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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.

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Reflections on the Mission of The Interpreter Foundation

Daniel C. Peterson

Abstract: *Among the covenant obligations taken upon themselves by faithful Latter-day Saints is the consecration of their talents, gifts, and abilities to the building of the Kingdom of God on the earth. Those who established and lead The Interpreter Foundation see their mission in terms of this covenant. The Foundation's goal is to foster honest and accessible scholarship in service to the Church and Kingdom of God, scholarship that will be of use and benefit to our fellow Latter-day Saints.*

On the evening of 27 September 1991, the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) held its annual banquet for that year. Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was the featured speaker that night.[1] "It strikes me," he said:

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1 A full and unedited transcription of Elder Maxwell's remarks was published in Daniel C. Peterson, "Elder Neal A. Maxwell on Consecration, Scholarship, and the Defense of the Kingdom," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 7 (2013): vii–xix. (For the transcription, see specifically pages x–xix.) A somewhat revised version of Elder Maxwell's remarks had appeared more than two decades earlier as Neal A. Maxwell, "Discipleship and Scholarship," *BYU Studies* 32/3 (1992): 5–9 (https://byustudies.byu.edu/PDFViewer.aspx?title=6094&linkURL=32.3MaxwellDiscipleship-6381b005-43e9-44b7-b309-9ad3eff4add1.pdf). Incidentally, a correction is required for a minor detail in my article mentioned above. My friend and former Maxwell Institute colleague Dr. Shirley Ricks, drawing from her journal, puts the embarrassing prayer incident (to which I refer on pages viii–ix) in September 1990, at our dinner celebrating the publication of John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks, eds., *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley on the Occasion of His*

that one of the sobering dimensions of the gospel is the democracy of its demands as it seeks to build an aristocracy of saints. Certain standards and requirements are laid upon us all. They are uniform. We don't have an indoor-outdoor set of ten commandments. We don't have one set of commandments for bricklayers and another for college professors. There is a democracy about the demands of discipleship, which, interestingly enough, is aimed at producing an aristocracy of saints. The Church member who is an automobile mechanic doesn't have your scholarly skills and I'll wager you don't have his. But both of you, indeed all of us, have the same spiritual obligation, the same commandments and the same covenants to keep. The mechanic is under the same obligation to develop the attributes of patience and meekness as are you and as am I.[2]

Among the covenant obligations taken upon themselves by faithful Latter-day Saints is the consecration of their talents, gifts, and abilities to the building of the Kingdom of God on the earth. It's an encompassing and comprehensive commitment. Everyone is under the same obligation. There is nothing in it to suggest that it applies to money (financial capital) but not to scholarly training (intellectual capital), to the wielding of a hammer but not to the wielding of a pen, to the deployment of administrative ability but not to using a capacity for research and publication. Everything is to be placed upon the altar. And,

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Eightieth Birthday (Salt Lake City and Provo: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), rather than at the annual FARMS banquet a year later. A very small thing, but a nice illustration of the historical utility of journal-keeping and contemporary documents!

    2   For the transcribed original of this quotation, see Peterson, "Elder Neal A. Maxwell on Consecration, Scholarship, and the Defense of the Kingdom," xiv. Compare Maxwell, "Discipleship and Scholarship," 6. In the latter version, Elder Maxwell's wording is rather different, but his essential point remains the same.

where appropriate and when called for, potentially everything may be required.

God, who so loved the world that he gave his Only Begotten Son, expects us, too, to be willing to give.[3] "I beseech you therefore, brethren," wrote the apostle Paul, "by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."[4]

But how should it be done?

Roughly three decades ago, back in the 1980s, one of the other General Authorities of the Church strongly encouraged two early leaders of FARMS to write in a way that all members of the Church could understand, not to write over the heads of any ordinary Church members nor to offend even the least of the Saints, and to make it possible for all who were interested, even if they lacked specialized academic training, to have access to useful information.[5]

What did he mean by his counsel not "to offend even the least of the Saints"? I'm sure that he wanted us to avoid the spirit of contention, to avoid viciousness and ego-driven competitiveness. To be civil, respectful, and polite. But there's more to the admonition than that. The salient scriptural passage, I think, is this one, as it appears in the gospel of Matthew:

> And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,
>
> And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

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3   See John 3:16. Unless otherwise indicated, biblical quotations are from the King James Version.

4   Romans 12:1.

5   Based on a personal email communication to the author from John W. Welch (18 March 2014).

Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!

Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.

And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.

Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?

And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.

Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.[6]

But isn't this passage literally only about children? No. No more than it is literally about sheep. It "concerns the attitude and conduct of the leaders of the community to their flock," says a Catholic biblical commentary.[7] But there was no separate clergy in the earliest Christian community, so it would be safer to say that it concerns the attitude and conduct of all Christians toward those who are or may be vulnerable (which probably includes all of us, at one time or another):

"Child" here [Matthew 18:5] is possibly not meant in its literal sense.… [T]he word may designate the simple who become disciples and who already have that simplicity that Jesus states as the condition of membership. With these "little ones" Jesus identifies himself.… By a change from "child" to "little ones" [in Matthew 18:6-9] the association is retained, but the little ones become more clearly the simple disciples "who believe."`… The sayings on scandal are addressed to the entire group of disciples.… The saying is addressed to all members.[8]

"The change from 'child' to 'little ones' suggests," an Evangelical commentary concurs, "that we are dealing both

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6   Matthew 18:2–14.

7   Reginald C. Fuller, Leonard Johnston, and Conleth Kearns, eds., *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1975), 935–936.

8   Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy, eds., *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 2:94–95.

with children and those that have become childlike."⁹ "By 'little ones,'" explained Theodore of Heraclea (d. ca. AD 355), "he means those imperfect in their knowledge or those recently baptized. He does not want these to be looked down upon as ignorant in his teaching."¹⁰ They are, says Chromatius (fl. AD 400), a contemporary and friend of St. Jerome, "humble people in the laity who simply and faithfully believe in the Son of God."¹¹ "These instructions about children and the subsequent teaching about 'little ones' (18:6-14; cf. 10:40-42) implicitly identify the disciples with these 'children,' as do later references to the disciples as 'least' (25:40, 45)."¹²

What is signified in the passage by the recurring verb *to offend* and its various derivatives? Consider an alternative rendition of a portion of Jesus's discourse as it's recorded there, in which the "offenses" of the King James Version become occasions of "stumbling":

> If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to stumble! Such things must come, but woe to the person through whom they come! If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is

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9   F. F. Bruce, ed., *The International Bible Commentary* (Basingstoke and Grand Rapids: Marshall Pickering/Zondervan, 1986), 1140.

10   As cited in Manlio Simonetti, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, New Testament Ib, Matthew 14–28 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 73. "A child is used to symbolize a new convert to Judaism in the rabbinic writings," according to Fuller, Johnston, and Kearns, *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, 936. Compare also Bruce, *The International Bible Commentary*, 1140

11   Cited in Simonetti, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, 74.

12   James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson, eds., *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2003), 1040.

better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.[13]

The relevant words here are variants of the Greek verb *skandalizo* and the Greek noun *skandalon*, each of which is obviously related to the English words *scandal* and *scandalize*. In both the Old Testament and the New, a *skandalon* "is an obstacle in coming to faith and a cause of going astray in it.… The force of the verb [*skandalizo*] is even stronger than that of the noun [*skandalon*]" because it refers to "the causing of a fall."[14] It means "to cause loss of faith."[15]

Thus, Christians are to do nothing, whether by commission or omission, by activity or neglect, that would lead to a loss of faith in a fellow disciple.

The apostle Paul clearly understood this principle. Thus, when he was faced with the question of whether it was appropriate for a Christian to eat meat that had been offered or consecrated to a pagan idol, he took a very practical approach out of concern for the possibly weak faith of his fellow disciples:

As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.…

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13   Matthew 18:6–9 (New International Version).

14   Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 7, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 345. I have transliterated the Greek.

15   Kittel and Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 7:351.

Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.

But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.

But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.

For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols;

And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?

But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.

Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.[16]

"Take heed," exhorts the Savior, "that ye despise not one of these little ones." "See that you do not disdain one of these little ones," says the New English Translation.[17] The Greek verb translated as "to despise" or "to disdain" is a form of *kataphro-*

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16 1 Corinthians 8:4, 7–13.

17 Matthew 18:10 (New English Translation).

neo, which is roughly equivalent to the English "to despise," "to disparage," "not to be concerned about."[18]

A critic of the traditional FARMS approach told me, a couple of years ago, that the organization didn't and shouldn't exist "to serve some old high priest in Ogden." But, in my view, the hypothetical old high priest in Ogden was very much part of the audience that FARMS was intended to serve. And he is very much in the minds of those of us who work with The Interpreter Foundation.

"The lost sheep represents erring fellow Christians," the commentary produced by the Society of Biblical Literature explains with regard to the passage from Matthew that I've been discussing. "When such a one goes astray (apostatizes), the community must expend every effort to get that person back into the fold."[19] Says another commentary, "The parable of the lost sheep mandates that community members make every effort to bring back those who are losing heart and leaving the community because of scandal or … 'stumbling blocks.'"[20]

Note the recurring phrases: "The community must expend every effort to get that person back into the fold." "Community members" should "make every effort to bring back those" who are leaving or have left. There is nothing in either commentary to suggest that the passage mandates such exertions only on the part of clergy or ordained leaders, and nothing to indicate that "every effort" means "every effort except persuasion" or "every effort that doesn't involve writing, the marshaling of evidence, and the deployment of logical arguments."

"Therefore," said the Lord in a revelation given in February 1829, "O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve

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18   Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 3, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 631.

19   James L. Mays, ed., *Harper's Bible Commentary* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), 971.

20   Dunn and Rogerson, *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, 1040.

him with all your heart, might, mind and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day." And, since February 1829 was well over a year before The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized, that revelation cannot have been addressed only to ordained Church leaders or, as it is often understood today, to formally set-apart missionaries. "Therefore, if ye have desires to serve God ye are called to the work."[21]

But need we wait until people have actually left before we "make every effort"? Shouldn't we already be working hard to build and maintain faith—or, perhaps more exactly said in the case of evidence and rational arguments and persuasion, to create the space in which faith can take root and flourish and to defend that space against the encroachment of threatening weeds? Or, to vary the metaphor, if I'm holding a life preserver and I see a swimmer about to drown, am I not obliged to use it?

Many years ago, while I was spending a summer at Princeton University in New Jersey, my family and I took the opportunity to attend the Hill Cumorah Pageant. I knew that the place would be ringed with anti-Mormons holding placards and handing out leaflets, and I had resolved that I was not going to be distracted by them. As I was about to enter the pageant grounds, though, I noticed one of the protestors who was haranguing a pair of teenage Mormon boys. I listened for a while, and swiftly realized that they were on the ropes, unable to answer him, and that the issue was one that, for particular reasons, I could answer very easily. I hesitated for a while; I really hadn't wanted to get involved. And, as it turned out, the exchange was quite unpleasant. (The man was rude and insulting.) But it seemed to me to be my duty to help out fellow Latter-day Saints when I could—and it still seems so to me today.

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21 Doctrine and Covenants 4:2–3.

The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose
I will not, I cannot, desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake![22]

I was fortunate, as I see it, to have grown up in a very non-academic family. My father had managed to get some North Dakota forestry school and a bit of California junior college under his belt before heading into the U.S. Army for World War II and then spent most of his life running a southern California construction company. My mother never went beyond high school. My uncles worked in construction, insurance, truck driving, and farming. I myself worked construction most summers through graduate school. I count myself lucky because I always valued those members of my family and, by extension, others working in largely blue-collar jobs. I knew at firsthand the goodness, intelligence, and worth of people beyond campuses, laboratories, and think tanks—something often forgotten among the intellectual elite. I suspect that I would have been much more snobbish than I am about schooling and degrees and academic prestige had I not been so firmly grounded outside of academia.

