review expressing the Prophet's personal evaluation of what he had read.

Of “greatest interest” and a “pleasure” to read

Joseph Smith told Bernhisel that he had not only read the volumes, but found them “of greatest interest” and a “pleasure to read.” Stephens wrote in a personable and self-effacing style that welcomes the reader to his story. When I first read *Incidents* I could not help but like the man and immediately relate to some of his experiences. His description

16 Joseph Smith to John Bernhisel, 16 November 1841, in Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 533.

17 See, for example, Joseph Smith letters to Oliver Granger, May 4, 1841, and Jennetta Richards, June 23, 1842, which were written in the hands of Robert B. Thompson and William Clayton respectively, in Jessee, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 527–28, 551–52. Joseph Smith's oft-cited letter to Emma Smith on June 4, 1834, from Zion's Camp was also dictated; a copy exists only in the handwriting of James Mulholland. See Jesse, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 344.

18 Jesse, *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 533.

19 <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/letter-to-john-bernhisel-16-november-1841>.

of standing in the ruined palace of Palenque one night reading a New York newspaper by the enchanting light of fireflies recalled a treasured experience I had shared with my children years ago.²⁰ The other insects of Mexico and Central America caused Stephens and his companions no end of difficulty:

Besides moschetoës and garrapatas, or ticks, we suffered from another worse insect, called by the native *niguas*, which, we are told, pestered the Spaniards on their first entry into the country, and which says the historian, “ate their Way into the Flesh, under the Nails of the Toes, then laid their Nits there within, and multiplied in such a manner that there was no ridding them but by Cauteries, so that some lost their Toes, and some their Feet, whereas they should at first have been picked out; but being as yet unacquainted with the Evil, they knew not how to apply the Remedy.” This description is true even to the last clause.²¹

Stephens, also a careful observer, asked good questions. His carefully reasoned conclusions and recommendations to future scholars provided “a rich fund for thought.”²² The work, wrote another reviewer, “unites both literary and scientific merit of a higher order. . . . We do not doubt that this book, both on account of its doubly national character and its undoubted superior merit, will find its way into the libraries of all persons who ever read anything else than a novel.”²³

“It unfolds and develops many things that are of great importance to this generation”

The violent and depressing Spanish conquest and subjugation of native populations of Mesoamerica laid the foundation for destructive currents, some of which continue even today. In southern Mexico, under the rule of Spain, frustration over social inequality and injustice had bubbled over into violence. Stephens relates:

20 Stephens, *Incidents*, 2:301-02.

21 Ibid., 2:322.

22 Review of Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Central America*, in *North American Review* 53/2 (1841): 503.

23 *New York Review*, (July 1841): 225. *Incidents* was simultaneously published in New York and London.

The Indians submitted to the dominion of the Spaniards until the year 1700, when the whole province revolted, and in Chillon, Tumbala, and Palenque they apostatized from Christianity, murdered the priests, profaned the churches, paid impious adoration to an Indian female, massacred the white men, and took women for their wives. But, as soon as the intelligence reached Guatemala, a strong force was sent against them, the revolted towns were reduced and recovered to the Catholic faith, and tranquility was restored. The right of the Indians, however, to the ownership of the soil was still recognized, and down to the time of the Mexican Independence they received rent for land in the villages and the milpas in the neighborhood.²⁴

Central American Independence from Spain in 1823 did not put an end to these difficulties. The Liberal faction worked to unite Central America under one government and impose progressive policies that went against entrenched native traditions and practices and tended to reduce the power of the Catholic church in the region. Opposition to these policies by the Conservative faction led to a new round of violence, some of which Stephens witnessed and described for his American readers. In the early sixteenth century, Stephens reflected, the highland and piedmont regions through which he traveled were “the most populous, the most civilized, and best cultivated in Guatemala. The people who occupied it were descendants of those found there by Alvarado, and perhaps four fifths were Indians of untainted blood.” By 1839, however, long suppressed tensions again exploded into violence. “For three centuries they had submitted quietly to the dominion of the whites, but the rising of Carrera had awakened a recollection of their fathers, and it was rumored that their eyes rolled strangely upon the white men as enemies of their race.”²⁵ Joseph Smith and his fellow Latter-day Saints would have taken interest in “the wars and complexities” of Mesoamerica’s bloody history (D&C 88:79).

United States President Martin Van Buren, the same who had told Joseph Smith, “Your cause is just, but I can do nothing for you,” tasked Stephens with the confidential and difficult assignment to learn who was actually in power in Central America and establish relations with them on behalf of the United States. This he found impossible, given that the

24 Stephens, *Incidents*, 2:286.

25 Ibid., 2:143.

region was in the midst of a chaotic civil war, yet Stephens was able to visit parts of Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica, as well as parts of southern Mexico, and provide detailed descriptions of current events. “Although he minimized the threat,” notes one authority, “he and Catherwood were in very dangerous territory, at considerable risk to life and limb.”²⁶ “Stephens was wandering through Central America at a time when the political infrastructure of the modern state was forming — or perhaps it would be more accurate to say ‘misforming.’ He witnessed a key clash between forces of the Central union (the Liberals) and disunion (the Conservatives) in something approaching a definitive battle.”²⁷ Stephens met both Carrera and Morazan, leaders of the rival factions, and *Incidents* contains a description of these interviews and his impressions.

“Luminous” and “Comprehensive”

Joseph Smith’s term *luminous* also aptly applies to Stephens’s work. Much of what he reported was new to American readers, and his writing style was clear and captivating. Stephens’s description of Copan, for example, is notable: “Rarely has the discovery of an archaeological site received such polished literary treatment.”²⁸ Stephens’s language would almost impel a Latter-day Saint reader in 1841 to think of the Book of Mormon. He praised the sculptor of monuments at Copan: “Little did he imagine that the time would come when his works would perish, his race be extinct, his city a desolation and abode for reptiles, for strangers to gaze at and wonder by what race it had been inhabited.”²⁹ He described Copan as a “desolate city.” Nobody knows “the time and means by which it was depopulated, and became a desolation and ruin; whether it fell by the sword, or famine, or pestilence. The trees which shroud it may have sprung from the blood of its slaughtered inhabitants; they may have perished howling with hunger; or pestilence, like the cholera, may have piled its streets with dead, and driven forever the feeble remnants from their homes.”³⁰ “In the moment of greatness and power, the builders [of

26 Michael Coe, *Breaking the Maya Code* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1993), 93.

27 Steve Glassman, *On the Trail of the Maya Explorer: Tracing the Epic Journey of John Lloyd Stephens* (Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press, 2003), 6.

28 Brian Fagan, *Elusive Treasure: The Story of the First Archaeologists in the Americas* (New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1977), 157

29 Stephens, *Incidents*, 1:146.

30 *Ibid.*, 1:159.

Uxmal] never contemplated that the time would come when their city would be a desolation."³¹ Stephens seemed most impressed by the ruins of Palenque.

Amid all the wreck of empires, nothing ever spoke so forcibly the world's mutations as this immense forest shrouding what was once a great city. Once it had been a great highway, thronged with people who were stimulated by the same passions that give impulse to human action now; and they are all gone, their habitations buried, and no traces of them left.

Here were the remains of a cultivated, polished, and peculiar people, who had passed through all the stages incident to the rise and fall of nations; reached their golden age, and perished, entirely unknown. The links which connected them with the human family were severed and lost, and these were the only memorials of their footsteps upon earth. We lived in the ruined palace of their kings; we went up to their desolate temples and fallen altars; and wherever we moved we saw the evidences of their taste, their skill in arts, their wealth and power. In the midst of desolation and ruin we looked back to the past, cleared away the gloomy forest, and fancied every building perfect, with its terraces and pyramids, its sculptured and painted ornaments, grand, lofty, and imposing, and overlooking an immense inhabited plain; we called back into life the strange people who gazed at us in sadness from the walls; pictured them in fanciful costumes and adorned with plumes and feathers, ascending the terraces of the palace and the steps leading to the temples, and often we imagined a scene of unique and gorgeous beauty and magnificence, realizing the creation of oriental poets. ... In the romance of the world's history nothing ever impressed me more forcibly than the spectacle of this once great and lovely city, overturned, desolate, and lost; discovered by accident, overgrown with trees for miles around, and without even a name to distinguish it.³²

The Prophet's term *luminous* is equally apt for Catherwood's drawings. In our day of modern photography, digital cameras, computers,

31 Ibid., 2:431.

32 Ibid., 2:291, 356–57.

and image manipulation, it is easy to forget just how difficult it was for Catherwood to represent accurately what his group discovered. In their travels, Stephens took the lead in bird-dogging ruins and monuments, which his companion could then draw. After spending the good part of one day at Copan scouting the surroundings, Stephens returned to find his companion struggling through a much harder work.

I found him not so well pleased as I expected with my report. He was standing with his feet in the mud, and was drawing with his gloves on to protect his hands from the moschetoës. As we feared, the designs were so intricate and complicated, the subjects so entirely new and unintelligible, that he had great difficulty in drawing. He had made several attempts, both with the camera lucida and without, but failed to satisfy himself or even me, who was less severe in criticism. The “idol” seemed to defy his art; two monkeys on a tree on one side appeared to be laughing at him, and I felt discouraged and despondent.³³

Fortunately, Catherwood persisted and succeeded in producing representations that were both accurate and beautiful.

One cannot fail to be impressed by Catherwood’s extraordinary achievements under these terrible conditions. His drawings are vivid and accurate, dramatic and sensitive, bringing the ruins of Palenque to life in their dense setting of sprawling vegetation. Stephens’s lengthy descriptions of the structures are an equally memorable tribute to the two explorers’ tenacity and single-minded dedication to archaeology.³⁴

According to archaeologist Michael Coe,

The quality of the illustrations in the 1841 and 1843 publications was a quantum jump away from anything that had been heretofore published on the antiquities of the New World. One has only to compare Catherwood’s rendering of the great tablet of the Temple of the Cross at Palenque with the garbled version in the del Rio 1822 report to see the difference. The same holds true with Catherwood’s more purely architectural drawings: many years ago (when I was

33 Stephens, *Incidents*, 1:120.

34 Fagan, *Elusive Treasure*, 176.

still an undergraduate at Harvard), I was at Uxmal, armed with a copy of Stephens and Catherwood. Catherwood's superb plate of the facade of the Governor's Palace at Uxmal is folded into the volume. Standing in front of the same palace, I directly compared the original with the copy: setting aside the reconstructions that had been carried out by the Mexican government in this century, they were virtually identical. Stephens and Catherwood could have lied and exaggerated like Waldeck about the Uxmal ruins — who among their readers in 1843 would have known the difference? — but they did not.³⁵

Art can have a powerful effect on readers of a text. Early editions of the Book of Mormon had no illustrations to supplement the volume. Catherwood's drawings from Central America, published in 1841, 1843, and 1844, helped Latter-day Saints conceptualize the Book of Mormon setting. For the first time since its publication, readers of the Book of Mormon could develop some idea of what places in the Book of Mormon may have looked like. The writers for the *Times and Seasons* editorial on September 15, 1842, regretted that they were unable to reproduce Catherwood's drawings of Palenque,³⁶ but in 1845, the Latter-day Saint editors of *The Prophet* reprinted Catherwood's drawings of the ruins of Zayl,³⁷ Sennacte, Sanachtsche³⁸ and Labna³⁹ from *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan*, apparently the first reproductions of those drawings published by Mormons.

Catherwood's influence can be seen in some of the earliest Latter-day Saint art on the Book of Mormon, particularly that of George Ottinger, whose art was used in George Reynolds's popular book *The Story of the Book of Mormon*.⁴⁰ Today, readers of the Book of Mormon have likely

35 Coe, *Breaking the Maya Code*, 93–94.

36 "Extract From Stephens' *Incidents of Travel in Central America*" *Times and Seasons* 3/22 (15 September, 1842), 914.

37 "A Portion of the Façade of the Ruins of Zayl in Yucatan," *The Prophet*, 25 January 1845.

38 *The Prophet*, 1 February 1845.

39 *The Prophet*, 8 February 1845; *The Prophet*, 22 February 1845.

40 Noel A. Carmack, "A Picturesque and Dramatic History": George Reynolds's Story of the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies* 47/2 (2008)115–41. For interesting comparisons between Ottinger's paintings and Catherwood's work see figures 9–12. For insight into Friberg's Book of Mormon art see Vern Swanson, "The Book of Mormon Art of Arnold Friberg: Painter of Scripture," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 10/1 (2001): 26–35.

seen Arnold Friberg's depiction of Samuel the Lamanite preaching on the wall of Zarahemla. He "contextualizes the narrative within an architectural setting based upon the well-known models of Puuc style Maya and Teotihuacano architecture." Samuel "stands by a tower that shows "the characteristic stone latticework and centralized Chac mask of Uxmal's Nunnery complex," the same buildings described by Stephens and illustrated by Catherwood. In another well-known painting, Friberg depicts Jesus appearing at the temple in Bountiful, which resembles the "stepped masonry platforms of Teotihuacan's Avenue of the Dead."⁴¹

Joseph Smith's term *comprehensive* was also well chosen. Stephens and Catherwood covered a lot of ground in their travels through Belize, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Chiapas, Mexico and Yucatan. The 1841 narrative provided an abundance of useful information for future travelers to the region. Missionary-minded Latter-day Saints like Wilford Woodruff, who also traveled widely, would have appreciated the narrative, which paints a broad portrait of Central America at this time, both its natural and human environments. Information from histories of the region provided valuable context for their discoveries.

"Most Correct"

The discovery of Central American ruins was of great interest to Joseph Smith and the Latter-day Saints, but *Incidents* also provided useful historical information. Stephens drew upon the work of Don Domingo Juarros, whose history was published in a London English translation in 1823.⁴² The Juarros history itself depended on the valuable *Historia de Guatemala* or *Recordacion Florida* by Francisco Antonio de Fuentes y Guzman.⁴³ The wide publication of *Incidents of Travel* made the historical information in these sources widely known to American readers.

What did Joseph Smith mean when he said *Incidents* was the "most correct" of all the books on American antiquities with which he was familiar? Earlier reports of the ruins of Palenque, some reprinted in

41 R. Tripp Evans, *Romancing the Maya: Mexican Antiquity in the American Imagination 1820-1915* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), 94.

42 Don Domingo Juarros, *A Statistical and Commercial History of the Kingdom of Guatemala in Spanish America*, ... Translated by J. Baily (London: J. F. Dove, 1823).

43 Francisco Antonio de Fuentes y Guzman, *Historia de Guatemala, o, Recordacion Florida* (Madrid: 1882).

Mormon publications, had circulated years before 1840. They included exaggerated claims about the size and extent of the site. Stephens with good humor noted that some reports claimed the site was "ten times larger than New York" or "three times as large as London." The author gently corrected these erroneous claims and provided more accurate information, based on his own observations.⁴⁴ As already noted, Catherwood's drawings also greatly helped to correct previous confusion.

It seems reasonable to assume that Joseph Smith was acquainted with some of the more popular works by Latter-day Saints on the Book of Mormon, such as Parley Pratt's *Voice of Warning*, which evidence indicates he read and suggested that corrections be incorporated into the 1839 edition.⁴⁵ In that edition Pratt cited reports on the Palenque ruins printed in the *Family Magazine* and Josiah Priest's 1833 *American Antiquities*, a work well known to early missionaries. Other Latter-day Saint pamphlets referenced the works of Boudinot, Davis, and Humboldt. While he may not have read these very books, Joseph Smith could easily have become acquainted with the passages used and cited by missionaries. Significantly, he assigned higher confidence to Stephens's work than he did to these other sources, which in his view were less "correct," "luminous," and "comprehensive."

Correspondences

Seeking to distance Joseph Smith from *any* Mesoamerican correlation with Book of Mormon events, Neville has difficulty providing an adequate explanation for Joseph Smith's 1841 letter to John Bernhisel. He downplays the letter to Bernhisel as "more of a polite but brief thank-you note to a friend and business associate with whom Joseph had been corresponding" (60). He suggests that the letter reflects a more general interest in Central America, rather than one which might place Book of Mormon events in a Mesoamerican setting (58). "Joseph's letter does not tie any Book of Mormon events to the locations in Central America" (57). How then would Stephens's work, as Joseph indicated, "correspond with" or "support" the Book of Mormon? In a rather dodgy argument, Neville insists that these correspondences did not have reference to anything Stephens wrote about Central America, but rather to a brief aside which mentions discoveries farther north. Just before

44 Stephens, *Incidents*, 2:304; also 2:305-7, 355-57.

45 Peter Crawley, *A Descriptive Bibliography of the Mormon Church. Volume One 1830-1847* (Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1997), 97-98.

discussing the ruins of Copan, Stephens mentioned countless theories about native American origins, some of them farfetched.