I mention this to underscore the fact that I do not regard academic work as more honorable than honorably driving a nail, caring for a baby, repairing sprinklers, or paving a street. Even though those of us who are involved with The Interpreter Foundation can handle the hammer of academic writing reasonably well, that doesn't mean that everything is a nail to which that hammer is suited. In fact, the most important things very seldom are.

In the Kingdom of God, there is, and is necessarily, a diversity of gifts.[23] All are essential to its proper function and

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22   "How Firm a Foundation," LDS Hymnal, #85.
23   See Paul's discussion in 1 Corinthians 12, as well as Doctrine and Covenants 46:7–26.

flourishing. "And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you."[24]

Each of us places on the altar, for the building of the Kingdom and the welfare of the Saints, whatever he or she is able to give.

The principles laid out by that General Authority thirty years ago—to write accessibly, not merely for scholars, and to both commend and defend the faith—helped to shape the policies and procedures followed by FARMS, and they strongly inform the approach of The Interpreter Foundation.

That's why we have a blog. It's why we record roundtable discussions on the scriptures that are aligned with the Church's Gospel Doctrine curriculum. It's why we've put up resources for teachers and students of the scriptures, and will be publishing yet more of them, and why we've begun to sponsor public symposia. It's why, to the maximum extent possible, we make our materials available at no charge.

Our journal and our books are intended to be as academically rigorous and defensible as we can make them— we will not pander to our audience nor engage in disingenuous arguments designed to score merely rhetorical points—but they will also, to the extent that we are able, be accessible. (Some articles will, inevitably, be more technical than others.) And they won't soar into the ether in pursuit of issues of no importance to real, living, Latter-day Saints and religious seekers. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has no distinct professional clergy, and it also has no separate scholarly caste, hermetically sealed off from the life of its members. We are or have been bishops, Relief Society sisters, home teachers, parents, Young Women leaders, and scoutmasters as well as scholarly readers of the scriptures. The Interpreter Foundation

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24   1 Corinthians 12:21.

doesn't exist in a vacuum, quarantined from the concerns and interests of Latter-day Saints, devoted merely to the hobbies of ivory tower academics.

President Boyd K. Packer told a story, years ago, of being invited to lunch with a group of academics at a very prestigious institution on the east coast. They were hoping, given the fact that he was both a General Authority (an Assistant to the Twelve, at the time) and the holder of a doctorate, that he would contribute to a new publication they were launching:

> I listened to them very attentively but indicated at the close of the conversation that I would not join them. I asked to be excused from responding to their request. When they asked why, I told them this: "When your associates announced the project, they described how useful it would be to the Church—a niche that needed to be filled. And then the spokesman said, 'We are all active and faithful members of the Church; however, …'" I told my two hosts that if the announcement had read, "We are active and faithful members of the Church; therefore, …" I would have joined their organization. I had serious questions about a "however" organization.[25]

The difference is crucial. "The LDS scholar has his citizenship in the Kingdom," Elder Maxwell used to say, "but carries his passport into the… world—not the other way around."[26] He was also fond of a statement from the eighteenth-century English clergyman William Law: "If you have not

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25   Packer, Boyd K. "The mantle is far, far greater than the intellect." *BYU Studies* 21, no. 3 (1981): 10.

26   Maxwell, Neal A. "Some thoughts on the gospel and the behavioral sciences." *BYU Studies* 16, no. 4 (1976): 589.

chosen the kingdom of God first," said Law, "it will in the end make no difference what you have chosen instead."[27]

Those who established and lead The Interpreter Foundation understand this. The Foundation's goal is to foster honest and accessible scholarship in service to the Church and Kingdom of God, scholarship that will be of use and benefit to our fellow Latter-day Saints. Nothing less. We cannot do all things, but this we can and will do.

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27   Maxwell, Neal A. *The Smallest Part* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1973), 1. Cf. C. S. Lewis, "A Slip of the Tongue," *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses*. (New York City: Macmillan, 1980), 131.

Founded Upon a Rock:
Doctrinal and Temple Implications of Peter's Surnaming

Matthew L. Bowen

Abstract: *The famous* Petros/petra *wordplay in Matthew 16:18 does not constitute Jesus's identification of Peter as the "rock" upon which his church would be built. This wordplay does however identify him with that "rock" or "bedrock" inasmuch as Peter, a small "seer-stone," had the potential to become like the Savior himself, "the Rock of ages." One aspect of that "rock" is the revelation that comes through faith that Jesus is the Christ. Other aspects of that same rock are the other principles and ordinances of the gospel, including temple ordinances. The temple, a symbol of the Savior and his body, is a symbol of the eternal family—the "sure house" built upon a rock. As such, the temple is the perfect embodiment of Peter's labor in the priesthood, against which hell will not prevail.*

When the Savior answered Simon Peter's averred testimony "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" with the declaration, "thou art Peter [*Petros*], and upon this rock [*petra*] I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:16, 18), he was not identifying Peter himself as the actual petra ("bedrock") upon which Christ's church would be built. The *Petros/petra* wordplay in this dialogue, however, does suggest that Jesus was ascribing potential "bedrock" strength to his chief disciple. Peter was a

stone "cut" or "hewn"[1] from this bedrock, "*the Rock* of ages" or "Rock of *eternity*" or "everlasting strength" (*ṣûr ʿôlāmîm*, Isaiah 26:4),[2] a stone with potential "bedrock" power in the priesthood.[3]

Jesus's words are an invitation to Simon, the future leader of Christ's church, to "climb up" by him—to become more like "Messiah, the King of Zion, the *Rock of Heaven*, which is broad as *eternity*."[4] Yahweh, as God of Israel, is described in the Hebrew Bible as "rock" (Hebrew *ṣûr*, or less frequently, *selaʿ*). The "rock" wordplay together with the promise of priesthood keys (Matthew 16:19) was an invitation to *theosis*, (i.e., for Peter to *become* a "partakers of the divine nature")[5] in more than the sense of a temporary transfiguration (Matthew 17:1–9).[6] Later, Peter the fully converted bedrock-like high priest and president of the Church invites all saints to *theosis* (2 Peter 1:4)—to become, like him, "living stone"[7] built into a "spiritual house" or temple founded upon Jesus Christ[8] and his gospel. Through the priesthood keys and sealing power that Peter received

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1   Eric D. Huntsman, "Galilee and the Call of the Twelve Apostles," in *The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ: From Bethlehem through the Sermon on the Mount*, ed. Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Thomas A. Wayment (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 242.

2   All scriptural citations are from the KJV unless otherwise indicated. Isaiah 26:4 renders *ṣûr ʿôlāmîm* as "everlasting strength." Rock connotes "strength" (i.e., priesthood power).

3   See Acts 3:6; cf. Luke 5:23.

4   Moses 7:53; cf. Isaiah 26:4

5   2 Peter 1:4.

6   See S. Kent Brown, "The Twelve," in *The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ: From the Transfiguration through the Triumphal Entry*, ed. Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Thomas A. Wayment (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2006), 119-120.

7   Richard Lloyd Anderson ("Simon Peter," *Ensign*, February 1975, 47) writes: "In Christ's leading disciple there was a living stone that he encouraged all members of the church to be" (1 Pet. 2:5).

8   On the centrality of Christ as the foundation stone in Peter's theology, see Frederick R. Howe, "Christ, the Building Stone in Peter's Theology," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 157/625 (2000): 35–43.

and the temple ordinances performed under that priesthood authority, the saints' families can become "sure houses."

In this paper I will discuss Jesus's "surnaming" Simon as *Petros* and its implications in the context of Jesus's "rock" teachings and the restored gospel. When other scriptural instances of Jesus's use of the "rock" metaphor are considered, it is clear that he envisions the *petra* of Matthew 16:18 as much broader than the person of Peter the apostle or the testimony that Peter received by revelation. Elsewhere Jesus identifies his own teachings[9]—the revealed truth of the fullness of the everlasting gospel[10] including its ordinances[11]—as the "rock" on which the saints' "houses" are to be built.[12]

Thus the "rock" is not only a testimony of faith revealed from the Father that Jesus is the Christ but also the covenant obedience ("hearing") and adherence to the "doctrine of Christ" that signifies reception of this testimony. This covenant of obedience in turn leads to further revelation, the obtaining of temple blessings, generational power in the priesthood, and sanctification in Christ (*theosis*). Hell—the powers of darkness in the spirit world—has never prevailed against the Church because of priesthood keys bestowed upon Peter. Peter and his counterparts in the latter days have had priesthood authority and keys bestowed upon them to ensure that the Church and its families are "sure" houses "founded upon [the] rock." Taken as one great whole, the Savior and his everlasting gospel are indeed a "Rock…broad as eternity," a rock upon which if we build our personal and family foundations, we can "never fall."[13]

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9 His "sayings," Matthew 7:24–26.

10 E.g., faith, repentance.

11 Baptism, reception of the Holy Ghost, etc.

12 See 3 Nephi 11:28–40; cf. 2 Nephi 31; jst Hebrews 6:1.

13 Moses 7:53; Helaman 5:12.

Simon: "Whosoever *Heareth* These Sayings…and Doeth Them" (Matthew 7:24–26)

A christological reading of Psalm 118:22, "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner," yields the interpretation that the "builders"—temple builders— are Israel's religious leaders.[14] It is in light of this reading of Psalm 118:22 that Jesus's words in Matthew 7:24–27 are to be understood. Jesus caps his Sermon on the Mount by likening the one "hearing" his sayings to a "wise" temple builder[15] who used *petra* as his foundation:

> Therefore whosoever *heareth* [*akouei* = Heb. *šōmēaʿ*] these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, [who] built his house upon *a rock* [*petran*]:

> And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a *rock* [*petran*].

> And every one that *heareth* these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, [who] built his house upon the sand:

> And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.[16]

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14   See especially Peter's use of this text in in Acts 4:11 and 1 Peter 2:7; Psalm 118:22 is similarly quoted and interpreted in Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10; and Luke 20:17.

15   Cf. Paul's description of his own "building" ecclesiastical role (1 Corinthians 3:10).

16   Matthew 7:24–27; cf. Luke 6:4–49, emphasis added.

Matthew 5:1–2, Joseph Smith Translation (hereafter JST), and Matthew 7:28 suggest that Jesus directed these words specifically to the disciples—the future "builders" of his church—and Simon Peter himself in the hearing of the people. If, as John 1:42 indicates, Jesus "surnamed" Simon *Cephas/Petros* early in his ministry, references to both "hearing" and "rock," conceivably constitute wordplay on "Simon" and "Cephas"/"Peter," similar to the "rock"-dialogue later in Matthew 16:13–20. This suggests a deeper connection between Peter, the temple, and all of Jesus's "rock" teachings.

The name "Simon" is a Hellenized form[17] of the personal and tribal name "Simeon," which had become popular because of the Hasmonean revolt and fervor in Judea for national restoration.[18] To the Hebrew ear, "Simeon" would have connoted something like "man of hearing" or "hearer,"[19] (i.e., "obedient"), not simply "the Lord has heard" as implied in the etiological literary pun in Genesis 33:19.[20]

Simeon is an ancient name that has at least one pre-Israelite temple connection. Enoch describes a theophany in which "there came a voice out of heaven" and commanded him to "turn…and get…upon mount Simeon" and subsequently "beheld the heavens open, and…was clothed upon with glory, and saw the Lord" and talked with him, "even as a man talketh one with another face-to-face" and was "show[n] the world for the space of many generations."[21] Enoch's "temple" experience

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17   Huntsman ("Galilee and the Call of the Twelve," 220) notes in addition that Andrew and Phillip are Greek names. This suggests a strong Greek influence in the Galilee area.