Some suggested they might have been of a race “separate” from the family of Adam. Or perhaps “some remnant of the antediluvian inhabitants of the earth”? Might the ark even have planted itself in the State of New York? Were they descendants of ancient Near Eastern peoples, or of the Chinese, or even of “modern” Europeans? Perhaps a single continent had been “rent asunder” by an earthquake; or the “fabled island of Atlantis ... been lifted out of the ocean. ... The monuments and architectural remains of the aborigines have heretofore formed but a small part of the groundwork for these speculations.”⁴⁶

Stephens also noted that historians like Robinson claimed that native American peoples were incapable of significant cultural achievements and that this attitude had influenced popular perceptions of pre-Columbian history.

Since Dr. Robinson wrote, a new flood of light has poured upon the world, and the field of American antiquities has been opened. The ignorance, carelessness, and indifference of the inhabitants of Spanish America on this subject are matter of wonder. In our own country, the opening of forests and the discovery of tumuli or mound and fortifications, extending in ranges from the lakes through the valleys of Ohio and Mississippi, mummies in a cave in Kentucky, the inscription on the rock at Dighton, supposed to be in Phoenician characters, and the ruins of walls and a great city in Arkansas and Wisconsin Territory, had suggested wild and wandering ideas in regard to the first peopling of this country, and the strong belief that powerful and populous nations had occupied it and had passed away, whose histories are entirely unknown. The same evidences continue in Texas, and in Mexico they assume a still more definite form.⁴⁷

Neville’s claim that Joseph was interested in Stephens because of what it said about Midwestern mound builders, rather than what it said about Central American correspondences, makes little sense. After all, the title of the book was *Incidents of Travel in Central America*. Stephens’s remarks on mound builders is but a brief aside in a two-volume work of nearly nine-hundred pages! The passage is short, very general, and

46 Stephens, *Incidents*, 1:96–97.

47 Ibid., 1:98.

contributes nothing new. A reader could find more detail in other books of the time, such as Josiah Priest's *American Antiquities*, which were already known to Latter-day Saints through the publications of Parley Pratt and other Mormon writers. Stephens's passing comment provides no new information. If, as Joseph said, Stephens work was *more* correct, luminous, and comprehensive than other earlier works, he obviously was referring to what Stephens said about Central America.

Age of Pre-Columbian Civilization in Mesoamerica

It is important to remember that when Latter-day Saints speak and write about the external geography of Book of Mormon events and also secondary and secular evidence of its truth, these are opinions and personal interpretations, not revelation. Arguments, suppositions, deductions, and interpretations may or may not be well-informed and carefully reasoned. This was as true for Joseph Smith and his contemporaries when they expressed their own views, as it is of us today. Of course it is no longer 1842. Our knowledge about the Book of Mormon, American geography, and the ancient world has increased substantially since Joseph Smith's day. We know that some things once argued or thought to be strong evidence for the Book of Mormon were based on faulty information or mistaken assumptions. We are not bound to evidence and arguments that have since been shown to be wrong. On the other hand we also know things today that earlier writers did not.

At the conclusion of his 1841 work, Stephens expressed his own well-reasoned conclusion about the age of the ruins his group had visited.

We are not warranted in going back to any ancient nation of the Old World for the builders of these cities; that they are not the work of people who have passed away and whose history is lost, but that there are strong reasons to believe them the creations of the same races who inhabited the country at the time of the Spanish conquest, or some not very distant progenitors. ... Some are beyond doubt older than others; some are known to have been inhabited at the time of the Spanish conquest, and others, perhaps, were really ruins before.⁴⁸

Today we know that Stephens's opinion of the age of these ruins was essentially correct. Copan, Quirigua, Palenque, and Uxmal were all

48 Ibid., 2:455.

pre-Columbian, dating to the later Maya Classic Period after the Book of Mormon era. Small groups of ancestral predecessors of those who built these cities likely lived there before that time, but the notable ruins Stephens and his companions described and illustrated represent a later cultural development.⁴⁹

What Stephens Didn't Know

Neville thinks no reasonable person could have considered these ruins evidence. "Stephens himself refutes the basic premise of the Mesoamerican connection, i.e., that the ruins in Copan were Nephite cities as described in the Book of Mormon narrative" (58). Those who thought that Copan, Quirigua, Palenque, and Uxmal were the very cities named in the Book of Mormon text were mistaken. We know that now, but nobody in 1842, or for a long time afterward, could date accurately the age of those ruins. Stephens's opinion, thoughtful and well informed, was still just one among many at the time. So it was not unreasonable for Joseph Smith or Latter-day Saints in 1842 to draw their own conclusions. *Incidents* provided a glimpse of a civilization whose level and complexity few had witnessed, and Stephens was keenly aware of many other cities yet to be discovered.⁵⁰ Latter-day Saints *never* held that Stephens's ruins were the full story. They fully expected that future explorations and research would yield additional evidence and discoveries consistent with Mormon's record. "Should ruins of many cities be discovered [in Central America]," wrote W. W. Phelps, "it would be no more than a confirmation of what was once on this land of the Lord."⁵¹ In 1855 the editor of *The Mormon* wrote, "The Book of Mormon becomes still more interesting to the archaeological student in its corroborative testimony, since its publicity was anterior to the researches of Stevens and Catherwood and most other explorers of Yucatan, Central America and California. It relates *not only to the numerous ruins already exhumed* but to hundreds of cities and temples, *whose ruins yet remain buried* amid the boundless forests."⁵²

Neville's discussion could leave his readers with the mistaken impression that no Mesoamerican ruins date to Book of Mormon times

49 Coe, *The Maya*, 95-99, 108-115, 131.

50 Stephens, *Incidents*, 2:193-97, 305, 364; *ibid.*, 2:128-29, 280.

51 "Discovery of Ancient Ruins in Central America," *Evening and Morning Star*, 1/9 (February, 1833), [71].

52 "Ancient Ruins in America," *The Mormon*, 28 April 1855, emphasis added. At this time John Taylor was the editor.

(58). Stephens was unaware that many other Mesoamerican ruins, of greater antiquity, would later be discovered throughout Mesoamerica. When he rode across the valley to Guatemala City, he had no idea that beneath his very feet were the remains of Kaminaljuyu, "one of the greatest of all archaeological sites in the New World," whose ruins date to Book of Mormon times, but lie mostly destroyed under the streets and buildings of that sprawling modern city.⁵³ He noted the beauty of Lake Atitlan, "the most magnificent spectacle we ever saw," and described the lake basin from his perspective on the surrounding hills. "All the requisites of the grand and beautiful were there; gigantic mountains, a valley of poetic softness, lake, and volcanoes, and from the height on which we stood a waterfall marked a silver line down its sides."⁵⁴ Nobody knew until recently that those waters concealed Preclassic ruins covered by water two thousand years ago⁵⁵ or that his road through Chiapas, Mexico likely took him within a stone's throw of ruins of comparable age and complexity.⁵⁶ Given Joseph Smith's interest in Stephens's work, there is every reason to believe that the Prophet would have greeted those discoveries with similar interest and enthusiasm.

Geographical Correspondences

The issue at hand, however, is not whether we think there exists evidence from Mesoamerica that supports the Book of Mormon, although I believe that is abundant, but what Joseph Smith and the early Latter-day Saints thought about it. Joseph Smith suggested that *Incidents of Travel in Central America* corresponded with and supported the testimony of the Book of Mormon. Was he right?

In fact, it is not difficult for a reader to find such correspondences. An obvious one was the *location* of the cities Stephens and Catherwood described and visited. Early readers of the Book of Mormon commonly assumed Central America to be the "narrow neck of land" mentioned in the text. John Taylor and others thought the geographical location of the discoveries was consistent with descriptions in the Book of Mormon. "It has fallen to his [Stephens's] lot," wrote John Taylor, "to explore the

53 Coe, *The Maya*, 40. For correlations with the Book of Mormon see Sorenson, *Mormon's Codex*, 82-86, 240-41, 547-78, 638-49.

54 Stephens, *Incidents*, 2:158.

55 Sorenson, *Mormon's Codex*, 646-47.

56 Ibid., 581-604. The site of Chinkultic near Comitán and most other sites within the central depression of Chiapas were abandoned in the Early Classic period. See Sorenson, *Mormon's Codex*, 674-78.

ruins of this once mighty people, but the ‘Book of Mormon’ unfolds their history; and published as it was, years before these discoveries were made, and giving as it does, accounts of a people, and of cities that bear a striking resemblance to those mentioned by Mr. Stephens, both in regard to magnificence and location.”⁵⁷

A related correlation had to do with the *level* of civilization that Central American discoveries revealed. The number of ruins described by Catherwood and Stephens in their books surprised and astounded many readers. In their subsequent expedition to Yucatan, the explorers visited forty-four sites, and they had obviously only scratched the surface. When Amos Wickerhsham observed that reports of the ruins of Palenque had been known before 1840, William Appleby could respond, “The ruins of the city of Ottolum [Palenque] was known; but Stevens visited altogether 43.”⁵⁸ Orson Pratt observed:

Now no one will dispute the fact that the existence of antique remains in different parts of America was known long before Smith was born. But every well informed person knows that the most of the discoveries made by Catherwood and Stephens were original — that the most of the forty-four cities described by him had not been described by previous travelers. Now the Book of Mormon gives us the names and location of great numbers of cities in the very region where Catherwood and Stephens afterwards discovered them. This, therefore, taking into consideration all the circumstances, is an additional evidence, of a very positive nature, in favour of the divine inspiration of this unlearned and inexperienced young man.⁵⁹

In addition to correspondences of location and cultural complexity, a few writers suggested that additional correlations among specific cities might be possible. The writers of the unsigned editorial on October 1, 1842, noted correspondences between Catherwood’s description of Quirigua and the city of Zarahemla,⁶⁰ based on several

57 “Stephens’s Works on Central America,” *Times and Seasons* 4/22 (1 October 1843): 346–47.

58 W. I. Appleby, *Mormonism Consistent ...* (Washington, DE.: Porter and Nave, 1843), 17–18.

59 Orson Pratt, “Reply to a pamphlet, printed in Glasgow, entitled, ‘Remarks on Mormonism,’” *Millennial Star* 11/8 (15 April, 1849): 115–16.

60 As previously noted, Quirigua is now known to date after Book of Mormon times.

obvious correlations between Stephens and Catherwood's report of the site and the Book of Mormon description of Zarahemla.⁶¹

1. Quirigua was located at a narrow point of land between the Bay of Honduras and the Pacific Ocean and nearly surrounded by water.
2. A river flowed by the ruined city, like the river Sidon, which flowed by Zarahemla.
3. The Nephite city was on the west side of the river Sidon. Quirigua lay on the left bank of the river, reportedly flowing into the Atlantic Ocean (Alma 2:3; 6:7).
4. Several miles upstream, the river was fordable: "Upstream, the river was here about two hundred feet wide, and fordable in every part except a few deep holes. Generally it did not exceed three feet in depth, and in many places not so deep." Nephite armies were able to cross over to the west bank of the Sidon as they attempted to head off Lamanite armies attacking the city (Alma 2:34).
5. The river Sidon eventually flowed into the sea (Alma 3:3; 44:22). After it passed by Quirigua, the river "was said to be navigable to the sea for boats not drawing more than three feet of water."
6. Some Latter-day Saints compared the description of "a large round stone, with its sides sculptured in hieroglyphics" which could not be read, with the stone interpreted by King Mosiah at Zarahemla, which gave an account of the destruction of the Jaredites whose "bones lay scattered in the land northward" (Omni 1:20–22).
7. Like Zarahemla, Quirigua seemed to resemble a culturally significant place. Catherwood described pyramidal structure, altars, and large monuments covered with hieroglyphic writing: "Of one thing there is no doubt: a large city once stood there; its name is lost, its history unknown" and "no account of its existence has ever before been published."⁶²

61 Stephens, *Incidents*, 2:118–23.

62 Ibid., 2:123.

On the basis of Stephens's report, it is understandable that some readers of the Book of Mormon would see a correlation. In October 1842, an editorial in the *Times and Seasons* suggested a possible link with the Nephite capital city: "It is certainly a good thing for the excellency and veracity, of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon, that the ruins of Zarahemla have been found where the Nephites left them: and that a large stone with engravings upon it, as Mosiah said; and a 'large round stone, with the sides sculptured in hieroglyphics,' as Mr. Stephens has published, is also among the left remembrances of the (to him) lost and unknown." The writer then qualified this statement as a matter of opinion.

We are not going to declare positively that the ruins of Quirigua are those of Zarahemla, but when the land and the stones, and the books tell the story so plain, we are of opinion, that it would require more proof than the Jews could bring to prove the disciples stole the body of Jesus from the tomb, to prove that the ruins of the city in question, are not one of those referred to in the Book of Mormon. ... It will not be a bad plan to compare Mr. Stephens' ruined cities with those in the Book of Mormon: light cleaves to light, and facts are supported by facts. The truth injures no one, and so we make another.⁶³

Buildings of Cement and Other Materials

The Book of Mormon mentions that the people of Lehi built many cities, some of which are described as "large" (Mosiah 27:6). Some of the people of Nephi who migrated northward became "exceedingly expert in the working of cement; therefore they did build houses of cement in the which they did dwell" (Helaman 3:7). Stephens and Catherwood found numerous large cities with buildings of well-cut stone, although they also

63 "Zarahemla," *Times and Seasons* 3/23 (1 October, 1842), 927. Neville expresses contempt and scorn for the writer of the unsigned editorial, whom he imagines to be Winchester. The view that "the ruins of Zarahemla have been found where the Nephites left them" is, according to Neville, "a bald-faced lie if taken literally — and if it refers to Central America" (128). With a surprising lack of charity, he further characterizes him as irrational and even applies Korihor's derisive epithet "the effect of a frenzied mind" (Alma 30:16) to the writer of the editorial (123, 128). This is simply bizarre. The editorial is clearly set forth as an "opinion" based on Stephens's report and the common assumption that the narrow neck of land was within Central America. No one may care if Neville disparages a sourpuss like Winchester, but what if Joseph Smith was the writer?

recognized that the cities they described likely had also contained many other buildings made of “frail and perishable materials” that had “not survived.”⁶⁴ They described one palace at Utatlan as “covered with hard cement” and one farther north at Palenque, where Stephens observed, “The floors are of cement, as hard as the best seen in the remains of Roman baths and cisterns.”⁶⁵

Temples

Temples are mentioned in the Book of Mormon, although little information is given about their structure. There were temples in the land of Nephi (2 Nephi 5:16; Mosiah 11:10; Alma 26:29) and Zarahemla (Mosiah 2:1; Alma 16:13) and the land northward, to which groups of the people of Nephi migrated (Helaman 3:14).⁶⁶ Other kinds of religious structures are mentioned, including “synagogues” and “sanctuaries” (Alma 16:13; 21:5; 22:7; 26:29; Moroni 7:1). The Savior appeared at the Nephite temple in Bountiful (3 Nephi 11:1). Stephens visited many buildings that he described as temples and other religious structures.⁶⁶ Of the monuments and buildings found at Copan, including what he described as a “temple,” Stephens wrote, “The genii who attended on King Solomon seem to have been the artists.” This language reminded some early readers of Nephi’s description of the temple of Nephi (2 Nephi 5:16).⁶⁷

Palaces

King Noah built a “spacious palace” (Mosiah 11:9), which may have been used later by the king of the Lamanites (Alma 22:2). The Quiche palace, according to historical sources, was said to contain gardens, baths, a treasury, armory, aviaries, menageries, as well as a section of the place for the queen and royal concubines.⁶⁸ The Palace at Palenque had several courtyards, which Stephens thought must have been used “for public and state occasions.”⁶⁹

The Judgment Seat

During the reign of the judges there was a “judgment seat” (Alma 1:2), or “the *place* of the judgement seat” (Helaman 9:7, 14). It indicates that

64 Stephens, *Incidents*, 2:355.

65 Ibid., 2:183; 2:313.

66 Ibid., 2:353–54.

67 “Ancient Ruins in America,” *The Mormon*, 28 April, 1855.