18   See Markus Bockmuehl, "Simon Peter's Names in Jewish Sources," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 55/1 (2004): 58–80.

19   cf. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 1576–77.

20   Genesis 29:33: "And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Because the Lord hath heard [*šāmaʿ*] that I was hated, he hath therefore given me this son also: and she called his name *Simeon* [*Šimʿôn*]."

21   Moses 7:2–4.

on Mount Simeon was revealed to the prophet at about the same time he began to receive revelations concerning the building of the temple.[22] The connection of Simeon with the "voice" of the Lord coming out of heaven would have evoked the idea of "place of hearing" for an ancient Israelite audience, since the *–ôn* ending on "Simeon" was "a particular nominal or adjectival form serving as an appellative"[23] that "describ[ed] some feature or aspect"[24]of the thing so named. Thus, under this grammatical model, "Simeon" as a toponym means "place of hearing" and as a personal name means "person [man] of hearing." F. F. Bruce observes that it is a "well-known principle of nomenclature" to bestow a positive name "in the fond hope that the attachment of [the] name of good omen" will inspire the one so named to become so. The parental hope[25] for an Israelite named Simeon (Simon) was that he would be a constant "hearer" in the sense of characteristically "obedient." In Hebrew, to "hear" *was* to "obey."

An Israelite's foremost responsibility, according to the covenant, was to "hear" and "obey" God's instruction (*tôrâ*; see especially the *Shema* of Deuteronomy 6:4). Deuteronomy emphasizes "loving" God by "hearing" (i.e., obeying) and keeping his commandments,[26] a principle conveyed most

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22   December 1830; see D&C 36:8.

23   Anson F. Rainey, "The Toponymics of Eretz-Israel," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, No. 231 (Oct., 1978) 5. In the same article, Rainey further suggests a possible connection between name "Simeon" and Arabic *simʿ*, "hyena dog" (a rare and uncertain term). While I agree with Rainey's assessment of the grammar of *–ôn* names, the far simpler explanation is that "Simeon" is an appellative that denotes something characterized by "hearing."

24   Ibid., 4. On Hebrew *–ôn* names in the Book of Mormon, see Stephen D. Ricks and John A. Tvedtnes, "Notes and Communications: The Hebrew Origin of Some Book of Mormon Place Names," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 6/2 (1997): 258.

25   F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 402.

26   See Deuteronomy 5:10, 7:9; 11:1, 13, 22 13:3; 19:9; 30:16, 19–20.

succinctly in Jesus's statement, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

Was Israel to hear the commandments of God or of men? This fundamental issue, raised by Jesus during his ministry,[27] was one with which Simon Peter, who "savor[ed] the things of men," had to wrestle.[28] Jesus condemned the teaching and observance of the "commandments of men," especially where such "traditions" encouraged the "laying aside" of God's commandments.[29] Eventually, Peter can declare without hesitation, "We ought to *obey* God rather than men" (Acts 5:29, emphasis added). The restoration was needed because religious leaders "[taught] for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but…deny the power thereof" (JS–H 1:19).

Jesus's description of a wise builder who hears and does is directed, on one level, to Simon himself but on another to every church member. Jesus's "sayings," which included a warning against being as salt which has "lost its savor"(are not "the commandments of men" but rather divine "revelation" (Matthew 5:13) in the purest sense. The manner in which obedience to his sayings is to be shown has been the same from the very beginning—what Nephi termed the "doctrine of Christ"[30] and Christ's "gospel" and "rock" (1 Nephi 13:6). These principles and ordinances,[31] when taught and performed with priesthood power and "authority," are the "doctrine" at which people were—and are—"astonished."[32] Jesus's sayings or doctrine—"every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"[33]—constitute an important aspect of what Jesus means

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27   Mark 7:7–8; Matthew 15:9.

28   Mark 8:33; Matthew 16:23.

29   See Mark 7:7–8.

30   2 Nephi 31:2, 21; 32:6; cf. Jacob 7:2, 6; 2 John 1:9.

31   See Hebrews 6:1; Articles of Faith 1:4.

32   Matthew 7:28; 22:24–33; Mark 1:22; 11:28; Luke 4:32; Acts 13:12.

33   Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4; D&C 84:44.

when he alludes to the rock on which we are to build (i.e., "hearken…and hold fast unto it"— Nephi 15:24).

A "New Name": The Surnaming of Simon Peter

Simon Peter was called and later chosen to build the Church on Christ's doctrine. John 1:42 suggests that Jesus surnamed Simon as Cephas ("stone"; Aramaic *kîpāʾ* = Greek *Petros*) early in his ministry,[34] apparently well before the events detailed in Matthew 16. JST John 1:42 suggests that this new name *kîpāʾ* can be rendered either as "stone" or "seer," (i.e., a "seer-stone"). The name Cephas/Peter is thus a kind of prophecy regarding the man—his potential leadership capabilities, including power in the priesthood and receptivity to revelation, a point reiterated when Jesus's instruction plays on Cephas/Peter in Matthew 16:18. Jesus—the Rock of Ages—lovingly surnamed Simon with this new name, knowing what the latter could and would become: a steadfast and constant conduit of revelation. Jesus reminded Simon Peter of this potential in his conversation with him in Matthew 16:13-20 and chastised Peter when he "savored" his own ideas more than the divine revelation that Jesus had just given him (Matthew 16:21-23).

Few passages of scripture have elicited as much debate as Jesus's words to Peter in Matthew 16:18, part of the so-called "rock dialogue," with its wordplay on *Petros/petra*. The three most common interpretive approaches are that "the apostle so named [Peter], or the affirmation he has just made"[35] are the "bedrock" of which Jesus speaks or that it is Jesus himself.[36]

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34   See also Mark 3:16.

35   Fredrick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament and Other Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 809.

36   Pheme Perkins, "Peter, The Apostle," in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2009), 4:476.

The first approach[37] interprets the wordplay as though Jesus is making the straightforward declaration, "Thou art Peter, and upon thee I will build my church" (*not* Jesus's words). The second approach,[38] on the other hand, draws insufficient meaning from the lexical relationship between *Petros* and *petra* in the Greek text as we now have it. The third approach tends to diminish Peter's role in the building Jesus describes. All three approaches have merit, yet none by itself is adequate.

Eric Huntsman explains the force of the wordplay in the Greek text—"*Petros*, the name Jesus gave *Peter* at his initial call means an isolated rock or stone, whereas *Petra*, a feminine noun, means bedrock, the type of rock of which a tomb was hewn or the foundation of an impregnable position or rocky fortress…Thus although Peter's subsequent apostolic career revealed that he was indeed a rock, the rock upon which the Church would be built was the rock from which Peter as an Apostle was hewn."[39] Peter had to grow into the role that the "new name" *Petros* implied (prophet, seer, and revelator), let alone that of the divine "bedrock." As Gerald Janzen has noted, "In the act of envisioning Jesus as Messiah,[40] he in turn found himself envisaged as Peter—a name wildly at variance with his actual character up to that point, a name later needing reinstatement through forgiveness,[41] yet a name whose

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37   See, e.g., Raimund Lülsdorff, "Vom Stein zum Felsen: Anmerkungen zur biblischen Begründung des Petrusamtes nach Mt 16,18," *Catholica* 44/4 (1990): 274-283; S. Carnazzo, "The Primacy of Peter in Sacred Scripture—Part 2," *Eastern Churches Journal: A Journal of Eastern Christendom* 12/2 (2005): 13–27. T. Finley hypothesizes that Jesus spoke these words in Aramaic and that *kîpāʾ* could underlie both *Petros* and *petra*, based on evidence from the Targums and Syriac versions of Matthew ("'Upon this Rock': Matthew 16.18 and the Aramaic Evidence," *Aramaic Studies* 4/2 , 2006, 133-51).

38   See, e.g., P. Grelot, "'Sur cette pierre je bâtirai mon Église' (Mt 16, 18b)" *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 109/5 (1987): 641–59.

39   Huntsman, "Galilee and the Call of the Twelve Apostles," 242.

40   Matthew 16:13–20.

41   John 22:1–23.

accuracy was eventually born out."[42] Simon would not only be *Petros*,[43] but *prōtos*[44] ("first").[45] He was not the founder or the foundation, but he would become the chief "builder."

The Rock of Faith and Revelation: Revealed Testimony that Jesus is the Christ and Continuing Revelation

On a fundamental level, the *petra* of which Jesus speaks includes the revelation that Jesus is the Christ, which is the content of Peter's confession or testimony.[46] As Huntsman notes, "In the context of Peter's preceding declaration [in Matthew 16:16]… Jesus's statement may be interpreted to mean that the Church would be built upon the apostolic testimony of Christ that comes through revelation."[47] Indeed, Peter, followed by the other Apostles, accepted Jesus as the Christ, whereas Israel's religious leaders—the temple builders of Psalm 118:22—had rejected him.[48] The Savior, the premortal Yahweh, had ever been a sanctuary to many in Israel and "rock of offense" and "stone of stumbling"[49] to others. Peter and his fellow apostles were

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42 J. Gerald Janzen, "What's in a Name? 'Yahweh' in Exodus 3 and the Wider Biblical Context," *Interpretation* 33/ 3 (1979): 239. See also A. Stock, "Is Matthew's Presentation of Peter Ironic?" *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 17/2 (1987): 64–69.

43 D. Bivin ("Matthew 16:18: The Petros-petra Wordplay—Greek, Aramaic, or Hebrew?" *Jerusalem Perspective*, Vol. 46–47 [1994]: 32–38) suggests that *petros* and *petra*, as Greek loanwords, may have been words that Jesus used. Cf. *petra* in *Yalkut Shimoni* to Numbers 23:9.

44 B. van Iersel, "Matteüs 16, 18: Simôn, Petros, petra, prôtos: Reflectie op woordspelingen rond Simon, de steenrots (Mt. 16, 18: Simôn, Petros, petra, prôtos)," *Tijdschrift voor Theologie*, 4 (1985): 402–409. He notes the play on *Petros* and *prōtos* in Matthew 10:2.

45 Compare Matthew 10:2 to 1 Nephi 1:11.

46 On Peter's confession of faith as the "rock," see Chrys C. Caragounis, *Peter and the Rock* (Berlin; New York: de Gruyter, 1990), passim; Grelot, "'Sur cette pierre," 641–59.

47 Huntsman, "Galilee and the Call of the Twelve Apostles," 242.

48 See especially 1 Peter 2:6–8.

49 Isaiah 8:14; 1 Peter 2:8.

priesthood holders ("living stones") rejected by the builders in like manner.[50]

In a text in which he decries Israel's illicit "covenant with death" and "hell,"[51] Isaiah envisions the Lord as the builder (or "founder"), the stone, and "the sure foundation" of a building that will result in the "disannulment" or "atoning" of that covenant (Isaiah 28:18):[52] "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for *a foundation stone*, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, *a sure foundation: he that believeth* shall not make haste" (Isaiah 28:16, emphasis added). The imagery suggests the building of a temple, the foundation stone of which is the Lord himself. The one who "believeth," or the one who has "faith" (*hammaʾămîn*) in that stone rests, on a "sure foundation" and consequently does not need to "make haste" (Isaiah 28:16) or will "not be confounded" (1 Peter 2:6).

The "bedrock" required for the kind of "building" of which Jesus and later Peter speaks indeed begins with and includes faith. But revealed faith—a revealed testimony that Jesus is the Christ—is only the first principle of the "doctrine" or "gospel" of Jesus Christ. As Paul put it, "For therein is the righteousness of God *revealed from faith to faith*: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."[53] The saints "living" now and eternally by "faith" or "faithfulness" (Heb. *ʾĕmûnâ*, Gk. *pistos*)—their justification and eventual sanctification—consists in their receiving and living by revelation to continually, "live…by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord."[54]

Identifying the rock in the "rock"-dialogue of Matthew 16, upon which Jesus would build His Church, the Prophet Joseph

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50 See Howe, "Christ, the Building Stone in Peter's Theology."

51 Isaiah 28:15.

52 Heb. *kuppar*.

53 Romans 1:17; quoting Habakkuk 2:4, emphasis added.

54 Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4; D&C 84:44; 98:11.

Smith stated, "What rock? Revelation."[55] Huntsman suggests that revelation of which Jesus speaks is identified in Helaman 5:12, "the apostolic testimony of Christ that comes through revelation."[56] Indeed, here Helaman gives his sons parental exhortation and priesthood leadership instruction. They are church and temple "builders":

> And now, my sons, remember, remember *that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation*; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of *the rock* upon which ye are built, which is *a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall* (Helaman 5:12, emphasis added).Helaman commends his sons not only to build their personal foundation on Christ but also the foundation of the Nephite/Lamanite church, which his sons lead after him.[57] Nephi has his custody of the sealing power and authority affirmed in a manner not dissimilar to Jesus's promise of the sealing keys to Peter (see Helaman 10:7). Important is that Joseph identified the "rock" as "revelation" in the context of a discussion of priesthood authority, priesthood keys, baptism, and the fruits of the kingdom of God. For the Church and its leadership to have the power in the priesthood and revelation needed for the building of Zion and God's kingdom on the earth, priesthood authority and keys must be present and ordinances performed correctly,

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55   *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 274.

56   Huntsman, "Galilee and the Call of the Twelve Apostles," 242.

57   Cf. Helaman 5:4, 18; 16:4.

which brings about a flood of revelation.[58] Thus the broad rock of the everlasting gospel includes revelation and "revealed" priesthood,[59] the ordinances performed by priesthood authority (see below), and the revealed testimony of Jesus ("the spirit of prophecy")[60] that begins with faith in him and advances "from faith to faith" according to one's "diligence and obedience" to the doctrine of Christ (D&C 130:19). I will now discuss this topic in more depth.

The Doctrine of Christ and the Atonement

Peter's surnaming of Jesus, "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God," was a testimony of faith, a revelation, and a declaration of pure doctrine. And yet when Jesus appeared to the Nephites in 3 Nephi 11, He emphasized the importance of not only faith but also subsequent repentance and baptism. His words are directed not only to individual Church members but to Israel's religious leaders—the "builders" of Psalm 118:22. He stated:

> And again I say unto you, *ye must repent*, and become as a little child, and *be baptized in my name*, or ye can in nowise receive these things.

> And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God.

> Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them.

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58 See JS–H 1:73–74; D&C 84:20; D&C 110; see especially Moses 8:24.

59 I.e., its keys of authority and power; see especially D&C 2:1-2; 128:17.

60 Revelation 19:10.

> And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and
> establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil,
> and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a
> sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to
> receive such when the floods come and the winds beat
> upon them (3 Nephi 11:37–40, emphasis added).

Jesus's words on this occasion clarify what he meant in Matthew 7:24–26 and 16:18–19. The rock (*petra*) of which Jesus spoke on those occasions must include not only a testimony of revealed faith that Jesus is the Christ but also repentance, baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, and reception of the Holy Ghost.[61] Jesus's inclusion of the phrase "and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them" (Matthew 16:19) confirms that he envisions the fullness of his Gospel (of which he is the focal point) as the rock on which the Church and its members are to be built. Jesus himself is the "Rock of Heaven" on which the saints as a temple are built (Moses 7:53) through the Gospel. The temple is "the gate of heaven,"[62] and the Savior himself is the "keeper of the gate"[63] (2 Nephi 9:41) and even the "gate" or "door."[64]

Noel B. Reynolds has noted that Jesus alludes in 3 Nephi 11:31–36 to what Nephi and later Jacob called the "doctrine of

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61   See especially 3 Nephi 11:31–36.

62   Genesis 28:17; Helaman 3:28; cf. Psalm 24:7–10.

63   John Gee, "The Keeper of the Gate," in *The Temple in Time and Eternity*, ed. Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: *FARMS*: 1999), 233–74. On the "keeper of the gate" or "keeper of the door" as a temple functionary, see 2 Kings 12:9; 22:4; Jeremiah 35:4; Nehemiah 3:29. See further Avram R. Shannon, "'Come Near unto Me': Guarded Space and Its Mediators in the Jerusalem Temple," in *Ascending the Mountain of the Lord: Temple, Praise, and Worship in the Old Testament: The 42nd Annual Brigham Young University Sidney B. Sperry Symposium*, ed. David R. Seely, Jeffrey R. Chadwick, and Matthew J. Grey (Provo, UT: RSC and Deseret Book, 2013), 66–84.

64   John 10:7, 9; cf. Moses 7:53.

Christ" or the "true points of his doctrine."[65] His commandment to repent and be baptized is a meristic[66] reference to a six-point formula taught consistently by prophets throughout the Book of Mormon: (1) faith in Jesus Christ, (2) repentance, (3) baptism, (4) the gift of the Holy Ghost, (5) enduring to the end in faith, hope, and charity, and (6) salvation and eternal life in the Kingdom of God. Reynolds suggests that a mention of one point in this formula is an implicit invocation of the entire formula. Numerous instances from the scriptures could be cited.

In 3 Nephi 18, Jesus institutes the sacrament at the temple in Bountiful among the Nephites and Lamanites in remembrance of his resurrected body[67]—his rebuilt "temple."[68] The Lord states that administration of this ordinance enables worthy partakers to remain "built" upon his "rock"—himself and his gospel:

> And I give unto you a commandment that *ye shall do these things.* And *if ye shall always do these things blessed are ye, for ye are built upon my rock.*
>
> But whoso among you shall do more or less than these are not built upon my rock, but are built upon a sandy foundation; and when the rain descends, and the floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon them, they shall fall, and the gates of hell are ready open to receive them.[69]

65   Noel B. Reynolds, "The Gospel of Jesus Christ as Taught by the Nephite Prophets," *BYU Studies* 31/3 (1991): 31–50; Reynolds, "The True Points of My Doctrine," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5/2 (1996): 26–56.

66   A *merismus* is a literary device by which a whole is referred to by its parts.

67   John W. Welch, "Ten Testimonies of Jesus Christ from the Book of Mormon" in *A Book of Mormon Treasury: Gospel Insights from General Authorities and Religious Educators* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2003), 316–42.

68   Matthew 26:61; 27:40; Mark 14:58; 15:29; John 2:19–22.

69   3 Nephi 18:12–13; cf. 3 Nephi 14:24–27, emphasis added.

Jesus's point is clear: worthy administration and partaking of the sacrament to and by Church members will keep them collectively and individually "built upon [the] rock" of his gospel. However, the failure of the Church and its members to so build will result in the Church's resting on a sandy foundation, susceptible to being overcome by the powers of darkness in this world and the spirit world ("the gates of hell"). Worthy partaking of the sacrament enables Church members to retain the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost and thus "lay hold" on the personal revelation that will empower them to endure to the end, enter through "the gate of heaven," and to be enthroned ("sit down") at the right hand of God with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Helaman 3:28-30). The sacrament too, then, is another important aspect of the gospel "rock."

Later, when his Nephite and Lamanite disciples are struggling to know what to name the Church, Jesus emphasizes that a Church called in his name is his Church "if it so be that they are *built upon my gospel*" (3 Nephi 27:8, emphasis added). The image here is of a church/temple built upon bedrock. Jesus additionally promises that if the Church is "built upon my gospel," the disciples—the leaders and "builders" of the Church—can "call upon the Father, for the church…and he will hear [them]" and "the Father will show forth his own works in it" (3 Nephi 27:9-10). The Lord personally instructed Hyrum Smith: "Build upon *my rock*, which is my gospel" (D&C 11:24, emphasis added).

On the other hand, if a church is "not built upon my gospel, [but] is built upon the works of men, or upon the works of the devil…they have joy in their works for a season, and by and by the end cometh, and they are hewn down and cast into the fire, from whence there is no return."[70] In other words, that

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70   3 Nephi 27:11.

church suffers the same fate as a building built on a sandy or airy foundation.[71]

Recalling that the Lord's building activity in Isaiah 28 was to "atone" Israel's illicit covenant with its enemies Death and Hell,[72] we note that the Savior also carefully defines the Gospel in 3 Nephi 27 as both His Atonement[73] and the ordinances necessary to fully partake of that Atonement.[74] We know from modern-day revelation that the Gospel is the same from the beginning.[75] Peter's mortal and *post-mortal* priesthood role was to build the Church upon the "doctrine of Christ."[76] This is the duty of every saint from Apostle to new member. Just as Peter had received keys in mortality, he was one of many who conferred them as an immortal messenger from God's presence. Faithful laborers of every dispensation continue the work of building in the spirit world so that ultimately hell will not prevail.[77]

The "Keys of the Kingdom": Priesthood Keys and Power as Aspects of the Eternal "Bedrock"

Jesus's surnaming of Peter was an important part of his priesthood leadership training. Peter was to become the model for all future apostolic and priesthood leadership. Hebrews 7:24 describes Christ's authority as an "unchangeable priesthood," based on Psalm 110, an enthronement psalm in which the Davidic king receives the Melchizedek priesthood "eternally" with an "oath and covenant."[78] Isaiah similarly envisages the investiture of the political and priesthood authority of the Davidic king in

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71   See 1 Nephi 11:36; 2 Nephi 28:18.

72   Isaiah 28:18.

73   See vv. 13–15; cf. D&C 76:40–42.

74   See vv. 16–20.

75   See Moses 6:23, 52–68; D&C 29:42.

76   D&C 27:12; 128:20; JS-H 1:72.

77   Cf. D&C 138:57–58.

78   See Psalm 110:4; cf. D&C 84:39–40.

Eliakim, son of Hilkiah, a servant of Hezekiah, evidently the royal treasurer:

> And *I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle*, and *I will commit thy government into his hand*:[79] and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. And *the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder*; so he shall open, and none shall shut and he shall shut, and none shall open. And *I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place* [*ûtĕqaʿtîw yātēd bĕmāqôm neʾĕmān*] and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house (Isaiah 22:21–23, emphasis added).

Similar to the Lord's investiture of Eliakim, Jesus invests Peter with his (Jesus's) own royal/priestly authority (the Melchizedek priesthood authority). After the events detailed in Matthew 16–17 and 28, Peter is fully authorized to act in the Savior's stead (see below). After Jesus's resurrection, Peter continued faithfully in this surrogate role until he himself, apparently like the Savior,[80] was "fasten[ed]…as a nail in a sure place."[81] Even after his death, in the spirit world and after his resurrection, Peter continued to operate in this role in building the church into a "sure house" against which "the gates of hell cannot prevail,[82] thus fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy that Zion would eventually become "a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes [*yĕtēdōtâw* = "its nails"] thereof

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79   Cf. Isaiah 9:6–7.

80   It was widely believed in the early Christian church that Peter was, like the Savior, crucified, but upside down in deference to the latter; hence, the "inverted cross" of St. Peter in Christian iconography.