68 Stephens, *Incidents*, 2:179.

69 Ibid., 2:319.

people went “*in unto* the judgment seat,” suggesting that it was perhaps inside a building (Helaman 8:27; 9:3). Stephens cited historical sources which described the palace of the Quiche kings: “In one of the saloons stood a throne, under four canopies of feathers” and also “tribunals of the judges.”⁷⁰ At Palenque,

The long, unbroken corridors in front of the palace were probably intended for lords and gentlemen in waiting; or perhaps, in that beautiful position, which, before the forest grew up, must have commanded an extended view of a cultivated and inhabited plain, the king himself sat in it to receive the reports of his officers and to administer justice.⁷¹

At one building Stephens found a set of two large tablets of hieroglyphics, eight feet high and thirteen feet long, on either side of a door that was the entrance to a corridor divided into three apartments. “The Indians call this building as escuela or school, but our friends the padres called it a tribunal of justice, and these stones, they said, contained the tables of the law.”⁷²

Walls and Towers

Walls of earth, wood, and stone are mentioned in the Book of Mormon (Mosiah; 9:8; Alma 48:8; 52:4; Helaman 1:21; 12:4). Stephens describes many walls of stone.⁷³ Towers are mentioned in the Book of Mormon (Mosiah 11:12–13). Stephens describes an enigmatic stone “tower” at Palenque on the south side of the palace and found the remains of what may have been others nearby. “On top was a high mound of stones, with a foundation wall still remaining. Probably a tower or temple had stood there.”⁷⁴

Structures for Astronomical Purposes

The Book of Mormon indicates that the Nephites to some degree were interested in astronomical phenomena. They kept a careful calendar over hundreds of years and looked for and reported significant heavenly phenomena (Alma 30:44; Helaman 12:15; 14:3–6; 16:13; 3 Nephi 1:4–21).

⁷⁰ Stephens, *Incidents*, 2:179.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 2:314.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 2:343.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 1:101–4, 134; 2:153, 171.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 2:317, 320–21.

Stephens speculated that one of the buildings at Palenque “perhaps was intended as an observatory.”⁷⁵

Ornamented Buildings

Nephi taught his people to build buildings and work in “all manner of wood” and other materials (2 Nephi 5:15); and according to Jarom, subsequent early Nephites did the same (Jarom 1:8). King Noah “built many elegant and spacious buildings; and he ornamented them with fine work of wood, and all manner of precious things” (Mosiah 11:8). The explorers described and depicted many examples of finely sculpted buildings. Stephens was particularly fascinated with the discovery at Uxmal of a large wooden beam, elegantly carved with hieroglyphics.⁷⁶ It had once been placed as a lintel in the doorway of one of the larger buildings. Ten feet long and very heavy, it required ten men to carry it. The explorers brought it back with them to New York City, where it was proudly displayed as part of an exhibit, but was destroyed in a tragic fire, along with many of Catherwood’s drawings and other valuable artifacts.⁷⁷

Altars and Idols

At the ruins of Copan, Stephens encountered many large carved statues which some characterized as “idols.” At Copan, these often stood before what he called an altar.⁷⁸ He discussed the pre-Columbian practice of human sacrifice⁷⁹ and interpreted one of the tablets at Palenque as representing one “in the act of making an offering, perhaps of a child.”⁸⁰ Like ancient Israel, Lehi’s people worshiped at “altars” (Alma 15:17; 17:4). In times of wickedness the people worshiped idols (2 Nephi 9:37; Enos 1:20; Alma 31:1) and were sometimes known to sacrifice women and children to “idol gods” (Mormon 4:14, 21).⁸¹

Ruined Buildings from Earthquake

Alma and Amulek were miraculously delivered during a powerful earthquake that destroyed the prison building in which they were held

75 Ibid., 2:348.

76 Ibid., 2:432-33.

77 Ibid., 1:102-3.

78 At Copan, *ibid.*, 1:102; 137-40, 150-59. At Quirigua, see *ibid.*, 2:121-22.

79 Ibid., 1:159; 2:184-85.

80 Ibid., 2:346-47.

81 W. I. Appleby, *Mormonism Consistent ...* (Washington, DE: Porter and Nave, 1843), 17-18.

and killed their captors (Alma 14:27). An earthquake is described in the City of Nephi (Helaman 5:30-32). During the great destruction at the time of Christ's death, "many great and notable cities were ... shaken till the buildings thereof had fallen to the earth, and the inhabitants thereof were slain, and the places were left desolate" (3 Nephi 8:14). "And there were some cities which remained, but the damage thereof was exceedingly great" (3 Nephi 8:15). Some of the inhabitants "were fallen upon and crushed to death" (3 Nephi 10:13). At Palenque: "Near this, on the top of another pyramidal structure, was another building entirely in ruins, which apparently had been shattered and hurled down by an earthquake. The stones were strewed on the side of the pyramid, and it was impossible to make out the ground-plan."⁸²

Nakedness

According to Stephens, many of the Indians he encountered "were naked, except a small piece of cotton cloth around the loins, and crossing in front between the legs" (1:40). He cited historical sources that indicate that when Mayan warriors fought, "their bodies were naked, except around the loins, and stained all over with earth of different colors."⁸³ Similar descriptions are found in the Book of Mormon (Enos 1:20).

Pre-Columbian Writing

Critics of the Book of Mormon could not credit the idea that pre-Columbian peoples ever had a knowledge of writing, as the Book of Mormon suggests. "According to Mormon, these native Americans could read, and write, ... but when that country first became known to Europeans, the inhabitants knew no more about letters than a four-legged animal knows the rules of logic; and not a scrap of writing was to be found."⁸⁴ There was not "even so much as a shadow or proof, that the sciences of reading and writing [and other evidences of advanced culture mentioned in the Book of Mormon] were ever known here."⁸⁵ Latter-day Saints found the new discoveries helpful in responding to such criticisms.⁸⁶ Stephens and Catherwood found numerous examples of hieroglyphics in their travels

82 Stephens, *Incidents*, 2:354.

83 Ibid., 1:30.

84 H. Stevenson, *Lecture on Mormonism* ... (1839), 12.

85 A Philanthropist, *Mormonism Unmasked* (Philadelphia, PA.: T. K. & P. G. Collins, 1840), 5-6.

86 E. Snow, 1841, 2-3.

and were convinced that these contained historical information about the former rulers and people who once inhabited the ruins they explored. While the cause of Copan's destruction seemed a mystery, "One thing I believe, that its history is graven on its monuments. No Champolion has yet brought to them the energies of his inquiring mind. Who shall read them?"⁸⁷ Although Stephens's contemporaries and many later scholars once doubted that these monuments contained writing of a historical nature, this has since proven true. "After four decades," David Stuart writes, "Mayanists are now accustomed to the idea that ancient Maya artisans and scribes, when composing and carving monumental inscriptions, were principally concerned with the commemoration of historical events surrounding kings, their families, and their courts."⁸⁸ The tradition of pre-Columbian writing in Mesoamerica (nothing comparable has been found anywhere else in the New World) compares favorably to that described in the Book of Mormon and is known to date from Preclassic times.⁸⁹ The ruins of Kaminaljuyu in the valley of Guatemala are older than the ruins of Copan, yet centuries before the time of Christ, "the elite of this Valley were fully literate at a time when other Maya were perhaps just learning that writing existed."⁹⁰

Similar Stories

Fuentes described a bloody war waged to avenge the abduction of the Ixconsocil and Ecselixpua, the daughter and niece of Balam Acan, the Quiche king. As Stephens told the story,

The rape of Helen did not produce more wars and bloodshed than the carrying off of these two young ladies with unpronounceable names. Balam Acan was a naturally mild man, but the abduction of his daughter was an affront not to be pardoned. With eighty thousand veterans, himself in the center squadron, ... he marched against Zutugilebpop, who met him with sixty thousand men, commanded by Iloacab, his chief general and accomplice. The most bloody battle

87 Stephens, *Incidents*, 1841, 1:159-60.

88 David Stuart, "A Foreign Past: The Writing and Representation of History on a Royal Ancestral Shrine at Copan." In E. Wyllys Andrews and William L. Fash, eds., *Copan: The History of An Ancient Maya Kingdom* (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 2004), 373.

89 Sorenson, "Records and Writing Systems" in *Mormon's Codex*, 184-232 for a detailed discussion.

90 Coe, *The Maya*, 60. Compare Mosiah 23:6-7.

ever fought in the country took place; the field was so deeply inundated with blood that not a blade of grass could be seen.⁹¹

This story reminded some Latter-day Saints readers of the priests of King Noah who kidnapped the daughters of the Lamanites and thereby incited a deadly war (Mosiah 20:1-15).⁹²

The Book of Mormon prophet Samuel the Lamanite prophesied of signs that would accompany the birth of Christ, which would be witnessed by those in the American land of promise. The most notable of these signs was that there “shall be one day and a night and a day, as if it were one day and there were no night” (Helaman 14:4). Five years after this prophecy was made, the sign was fulfilled (3 Nephi 1:15). “Is it probable,” wrote Origen Bachelier, “that when Christ was born, the inhabitants of America were notified of it by a supernatural light, insomuch that it was as light as noon-day during the whole night?”⁹³ “We Yankees,” wrote another critic in 1841, “have been taught to believe, that the light was called day, and the darkness called night; but the Mormons, to outdo all others, they have night in the day time.”⁹⁴ *Incidents of Travel* told of a tradition of the division of the pre-Columbian kingdom of Guatemala among three sons. “This division was made on a day when three suns were visible at the same time, which extraordinary circumstance, says the manuscript, has induced some persons to believe that it was made on the day of our Saviour’s birth.”⁹⁵ Some readers associated this tradition with the Book of Mormon account of the sign of Christ’s birth.⁹⁶

Elephants

The Book of Mormon indicates that the Jaredites knew of elephants (Ether 9:19). Stephens described one of the elaborately carved stone monuments at Copan (now known as Stela B) as portraying

91 Stephens, *Incidents*, 2:173-74.

92 John E. Page, “Collateral testimony of the truth and divinity of the Book of Mormon. — No. 4,” *Gospel Herald* 3/27 (September 21, 1848): 125-26.

93 Origen Bachelier, *Mormonism Exposed* (New York: 1838), 19.

94 Parsons, 22.

95 Stephens, *Incidents*, 2:173.

96 John E. Page, “Collateral testimony of the truth and divinity of the Book of Mormon — No. 3,” *Gospel Herald* 3/26 (September 14, 1848): 123. Understandably, some early readers would connect the two events, but it seems unlikely that the event reported in Stephens’s source had any direct relationship with that described in the Book of Mormon. For a recent perspective see Gardner, *Second Witness*, 5:193-95, 238.

elephantine-like representations. “The two ornaments at the top appear like the trunk of an elephant, an animal unknown in that country.”⁹⁷ During their subsequent travels in western highlands Guatemala, near Gueguetenango, they learned of the discovery of the remains of a mastodon.

The next morning Don Joaquim told us of the skeleton of a colossal animal supposed to be a mastodon which had been found in the neighborhood. Some of the bones had been collected and were then in the town, and having seen them, we took a guide and walked to the place where they had been discovered on the borders of the Rio Chinaca, about half a mile distant. At the time the river was low, but the year before, welled by the immense flood of the rainy season, it had burst its bounds, carried away its left bank, and laid bare one side of the skeleton. The bank was perpendicular, about thirty feet high, and the animal had been buried in an upright position. Besides the bones in the town, some had been carried away by the flood, others remained imbedded in the earth; but the impression of the whole animal, from twenty-five to thirty feet long was distinctly visible. We were told that about eight leagues above, on the bank of the same river, the skeleton of a much larger animal had been discovered.⁹⁸

Stephens also mentioned elephantine-like figures found on other buildings, including one at Uxmal, which “resembles somewhat an elephant’s trunk,” but thought it improbable that this was intended by the pre-Columbian artisan, “for the elephant was unknown on the Continent of America.”⁹⁹ Early Mormon readers of the Book of Mormon would likely have disagreed.¹⁰⁰

Traditions

Early critics of the Book of Mormon argued that no native American traditions supported the Book of Mormon. LaRoy Sunderland, who

97 Stephens, *Incidents*, 1841, 1:156.

98 Ibid., 1841, 2:228-29.

99 Ibid., 1:97.

100 Many scholars today reject the correlation suggesting that the figures portrayed at Copan likely show the beaks of macaws rather than elephants. See Brant Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Kofford, 2007), 6:260.

argued that Joseph Smith fabricated the Book of Mormon, claimed, “Smith knew, very well, that those traditions would not countenance the book of Mormon, but which they would in all probability have done, had that book been true.”¹⁰¹ Latter-day Saints, however, found in Stephens’s *Incidents* a useful rebuttal to such criticisms. At the time of the conquest, the Quiche King in Guatemala received word of the coming of the Spaniards and through divination received ill omens warning that his people were soon to be conquered. These omens reportedly included “the ominous circumstance of a certain stone, brought by their forefathers from Egypt, having suddenly split into two, predicted the inevitable ruins of the kingdom.”¹⁰² Stephens cited a tradition suggesting that some of the native inhabitants of that land were descended from Israel:

Fuentes, the chronicler of the kingdom of Guatemala, the kings of Quiche and Kachiquel were descended from the Toltecan Indians, who, when they came into this country, found it *already inhabited* by people of different nations. According to the manuscript of Don Juan Torres, the grandson of the last king of the Quiche’s, which was in the possession of the lieutenant-general appointed by Pedro de Alvarado, and when Fuentes says he obtained by means of Father Francis Vasques, the historian of the order of San Francis, the Toltecas themselves descended from the house of Israel, who were released by Moses from the tyranny of Pharaoh, and after crossing the Red Sea, fell into idolatry. To avoid the reproofs of Moses, or from fear of his inflicting upon them some chastisement, they separated from him and his brethren, and under the guidance of Tanub, their chief, passed from one continent to the other, to a place which they called the seven caverns, a part of the kingdom of Mexico, where they founded the celebrated city of Tula. From Tanub sprang the families of the kings of Tula and Quiche, and the first monarch of the Toltecs.¹⁰³

Early Latter-day Saints enthusiastically received reports of ancient Israelite connections with Central America,¹⁰⁴ but were less inclined to

101 LaRoy Sunderland, “Mormonism,” *Zion’s Watchman*, 24 February, 1838.

102 Stephens, *Incidents*, 2:175.

103 *Ibid.*, 2:171-72.

104 “Facts are stubborn things,” *Times and Seasons* 3/22 (September 15, 1842): 922; John E. Page, “Collateral testimony of the truth and divinity of the

probe the implication of these reports. The tale recounted by Stephens said that the Toltecs were descendants of the House of Israel, and when they arrived in Guatemala they “found it already inhabited by people of different nations.” The unquestioned assumption of most Latter-day Saint readers throughout the nineteenth century was that Book of Mormon migrants were the sole ancestors of all native Americans, even though that idea is not grounded in the text itself.

Much of the criticism of the Book of Mormon and Latter-day Saint literature discussing the book has been based on this non-textual assumption of both critics and believers.¹⁰⁵ It is then of some interest to note that the Quiche tradition cited above indicates that the pre-Columbian inhabitants of Guatemala and Mexico included more than Israelite descendants, but as far as can be determined, no Latter-day Saint reader of Stephens and Catherwood seems to have taken note of that point. Had they done so, one wonders if past defenders of Book of Mormon may have been able to more effectively address thorny historical questions that have vexed some readers. The Latter-day Saint discovery of Mesoamerican traditions marked the beginning of a long interest in the subject that continues even today.

Machinery

The Book of Mormon indicates that the early Nephites had “machinery” (Jarom 1:8). Machines need not be complicated, but early critics were amused.¹⁰⁶ “What kind of machinery the Nephites had is not stated,” wrote an opponent of the Book of Mormon. “It cannot be too little to suppose, that they had cotton mills, and worsted mills, and steam engines to run on rail ways. But then, what has become of them all?”¹⁰⁷ One historical description of a battle, cited by Stephens, indicates that the native forces who opposed the Spaniards in Guatemala had in their camp “several military *machines*, formed of beams and rollers, to be

Book of Mormon.—No. 1,” *Gospel Herald* 3/24 (August 31, 1848): 108.

105 See, for example, B. H. Roberts, “Book of Mormon Difficulties” in Brigham D. Madsen, ed., *B. H. Roberts Studies of the Book of Mormon* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 64-148.

106 *Webster’s 1828 Dictionary of the English Language* defines *machine* as “An artificial work, simple or complicated, that serves to apply or regulate moving power, or to produce motion, so as to save time or force.”

107 Stevenson (1839), 12-13.

moved from place to place” to resupply weapons to their forces, a datum that subsequent defenders of the Book of Mormon could point out.¹⁰⁸

Weaponry

Nephite weaponry included “swords” (Mosiah 9:16; 10:10; Alma 43:18, 20), “darts” (Jarom 1:8), the “bow” (Enos 1:20) and “arrow” (Jarom 1:8; Mosiah 9:16; 10:8; Alma 3:5; 43:20; 49:20), “slings” (Mosiah 9:16; 10:8; Alma 2:12; 3:5; 43:20; 49:20), “stones” (Mosiah 10:8; Alma 2:12; 3:5,) and the “javelin” (Jarom 1:8; Alma 51:34; 62:36). Defensive weaponry included protective armor of “thick clothing” (Alma 43:19) and “very thick garments to cover their nakedness” (Alma 49:6). Some warriors at times wore “breastplates” (Alma 49:6) and various kinds of shields, which included “arm shields” (Alma 43:19, 38). E. D. Howe, author of the first anti-Mormon book, thought that Book of Mormon weaponry was excessive and unrealistic. “Their implements of war consisted of swords, spears, scimitars, javelins, bows and arrows, slings, &c. We can see no propriety in the omission by the author of the use of guns and ammunition. We think it would have been as credible as most of the events of the narrative, and would have been matter for Mormon credulity and admiration.”¹⁰⁹ *Incidents* quoted historical sources that affirmed that pre-Columbian warriors in Central America fought with weapons corresponding in many ways to those described in the Book of Mormon. These included “swords,” specifically “wooden swords having stone edges.”¹¹⁰ Sources also mention “arrows and slings, ... stones and darts, ... javelins and pikes.” On some of the monuments at Copan, “the figures have all breastplates.”¹¹¹ Mayan warriors “wore loose coats stuffed with cotton” and had “shields,” including arm shields. Warriors “had each a shield covered with the skin of the danta on his arm.”¹¹²

Incidents cited additional reports from early Spanish descriptions of Mayan warriors:

Large bodies of warriors came upon them from the town, armed with **bows** and **arrows**, lances, **shields**, double-handed

108 Stephens, *Incidents*, 2:177, emphasis added; E. L. Kelly, in *Braden Kelly Debate*, 58.

109 E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (1834), 71.

110 Stephens, *Incidents*, 1843, 1:255, 258, Plate XXIII.

111 *Ibid.*, 1841, 142.

112 *Ibid.*, 1841, 1:100; 2:175; 178.

swords, slings, and stones, their faces painted white, black, and red, and their head adorned with plumed feathers.¹¹³

The Indians were armed with **quivers of arrows**, sticks burned at the ends, lances pointed with sharp flints, and two-handed **swords** of very hard wood. They had flutes, and large sea-shells for trumpets, and turtle-shells which they struck with deer horns. **Their bodies were naked, except around their loins**, and stained all over with earth of different colours, and they wore stone rings in their ears and noses.¹¹⁴

Swords made of Wood, having a Gutter in the fore Part, in which were sharp-edged Flints strongly fixed with a sort of Bitumen and Thread.¹¹⁵

At the ruins of Kabah, Stephens found a stone doorjamb with a carved figure of a warrior carrying such a sword.¹¹⁶

Battle Numbers

In 1833 Parley P. Pratt and William McLellin preached to congregations in Illinois, where they encountered opposition from local ministers, including the Reverend J. M. Peck.¹¹⁷ Pratt says that Peck claimed “there were no antiquities in America, no ruined cities, buildings, monuments, inscriptions, mounds or fortifications, to show the existence of such a people as the Book of Mormon described.” Pratt pointed to Mound Builder remains in the American Midwest, but Peck remained unimpressed.¹¹⁸ In his *Gazeteer of Illinois*, published the following year, Peck made light of the Book of Mormon account.

Those who are particularly desirous of information concerning the millions of warriors, and the bloody battles in which more were slain than ever fell in all the wars of Alexander, Caesar, or Napoleon, with a particular description of their military

113 Ibid., 1843, 1:25.

114 Ibid., 1843, 1:30.

115 Ibid., 1:258.

116 Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan*, 1843, 1:255, 258, Plate XXIII.

117 William McLellin Journal, 14-21 April, 1833, in Jan Shipps and John W. Welch, eds., *The Journals of William E. McLellin 1831-1836* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 114-17.

118 Parley P. Pratt, *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 69-70.

works, would do well to read the “Book of Mormon,” made out of the “golden plates” of that distinguished antiquarian Joe Smith!¹¹⁹

In 1841, Tyler Parsons, another critic, expressed a similar view: “This Mormon bulletin or sword fight with the Lamanites sets Napoleon Bonaparte all in the shade. The battle of Waterloo or Trafalgar is not a circumstance to this. Here is 230,000 of God’s people killed, but the 24 that General Mormon saved in his 10,000.”¹²⁰ That same year, Stephens cited historical accounts of pre-Columbian warfare in Guatemala that placed accounts of warfare in the Book of Mormon in a more favorable light. “Their history, like that of man in other parts of the world, is one of war and bloodshed.” One pre-Columbian battle reportedly involved over one hundred and forty thousand warriors, “the most bloody battle ever fought in the country”; “the field was so deeply inundated with blood that not a blade of grass could be seen.”¹²¹ Pre-Columbian armies and those during the later Spanish Conquest of Guatemala are reported as numbering “sixty thousand,” “seventy thousand,” “seventy-two thousand,” “eighty thousand,” “ninety thousand.”¹²² Direct correspondences with the Book of Mormon include armies numbering in the thousands and tens of thousands (Alma 3:26; 28:2, 10–11),¹²³ thirty thousand (Mormon 1:11; 2:25),¹²⁴ numbers in the forty thousands (Mormon 2:9),¹²⁵ and even forces on one rare occasion said to have numbered over 230,000, the size of the Nephite force mustered at the Hill Cumorah (Mormon 6:11–15).¹²⁶

Great Destructions

When early Latter-day Saints heard reports of ruined cities, they were led to ask, What may have caused their destruction? Some suggested that the Book of Mormon account of destruction at the time of the Savior’s death might provide a reasonable explanation. Critics in Joseph Smith’s day and throughout the nineteenth century made mock of the narrative

119 J. M. Peck, *A Gazetteer of Illinois* ... (1834), 53.

120 Tyler Parsons, *Mormonism Fanaticism Exposed* (1842), 27.

121 Stephens, *Incidents*, 2:173–74.

122 *Ibid.*, 2:173–78.

123 *Ibid.*, 2:173–174, 176–77.

124 *Ibid.*, 1:100; 2:174.

125 Mormon fought a Lamanite army of 44,000 with an army of 42,000. Stephens mentions Guatemalan armies of 40,000 and 46,000 (*ibid.*, 2:174, 176).

126 *Ibid.*, 2:176.

in 3 Nephi, but Stephens's work contained numerous correspondences that set the account in a more plausible light. Stephens described Central America aptly as "a land of volcanoes and earthquakes,"¹²⁷ and he witnessed firsthand some of the violent geological changes common to the region, including several earthquakes. As he descended from Guatemala City to the Pacific Coast he passed by Agua and Fuego rising on either side of the road.

In one place the horse-path lies through an immense chasm, rent asunder by a natural convulsion, over which huge stones, hurled in every direction, lay in the wildest confusion; in another it crosses a deep bed of ashes, and cinders, and scorified lava; and a little further on strata of decomposed vegetable matter cover the volcanic substances, and high shrubs and bushes have grown up, forming a thick shady arbour, fragrant as the fields of Araby the Blessed. At every step there was a strange contrast of the horrible and beautiful.¹²⁸

The oft-repeated comparison of the torment of the wicked to "a *lake of fire* and *brimstone*, whose *flames are unquenchable*, and whose *smoke ascendeth up* forever and ever" (Mosiah 3:27, emphasis added), conveys volcanic imagery. It appears more frequently in the Book of Mormon, than in the Bible, suggesting that actual examples were available to New World prophets and their audiences for comparison (2 Nephi 9:16,19, 26; 28:23; Jacob 3:11; 6:10; Alma 12:17; 14:14-15).¹²⁹ One evening near Zonzonate, Stephens climbed near the crater of one volcano. "The sight was fearfully grand," he said. "Night and day it forces up stones from the bowels of the earth, spouts them into the air, and receives them upon its sides. ... Every burst of the volcano sent forth a pillar of fire; in four places were steady fires, and in one a stream of fire was rolling down its side."¹³⁰ In addition to describing what he witnessed himself, Stephens also quoted liberally from historical sources on Guatemala and elsewhere that reported significant geological disturbances and the destruction they caused. These descriptions of destruction, all within

127 Ibid., 1:33

128 Ibid., 1:284.

129 Jacob, who lived in the land of Nephi, uses the analogy seven times, Benjamin's angel once, Alma and the wicked judge once each. The closest wording in biblical passages is found in Revelation 14:10-11 and 19:20, but see also Genesis 19:24; Psalms 11:6.

130 Ibid., 1:328-29.

Central America, are one long tale of woe. They include references to earthquakes, thunder, lightning, subterranean noises, changes on the face of the land, long periods of darkness, terrorized inhabitants, and the destruction and burial of cities — all of which recall events described in the Book of Mormon account of destruction at the time of Christ's death (3 Nephi 8-10).

At that time the old capital, twenty-five miles distant, shattered and destroyed by *earthquakes*, was abandoned by its inhabitants, and the present was built in the rich valley of Las Vaccas, in a style commensurate with the dignity of a captain-generalship of Spain.¹³¹

On the 27th of December, 1581, the population was again alarmed by the volcano, which began to emit fire; and so great was the quantity of ashes thrown out and spread in the air, that *the sun was entirely obscured, and artificial light was necessary in the city at midday*. ...

The years 1585 and 6 were dreadful in the extreme. On January 16th of the former, *earthquakes* were felt, and they continued through that and the following year so frequently, that not an interval of eight days elapsed during the whole period without a shock more or less violent. Fire issued incessantly, for months together, from the mountain, and greatly increased the general consternation. The greatest damage of this series took place on the 23d of December, 1586, when *the major part of the city again became a heap of ruins, burying under them many of the unfortunate inhabitants*; the *earth shook* with such violence that the tops of the high ridges were torn off, and deep chasms formed in various parts of the level ground. ...

On the 18th of February, 1651, about one o'clock, afternoon, a most extraordinary *subterranean noise* was heard, and immediately followed by three violent shocks, at very short intervals from each other, which *threw down many buildings and damaged others*; the tiles from the roofs of the houses were dispersed in all directions, like light straws by a *gust of wind*; the bells of the churches were rung by the vibrations;

131 Stephens, *Incidents*, 1:193, emphasis added.

masses of rock were detached from the mountains; and even the wild beasts were so terrified, that, losing their natural instinct, they quitted their retreats, and sought shelter from the habitations of men . . .

The year 1717 was memorable; on the night of August 27th the mountain began to emit flames, attended by continued *subterranean rumbling noises*. On the night of the 28th the eruption increased to great violence, and very much alarmed the inhabitants. The images of saints were carried in procession, public prayers were put up, day after day, but the terrifying eruption still continued, and was followed by frequent shocks, at intervals, for more than four months. At last on the night of September 29th, the fate of Guatemala appeared to be decided, and inevitable *destruction* seemed to be at hand. *Great was the ruin among the public edifices; many of the houses were thrown down*, and nearly all that remained were dreadfully injured; but the greatest devastation was seen in the churches. . . .

The year 1773 was the most melancholy epoch in the annals of this metropolis; it was then *destroyed*, and, as the capital, *rose no more from its ruins*.” ... “About four o’clock, on the afternoon of July 29th, a tremendous vibration was felt, and shortly after began the *dreadful convulsion* that decided the fate of the unfortunate city.” ... “On the 7th September there was another, which *threw down most of the buildings that were damaged* on the 29th of July; and on the 13th December, one still more violent terminated the work of destruction.”¹³²

The most dreadful calamity that had as yet afflicted this unfortunate place occurred on the morning of September 11th, 1541. It had rained incessantly, and with great violence, on the three preceding days, particularly on the night of the 10th, when the water descended more like the torrent of a cataract than rain; the *fury of the wind*, the incessant appalling *lightning*, and *dreadful thunder*, were indescribable.” “At 2 o’clock on the morning of the 11th, the *vibrations of the earth* were so violent, that the people were unable to stand; the shocks were accompanied by a terrible

132 Ibid., 1:267-69.

subterranean noise which spread universal dismay: shortly afterward, an immense torrent of water rushed down from the summit of the mountain, forcing away with it **enormous fragments of rocks** and large trees; which descending upon the ill-fated town, overwhelmed and **destroyed almost all the houses, and buried a great number of the inhabitants under the ruins.**¹³³

On his way back to Guatemala from Costa Rica, Stephens sailed by the volcano Cosaguina.

Before me was the volcano Cosaguina, with its field of lava and its desolate shore, and not a living being was in sight except my sleeping boatmen. Five years before, on the shores of the Mediterranean, and at the foot of Mount Etna, I read in a newspaper an account of the eruption of this volcano. Little did I then ever expect to see it; the most awful in the history of volcanic eruptions, the **noise** of which startled the people of Guatemala four hundred miles off; and at Kingston Jamaica, *eight hundred miles* distant, was supposed to be signal guns of distress from some vessel at sea. **The face of nature was changed;** the cone of the volcano was gone; a mountain and field of lava ran down to the sea; a forest old as creation had entirely disappeared, and two islands were formed in the sea; shoals were discovered, in one of which a large tree was fixed upside down; one river was completely choked up, and another formed, running in an opposite direction; seven men in the employ of my bungo-proprietor ran down to the water, pushed off in a bungo, and were never heard of more; wild beasts, howling, left their caves in the mountains, and ounces, leopards, and snakes fled for shelter to the abodes of men.

This eruption took place on the 20th of January 1835. Mr Savage was on that day on the side of the Volcano of San Miguel, distant one hundred and twenty miles, looking for cattle. At eight o'clock he saw a **dense cloud** rising in the south in a pyramidal form, and heard a noise which sounded like the roaring of the sea. Very soon the **thick clouds** were **lighted up by vivid flashes, rose-coloured and forked, shooting and disappearing**, which he supposed to be some electrical

133 Stephens, *Incidents*, 1:280, emphasis added.

phenomenon. These appearances increased so fast that his men became frightened and said it was a *ruina*, and that the end of the world was nigh. Very soon he himself was satisfied that it was the eruption of a volcano; and as Cosaguina was at that time a quiet mountain, not suspected to contain subterranean fires, he supposed it to proceed from the Volcano of Tigris. He returned to the town of San Miguel, and in riding three blocks felt three severe shocks of earthquake. The inhabitants were distracted with terror. Birds flew wildly through the streets, and, blinded by the dust, fell dead on the ground. ***At four o'clock it was so dark that, as Mr. S. Says, he held his hand before his eyes and could not see it. Nobody moved without a candle, which gave a dim and misty light, extending only a few feet.*** At this time the church was full, and could not contain half who wished to enter. The figure of the Virgin was brought out into the plaza and borne through the streets, followed by the inhabitants, with candles and torches, in penitential procession, crying upon the Lord to pardon their sins. Bells tolled, and during the procession there was another *earthquake*, so violent and long that it threw to the ground many people walking in the procession. ***The darkness continued till eleven o'clock the next day when the sun was partially visible, but dim and hazy, and without any brightness.*** The dust on the ground was four inches thick; the branches of trees broke with its weight, and people were so disfigured by it that they could not be recognized.

At this time Mr. S. set out for his hacienda at Zonzonate. He slept at the village, and at two or three o'clock in the morning was roused by a report like the breaking of most terrific *thunder* or the firing of thousands of cannon. This was the report which startled the people of Guatemala, when the commandant sallied out, supposing that the quartel was attacked, and which was heard at Kingston in Jamaica. It was accompanied by an *earthquake* so violent that it almost threw Mr S. Out of his hammock.¹³⁴

134 Ibid., 2:36-38, emphasis added.

These descriptions of geological activities in Central America corresponded to similar descriptions of the disasters in 3 Nephi.¹³⁵ Obviously, the value of the above correspondence varies. Some of the above seem insignificant. Others noted by early writers, such as traditions of Israelite origins, and signs at the birth of Christ, were of obvious interest to nineteenth century readers, but would likely be dismissed today by most scholars as reflecting post-Columbian Christian influences. Personally, I find the correspondences in writing, Mesoamerican warfare, and descriptions of geological phenomena to be of particular interest and significance. To others they may seem less so. The issue, however, is not whether *we* find them convincing, but to show that Joseph was right. The correspondences are there. They are easy for the reader to find and, contrary to Neville, they deal with Mesoamerica and the Book of Mormon.

Apostate Geography?

Neville observes that some of those who wrote about the Book of Mormon, such as William Smith and John E. Page, later rejected the leadership of Brigham Young and the Quorum of the Twelve after the death of Joseph Smith.¹³⁶ He attempts to use their previous associations with Winchester and their later apostasy to tar their ideas about the Book of Mormon with the brush of heresy so that he can more easily dismiss them. “Joseph Smith liberated William Smith and John Page. Now they could explicitly advocate the Mesoamerican argument he had never approved. Like Winchester, they took the position that Joseph was a fallen prophet; he lacked the vision to see how powerful the Mesoamerican links were to prove the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon to a disbelieving world” (189). Where is the evidence that William or John Page ever felt that they could not freely express their ideas about Book of Mormon geography or that anyone in the Church ever considered it an issue of

135 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), 136–90; Sorenson, *Mormon’s Codex*, 641–53; Jerry D. Grover, *Geology of the Book of Mormon* (2014); Neal Rappleye, “The Great and Terrible Judgements of the Lord: Destruction and Disaster in 3 Nephi and the Geology of Mesoamerica,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 15 (2015): 143–57.