81   Isaiah 22:23; cf. John 21:18; "rock," especially "bedrock" is the "sure place" *par excellence*.

82   See Joseph Smith—History 1:72.

shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken."[83]

As noted above, Isaiah alludes to the Lord's "disannulling" ("atoning") of Israel's "covenant" with its archenemies "Death" and "Hell."[84] The Lord accomplished this by laying for Zion's temple a Davidic king (the Lord himself) as "foundation stone, a tried stone, a precious corner, a sure foundation."[85] The atonement imagery is temple imagery and temple-building imagery in particular. Jesus alludes to Isaiah's atonement and temple imagery[86] when he describes his divine authority to John: "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have *the keys of hell and of death*" (Revelation 1:18, emphasis added). "These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath *the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth*" (Revelation 3:7, emphasis added). Following his resurrection, the Savior declared to Peter and his other disciples, "All power [*exousia*, authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, *baptizing* them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:18–19, emphasis added). Baptism is, among many things, symbolic resurrection and deliverance from the waters of Death (from Israel's enemies Mot and Yamm, or "death and hell, and the devil."[87] The bronze "sea" (*yām*) atop the twelve oxen in the Jerusalem temple,[88] like our

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83 Isaiah 33:20; cf. 54:2; Moroni 10:31.

84 Isaiah 28:18; cf. 2 Nephi 9:26.

85 Isaiah 28:16; see Helaman 5:12.

86 Isaiah chapter 22 and 28.

87 See 1 Corinthians 15:26–29; 2 Nephi 9:26; Jonah 2. On Jacob's interpretation of these motifs in 2 Nephi 6-10, see Daniel Belnap, "'I Will Contend with Them that Contendeth with Thee': The Divine Warrior in Jacob's Speech of 2 Nephi 6-10," *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Restoration Scripture* 17/1 (2008) 20-39.

88 1 Kings 7:25, 44; 2 Kings 16:17; 2 Chronicles 4:3-4, 15.

modern temple baptismal fonts, symbolizes Yahweh's defeat of Yamm and Israel's redemption.[89]

It is against the backdrop of Yahweh's (Jesus's) *exousia* and total power over "death, hell, and the devil" through the atonement (2 Nephi 9:26) that we need to understand Jesus's promise that he would grant Peter "the keys of the kingdom" (Matthew 16:18). Matthew recounts the fulfillment of Jesus's promise at the Mount of Transfiguration.[90] Kent Brown suggests that Peter's (along with James and John's) participation in Jesus's transfiguration—they were transfigured too—was a "partaking of the divine nature."[91] If Jesus, as Yahweh, was the "bedrock" of eternity,[92] Peter, James, and John, the future "First Presidency" of the Church, like Moses[93] who bestowed keys on this occasion, had become that "bedrock" if only for a few moments. This "First Presidency," a pattern on earth of the Presidency of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in heaven, had then tasted what Jesus had in mind for them to become as well as what he was authorizing and empowering them in the priesthood to members of his Church to eventually become.

Peter's attention at this moment turns to the temple. His suggestion that they build three "tabernacles"[94] reflects his incomplete understanding of the meaning and function of temples (Luke 9:33). Peter witnessed that Moses, Elijah, and the Savior were "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). Temples are in fact connected with the "divine nature," preparing men and women to become partakers therein. Peter here received keys that would empower him to bind or "seal"

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89 Cf. Exodus 15:1-22; Isaiah 51:9-11.

90 See Matthew 17:1–9.

91 Brown, "The Twelve," 119–20.

92 See Moses 7:53; Isaiah 26:4.

93 See Moses 1 Moses 1:1-2, 11-15, 25.

94 See Matthew 17:4; Mark 9:5; Luke 9:33.

the blessings of exaltation upon the saints, including eternal power in the priesthood.[95]

Moreover, it is appropriate that Jesus reiterated Simon's "new name," Peter, on the eve of his receiving priesthood keys. In bestowing these keys on Peter, the Lord conferred his own authority, to "open, and none shall shut," to "shut and none shall open";[96] to "bind on earth [in order to have] bound in heaven"[97] or to "seal on earth [in order to have] sealed in heaven."[98] To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a *white stone* [*psephos*], and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."[99] For entrants into the celestial kingdom, the Prophet Joseph Smith explained in 1843 this "new name is *the key word*" (D&C 130:11, emphasis added).

The "new name" is a "key" that opens the way, as Brigham Young indicated, for the saints to pass "the angels who stand as sentinels…and gain [their] eternal exaltation in spite of earth and hell."[100] The "key of the knowledge of God"[101] is the "key of knowledge" or "fullness of the scriptures"[102] that unlocks exaltation. Indeed, "the sealing and binding power, and…the keys of the kingdom…consist in the key of knowledge" (D&C 128:14) that unlocks every blessing to the children of God on both sides of the veil.

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95   Cf. 1 Peter 2:5; D&C 121:36, 46.

96   Isaiah 22:22; Revelation 3:7.

97   Matthew 16:19.

98   Helaman 10:7; cf.2 Nephi 30:17.

99   Revelation 2:17; cf. Isaiah 62:2, emphasis added.

100   *Discourses of Brigham Young*, comp. John A. Widtsoe (Salt Lake City, Deseret Book, 1954), 637.

101   D&C 84:19.

102   JST Luke 11:52.

The Church as "Sure House[s]": Priesthood and Temple Ordinances as Eternal "Bedrock"

Joseph Smith spoke of baptism for the dead as an "ordinance… instituted from before the foundation of the world" (D&C 124:33). In D&C 128:5, he stated that vicarious ordinance work for the dead was "only to answer the will of God, by conforming to the ordinance and preparation that the Lord ordained and prepared before the foundation of the world, for the salvation of the dead who should die without a knowledge of the gospel." In D&C 128:8 the Prophet spoke of "ordinances" that needed to be attended to "in their own propria persona, or by the means of their own [vicarious] agents, according to the ordinance that God has prepared for their salvation from before the foundation of the world." The Prophet here quotes Jesus and Peter's "rock"-dialogue (Matthew 16:18-19). Ordinances require priesthood authority and keys.

The concept of "ordinances" that were "instituted" or "ordained and prepared" before the foundation of the world for the salvation of the human family is consistent with the picture revealed to Joseph Smith of a baptism and confirmation of Adam (Moses 6:52-58), Enoch's commission to baptize (Moses 7:11), and so forth. Priesthood ordinances, including vicarious ordinances for the dead, are eternal "bedrock" that antedates even the foundation of the world. Even the dead against whom hell has previously "prevailed" can "be redeemed, through obedience to the ordinances of the house of God" (D&C 138:58).[103]

Jesus knew that his church, over which Peter would preside, had to be collectively and individually built upon the "rock" of revealed testimony, obedience to gospel (including temple) ordinances, priesthood power, and the Savior himself

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103   I.e., the doctrine of Christ and its ordinances, see Articles of Faith 1:4; jst Hebrews 6:1.

to become the "sure house" that the dynastic royal "houses" never were, a manifestation of the kingdom of God on earth, a "house" against which the gates of hell could not prevail. The Lord had offered to build David, Jeroboam, and others a "sure house" (Heb. *bayit neʾĕmān*).[104] David's royal "house," whose last regnant (excluding Jesus himself who never reigned temporally over Israel) was Zedekiah, became an "unsure" dynasty because of David and his descendants' sins. D&C 132:39 informs us that because David has "fallen from his exaltation, and received his portion; and he shall not inherit them [i.e., his family, his "house"] out of the world." The Jerusalem temple on its "rock" was both the "house of the Lord" and a monument to the Davidic dynasty and the Lord's promises to David. That temple has been repeatedly razed, emblematic of David's fortunes. Fortunately, temples today dot the earth, and the "houses" (families) can become "sure houses" through covenant faithfulness, obedience, and the exercise of priesthood keys.

The Church of Jesus Christ is heir to—and arguably the fulfillment of—the Lord's promises of "sure houses" to Israel's kings. In other words, the Church, its families, and its temples are Jesus's "sure house."[105] Peter himself learned that revealed testimony and covenant obedience could make "lively stones"[106] out of individual church members and a "spiritual house" (Gk. *oikos pneumatikos*) out of them collectively. The Church in any age is only a "spiritual house" or a "sure house" to the degree the saints themselves—collectively, individually, and by family— are "founded" on the Savior and his Gospel. The Church is in a real sense a temple[107] like the Jerusalem temple that stood on

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104   See 1 Samuel 2:35; 25:28; 2 Samuel 7:16; 1 Kings 11:38.

105   Compare 1 Samuel 2:35; 25:8; 2 Samuel 7:16; 1 Kings 11:38 versus D&C 132:39.

106   I.e., "living stones," *lithoi zōntes*, 1 Peter 2:5

107   Cf. T. Fornberg, "Peter—the High Priest of the New Covenant?" *East Asia Journal of Theology* 4/1 (1986): 113–21.

the temple mount (Moriah) the "rock" of Zion. The exercise of the priesthood sealing keys that Peter once received enable individual families within the walls of modern-day temples to become "sure houses," the "sure house" being one of the most important things the temple symbolizes.[108] The exercise of these keys also makes it collectively possible for the House of Israel to become a "sure house" against which hell cannot prevail—the "sure" house that it was always meant to be, "sure" like the Savior himself.

"The Gates of Hell Shall Not Prevail": Endowed to Endure

Even the best of us begin like Peter. As President Gordon B. Hinckley has observed,

> So many of us are so much like [Peter]. We pledge our loyalty; we affirm our determination to be of good courage; we declare, sometimes even publicly, that come what may we will do the right thing, that we will stand for the right cause, that we will be true to ourselves and to others. Then the pressures begin to build…There is a weakening of the will. There is a softening of discipline. There is capitulation. And then there is remorse, followed by self-accusation and bitter tears of regret."[109]

But by founding ourselves on Christ and his gospel—his "rock"—we become like the converted seer Peter (see Acts 10), who could declare without hesitation the necessity of obeying

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108   Latter-day temples are built on higher, safer ground (or as near to it as can be found in a locale), often on mountains or hills (cf. the expression mount[ain]/hill of the Lord). Temples are conceptually "buil[t] on [the] rock" and, as architectural representations of mountains, temples constitute "bedrock" themselves (cf. the granite of the Salt Lake Temple). In this way too they represent the Savior and the "temple" of his body.

109   Gordon B. Hinckley, "And Peter Went Out and Wept Bitterly," *Ensign*, May 1979, 65.

God in all conditions and under all circumstances (see Acts 5:29). As Richard Lloyd Anderson has noted, "Peter proclaimed repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. (Acts 2:38; 8:14ff),"[110] (i.e., he lived—cf. JST John 4:1–2) and preached the doctrine of Christ fearlessly. Simon the "hearer" became Peter the wise "builder" (see Matthew 7:24). We are to do likewise.

Peter obtained the "keys of the kingdom" and thus "the key of knowledge" (D&C 128:14), even "the key of the knowledge of God" (D&C 84:19). The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that

> A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge, for if he does not get knowledge, he will be brought into captivity by some evil power in the other world, as evil spirits will have more knowledge and consequently more power than many men on the earth. Hence it needs revelation to assist us, and give us knowledge of the things of God.[111]

We gain the knowledge and revelation we need to avoid being "brought down into captivity" here and hereafter[112] only to the degree that we obey ("hear"!) the doctrine of Christ— faith, repentance, baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost (and the ordinances of the house of God), and enduring to the end. The endowment of power and knowledge that Peter and the disciples received (see Luke 24:49) is offered to the Latter-day Saints to enable them to fulfill their earthly missions and to "gain their eternal exaltation in spite of earth and hell."[113]

The promise that the Lord made to Peter in Matthew 16 is extended to the Latter-day Saints, and perhaps no promise

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110   Anderson, "Simon Peter," 47; see also Tertullian, *On Baptism*, 4.17.

111   Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957), 4:588; Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 217.

112   1 Nephi 14:2, 7; 2 Nephi 1:7.