136 On William Smith see Kyle R. Walker, *William B. Smith: In the Shadow of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2015). On John E. Page see John Quist, “John E. Page: An Apostle of Uncertainty,” *Journal of Mormon History* 12 (1985): 53–68.

controversy? William wrote very little about the subject before and after his excommunication, suggesting that it was not a matter of great importance. Neville characterizes William's views as "Mesoamerican" when they were not, just as he misrepresented those of Winchester. William's overview of the Book of Mormon, which, remarkably, Neville cites but has not read carefully, is one more example of traditional hemispheric thinking, with Central America in the middle. William, like Winchester, knows about Stephens and Catherwood,¹³⁷ but never seems to have allowed their work to influence his thinking about Book of Mormon geography.

In contrast to those of Winchester and William Smith, the writings of John E. Page show enthusiasm for *and* familiarity with *Incidents*, which he frequently cites by page number, a clear indication of having read them. Neville attempts to portray Page's ideas about Book of Mormon geography as deviant or reflecting false doctrine. This ignores several important points. First, while some of these ideas were published in 1848 when Page was a follower of Strang, they likely reflect his earlier thinking about the Book of Mormon. His interest in Stephens's work goes back to 1841, and he was using it in Pittsburgh to defend the Book of Mormon in 1842. He also lectured on the Book of Mormon in Boston and Washington in 1843 and 1844.¹³⁸ Second, while Page later associated with some dissident groups, these all claimed to accept the Book of Mormon. His belief and interest in this seem to have been a constant, even when his views of other doctrines, such as prophetic authority, were not.¹³⁹ Third, Page's ideas about Central America and the Book of Mormon do not differ significantly from those of others who followed the Twelve.

"The Ancient Centers of the Nephites"

Neville holds that Joseph Smith and his associates did not really view Central America as an important region of Book of Mormon events, but considered it merely a peripheral region to which the people of Lehi may have migrated during Book of Mormon times or afterward, but not the location of events described in the book (58). Neville is welcome

137 "American antiquities," *The Wasp*, 1 October, 1842.

138 Page, "The Book of Mormon," *Gospel Herald*, 6 July, 1848.

139 Joseph Smith Journal, 7 July, 1839, in Dean C. Jesse, Mark Ashurst McGee, Richard L. Jensen, eds., *The Joseph Smith Papers: Journals Volume 1: 1832-1839* (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2008), 345-46; Quist, "John E. Page," 64, 67-68.

to think that Mesoamerica was a “hinterland” to the Book of Mormon story. The problem is that he attributes that view to Joseph Smith and his contemporaries. Early publications on the Book of Mormon from 1830 on show that Central America was always a region of interest to readers of the Book of Mormon.

In a reference to John Page’s 1848 writings, Neville asks, “Had Joseph Smith taught, sanctioned, or even permitted the Mesoamerican course of argument, wouldn’t it have been his rightful successor, Brigham Young, who would have given these speeches” instead of Page (189). His reference to Brigham Young is significant, but not for the reasons he may think. Early efforts to take the Gospel to the Lamanites were a key motivation for colonization activities in the later nineteenth century. A rare apostolic proclamation from the Quorum of the Twelve was issued under Young’s leadership in 1845. The document is significant in reflecting the united voice of the Twelve to the world. They testified that “the ‘Indians’ (so-called) of North and South America” were the promised remnant spoken of in the Book of Mormon.¹⁴⁰ As the work expanded southward into Arizona, Young explained that these efforts were only a small beginning to the work that needed to be done by the Saints.

Nor do I expect we shall stop at Arizona, but I look forward to the time when settlements of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will extend right through to the city of *Old Mexico*, and from thence on through *Central America* to *the land where the Nephites flourished in the Golden era of their history*, and the great backbone of the American continent be filled, north and south, with the cities and temples of the people of God. In this great work, I anticipate the children of Nephi, of Laman and Lemuel [native Indians] will take no small part.¹⁴¹

Given that Young was a participant in Zion’s Camp in 1834 during the Zelp encounter, and was also one of Joseph Smith’s closest

140 *Proclamation of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. To All the Kings of the World: To the President of the United States of America; To the Governors of the Several States; And to the Rulers and People of All Nations* (New York: 6 April, 1845), 2–3. On the background of this proclamation see Roper, “Losing the Remnant,” 105–06.

141 Brigham Young to William Staines. 11 January 1876, Letterbook 14:124–26, in Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses*, 382, emphasis added.

associates during the Nauvoo years when *Incidents* became known to Latter-day Saints, his view of Southern Mexico or Central America as “the land where the Nephites flourished in the Golden era of their history” shows how influential the work of Stephens and Catherwood was in his conception of the ancient geographical setting of Mormon’s record. Shortly before his death in 1877 he counseled his son Fera to “read all good books you can obtain.” Never a fan of novels, he advised him to read more history. “We should read the true and wise. The perusal of the rest is worse than time wasted, it is time abused. Sell your Dickens’ works and get Stephens’ & Catherwood’s *Travels in Central America*.”¹⁴² Young, one of Joseph Smith’s most intimate and trusted associates, can hardly have been unaware of his friend’s endorsement of their work.

John Taylor, who may have scribed Joseph Smith’s letter to Bernhisel, described the 1876 Lamanite mission to Arizona in language consistent with Brigham Young’s:

That mission [the Arizona mission] is a precursor of others that will be started still further south, *until* we enter Mexico, and go even to *the ancient centres of the Nephites*, where God dwelt among his ancient people, *where Jesus manifested himself in their midst*, and the ancient Gospel began to be proclaimed in purity and power among the people.¹⁴³

Consistent with Brigham Young’s reference to “the land where the Nephites flourished in the Golden era of their history,” Taylor associated Mexico and Central America with the “ancient centres of the Nephites.” This idea — the increased importance of Central America as the location of Book of Mormon events — apparently did not include an abandonment of the old view that the Nephites were destroyed in New York State, which seems to have remained a part of their thinking. Taylor saw this expansion southward as reflecting an interesting symmetry with the Book of Mormon. “The nations of this continent started there and ended at Cumorah. The Gospel of our day started at Cumorah — it has been pushing east and south, and will continue to extend until all the land of Zion shall be visited.”¹⁴⁴ The idea that the nations of this continent (the

142 Brigham Young to F. L. Young, 23 August, 1877, in Dean C. Jesse, ed., *Letters of Brigham Young to His Sons* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1974), 314.

143 John Taylor to William W. Taylor, 6 June 1876, in *Millennial Star* 38/28 (10 July 1876), 437, emphasis added.

144 John Taylor to William W. Taylor, 6 June 1876, in *Millennial Star* 38/28 (10 July 1876), 437, emphasis added.

Jaredite, Mulekite, and Lehite peoples) “started” in that region implies that these colonies landed in Mexico or Central America following their migrations from the Old World by sea, rather than the eastern territories of the United States or South America. This line of thinking is even apparent in the writings of those, like Orson Pratt, who still continued to view South America as a locale for some of those events.¹⁴⁵

George Q. Cannon, beginning at age sixteen, worked in the office of the *Times and Seasons* under the tutelage of John Taylor from April 1843 until early 1846. He would have become intimately familiar with the business of the printing office and the content of what was published and discussed there.¹⁴⁶ In 1853, as a missionary in Hawaii, on reading from Stephens’s *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan*, he reflected in his journal, “What mighty works the ancients have left in those countries, exciting the wonder and admiration of all travelers and <all> who read the account of their travels. These things are unanswerable arguments in favor of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon.”¹⁴⁷ Writing for the *Western Standard* in 1857, Cannon explained the significance of Central America in his understanding of Book of Mormon events.

The Book of Mormon pointed out with remarkable definiteness, years before the discovery of ruins in Central America, the situation of cities built and occupied by the ancient dwellers of this continent. Explorations made subsequent to the printing and extensive circulation of this Book, revealed the fact that ruins occupying *the precise situation of these ancient cities*, did really exist. Prior to their discovery the nonexistence of ruins of cities such as the Book of Mormon described, had been plausibly urged as an argument against its authenticity. If, said the objector, such an enlightened and highly advanced people ever occupied this continent—if they built cities and temples of such magnitude as stated by the Book of Mormon, where are the ruins? The discoveries of Stephens and Catherwood in the country declared by the Book of Mormon

145 Orson Pratt, “Was Joseph Smith Sent of God?” *Millennial Star* 10/19 (1 October, 1848): 289, thought the narrative implied that “the northern portions of South America, and also Central America, were the most densely populated.”

146 Davis Bitton, *George Q. Cannon: A Biography* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1999), 42–48.

147 George Q. Cannon Journal, 24 November, 1853, in Chad Orton, ed., *The Journals of George Q. Cannon: Hawaiian Mission 1850–1854* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2014), 383.

to be the *principal residence* of one of the colonies that were led to this land, overthrow the objections of those who were determined to view the Book as a forgery.¹⁴⁸

Cannon's comments again underscore the influence of Stephens's work on how Latter-day Saints understood and defended the Book of Mormon. His judgment that "the non-existence of ruins of cities" previous to the discoveries in Central America "had been *plausibly* urged as an argument against its authenticity" suggests that those discoveries were considered far more impressive in his view than reports of Midwestern mound builders. His description of southern Mexico and Central America, like those of Brigham Young, John Taylor and others, shows that it was not a peripheral region in their thinking, rather a "principal residence" of Book of Mormon people.

With what may reflect frustration at the absence of actual documentation for the Prophet's disapproval of things Mesoamerican, Neville wrote, "Joseph doesn't seem to appreciate the long-term damage Winchester's articles will create" (158). But does Neville?

If Joseph was angry or upset, or ever felt threatened by the publication of the unsigned articles, it seems strange that he would allow close and trusted associates like John Taylor to continue to publish those views after Smith retired as editor in 1842. Taylor continued to praise the work of Stephens and Catherwood in connection with the Book of Mormon and even recommended it to Latter day Saints. Exactly one year after the "Zarahemla" article was published, Taylor reviewed Stephens's more recent book *Incidents*:

This is a work that ought to be in the hands of every Latter-day Saint; corroborating, as it does the history of the Book of Mormon. There is no stronger circumstantial evidence of the authenticity of the latter book, can be given, than that contained in Stephens' works.¹⁴⁹

In another article published in December 1844 he wrote,

As to the original inhabitants of the continent of America, the Book of Mormon backs up the description of immense "ruins" in Central America, [and] dispels all doubt. ... To

148 George Q. Cannon, "Buried Cities of the West," *Millennial Star* 19/2 (10 January, 1857), emphasis added.

149 "Stephens' Works on Central Americas," *Times and Seasons* 4/22 (1 October, 1843), 346-47.

turn the attention of such as may read the works of Stevens upon the “ruins” of Central America, we ask a perusal of the following from the writings of Nephi in the Book of Mormon: “Behold, that great city Zarahemla have I burned with fire, and the inhabitants thereof.”¹⁵⁰

Taylor’s reference to Zarahemla in connection with Stephens’s ruins is notable and suggests he found nothing problematic in the idea. It would be strange if Joseph had ever opposed it. In March 1845 Taylor wrote, “Such relics are capital stock for the Latter-day Saints, as well as is the cities, and ruins in Central America, discovered by Mr. Stevens in the very places where the Book of Mormon left them.”¹⁵¹ One month later, Taylor, who by then had been seriously wounded in Carthage jail, eulogized his friend and martyred Prophet as “one of the greatest men that ever lived on the earth; emphatically proved so, by being inspired by God to bring forth the Book of Mormon, which gives a true history of the natives of this continent; their ancient glory and cities: — which cities have been discovered by Mr. Stevens in Central America, *exactly where the Book of Mormon left them.*”¹⁵²

Neville’s theory would have us accept the idea that Joseph Smith was able to persuade smart and faithful men like John Taylor to accept and practice the principle of plural marriage with all the difficulties that entailed, and yet could not get him to be quiet about the Book of Mormon and Mesoamerica. It assumes that Brigham Young, perhaps the Prophet’s most trusted friend and faithful associate, and a careful and close student of Joseph’s teachings, just didn’t really understand what Neville considers a meaty doctrine about a North American “Heartland” geography, which excluded Central America. It is a novel idea — fiction, not history.

Matthew Roper is a research associate at the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship. He received a BA in history and an MA in sociology from Brigham Young University. Matt has had a long and abiding interest in the Book of Mormon and has published on issues such as warfare, Lehite social structure, interpretations of Book of Mormon geography, and other topics relating to the ancient pre-Columbian

150 “Ancient Ruins,” *Times and Seasons* 5/23 (15 December, 1844), 746–47.

151 “Another Mormon Witness,” *Times and Seasons* 6/4 (1 March 1845), 831.

152 “Remarks,” *Times and Seasons* 6/6 (1 April. 1845), 855, emphasis added.

setting for the book. He also compiled and is responsible for the Harold B. Lee Library's electronic collection, 19th-Century Publications about the Book of Mormon (1829-1844). His current research and publication efforts focus on questions of Book of Mormon authorship, historical and contemporary interpretations, and the intellectual history of Latter-day Saint scripture.

A TREASURE TROVE OF QUESTIONS

Steven T. Densley, Jr.

A review of James E. Faulconer, *The New Testament Made Harder: Scripture Study Questions*. The Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2015, 518 pages with endnotes. \$21.95 (paperback).

Abstract: The New Testament Made Harder is a book that collects study questions that follow the Gospel Doctrine reading schedule. The book contains very little commentary and does not provide answers to the questions posed. The main objective is not to provide information, but rather to encourage students of the New Testament to think more deeply about what they are reading. For those who are willing to put forth the effort, they will find this book to be a helpful tool in learning to analyze the scriptures more closely.

“Judge a man by his questions rather than his answers.” — Voltaire

A philosopher is that rare variety of individual who seems more interested in asking questions than in finding answers. Of course, great teachers have discovered that a love of wisdom is often best cultivated not through the mere conveyance of information but through the individual struggle for knowledge. That struggle often begins with a question. It is sometimes said that the restoration of the gospel began with a question. Indeed, it would seem that most human insight and even revelation from God starts at least with curiosity and more often still, with deep, penetrating questions. Questions often arise through the conflicts of life and through experiencing a crisis. And when we do not encounter opposition, we often do not contemplate important questions. However, an insightful philosopher can push us toward thinking more deeply about things and learning even when we are in a comfortable state of complacency. For example, how many times have we glossed over

the scriptures in a repetitive pattern of daily reading without feeling the growth that comes during those times that we are really struggling for answers? How often have we sat contentedly in a Gospel Doctrine class without absorbing any new insight because we were neither challenged by the teacher nor by ourselves with probing questions?

In *The New Testament Made Harder*, philosophy professor James E. Faulconer confronts us with questions calculated to prod us out of our routine study of the scriptures. He explains in his introduction that good questions can force us to reconsider what we thought we already knew and lead to more questions (p. xi). He states the further goal of moving classroom discussion beyond the typical questions that we have all heard before and to which everyone in class already knows the answers into the realm of deeper contemplation (p. xiii).

The New Testament Made Harder is the last in a series of books that follow the four-year Gospel Doctrine study cycle and are meant as study aids for students and teachers as they prepare for Sunday lessons. These scripture study questions are part of a series of such questions that Faulconer first started posting in the *Times and Seasons* blog in 2003 and which were later re-posted in the *Feast Upon the Word* blog. For the most part, there is no material in the book that cannot also be found in the blog posts, apart from a few additions and deletions here and there. So it is clear that the author has reviewed his earlier work and has made changes.

Faulconer explained when he began posting the study questions at *Times and Seasons* that the questions came from notes he would hand out to class members in his ward covering the reading for the next week.¹ He did so as a way to help members of his class to think more deeply about the upcoming material. Fortunately, he kept the practice going through all four years of the Gospel Doctrine curriculum. This final volume in the series is the culmination of that effort.

The title itself stands in playful contrast to the *Scriptures Made Easier* series, authored by David J. Ridges and published by Cedar Fort, beginning in 2004. It is appealing to us to think that we can gain great insights with little effort. My own father used to tell me, when I was showing signs of a desire to skip some hard work, that “some people want to arrive without having made the trip.” And while I have not read any of the *Scriptures Made Easier* books — they might be very good — I

1. See Falconer, James E., *Times and Seasons*, Sunday School Lesson 1, accessed July 22, 2015, <http://timesandseasons.org/index.php/2003/12/sunday-school-lesson-1-2/>.

understand the inclination we all have to simply be given answers. In contrast, Faulconer wants us to struggle with the questions first.

One might ask whether the changes to the blog posts and the collection of those posts into book form make it worthwhile to purchase the book. For me, personally, it is worth it, but perhaps just barely. I have used the blog posts for years in preparing lessons. There are some things that can be done more easily with a book than with a blog post on a screen. I can jump around between pages, make notes, and leave bookmarks in a bound volume easier than I can with a blog. And, of course, a book can be used offline.

Unfortunately, the publisher has not taken full advantage of the book format. For example, there is no subject and scripture index. There is also no bibliography or works-cited section. And while there is an endnotes section, the sources cited therein are sparse. In a book of over five hundred pages, one might expect to see more than eight pages of endnotes that pertain to only about half of the chapters. In some respects, these features that would otherwise be expected are not really necessary in this book. If one wants to find questions about a particular verse, it is not too difficult to determine whether or not the verse is discussed in the main body of the text. Furthermore, there are not really very many sources that are referenced. The book overwhelmingly consists of questions, and although there is some commentary, the book itself is not really meant to be a work of commentary. At times, the author comments on the translation of the New Testament and notes that he is providing his own translation of the material when he is not referencing the King James Version. At other times, he makes occasional references to “scholars” without indicating who these scholars are. Faulconer is a tremendous scholar and a great thinker. However, it would add even more *gravitas* to his book if we were able to use it as a tool not only to spark thought and discussion but also to spark further research and inquiry into the scholarly works upon which this particular book depends. And, of course, there are the lingering questions regarding whether or not Professor Faulconer’s occasional representations of the “scholars” is accurate. Where there are no references, it is difficult to know.

Furthermore, in the transition from blog to book, while there are a few changes to the text here and there, it is not noticeably improved. What’s more, there are occasional typographical errors sprinkled throughout the text that could have been corrected with a bit more careful editing.

That brings us to the questions themselves. Many a student has sat in an introductory philosophy class becoming increasingly frustrated with the professor's asking questions without revealing answers. It can seem at times that the professor is playing some kind of cat-and-mouse game, enjoying watching the students squirm under the pressure of questions about justice, truth, beauty, and art. At some point, students may become frustrated at their own inability to grasp answers to seemingly simple questions. Another danger is that the students will decide that the professor simply does not know the answers. It can seem that the professor only knows how to ask questions but cannot provide enlightenment. Readers will perhaps experience both sensations as they read Faulconer's book. Of course, there are many times when questions lead to "ah-ha" moments and new insight is gained. That does not happen as often as one would hope. However, Faulconer seemed to anticipate this. In his introduction he suggests that in each set of questions a reader may only find "a question or two among them that you can use as foci for your lesson" (p. xii).

Of course, as Faulconer observes, we have all sat in a Gospel Doctrine class when the teacher is asking questions that no one wants to answer because they are too simple, too familiar (p. xiii). Faulconer aimed at providing a list of questions that readers typically have not considered. Some of the questions include the following:

- "Why does Mark begin with Jesus's baptism rather than with his birth?" (p. 85)
- "What does Jesus mean when he tells the Seventy not to greet people along the way?" (p. 161)
- "Why does Jesus do so many of his miracles on the Sabbath?" (p. 183)
- "What does it mean to walk in the Spirit?" (p. 357)
- "How does the phrase 'perfect law of liberty' contrast with the Pharisaic understanding of the Law?" (p. 465)

As it is plain to see, these are questions that may elicit a variety of different although valid responses. They are questions that may lead to other questions and further discussion. And, of course, one can imagine a frustrated student turning to Professor Faulconer and asking, "So what are the answers to the questions?" And Professor Faulconer responding, "I don't know. But they are interesting questions, aren't they?"

Indeed.

Steven Densley, Jr. is an attorney and is licensed to practice law in Utah, Nevada, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. He graduated with University Honors from Brigham Young University with a combined Bachelors and Masters degree in Public Policy and Political Science. As an undergraduate, he was an Assistant Editor on the Pi Sigma Alpha Review. He received his law degree from Brigham Young University where he was a member of the Law Review and the National Moot Court team. He has published articles in the Utah Bar Journal, the Journal of Law and Family Studies, and Meridian Magazine. He was the Executive Vice President of FairMormon from 2013-15. He has been recognized in SuperLawyers Magazine as one of the Mountain States Rising Stars and has been listed numerous times in Utah Business Magazine as being among the Utah Legal Elite. He has appeared on CNN, C-Span, NPR, BBC Radio, KUTV, KTVX, KSL Radio, KTKK Radio, and Swiss TV.

THE THEORY OF EVOLUTION IS COMPATIBLE WITH BOTH BELIEF AND UNBELIEF IN A SUPREME BEING

David M. Belnap

Abstract: The crux of the creation–evolution conflict is a futile desire to scientifically prove or disprove the existence of God. The conflict is manifest in the common belief that creation means a divine, supernatural process and that evolution denotes an atheistic, accidental event. Evolution involves a random change in an inherited trait followed by selection for or against the altered trait. If humans use this principle to design machines, solve complex mathematical problems, engineer proteins, and manipulate living organisms, then certainly a super-intelligent being could have used evolution to create life on earth. This reasoning indicates that evolution does not prove atheism and that evolution is a constructive process. The theory of evolution is a mechanistic description and therefore, like all other scientific principles, is neutral on the question of God’s existence. Evolution is compatible with the simple scriptural accounts of creation. Consequently, belief or unbelief in God is put back where it should be — on individual choice.

One of my science teachers in junior high school was especially memorable. His classes and field trips were very interesting, and he was enthusiastic. He greatly stimulated my budding interest in science. For these gifts, I owe him a tremendous debt of gratitude. He also inadvertently helped me learn a valuable lesson in the relationship of science and religion.

One day he introduced my classmates and me to the school’s human skeleton. He explained that it was real and came from a young woman whose body had been donated. He showed us that the pelvis was broad and explained that this was characteristic of female skeletons — facilitating the carrying and delivery of children. I was fascinated! He also pointed out the rib cage and told us that men and women have the same number of ribs. Hence, he said, that Bible story about Eve being formed from one of Adam’s ribs was not true. (He assumed that if the

rib story were true, human males and females would have a different number of ribs.)

At home, I excitedly told my family about the skeleton. I also proudly explained my new understanding of the Adam and Eve story. My devoutly religious parents were not impressed with this new perception. They contacted the school administration to voice their concern that my teacher's comment about Adam and Eve was inappropriate. Nonetheless, what is most impressive was how my parents responded to me.

Instead of jumping into the scriptures and making this conflict a contest between science and religion, they only reasoned with me. With the full support of my father, my mother pointed out that children are still born with arms, legs, eyes, and so forth even if one or both parents lost one or more of those body parts before conceiving the child. Therefore, she patiently reasoned, a rib could have been taken from Adam, and his male children would still have the same number of ribs as his female children.^{1,2} As proof of this principle, my parents also noted that baby boys are still born with foreskins even though many generations of their forefathers were circumcised.

My parents were not trained scientists, but their arguments were the perfect response. Not only did my mother and father convince me that my teacher's interpretation of the biblical rib story was wrong, but also, I have come to realize, they showed me that the use of reasoning, data, and patience is the best way to handle questions between science and religion and that these conflicts can be resolved to the detriment of neither scripture nor science.³ My parents' example was invaluable in helping me later reconcile evolution and creation.

1. My mother told me recently that she thought then of acquired vs. inherited traits (see note 2), concepts she had learned in college. My father told me recently that he had a biology teacher in college who left him with the impression that science and scripture were compatible.

2. *Inherited traits* are those an organism inherits from its biological parents and will pass on to its progeny. In humans, these traits include such things as hair color, hair type, eye color, and ear shape. *Acquired traits* give an organism characteristics that are not passed on and include such things as learned behaviors, environmental effects, deliberate actions, and accidents. Cuts, broken bones, amputations, burns, and learned skills are examples of acquired traits.

3. I came to understand then that the authenticity of the Adam and Eve story was not dependent on boys having fewer ribs than girls. However, my parent's reasoning does not prove that the rib story is true. The validity of that story depends on factors beyond human anatomy.

Introduction

In the 1850s, Charles Robert Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace put forth the theory of evolution by natural selection. The theory was incompatible with popular interpretations of the scriptural record of creation, and in the more than fifteen decades since, many have considered the theory an affront to belief in God. Some believers in God argue that evolutionary concepts are heretical and that alternative models can explain the record of nature (i.e., the observations documented by Wallace, Darwin, and many other scientists). Institutions have been set up to promote these non-evolutionary ideas. On the other hand, the overwhelming majority of scientists attest that the record of nature unambiguously shows that evolutionary processes occurred and continue to occur. But because the scriptural account seems incompatible, some evolutionists promote the idea that scripture should be regarded as fictitious tales from an ancient and unenlightened people.

A much quieter group of people — including many scientists — accepts both the record of scripture and the record of nature.⁴ For example, most Americans appreciate science and faith in God. Evidence of this duality is the fact that both scientific and religious institutions are well funded and enjoy broad support in the United States. In general, people who accept both scripture and science are uncomfortable when asked to choose between creation and evolution. Many profess that with advancing knowledge, the controversies will eventually be resolved. However, despite this “middle ground,” the idea persists that evolution is incompatible with belief in God.

The root of the conflict between creation and evolution is a desire for the “golden prize” — physical proof of God’s existence or nonexistence. Therefore, each side in this debate stands to win or lose a cherished conviction, but neither side should claim dominance because the theory of evolution is compatible with both faith in God and faith in atheism.

4. Examples of scientists who accept evolution and divine creation: Henry Eyring, *Reflections of a Scientist*, ed. H. R. Romney (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983, 1998); Francis S. Collins, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* (New York: Free Press, 2006); Karl W. Giberson, *Saving Darwin: How to be a Christian and Believe in Evolution* (New York: HarperOne, 2008); Kenneth R. Miller, *Finding Darwin’s God: A Scientist’s Search for Common Ground between God and Evolution* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999); National Academy of Sciences and Institute of Medicine, *Science, Evolution, and Creationism* (Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press, 2008), 12, 15, 54; Simon Conway Morris, “Darwin’s Compass: How Evolution Discovers the Song of Creation.” The Boyle Lecture, London, 23 February 2005, <http://www.stmarylebow.co.uk/#/boyle-lecture-2005/4535725162> (accessed 3 September 2015).

The Theory of Evolution

Mechanistically, the theory of evolution by means of natural selection can be summarized in two simple principles: First, changes occur in inherited traits (see footnote 2). Second, changed traits are selected or rejected.

Characteristics passed from parent to offspring can vary randomly. For example, changes may be mutations within an existing gene, the insertion or deletion of an entire gene or a portion of a gene, or changes to how a gene is regulated. Modifications can also result from normal genetic variation among individuals of the same species as genes are recombined during reproduction.

Selection of changed, inherited traits occurs. Modifications that give offspring advantage are carried forward to successive generations. Unharmful (neutral) mutations or changes also are passed forward. Disadvantageous modifications result in premature death or diminished reproductive capacity, and hence the trait is either not passed on to offspring, or the prevalence of that trait diminishes over time.

Genetic change followed by selection allows successive generations of living things to be modified compared to their ancestors. This process allows organisms to adapt to changing conditions, or the lack of adaptation causes the population to become extinct. Different species can arise from a common ancestor after long periods of time, many changes in traits, a physical separation, or a combination of these events. However, between successive generations, the change may be imperceptible. Rapid changes also have been observed.⁵ For example, in some cases when a new animal species was introduced into an area, significant and rapid changes in anatomy, physiology, behavior, or life span have been observed. Adaptations in guppies were observed within only four to eight years or seven to thirteen generations.⁶ Studies of

5. Two review articles: S. P. Carroll, A. P. Hendry, D. N. Reznick, and C. W. Fox, "Evolution on Ecological Time-Scales," *Functional Ecology* 21 (June 2007): 387–93; A. P. Hendry, P. Nosil, and L. H. Rieseberg, "The Speed of Ecological Speciation," *Functional Ecology* 21 (June 2007): 455–64.

6. D. N. Reznick, F. H. Shaw, F. H. Rodd, and R. G. Shaw, "Evaluation of the Rate of Evolution in Natural Populations of Guppies (*Poecilia reticulata*)," *Science* 275 (28 Mar. 1997): 1934–37. An earlier study on guppy evolution showed changes within eleven years or thirty to sixty generations; D. A. Reznick, H. Bryga, and J. A. Endler, "Experimentally Induced Life-History Evolution in a Natural Population," *Nature* 346 (26 July 1990): 357–59.

lizards showed notable changes within ten to thirty-six years or twenty to thirty generations.⁷

The theory of evolution is a mechanistic explanation of how the diversity of life developed from primitive or ancestral life forms. The theory also provides an explanation for how traits are related among living things. In addition, evolutionary studies often estimate when an organism appeared or disappeared.

Evolutionary principles provide powerful tools for understanding biology, including disease. For example, these principles are used to understand and develop treatments for drug-resistant pathogens. Genes in pathogenic organisms mutate, often conferring resistance to drugs such as penicillin. The often-rapid evolutionary response of pathogens prevents many new drugs from being used. Evolutionary principles also help researchers understand how a protein from a bacterium, yeast, plant, worm, fruit fly, fish, mouse, or other organism is relevant to a similar, but mutant and malfunctioning, human protein. Within a person suffering from cancer, malignant cells evolve and compete with healthy cells in the same way that whole organisms evolve and compete with each other.⁸

Evolution theory does not explain *why* the earth was created nor the agent responsible, if any. As far as the theory is concerned, the earth and living things could have a purpose or they could not. They could have been a random accident or the plan of an intelligent creator. The theory is silent on these matters. Any claim otherwise is conjecture.

On the existence of a supreme being, the theory of evolution is no different from any other scientific principle. For example, atomic theory,

7. A. Herrel, K. Huyghe, B. Vanhooydonck, T. Backeljau, K. Breugelmans, I. Grbac, R. Van Damme, and D. J. Irschick described adaptations that occurred within thirty-six years (approximately thirty generations) in "Rapid Large-Scale Evolutionary Divergence in Morphology and Performance Associated with Exploitation of a Different Dietary Resource," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 105 (25 Mar. 2008): 4792–95. Changes within ten to fourteen years were observed by J. B. Losos, K. I. Warhelt, and T. W. Schoener, "Adaptive Differentiation Following Experimental Island Colonization in *Anolis* lizards," *Nature* 387 (1 May 1997): 70–73. Modifications occurring within twenty generations (fifteen years) were reported in Y. E. Stuart, T. S. Campbell, P. A. Hohenlohe, R. G. Reynolds, L. J. Revell, and J. B. Losos, "Rapid Evolution of a Native Species Following Invasion by a Congener," *Science* 346 (24 Oct. 2014): 463–66. An example of rapid evolution in cane toads, which were introduced into Australia to control insects, is found in B. L. Phillips, G. P. Brown, J. K. Webb, and R. Shine, "Invasion and the Evolution of Speed in Toads," *Nature* 439 (16 Feb. 2006): 803.

8. L. M. F. Merlo, J. W. Pepper, B. J. Reid, and C. C. Maley, "Cancer as an Evolutionary and Ecological Process" *Nature Reviews Cancer* 6 (Dec. 2006): 924–35.

laws of motion, germ theory of disease, the “Big Bang” theory, and so forth are silent on the question. One may argue that scientific principles are compatible with the existence of God who made an orderly, complex, precisely tuned universe, but no scientific idea proves or requires a supreme being. Conversely, one may argue that the universe can be explained through random or accidental processes, but no established scientific principle proves or requires the lack of a supreme being.⁹ The same reasoning applies to the question of whether life on earth has a purpose. Science only describes physically observable events. Science cannot answer whether God exists and if life on earth has a purpose.

Just a “Theory”

In scientific language, *theory* means “a well-established set of principles that explain observed phenomena.” An explanation that is not well grounded is a *hypothesis*. Therefore, the common use of *theory* to mean “a guess” or “speculation” does not apply to Darwin’s and Wallace’s ideas. The theory of evolution is well justified in numerous observations and is a foundation principle of modern biology. Like hypotheses, theories can be overturned or modified by new data, but thus far, the theory of evolution has stood for over 150 years. One of the most surprising things about the theory is how well new discoveries have fit with the ideas that Wallace and Darwin proposed in the 1850s.

The Creation

Divine revelation gives us *why* and *who* answers. The scriptures say that God is responsible and that he created the earth and living things to give humans, his children, a place where we could learn to develop faith and show our willingness to follow the Lord’s commandments.¹⁰

9. In mathematics, for example, a person can argue that if $A = B$ and $B = C$, then A must equal C . No proof or physical observation says that God exists or does not exist. Therefore, the arguments that observations of nature are consistent with the existence or nonexistence of God are statements of faith. In the Book of Mormon, Alma used an analogous argument to Korihor, who wanted a sign that God exists (see Alma 30:44). Alma tells Korihor that if he wants a sign he should think about the world around him. The earth, life on earth, and the motion of the earth and other planets are testimony of God’s existence. However, this is not proof that God exists, and faith is still needed to accept that a supreme being created the earth. Faith is also required to accept the atheistic argument that the world can be explained without a supreme creator. Belief in God comes from spiritual observations.