113   *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 637.

is made more often in modern-day revelation: if we "build up [the Lord's] church, upon the foundation of my gospel and my rock, the gates of hell shall not prevail against [us]" (D&C 8:9) and "whosoever is of my church, and endureth of my church to the end, *him will I establish upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them*" (D&C 10:69, emphasis added). Likewise, the Latter-day Saints who obey the doctrine of Christ (i.e., "do these last commandments of mine which I have given you"), the Lord promises, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; for my grace is sufficient for you, and you shall be lifted up at the last day" (D&C 17:8-9). "For by doing these things the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; yea, and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name's glory" (D&C 21:6). "And again I say unto you, if ye observe to do whatsoever I command you, I, the Lord, will turn away all wrath and indignation from you, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against you" (D&C 98:22). Obedience to the doctrine of Christ—building upon his rock through the power of the priesthood[114]—is the way. Jesus himself was obedient to "the very points of his doctrine" (2 Nephi 31:7) in becoming like the Father and receiving his fulness, and Simon Peter was "obedient" in becoming like Jesus. Just as Jesus invited Peter, so he invites us to become partakers of the divine nature: "Follow thou me."[115]

Conclusion

Simon Peter, like Enoch[116] and Samuel[117] became not only a constant "hearer" of the divine word but a constant, rock-

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114 I.e., the Lord's "everlasting strength," Isaiah 26:4.
115 2 Nephi 31:10; cf. John 21:22.
116 Moses 6:27, 35-39; 7:2-69.
117 1 Samuel 3:9-10; 9:18-19.

like "seer."[118] The Lord himself quoted Peter's own teaching on repentance and baptism ("repent and be baptized every one of you," Acts 2:38) when he identified faith in Christ and the ordinances of the gospel as the rock on which we need to build and "continue."[119] The "rock" upon which Jesus promised that he would build his Church includes revealed faith that Jesus is the Christ, repentance, baptism (partaking of the sacrament), receiving the Holy Ghost and the ordinances of the house of God, which empowers the saints to have the needed revelation and knowledge to endure to the end in spite of "hell" (the powers of darkness in the spirit world).

Peter, who in mortality understood that the gospel would be preached to the dead in prison,[120] has labored in the Savior's building or restoration (*oikodomeō*) of his church *on both sides of the veil*. Because of Peter and others' power in the priesthood, hell has never fully prevailed against Christ's church, particularly in the spirit world during the Great Apostasy. As Latter-day Saints participate in temple ordinances on behalf of the dead, their collective "house" and individual houses are made eternally "sure," and hell ceases to "prevail." They become more like the Savior, the Rock of Ages, against whose work hell is ultimately destined to fail.

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118   Matthew 7:42; jst John 1:42; Acts 5:29; see especially Acts 17:9-48.

119   D&C 33:11–13.

120   1 Peter 3:18–19; 4:6.

Literacy and Orality in the Book of Mormon

Brant A. Gardner

Abstract: *The Book of Mormon is a literate product of a literate culture. It references written texts. Nevertheless, behind the obvious literacy, there are clues to a primary orality in Nephite culture. The instances of text creation and most instances of reading texts suggest that documents were written by and for an elite class who were able to read and write. Even among the elite, reading and writing are best seen as a secondary method of communication to be called upon to archive information, to communicate with future readers (who would have been assumed to be elite and therefore able to read), and to communicate when direct oral communication was not possible (letters and the case of Korihor). As we approach the text, we may gain new insights into the art with which it was constructed by examining it as the literate result of a primarily oral culture.*

Humankind spoke before we wrote. In the early stages of the movement from exclusively oral to heavily literate communication, writing was an adjunct to oral transmission rather than a replacement for it. Stephen Houston, Dupee Family Professor of Social Science and Professor of Anthropology and Archaeology at Brown University, notes that "The earliest Greek writing is likely to have functioned at first as a mnemonic device, a means of stabilizing memory. But at the same time

feats of memorization continued to be highly prized."[1] From those early beginnings, the burden of preserving information has moved toward written texts, though not as steadily or inexorably as our modern sensibilities might suggest. Joyce Marcus, Professor in the Department of Anthropology and College of Literature, Science, and the Arts at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, reminds us:

> Some ancient states, like the Incas and Tarascans, were extremely powerful and efficient without writing. Their success suggests that we may have overemphasized the role of writing and underestimated the roles of mnemonic devices, oral tradition, and memorization. Inventions such as the Andean *kipu* were used for accounting and record-keeping and are alternatives to writing. Some civilizations used monumental sculpture and mural painting to convey political propaganda. Even states whose neighbors had long-established writing systems did not always borrow them. Not only are there alternatives to writing; many ancient states even saw literacy as undesirable.[2]

Particularly when studying ancient cultures, the study of orality is equally as important as studying literacy. Both means of encoding and transmitting information existed in a complicated relationship.[3] Although the Book of Mormon stands as a firm witness of Nephite literacy, it was produced in

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1   Stephen Houston, "Literacy Among the Pre-Columbian Maya: A Comparative Perspective," in *Writing Without Words: Alternative Literacies in Mesoamerica and the Andes*, ed. Elizabeth Hill Boone and Walter D. Mignolo (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University, 1996), 30.

2   Joyce Marcus, "Writing," in *Archaeology of Ancient Mexico and Central America: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Susan Toby Evans and David L. Webster (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 2001), 826.

3   Rosalind Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece*, Key Themes in Ancient History, series ed. P. A. Cartledge and P. D. A. Garnsey (New York: University of Cambridge, 1992, rpt. 1999, 6–11). Thomas discusses definitions

an age where evidence suggests that for most cultures orality remained an important part of the storage and transmission of cultural information. The nature of Nephite literacy and its interaction with orality requires a careful examination, especially since any indication of the role of orality is transmitted through a literary source.

Nephite society unquestionably produced literate men.[4] Only men are associated with the named books that compose the Book of Mormon. Only men are ever listed as writing letters. Only men can be seen as the authors of implied records that must have been referenced, but which are not explicitly identified.[5] The absence of women as writers parallels the general absence of women as actors in the text. Clearly, the absence of women in most of the recorded events does not indicate that there were no women and cannot indicate that the women had no important part in those events. The absence of named women was an authorial choice that unconsciously repeated the prejudices of a very patriarchal Nephite culture. Just as the absence of named women should not suggest that they were unimportant in the actual events portrayed in the text, their absence as writers should not suggest that women could not read or write.

There were women who both read and wrote, but they must have done so in contexts that did not result in the official records that served as Mormon's sources for his opus. The patriarchal

for orality and literacy, indicating that for both there are complexities beyond the simplistic division between writing and not writing.

4   The Book of Mormon period is certainly earlier in time than early Christian practice, but the social forces for patriarchy were similar. Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 223: "It is not surprising then that lectors were always male. They were chosen from among the faithful, and generally not from the catechumenate. Literacy naturally remained a prerequisite."

5   The detailed accounts of the ministry of the sons of Mosiah presume a record that was kept and then entered into the official plates of Nephi record, from which Mormon took the account that he wrote.

dominance of Nephite culture mirrors that of the Old World milieu from which it descended. In that case, however, the large number of available documents provides enough information to see past the patriarchal dominance in literacy to a role for at least some women. In the Old World, there were female scribes whose function was to be secretaries for palace women.[6] The New World Maya (the only group for which a translatable writing system is known) were also a patriarchal culture. Dorie Reents-Budet, Consulting Curator of Ancient American Art at the Mint Museum, notes: "In at least two artist's signatures, the *ts'ib* glyph is prefixed with the male pronoun *ah*, reading 'he the painter/writer,' and all known Classic Period representations of artists are male. There is no known artist's signature that begins with the female pronoun *na'*, although there is one instance where a woman carries the title of *Na' ts'ib*, or 'Lady Scribe.'"[7] In other patriarchal cultures, there were literate women even though the majority of recorded information speaks only of the literate men.[8] It is reasonable to assume that there were also Nephite women who both read and wrote, even though we have no explicit documentation for that assertion.

Asserting that Nephite women could be literate is a microcosm of the problem of discussing literacy for the entire Nephite population. We have indisputable evidence that there

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6   Karel Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2007), 285n5: "In the Old Babylonian period there were female scribes in Mari and Sippar, where they served mostly as secretaries to palace women (Mari) and female devotees of Šamaš (Sippar)."

7   Dorie Reents-Budet, *Painting the Maya Universe: Royal Ceramics of the Classic Period* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994), 48.

8   Nevertheless, the fact that some women were literate should not suggest that a large percentage of women were literate. Thomas states that for ancient Greece (*Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece*, 10): "Women had no part in public life, and were probably almost all illiterate unless they kept domestic accounts, but their male counterparts in Athens were surrounded by the written records of democratic business."

were Nephites who could read and write. The plates delivered to Joseph stand as firm evidence of Nephite literacy. The text on those plates frequently refers to other written documents.[9] What becomes the question for Nephite culture is the extent of literacy among the general population. Of course, this question is complicated by the obvious fact that we depend upon a text to understand Nephite orality. Alan K. Bowman, Principal of Brasenose College at Oxford and Greg Woolf, Professor of Ancient History at the University of St. Andrews, remind us that this is a common problem for the study of antiquity: "Our understanding of the ancient world is overwhelmingly dependent on texts. Our use of these texts, whether they are literary or documentary, depends on the assumptions we make about how they were originally produced, read and understood."[10] Those questions will not only lead us into discussions of Nephite literacy, but also into the Nephite intertwining of literacy and orality. Nephites wrote, but to whom, for whom, and at what point during the process of communicating information?

Our information about the Nephites is limited to that found in the Book of Mormon. The possible meanings of the data extracted from that single source may be elucidated by understanding the relationship between orality and literacy in the ancient world. There is no reason to believe that Nephites were significantly different from the Old World populations from which they descended, from their New World counterparts, or from any other known ancient population. Understanding the relationship between orality and literacy in the ancient world

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9   Nephi indicates that he consulted a document that Lehi wrote. Nephi himself wrote at least two records. When Mormon creates his book, he uses a library of documents from which he often quoted.

10   Alan K. Bowman and Greg Woolf, *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, England and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994, reprint 2001), 1.

provides a necessary foundation for understanding the Book of Mormon. If the general experience of comparable peoples during the same time period cannot be accepted as the plausible interpretive environment, we have placed the Nephites as a people utterly unique in the entire world during the time in which they lived.

Orality and Literacy in Antiquity

Rosalind Thomas, Lecturer in Ancient History at Royal Holloway and Bedford New College at the University of London, urges: "The tendency to see a society (or individual) as either literate or oral is over-simple and misleading. The habits of relying on oral communication (or orality) and literacy are not mutually exclusive."[11] Even within the realm of literacy there can be a broad range of capabilities that might be described as literate.[12] Thomas provides a fascinating example of the complications in

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11   Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece*, 4.

12   Rosalind Thomas, "Writing, Reading, Public and Private 'Literacies': Functional Literacy and Democratic Literacy in Greece," in *Ancient Literacies: The Culture of Reading in Greece and Rome*, ed. William A. Johnson and Holt N. Parker (Oxford, England and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 14: "It is misleading to talk simply… of percentages of 'literates,' for that presupposes a certain definition of literacy, one that irons out variety and complexity. The percentages of "literates" in modern Britain changes depending on whether you define literacy as being able to read three words on a page, an Inland Revenue form, or a work of literature (we see ancient equivalents of these [in ancient Greece]). It thus seems more useful to talk of the uses writing is put to, and of different types of literacy." See also Bowman and Woolf, *Literacy and Power in the Ancient World*, 2–3: The dominant theme of all [general introductions to literacy] is an account of what cannot be held to be generally true about literacy. This negative credo can be briefly summarized. Literacy is not a single phenomenon but a highly variable package of skills in using texts: it may or may not include writing as well as reading and is generally geared only to particular genres of texts, particular registers of language and often to only some of the languages used within multilingual societies. Moreover, literacy does not operate as an autonomous force in history, whether for change, progress and emancipation or for repression. Literacy does not of itself promote economic growth, rationality or social success. Literates do not necessarily behave or think differently from illiterates, and no Great Divide separates societies with writing

understanding ancient literacy: "When a prosperous freedman, Hermeros, in 'Petronius' *Satyricon* says he knows only 'lapidary writing' (*lapidariae litterae, Satyricon*.58.7), by which he must mean the capitals of inscriptions, we gain a rare glimpse of differentiated reading skills in the ancient world which may have been quite regular."[13] The letters carved into stone were all capitals and well proportioned. The limitation suggests that he could not read handwriting.