10. Genesis 1–2; Moses 1–3; Abraham 3:24–26; 4–5.

Although the scriptures give a brief, simplified account of what happened during the Creation, the emphasis is (1) who was responsible, (2) why the earth was created, (3) humans are made in God's image, (4) humans are to populate the earth and care for the Lord's handiwork, and (5) physical creations have a spiritual counterpart. Before relating the Creation to Moses, the Lord explained that he created the world (Moses 1:4, 31–34). God also answered Moses's specific question "why these things are so?" (Moses 1:30): to give us immortality and the opportunity for eternal life (Moses 1:39). The simple story cannot have been intended as a detailed scientific account. The purpose of the scriptures is to explain spiritual concepts, not scientific observations.

The Conflict

At one extreme of the creation–evolution debate are people who reject divine creation. At the other end are people who reject evolution. Ironically, despite contempt for each other's point of view, both groups interpret scripture and scientific data in the same way with regards to the creation–evolution controversy: (1) The Genesis account is a literal account of a creation process that took place in six consecutive twenty-four-hour periods (as we currently measure time) and occurred only a few thousand years ago. No symbolism or metaphor exists in the scriptural account. It is a precise description — that is, a scientific document. (2) If the theory of evolution is true, then God cannot exist. (3) If the establishment of life on earth can be explained only by the use of miraculous (i.e., unexplainable or supernatural) processes, then God must exist and must have created the earth. (4) If random processes occur, then God cannot be involved.

The conflict is rooted in the assumption that scientific observations can be used to prove or disprove God. At stake is the desire to once and for all settle the question of God's existence or nonexistence with physical evidence and scientific proof. The biblical declarations that God created the earth have led some to look for evidence of his creative hand in nature; essentially, they have tried to use natural phenomena to prove that God exists. After the theory of evolution was deduced, some have used its postulates to try to prove that God does not exist.

Before the theory of evolution was put forward, scientists assumed that animals and plants were formed in their present states. This was the principal idea that Darwin's and Wallace's work overthrew. Their work and the vast amount of study since showed that present animals and plants have changed or evolved from earlier forms. The pre-evolution

idea that animals and plants were formed in their present states was assumed to be consistent with the biblical story. After that conjecture was shown to be scientifically incorrect, many have made another assumption — that God does not exist because the scientific model supposedly based on scripture was found to be erroneous and because evolution involved random events. Consequently, the conflict is between (1) extending the biblical record beyond its intended scope and purpose to say that animals and plants were created in their present form a few thousand years ago or (2) extending the scientific theory beyond its limits to say that God does not exist.¹¹

Evolution Is a Constructive Process

One of Darwin's most effective arguments was his comparison of artificial and natural selection. Humans selected domestic animals and plants based on desired characteristics, he noted, which led to many varieties with vastly different attributes. For example, the dog breeds Great Dane and chihuahua are thought to have a common ancestor, the wolf.¹² Maize, the common grain also known as *corn*, was domesticated from teosinte. Modern maize looks very different from its wild ancestor.¹³ These types of artificial selection, Darwin reasoned, were analogous to what nature did through natural selection.

Similar reasoning, comparing artificial and natural evolution, can help us with the creation–evolution controversy. Because random manipulation followed by selection can lead to correct solutions for complex problems and can be used to design machines and proteins, we can deduce that life on earth *could* have developed via evolutionary processes that were put in place by an intelligent creator.

The seeming randomness of evolution leads many to conclude that evolution must be a godless process. But, must *randomness* mean

11. For a discussion of the social and religious consequences of extending evolution theory beyond its bounds see, for example, Stephen H. Webb, *The Dome of Eden: A New Solution to the Problem of Creation and Evolution* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2010) and Karl W. Giberson, *Saving Darwin: How to be a Christian and Believe in Evolution* (New York: HarperOne, 2008). These consequences include not only support for devastating ideas like racism, but also the reluctance of many people to accept the legitimate scientific claims of evolutionary theory.

12. Or a wolf-like animal that is the common ancestor of both modern wolves and dogs.

13. Assuming modern teosinte resembles the teosinte from which maize was developed.

godlessness? Is the evolution of life analogous, as is commonly suggested, to the production of a dictionary via an explosion in a printing shop?

If the complete process were random, then yes, evolution might be like such an explosion. However, evolution is not just a random process. Evolution is a random procedure followed by a selection mechanism. The combination of random variation followed by selection is a constructive and orderly process. Such a combination is a powerful way to solve physical or mathematical problems that have a large number of potential solutions.

For example, antibodies are protein molecules that recognize and chemically attach to foreign objects within our bodies. Once attached, the antibody neutralizes the object or signals an additional response by the immune system. Antibodies can be extremely specific. For example, an antibody to a specific virus will not bind to even closely related viruses. How is such specificity produced? The answer is via a random procedure followed by a selection mechanism.¹⁴

Every day a human body manufactures millions of B cells; each produces an antibody with randomly different specificity. To make different specificities, a random selection is made from several antibody genes. Then random misalignments occur as the genes are spliced together, giving additional variety. Finally, random mutations may occur within the selected genes. This provides enough different specificities so that the variety of foreign antigens (foreign molecules) encountered can be recognized. The immune system has no way of knowing what new foreign molecules will be present, so randomly generating an enormous number of antibody specificities is an efficient way to be prepared. Each B cell that encounters a foreign object is activated and copied to fight invaders. Cells that do not encounter foreign antigens die or are inactivated. Therefore, the selection process allows “correct” and “incorrect” solutions to be determined. Although antibody production includes a random process, the overall production is an orderly and efficient way to fight pathogens.

In addition to having a selection mechanism following a random event, evolution of life or evolution in problem solving is iterative. In other words, each generation builds upon the previous one. Complex mathematical problems can be difficult to solve because the path to the

14. S. Tonegawa, “Somatic Generation of Antibody Diversity” *Nature* 302 (14 Apr. 1983): 575–81; C. Branden and J. Tooze, *Introduction to Protein Structure*, 2nd Ed. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999), 302–3; K. Murphy, *Janeway’s Immunobiology*, 8th ed. (New York: Garland Science, 2012), 12–16, 157–69, 179–84, 192–94, 275–90, 316–27.

solution is unknown, or the solution is one number in a very large set of possibilities. Beginning with an initial estimate or random number and then iterating until a solution converges can be a productive way to find a solution. A key to success is to also have a selective mechanism to choose correct answers from incorrect ones.

In three-dimensional electron microscopy, my own field of research, randomly selecting a starting point can lead to the correct answer (see Figure 1). Objects lie in random, unknown orientations in the electron microscope and are imaged in two dimensions (see Figure 1A, B). To properly reconstruct the three-dimensional object, the unknown orientation angles must be determined. My laboratory and other laboratories¹⁵ have shown that assigning random starting angles can lead to the correct result through an iterative process (see Figure 1C). However, wrong answers are also possible. Proper selection criteria are essential to distinguish correct and incorrect results.¹⁶

Evolutionary processes can be used to design and build machines.¹⁷ Analogous to evolution of living things,¹⁸ an engineer makes an initial design and then does the following:

15. E. Sanz-García, A. B. Stewart, and D. M. Belnap, "The Random-Model Method Enables *Ab Initio* Three-Dimensional Reconstruction of Asymmetric Particles and Determination of Particle Symmetry," *Journal of Structural Biology* 171 (Aug. 2010): 216–22 and references therein. See also H. Elmlund, D. Elmlund, and S. Bengio, "PRIME: Probabilistic Initial 3D Model Generation for Single-Particle Cryo-Electron Microscopy," *Structure* 21 (6 Aug. 2013): 1299–306 and J. Vargas, A. L. Álvarez-Cabrera, R. Marabini, J. M. Carazo, and C. O. S. Sorzano "Efficient Initial Volume Determination from Electron Microscopy Images of Single Particles," *Bioinformatics* 30 (15 Oct. 2014): 2891–98.

16. Another example is in X-ray crystallography, a closely related field to 3D electron microscopy. There, crystals of proteins or nucleic acids (DNA or RNA) are placed in an X-ray beam. The resulting patterns are a series of spots. Each spot represents a sinusoidal function with an amplitude and phase. By combining the amplitudes and phases of each spot in the whole pattern, the atomic-resolution structure of the crystallized molecule can be solved. However, only the amplitudes are known; the phases of each spot are unknown and must be determined. One way to determine phases is to use a "genetic algorithm," see S. T. Miller, J. M. Hogle, and D. J. Filman, "*Ab initio* Phasing of High-Symmetry Macromolecular Complexes: Successful Phasing of Authentic Poliovirus Data to 3.0 Å Resolution," *Journal of Molecular Biology* 307 (23 Mar. 2001): 499–512.

17. For example, A. E. Eiben and J. E. Smith, *Introduction to Evolutionary Computing* (Berlin: Springer, 2003), and P. J. Bentley, ed., *Evolutionary Design by Computers* (San Francisco: Morgan Kaufmann, 1999).

18. These methods are also known as "genetic algorithms."

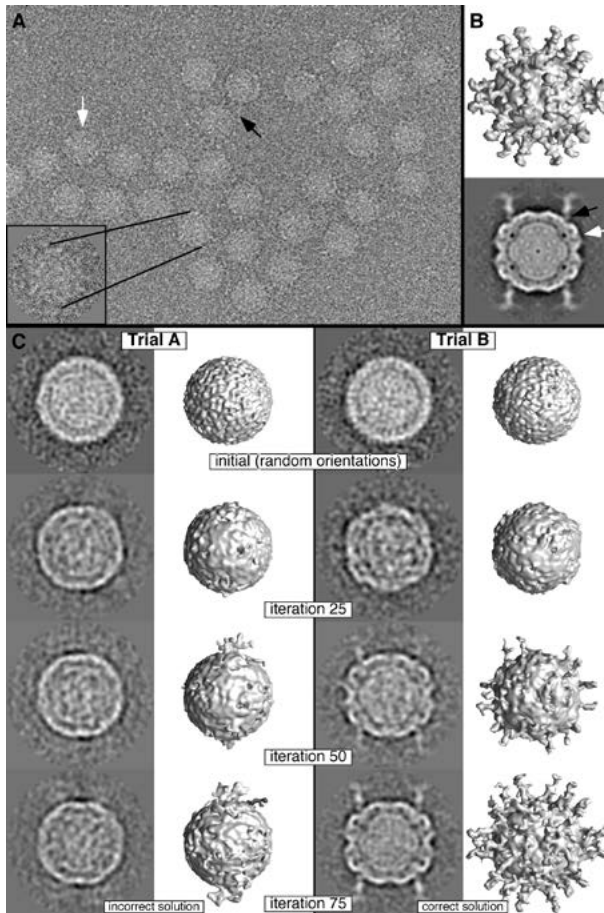


Figure 1. Use of a random starting point followed by iteration to solve a complex mathematical problem. In this example, three-dimensional (3D) structures are computed from two-dimensional (2D) images. Poliovirus particles (white arrows) with protein receptors attached (black arrows) are shown.

A) Image of polioviruses recorded in a transmission electron microscope.¹⁹ This 2D view is analogous to an X-ray image of a human body part — that is, the 3D structures of the viruses are superimposed onto a 2D plane. *Inset*, example of an extracted particle image. Each particle image in the micrograph is extracted separately and then can be combined with other images to reconstruct the average 3D structure of the poliovirus particle. But first, the view orientation

(given by three angles) of each particle image must be determined.

B) Two views of the 3D structure computed from 2D images.²⁰ *Top*, a view from the outside. *Bottom*, a slice through the center.

C) A few thousand particle images were used for these two tests.²¹ In each test, each particle image was randomly assigned an initial orientation. A 3D structure was computed (*top row*). This structure is just a round meaningless blob because the orientation angles are randomly incorrect. Then, an iterative process was begun, and the orientations were allowed to change. After 75 iterations, trial A did not converge to the correct orientations, but trial B did. For comparison, the 3D structure solved from the same 2D data, but by a different method,²² is shown in panel B.

Panels B and C were adapted from a previous study.²³ Poliovirus is 30 nm in diameter.

19. D. M. Belnap, B. M. McDermott Jr., D. J. Filman, N. Cheng, B. L. Trus, H. J. Zuccola, V. R. Racaniello, J. M. Hogle, and A. C. Steven, "Three-Dimensional Structure of Poliovirus Receptor Bound to Poliovirus," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 97 (4 Jan. 2000): 73–78.

20. *Ibid.*

21. E. Sanz-García et al., "The Random-Model Method."

22. D. M. Belnap et al., "Three-Dimensional Structure."

23. E. Sanz-García et al., "The Random-Model Method."

1. Random changes (“mutations”) are made in the design. Each random change results in an altered characteristic of the machine.
2. The new machine is constructed and tested. A selection process determines if the change is advantageous or detrimental.

Advantageous changes are kept and used as a starting point for additional “mutations.” Over time, cumulative changes produce an improved machine. Random alterations cause a variety of changes,²⁴ and the selection process keeps only those modifications that improve or do not debilitate the device. The entire process can be automated in a computer. This significantly improves efficiency because many “generations” can be produced and tested without physically constructing each one.

In 2000, Hod Lipson and Jordan Pollack used this engineering process to build and optimize small machines to crawl across a surface.²⁵ Each machine could have bars connected by ball joints to allow flexibility, actuators to change the length of a bar to produce movement, and an electrical network (termed “neurons”) to stimulate movement. A standard stepper motor provided propulsion. At the beginning, two hundred separate machines with no bars or neurons were each given random characteristics and allowed to evolve for 300–600 generations. Characteristics that were allowed to mutate included length of bars, number of bars, number of joints, number of neurons, connecting a neuron to a bar (allowing it to become an actuator), and neuronal function. As the authors stated, “Both body (morphology) and brain (control) were thus co-evolved simultaneously.” Selection, or fitness, of each machine was assessed by locomotive ability — each device was tested for how well it could move on a horizontal surface. A machine was selected if it could move farther in a certain time than other machines. Interestingly, this artificial evolution experiment showed similarities to natural, biological evolution: (1) From the similar starting point of the 200 machines, significantly different machines were produced. Differences were both structural and functional. (2) Some machines diverged into different forms. (3) Other machines that had diverged

24. Variations can be made throughout the device or only in regions specified by the designer.

25. H. Lipson and J. B. Pollack, “Automatic Design and Manufacture of Robotic Lifeforms,” *Nature* 406 (31 Aug. 2000): 974–78. See also commentary by Rodney Brooks, “From Robot Dreams to Reality,” *Nature* 406 (31 Aug. 2000): 945–47.

earlier in the experiment converged into similar forms. (4) Despite never being specified or favored, symmetry was found in some machines.

In a process termed *directed evolution*, evolutionary principles are used to design new proteins or alter the functions of existing proteins.²⁶ Just as the sequence of the twenty-six letters of the alphabet determines the meaning of words and sentences, the sequence of the twenty amino acids determines the structure and function of a protein. In directed evolution of proteins, a person starts with an initial amino-acid sequence, which may be random or based on a known protein. Next, the sequence of amino acids in the protein is altered randomly. All or only some of the amino acids within the protein may be allowed to change. The result is tested. Products with enhanced function are selected, and products with debilitated function are rejected. The randomization and selection steps are repeated. In addition, multiple trials are necessary to produce the desired output because many runs will not be successful.²⁷ In one notable example, directed evolution was used to form proteins that could perform an entirely new function.²⁸

A common microbiological method is to use evolution to make bacteria or viruses with a desired characteristic. Mutations can be induced by radiation (e.g., ultraviolet light) or chemicals. The researcher then sets up conditions to select for a specific characteristic. For example, in a technique known as bioremediation, many are seeking to use bacteria to clean up toxic chemicals. Commonly, evolution is used to induce or generate organisms to tolerate and metabolize these compounds.

If human beings can use evolutionary principles to design machines and solve problems, an intelligent creator also could use random variation coupled to selection to produce and maintain life on earth. If humans

26. C. Jäckel, P. Kast, and D. Hilvert, "Protein Design by Directed Evolution," *Annual Reviews of Biophysics* 37 (2008): 153–73. See also, R. Kazlauskas and S. Lutz, "Engineering Enzymes by 'Intelligent' Design," *Current Opinion in Chemical Biology* 13 (Feb. 2009): 1–2 and other articles within that same issue.

27. As was seen in Lipson and J. B. Pollack, "Automatic Design and Manufacture of Robotic Lifeforms" and in my laboratory's experiment (Fig. 1C), many trials fail to produce satisfactory results. Therefore, multiple runs are necessary. This is analogous to what happened during natural selection as many species became extinct and others survived.