The Book of Mormon is clearly representative of the highest levels of literacy and is demonstrably highly literate from the beginning. The earliest text in our Book of Mormon is Nephi's first eponymous book. Internal evidence indicates that he was already writing the book we know as First Nephi within thirty years of his family's arrival in the New World (2 Ne. 5:28). Nephi also indicates that he had already been writing prior to the time he recorded that date: "I, Nephi, had kept the records upon my plates, which I had made, of my people thus far" (2 Ne. 5:29). Nephite literacy, therefore, can be directly traced from Nephi back to Jerusalem. Not only Nephi, but his father Lehi could both read and write.[14] Nephite literacy flowed from Old World literacy. The assumptions Nephi might have made about his people's need for literacy might reasonably reflect the understanding of literacy in the culture from which he derived his own education in reading and writing.

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from those without it. The invention of writing did not promote a social or intellectual revolution, and reports of the death of orality have been exaggerated.

13   Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece*, 9.

14   1 Ne. 5:10 has Lehi reading the brass plates and 1 Ne. 6:1 mentions "the record which has been kept by my father." Mosiah 1:4 tells us: "For it were not possible that our father, Lehi, could have remembered all these things, to have taught them to his children, except it were for the help of these plates; for he having been taught in the language of the Egyptians therefore he could read these engravings, and teach them to his children, that thereby they could teach them to their children, and so fulfilling the commandments of God, even down to this present time" (Mosiah 1:4).

The ancient Near East was certainly literate, but not universally literate. The literacy rate has been estimated at only five percent of the population in ancient Mesopotamia and perhaps slightly higher in Egypt.[15] Christopher Rollston, Visiting Professor of Northwest Semitic Languages and Literatures at George Washington University, provides the probable comparative information for ancient Israel:

> Mesopotamian cuneiform and Egyptian (hieroglyphic, hieratic, or demotic) were difficult to master. For this reason, it is also plausible to posit that the rates of literacy among the populace were higher in ancient Levantine societies with an alphabetic writing system than in Mesopotamia or Egypt. I will concede this point. Of course, literacy rates in ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt are estimated to be very low, with some studies suggesting that the rate is in the low single digits. Therefore, even if it is plausible to posit higher rates of literacy for those living in ancient Israel than for those living in Mesopotamia or Egypt, this does not lead to the conclusion that the non-elite populace was literate. Ultimately, I would contend that the Old Hebrew epigraphic data and the biblical data align and reveal that trained elites were literate and there is a distinct dearth of evidence suggesting that non-elites could write and read. Those wishing to argue for substantial amounts of non-elite literacy can do so, but it is a perilous argument without much ancient or modern support.[16]

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15   Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible*, 10.

16   Christopher A. Rollston, *Writing and Literacy in the World of Ancient Israel: Epigraphic Evidence from the Iron Age* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), 134. Van der Toorn (*Scribal Culture*, 11) also states: "The evidence suggests that the role of writing in Israel was about the same as elsewhere in the ancient Near East; the literacy rate was presumably similar to that in

The evidence suggesting that the division between literate and illiterate replicated the division between elite and non-elite does not suggest that there was an absence of writing among the non-elites. Because concepts of literacy can cover a wide range of abilities, it is quite likely that there was some ability to read present among at least some of the non-elite. Nevertheless, Roland De Vaux suggests a rather widespread literacy in ancient Israel: "Writing was in common use at an early date. Besides the professional scribes, like those employed at the court for administration, and private secretaries like Baruch, members of the ruling class could write, judging by the stories of Jezebel and of Isaiah. But these were not the only ones: a young man of Sukkoth was able to give Gideon, in writing, the names of all the chiefs of his clan, and the commandment of Deuteronomy 6: 9; 11:20 [to place a written phrase on the doorposts] presumed that every head of family could write."[17]

Unfortunately, De Vaux's evidence for widespread literacy is questionable. Writing as a talisman was a widespread practice in antiquity, but the possession of a text does not require the ability to personally create it or even necessarily to read it.[18]

surrounding civilizations as well." David M. Carr ("In Conversation with W. M. Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel*," in *Perspectives on Hebrew Scriptures II: Papers from the Journal of Hebrew Scriptures. Comprising the Contents of Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*, Volume 5., ed. Ehud Ben Zvi [Piscataway, New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2007], 330) also states: "Following Harris and other scholars who have studied ancient literacy levels, I think that it is highly unlikely that even "basic literacy" was "commonplace" across all of ancient Israel."

17   Roland De Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, First published in French in two volumes under the title *Les Institutions de l'Ancien Testament* in 1958. First English translation 1961 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 49. Internal references silently removed.

18   Marvin Meyer and Richard Smith, eds., *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1994). Meyer and Smith present a published corpus of Christian magical texts. These range from curses to protective amulets to portable prayers. The wide range and anonymous authors make it impossible to definitively declare that many were commissioned rather than created by the owner. However, the magical nature of many of the

Thomas documents the hazards of presuming that the magical functions of texts imply literacy in those who employed them:

> When literacy was taken over by Buddhist monks in Tibet they used it for what to them was its obvious and necessary function, to print prayers on the water. Writing is often used for magical purposes and this is not confined to the semi-literate or (vicariously) to the illiterate who might be expected to treat writing with awe. In the Old Testament a woman who has committed adultery is made to swallow water into which a curse written out "in a book" has been diluted. She is literally drinking the curse (Numbers 5:23–24). Diluted writing is also widely used for medical remedy: in Somali for instance, powerful passages from the Koran are written out, then washed into the cup of water and the water is then drunk.[19]

Although posting a text on the doorposts cannot suggest widespread literacy, it is certain that the assumed division between elite and non-elite was not absolute. Nevertheless, the social expectation presumed an inability to read and write. The Lachish letters were ostraca (scraps of pottery used for writing) written to and from military leaders apparently preparing for

texts strongly suggests that there was a ritual specialist whose power with the other world was encoded in text and provided to the bearer of the paper or amulet. Edmund Meltzer, in the introduction to "Old Coptic Texts of Ritual Power," (in *Ancient Christian Magic*, 17–18) notes: "The identification or self-predication of identity of the ritualist with the divine being or power remains a feature of Coptic texts of ritual power, and is quite likely one of the reasons why the popular or everyday use of ritual power was proscribed by the church authorities." It is highly unlikely that all those using such written ritual power texts would have been ritual specialists or had the temerity to presume self-identification with a divine being. It is therefore most likely that most who possessed and used such texts acquired them from a ritual specialist, even when the text is written as a first-person invocation.

19   Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece*, 19–20.

Nebuchadnezzar's invasion (around 590 BC). That invasion eventually resulted in the fall of Jerusalem, the Babylonian exile, and of course, the departure of Lehi and his family for the New World. A military commander sent the following response to his superior:

> Your servant Hoshayahu (hereby) reports to my lord Ya'ush. May YHWH give you good news.… And now, please explain to your servant the meaning of the letter which my lord sent to your servant yesterday evening. For your servant has been sick at heart ever since you sent (that letter) to your servant. In it my lord said: "Don't you know how to read a letter?" As (Y)HWH lives, no one has ever tried to read me a letter! Moreover, whenever any letter comes to me and I have read it, I can repeat it down to the smallest detail.[20]

The fact that letters were exchanged clearly points to some literacy. However, the commander's expectation was that the recipient would have the letter read to him. The subordinate's reply reflected justifiable pride in his ability to read. Literacy outside of the elites existed, but was sufficiently unusual that it was an unexpected exception. In addition to highlighting the typical expectations of literacy, however, this letter writer also tells us that even in a culture with some literacy it was essentially only an adjunct to orality, not a replacement for it. The subordinate also declares that when "I have read it, I can repeat it down to the smallest detail." There is no indication that the record itself would be referenced, but rather that the

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20 J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (Louisville, Kentucky: The Westminster John Knox Press, 1986), 418. See also "Lachish Letters," *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*, accessed September 2010, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lachish_letters#cite_note-1.

function of the writing was to provide the information that would then be remembered without the written copy.[21]

This early division between elite and non-elites gradually changed for later Israelite society.[22] In the first century,

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21   Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible*, 12: "In order for a written communication to reach its destination, however, the written text needed a voice. Texts were for the ears rather than the eyes…. Even such a mundane form of written communication as the letter usually required the intervention of someone who read its contents to the addressee. A messenger did not deliver the letter like a mailman; he announced its message, and the written letter served as aide-mémoire and means of verification."

22   Paul Y. Hoskisson, "Jeremiah's Game," *Insights* 30/1 (2010), 4. Hoskisson suggests that coding game in Jeremiah might suggest a fairly widespread literacy in Israel during the time when Lehi's family left and therefore might explain the apparent widespread Nephite literacy. There are two problems with that suggestion.

The first issue is whether or not this literary code/game (called *atbash*) suggests literacy. In *atbash*, the Hebrew letters are arranged in two rows where the first half is in typical order, and in the second row that letters are in a reversed order. Then a work is created by selecting the character in the opposite row of that of the actual letter of the word. Hoskisson (pp. 3–4) indicates that "any use of an atbash works only if his audience were somewhat literate." Unfortunately, what it tells us is that it requires not simple literacy but a trained form of literacy. One needed not only to be able to read, but to know that a written word was not actually a word and then know to apply *atbash* as a means to translate it. Even the most literate might require the time to stop and translate. Thus, it requires much more than literacy to understand the game.

Nevertheless, Hoskisson is correct that the message is lost if the intended audience doesn't get the reference. That does not require textual literacy, but more of cultural literacy. One who read or heard Jeremiah would have to know that the word being used was code for the other language. Once the knowledge was available, the game no longer came into play but simply the meaning derived from using it. The level or training required to create and understand *atbash* exceeds typical literacy. It therefore argues that understanding was more likely based on a usage that supplied the meaning (directly by instruction or indirectly through context). See the discussion of recognizing the word STOP in a stop sign and the phrase *e pluribus unim* in the body of this discussion.

The second problem is whether or not this hint at literacy has any meaning for the Nephite population long after their departure from Israel. I can easily agree that Nephi's training suggests a literate family who would intend to keep that literacy alive. However, it doesn't necessarily tell us how literacy collided with the inmixture of the native New World population who were

reading the Torah was taught in both schools and homes.[23] Deanna Draper Buck, a support specialist for Seminaries and Institutes of Religion in Louisville, Kentucky, argues that a similar widespread literacy would have existed in Israel prior to the time Lehi and his family left for the New World.[24] She cites De Vaux's assertion of the meaning of the texts on the doorposts. She also suggests that "Reading and writing have been distinguishing characteristics of God's people from the Creation. God gave a commandment to Adam to keep records and teach his children to read and write so that they could be able to read, remember and keep the commandments."[25] While true, evidence suggests that not all of Adam's descendants (and perhaps only few) were able to read. The scriptures were unmistakably valuable in ancient Israel, but most of Adam's children would have heard them read rather than personally read them. Harry Y. Gamble, Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia, reminds us that even in early Christianity, "This [lack of general literacy] is true in spite of the importance the early church accorded to religious texts, for acquaintance with the scriptures did not require that all or even most Christians be individually capable of reading them and does not imply that they were."[26]

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not likely to have been literate (and if they were, certainly not in the Hebrew language or however Egyptian was used).