28. The function was catalysis of a chemical reaction for which no known natural enzyme exists. D. Röthlisberger, O. Khersonsky, A. M. Wollacott, L. Jiang, J. DeChancie, J. Betker, J. L. Gallaher, E. A. Althoff, A. Zanghellini, O. Dym, S. Albeck, K. N. Houk, D. S. Tawfik, and D. Baker, "Kemp Elimination Catalysts by Computational Enzyme Design," *Nature* 453 (8 May 2008): 190–95.

can use evolutionary means to make microbes or proteins with desired characteristics and the selective process to get desired traits in animals and plants, then a super-intelligent being could have used evolution to physically make people, animals, plants, and microbes.

Evolution is a process that started with simple organisms and then gradually increased to more complex organisms and more complex interactions among living things. Evolution allowed the complexity of life to increase in a natural, orderly way. Evolution allowed, and continues to allow, living things to respond effectively to each other and to environmental changes. As with foreign antigens and antibodies, the situations each species may face are unknown. Randomly generating mutations allows each species to respond to a variety of conditions.

“Intelligent Design”

The idea that an intelligent creator could have used evolution to form life on earth is much different from the ideas promoted by the “intelligent design” movement. Proponents of intelligent design postulated that some biological machines and processes are so complex that evolution could not produce them. However, others showed that such mechanisms could evolve from simpler components.²⁹ Indeed, the vast complexity of life suggests that evolutionary processes must be involved to improve functionality, allow adaptability, build complexity, and permit trade-offs.

Simple Explanations

Parents, teachers, museum curators, authors, documentary filmmakers, and others use simple explanations to enlighten and educate. They do not intend to deceive or hide important information. Rather, they exclude or minimize details to explain an important principle, process, or event in a way that the intended audience understands. Otherwise, the audience may misunderstand or lose interest. Details can be learned later.

If modern teachers, curators, parents, and others use simple explanations for their audiences, why do some expect the ancient scriptural record to be correct according to our modern understanding of astronomy, geology, and biology? The accounts by Moses and Abraham were written thousands of years ago to people who, for example,

29. See, for example, K. R. Miller, *Finding Darwin's God: A Scientist's Search for Common Ground between God and Evolution* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), and National Academy of Sciences and Institute of Medicine, *Science, Evolution, and Creationism* (Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press, 2008).

understood nomadic agriculture but had little if any understanding of science, as even lay people do today. The scriptural explanations are very simple and should be taken as such.³⁰

When given at different times or to different audiences, simple explanations often vary. For example, depending on a child's maturity, parents give divergent answers to the question "where do babies come from?" Because of differing elements or details, simple explanations given to one audience may seem inconsistent, confusing, or even inappropriate when given to another. Details unimportant in one context may be important in another. Latter-day Saints have four scriptural accounts of the Creation: in the books of Genesis, Moses, and Abraham, and in the temple endowment ceremony. The differences in these narratives — and in particular, as noted by Bruce R. McConkie, the "different division of events" between the temple account and the accounts by Moses and Abraham³¹ — suggest that one should indeed view the four renderings as simple descriptions. All accounts relate the most important messages: God was responsible, the divine purpose of Creation, and so forth. Only the details differ.³²

30. "Let us not try to wrest the scriptures in an attempt to explain away what we cannot explain. The opening chapters of Genesis, and scriptures related thereto, were never intended as a text-book of geology, archeology, earth-science or man-science. ... We do not show reverence for the scriptures when we misapply them through faulty interpretation." James E. Talmage, "The Earth and Man," *The Latter Day Saints' Millennial Star* 93 (No. 53; 31 December 1931), 851–852.

31. Bruce R. McConkie, "Christ and the Creation," *Ensign*, June 1982, 8–15.

32. The four New Testament accounts of Christ's resurrection are another example of how a simple, but important, scriptural story is told in multiple ways that are not consistent in detail:

- In Matthew (28:1–10), two women go to the tomb where they meet one angel who tells them Jesus is risen and instructs them to go tell the other disciples. The two women then meet the risen Jesus on their way to tell the disciples. Jesus instructs them that he will meet the others in Galilee.
- In Mark (16:1–14), three women meet one "young man" at the tomb. He tells them Jesus is risen and instructs them to tell the other disciples that Jesus will meet them in Galilee. Jesus then appears to Mary Magdalene, who reports this to the other disciples. Afterwards, two disciples traveling "into the country" see Jesus, and they report this to the other disciples. Finally, Jesus appears to the eleven apostles.
- In Luke (23:55–56; 24:1–49), five or more women meet two "men" at the tomb. The men inform the women that Jesus has risen from the dead. The women return from the tomb and tell the eleven apostles

If we regard the scriptural accounts of the Creation as simple explanations, then remarkable parallels exist between those stories and the record of nature. The fossil record and scripture indicate that initially the earth was barren of life. Then, vegetative life appeared followed by animal life, which began in the sea. Terrestrial animals followed, and humans appeared after other animals.³³

But, what of the inconsistencies between our current understandings of the scriptural and natural records? For example, Genesis states that the creation occurred in six days, flowering plants appear on the same day as other plants, and whales appear before terrestrial animals. Each of these points disagrees with the record of nature.

Some define each creation “day” as a twenty-four-hour period. Yet, for example, the fossil record shows millions of years between the first-known fossilized plants and animals. If one imagines teaching the creation to very young children, the use of a day as a metaphor for a creative period is perfectly appropriate. The Hebrew word for *day*, used in the Genesis account, can also be interpreted as an indefinite period of

and other disciples. Peter runs to the tomb and finds it empty. Later that day, Jesus appears to two disciples who were walking to Emmaus. The two disciples return to Jerusalem and notify the eleven apostles and other disciples. As the two disciples give their report, Jesus appears to the group.

- In John (20:1–21), Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb and finds it empty. She hurriedly leaves and informs Peter and John. They run to the tomb and also find it empty. They leave, but Mary, who has returned, sees two angels inside the tomb who ask her why she is weeping. Mary turns away and then sees the risen Jesus. She leaves and tells the disciples she saw Jesus. Later that day, Jesus appears to a group of disciples who are in hiding.

If one focuses on details such as who was at the tomb first, when heavenly messengers appeared, how many heavenly messengers appeared, why the disciples were told to meet Christ in Galilee when he appeared to them later that day in Jerusalem, and so forth, one misses the important fact that Jesus rose from the dead — the consistent and important point in all four accounts! Likewise, if we insist on strict consistency and scientific rigor in the Creation stories, we miss valuable spiritual insights and unique lessons we can learn from each account.

33. Elder James E. Talmage expressed a similar idea: “But this we know, for both revealed and discovered truth, that is to say both scripture and science, so affirm—that plant life antedated animal existence and that animals preceded man as tenants of earth.” James E. Talmage, “The Earth and Man,” *The Latter Day Saints’ Millennial Star* 93 (No. 53; 31 December 1931), 850.

time.³⁴ Therefore, considering the geologic record, *day* in Genesis 1 most likely means “an unspecified time period.” Because the latter definition is compatible with both the Hebrew text and the fossil record, we can assume this is the correct interpretation.

The other two examples are not as easy to reconcile. However, if we remember the purpose of the story was not to recount a detailed chronology, then the following reasonings may be credible.

Flowering plants reproduce sexually as pollen from the male anther is placed in the female stigma. Genesis states that flowering, or fruit-bearing, plants were created on the same “day” that other plants were created, implying that flowering plants were present before animals appeared. However, in the fossil record, the first-known flowering plants appeared after animals were already in existence. In addition, although some aquatic or terrestrial flowering plants are fertilized as pollen drifts through water or air, most flowers require an animal to transfer the pollen. These plants cannot reproduce if animals are not present to pollinate them. In other words, most flowers are useless without animals. So, is the scriptural record in error in saying flowering plants were formed before animals were formed? No, to explain simply, one could group flowers with the other plants because the mechanism was in place for flowers to develop. The flowering plants could then evolve with the pollinating animals. Explaining this in the simple biblical story would be an unnecessary detail.

The record of nature indicates that whales evolved from terrestrial animals, but Genesis states that whales were created when aquatic life was created. Rather than explain the complex process of aquatic life leading to terrestrial life followed by some terrestrial animals adapting back to aquatic life, a simpler explanation would be to say that all aquatic life was created on the same “day.” The detail that whales actually came after land animals could be omitted — the mechanism was in place for whales to develop because land animals developed from aquatic ones. Explaining that whales developed from terrestrial animals would be an unnecessary complication that would likely be misunderstood by the people of Moses’s day.

34. See, for example, meanings of the word *Yom* (H3117) in *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. See also Greg Neyman, “Word Study – Yom,” Old Earth Creation Ministries, http://www.oldearth.org/word_study_yom.htm, accessed 15 Mar. 2015.

An Imperfect World

One argument for godless evolution is the fact that life is messy and the design is far from ideal. The retina of the vertebrate eye has the sensory layer facing away from incoming light, not towards it. The plant enzyme that converts carbon dioxide to sugars is “notoriously inefficient.”³⁵ The human mouth grows more teeth than it has room to hold — forcing people to have wisdom teeth extracted; many of us get expensive orthodontic work to straighten the teeth. An intelligent designer, the argument goes, would have made things more intelligently.

In addition, incredible suffering occurs in the world. Not only are human beings often cruel to each other, but animal brutality abounds. For example, as Darwin noted, some wasps are extraordinarily cruel as they lay eggs in living caterpillars and the larvae eat their host alive.³⁶ Why would a truly loving God make a world with such brutality and inefficiencies? The scriptures provide explanations for these apparent

35. This chemical reaction is critical to plant and animal life. R. J. Spreitzer and M. E. Salvucci, “RUBISCO: Structure, Regulatory Interactions, and Possibilities for a Better Enzyme,” *Annual Reviews of Plant Biology* 53 (2002): 449–75.

36. “With respect to the theological view of the question. This is always painful to me. I am bewildered. I had no intention to write atheistically. But I own that I cannot see as plainly as others do, and as I should wish to do, evidence of design and beneficence on all sides of us. There seems to me too much misery in the world. I cannot persuade myself that a beneficent and omnipotent God would have designedly created the *Ichneumonidæ* with the express intention of their feeding within the living bodies of Caterpillars, or that a cat should play with mice. Not believing this, I see no necessity in the belief that the eye was expressly designed. On the other hand, I cannot anyhow be contented to view this wonderful universe, and especially the nature of man, and to conclude that everything is the result of brute force. I am inclined to look at everything as resulting from designed laws, with the details, whether good or bad, left to the working out of what we may call chance. Not that this notion at all satisfies me. I feel most deeply that the whole subject is too profound for the human intellect. A dog might as well speculate on the mind of Newton. Let each man hope and believe what he can. Certainly I agree with you that my views are not at all necessarily atheistical. The lightning kills a man, whether a good one or bad one, owing to the excessively complex action of natural laws. A child (who may turn out an idiot) is born by the action of even more complex laws, and I can see no reason why a man, or other animal, may not have been aboriginally produced by other laws, and that all these laws may have been expressly designed by an omniscient Creator, who foresaw every future event and consequence. But the more I think the more bewildered I become; as indeed I have probably shown by this letter.” Charles Darwin to Asa Gray, 22 May 1860, published in *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin*, vol. 2, ed. Francis Darwin (London: John Murray, 1887), 311–12.

inconsistencies. This is another example in which scripture is compatible with the record of nature.

The scriptures speak of Adam and Eve leaving the peaceful Garden of Eden and entering a world of competing organisms (see Genesis 3:16–19, 23; Moses 4:22–25, 29). Adam and Eve would have to work for their food and other sustenance. The world would contain sorrows. Death would come. Childbirth would be extremely difficult. Wasps cruelly enslaving caterpillars and animals brutally killing each other are consistent with the world where God sent Adam and Eve.

Scripture speaks of God having a perfected body and humans being made in God's image (see Philippians 3:21; Genesis 1:26–27). Therefore, humans are similar to God but not exact copies. Each of us likely has more defects than simply a retinal layer on the opposite side of input light and too many teeth. Therefore, one should not be surprised that life on earth is not perfectly designed. How could it be perfect and be the testing ground that the scriptures say it is? How could you and I develop faith if our bodies were perfect, if we were not challenged by physical limitations?

These gospel teachings are compatible with an imperfect world that came to be through messy evolutionary processes. The argument that a designer would create perfect organs and a perfect world assumes a peaceful, perfect "Garden of Eden" world, not the messy, competitive, cruel, and sorrowful world into which, the scriptures say, Adam and Eve were sent.³⁷

Conclusion

Scientists often express frustration that many people do not accept evolution. The scientists point out the overwhelming biological evidence and cannot comprehend how anyone can deny that evolutionary processes occurred. On the other hand, believers in God point out the order, complexity, and beauty of nature and cannot fathom how anyone can claim it arose by accident. Are the only alternatives *really* godless evolution and a "miraculous" six-day process? The creation–evolution conflict exists because (1) science has been extended beyond its bounds to say God does not exist and (2) scripture has been extended beyond its bounds to say evolutionary theory is false.

37. In his book *The Dome of Eden*, theologian Stephen H. Webb proposes a way to reconcile the cruelty of the world ("natural evil"), creation by a loving God, and evolution.

My former teacher erroneously assumed that males should have fewer ribs than females if the Genesis rib story was correct. Likewise, many have surmised similarly unfounded ideas about evolution and creation. If these ideas are tied to deeply held values of faith (in God or atheism), people are reluctant to give them up when confronted with contradictory evidence. Hence, we have conflict. However, data, reasoning, humility, and patience can help us resolve the conflict.

At the root, the creation–evolution conflict presumes that God’s existence or nonexistence can be proven, but attempts to scientifically verify or refute a supreme being are futile. The randomness and messiness of evolution does not prove the nonexistence of God, just as the existence of God is not proven by the beauty and order found in nature. Scientific or mechanistic methods do not have the capability to answer questions about God’s existence or the meaning of life. What would be the physical test or observation that would confirm or deny his existence? Besides, the scriptures are clear that belief in God is a choice and cannot be forced on others (e.g., see Alma 30:7–9; Joshua 24:15). People must be free to choose to follow God or not. People cannot be free if his existence is proven scientifically because that proof would be another way people could be forced to follow him. As the scriptures say, faith is hope or belief in “things which are not seen” (Alma 32:21; Hebrews 11:1). If scientific observations are “seen” things and if science cannot prove or disprove God, then faith in atheism and faith in God should be viewed as equivalent positions as far as science is concerned. Logical arguments for either belief can be made.

Therefore, we should call a truce in this war and concede that belief or unbelief in God cannot be proven by current scientific understanding, no matter how much one may wish it to be otherwise. Believers in God need to renounce the notion that evolution must be disproved to save the faith; likewise, atheists need to abandon the idea that evolution is evidence of God’s nonexistence.

Also, some have attempted to resolve the concern of God-fearing people by noting that many scientists believe in God and accept evolution. Merely pointing this out is not enough. Too many believers in God view such people with suspicion. The idea that evolution is incompatible with faith in God has persisted for so long and the conflict is so deep that many believers in God are convinced that if a person starts to accept anything about evolution, the individual will eventually discard his or her faith in God. The scientific community needs to acknowledge that science is

neutral on the existence of God and needs particularly to note that the theory of evolution does not disprove the existence of a supreme being.³⁸

Believers in God must realize that insistence on a creation model that excludes evolution facilitates the argument by atheistic evolutionists that God does not exist. Believers and prospective believers in God should not have to choose between accepting scientific observations and having faith in God.

If humans can use evolution to construct machines, engineer proteins, produce living organisms with desired characteristics, or solve complicated problems, then certainly a super-intelligent creator could have used the same principle to create life on earth. But this does not prove that God created life by means of evolution; this reasoning means that evolution is compatible with belief or nonbelief in God. Therefore, faith (in God or atheism) is put back where it should be — on each person's spiritual conviction and choice.

I thank family members, friends, and colleagues who have helped me develop these ideas and prepare this article for publication. I also thank the editors and anonymous reviewers for their helpful suggestions.

David Michael Belnap received a BS degree in biochemistry from Brigham Young University in 1989 and a PhD in biology from Purdue University in 1995. Since his days at Purdue University, he has studied the structure of viruses primarily by three-dimensional electron microscopy. He has also studied other biological macromolecules and helped develop 3DEM methods. Following graduate studies, he worked at the National Institutes of Health (Bethesda, Maryland; 1995 to 2004) and Brigham Young University (2004 to 2012). He currently is a research faculty member in the Departments of Biochemistry and Biology at the University of Utah, where he also directs the Electron Microscopy Core Laboratory. David enjoys serving in the church and especially enjoys being outdoors with his wife Julie and family.

38. An example of this being done is National Academy of Sciences and Institute of Medicine, *Science, Evolution, and Creationism* (Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press. 2008).