23   Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church*, 7: "Instruction in reading Hebrew was more widely given among Jews than instruction in Greek or Latin was among Gentiles and with less regard to social status. According to Josephus, in first-century Judaism it was a duty, indeed a religious commandment, that Jewish children be taught to read. Such training may often have been given at home by parents, but rabbinic sources suggest that by the first century schools were common in towns and were heavily enrolled."

24   Deanna Draper Buck, "Internal Evidence of Widespread Literacy in the Book of Mormon," *The Religious Educator* 10, no 3 (2009): 62–63.

25   Buck, "Internal Evidence": 60.

26   Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church*, 5.

Although literacy was clearly present and important in the ancient Near East, texts most often served in support of a primarily oral means of communication.[27] Perhaps the easiest way to understand the relationship between the written and spoken word is that even the written word became comprehensible only after its conversion into oral form. Gamble notes: "In the Greco-Roman world virtually all reading was reading aloud; even when reading privately the reader gave audible voice to the text. Thus, apart from the context, the difference between private and public reading was not in a contrast between silent reading and reading aloud, but in levels of projection."[28] Karel Van der Toorn adds: "Written documents were read aloud, either to an audience or to oneself. Silent reading was highly unusual. Even the student who read in solitude 'muttered' his text."[29] Thus, even the most literate used the text to generate an oral message. The fact of a text did not diminish the uses or importance of oral transmission. In fact, it can be argued that Greek books were created by dictation, creating the fascinating cycle of oral transmission to written text and back to oral when the dictated text was read aloud.[30] The ancient world was literate, but the message of their literacy typically reached the majority of the people orally.[31]

The Primacy of Orality in Nephite Culture

Most ironically for a culture where our entire body of evidence consists of a text, I suggest that Nephite culture depended first upon oral communication and only secondarily upon written. It is an idea William Eggington, chair of the Department of Linguistics at Brigham Young University, proposed in 1992:

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27 Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece*, 4.

28 Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 203.

29 Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 12.

30 Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece*, 91.

31 Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 13.

"The major hypothesis I wish to develop in this paper is that Lehi and his descendants functioned in a society which exhibited strong oral residual culture characteristics: they had access to print as a technology, but retained many features of a nonprint culture."[32] He examined aspects of the Book of Mormon that arguably retain characteristics of oral texts rather than texts more dependent upon literate tradition. To his examination I will add a further examination of plausible oral elements within Nephite literate production as well as an examination of the functions and audiences for Nephite written texts.

Nephi, who I suggest was a trained scribe, lamented: "neither am I mighty in writing, like unto speaking" (2 Nephi 33:1). At the end of the Book of Mormon, Moroni appears to underline the primacy of oral communication when he declares: "The Gentiles will mock at these things, because of our weakness in writing; for Lord thou hast made us mighty in word by faith, but thou hast not made us mighty in writing; for thou hast made all this people that they could speak much, because of the Holy Ghost which thou hast given them" (Ether 12:23).

Although it is possible to read this verse only as an affirmation of the power of the Holy Ghost, it still supposes that Nephites at this late date considered their oral performance more powerful than the written record.[33] Reading Moroni's declaration as an indication of the primacy of oral communication might be strengthened by the Nephite prophecy of Joseph Smith's role,

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32   William G. Eggington "'Our Weakness in Writing:' Oral and Literate Culture in the Book of Mormon," FARMS Reprint (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1992), 2.

33   Eggington ("Our weakness in Writing," 5–6) suggests: "Some authors of the Book of Mormon knew the linguistic constraints and difficulties they faced as they constructed their texts. The oft quoted scripture of Ether 12:27, "and if men come unto me, I will show unto them their weakness," derives from counsel given to Moroni because Moroni was disturbed by his and other writers' weaknesses in writing. They admit 'stumbling because of the placing of [their written] words' (Ether 12:26), even though they acknowledge that their spoken words were powerful."

which declares that for Joseph it will be the text rather than the oral communication that is more spiritually powerful: "And the Lord hath said: I will raise up a Moses; and I will give power unto him in a rod; and I will give judgment unto him in writing. Yet I will not loose his tongue, that he shall speak much, for I will not make him mighty in speaking. But I will write unto him my law, by the finger of mine own hand; and I will make a spokesman for him" (2 Nephi 3:17).[34]

Discovering whether or not Moroni's statement truly describes a culture that was primarily oral and only secondarily literate will be difficult given that our only evidence of that putative orality will come from a written text. Thomas notes that: "The historian Herodotus is also analysed as an 'oral writer', on the grounds of his style. Fluent and leisurely, it has certain archaic features (like ring composition [another term for chiasmus]) which some have seen as specifically 'oral.'" [35]Nevertheless, she concludes: "But what seems to deserve more critical questioning is whether these stylistic features can simply be attributed to 'orality', the 'oral context', the prevalence of performance—all fairly vague terms—or to the literary and stylistic tradition then dominant."[36]

We face the same challenge is discerning orality from Nephite literate production.[37] Fortunately, we have a long

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34   The shift from powerful speaking to the lesser medium of writing may be further emphasized as Joseph translated the Book of Mormon. Moroni indicates that "the Lord knoweth the things which we have written, and also that none other people knoweth our language; and because that none other people knoweth our language, therefore he hath prepared means for the interpretation thereof" (Mormon 9:34). Only through divine preparation and direct influence would the meaning of the Book of Mormon be known to a future audience.

35   Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece*, 102.

36   Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece*, 102.

37   Eggington ("Our Weakness in Writing," 2) lists the specific weaknesses in such a study:

> First, we do not know everything about oral societies. Because oral societies, by definition, do not keep written, and thus preservable, records one can only deduce certain generalities from

text. Nevertheless, I must underline the fact that this analysis of orality begins with the presumption of a primary orality. Declaring that the Nephites are best seen within the known range of human populations in antiquity, I look for orality assuming that it ought to be found. An initial assumption of universal literacy would likely see the evidence differently.

Perhaps this difference in initial assumptions lies behind the very different conclusions I propose than those suggested in Deanna Draper Buck's "Internal Evidence of Widespread Literacy in the Book of Mormon." One sample of her evidence comes for the repeated injunction to search the scriptures:

> The following references show examples of people, both elite and common, being commanded to *search* the scriptures. King Benjamin commanded his sons to "*search* them diligently, that ye may profit thereby" (Mosiah 1:7; emphasis added). While Jesus was speaking to the multitude in Bountiful following his resurrection, he spoke of the prophecies of Isaiah and said, "Behold they are written, ye have them before you, therefore *search* them" (3 Nephi 20:11; emphasis added). A little later, Jesus again admonished the multitude to search the scriptures relating to Isaiah: "And now, behold, I say unto you, that ye ought to *search* these things. Yea, a commandment I give unto

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myths, legends, and a few oral societies that exist today, such as some Australian Aboriginal communities. Second, we don't know much about the cultures of Book of Mormon peoples. The Book of Mormon is a translated document. Thus when this paper examines textual evidence, we must realize that many syntactical structures could have been filtered through the English language. Although these gaps are significant, I believe that sufficient evidence warrants consideration of my conclusions.

Of his cautions, I see the problem of translation as perhaps the greatest. Some evidence depends upon the kind of vocabulary that is subject to alteration through the translator and therefore may only be used with appropriate caution.

you that ye search these things diligently; for great are the words of Isaiah" (3 Nephi 23:1; emphasis added).[38]

The way Buck and I understand these verses differs based upon the assumptions we bring to them. Beginning with the assumption of widespread literacy, these verses suggest that each person hearing this commandment has an available copy of the scriptures and should therefore spend significant time searching in that text, specifically the Isaiah portions. Beginning with the assumption of limited literacy, this is a command to those who have access to do the searching. In defense of the more limited reading, it is similar to what Rollston suggests for a parallel issue in understanding the Bible: "Sometimes scholars will refer to the number of times 'reading' and 'writing' is mentioned in the Hebrew Bible and assume that this demonstrates that elites and non-elites could read and write. However, I would contend that the Hebrew Bible was primarily a corpus written by elites to elites. That is, it would be difficult to suggest that statements in the Hebrew Bible could be used as a basis for assuming the literacy of non-elites."[39]

Rollston's caution is important because it reminds us that the very fact that our evidence comes from a literate production skews the information about what the culture was like outside of a written text. In antiquity, orality and literacy coexisted in some culturally-determined balance. When our evidence for orality comes only through a literate text, it will be difficult to discern the precise nature of that balance.

Nevertheless, understanding that the beginning assumption will significantly influence the conclusion, I posit that, like other ancient populations, the Nephites were likely primarily oral and only secondarily literate. The cross-cultural

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38 Buck, "Internal Evidence of Widespread Literacy in the Book of Mormon," 67.

39 Rollston, *Writing and Literacy in the World of Ancient Israel*, 133.

information about how such cultures worked will provide an interpretive context in which we may best judge the type of evidence for orality that can be deduced from Nephite literate production.

Textual Suggestions of Oral Primacy

Although modern readers and writers are able to silently understand or produce a text, I suggest that it is still very common that texts are connected to orality. When we read silently, we often silently produce the words rather than simply understanding them directly from the symbols on the pages. When we write, we record words that we have constructed silently. Thus, even modern writing can be conversational and replicate manners of speaking. The training of literacy constrains those more casual oral tendencies by stylistic devices that are more appropriate to the written rather than spoken language. Where an oral presentation might use repetition of concepts in different words to help the audience understand the concepts, a written text can be more concise precisely because the text is available for repeated consultation.

In the absence of training in producing the written word, written texts easily replicate speech with all of its repetitions, asides, and imprecision. The modern proliferation of electronic social media provides ample evidence of the replication of speech into written communication. For modern published texts, those natural tendencies are constrained by training, cultural dictates, and editors who encourage writers into more concise and precise presentations of ideas. Without the benefit of editors, the Nephites should have reproduced evidence not only of their oral style but also of their primary dependence upon oral communication—even as they wrote.

The fact that the Book of Mormon is a translated text makes evidence derived from vocabulary particularly problematic as it is difficult to know how much of the presence of a particular

word derives from the plate text and how much is the result of the translator's vocabulary and understanding.[40] Even if it cannot be conclusive, there are, nevertheless, some anomalous mixtures of verbs for writing and speaking that are worth noting as possible evidence of a primary orality. For example, Nephi is physically writing on the plates, but the words he uses to express what he intends to communicate are oral: "And now, I would prophesy somewhat more concerning the Jews and the Gentiles. For after the book *of which I have spoken* shall come forth, *and be written* unto the Gentiles, and sealed up again unto the Lord, there shall be many which shall *believe the words which are written*; and they shall carry them forth unto the remnant of our seed" (2 Nephi 30:3, emphasis added). The statement "of which I have spoken" could easily and more accurately have been "of which I have written."

The same mix of oral and written occurs as Nephi transitions from transcribing his own oral sermon to transcribing Jacob's:

> And now I, Nephi, make an end of my prophesying unto you, my beloved brethren. And I cannot write but a few things, which I know must surely come to pass; neither can I write but a few of the words of my brother Jacob.
>
> Wherefore, *the things which I have written* sufficeth me, save it be a few words which *I must speak* concerning the doctrine of Christ; wherefore, *I shall speak unto you plainly*, according to the plainness of my prophesying. (2 Nephi 31:1–2)

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40   I have discussed these issues and cautions in Brant A. Gardner, *The Gift and Power: Translating the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Kofford Books, 2011), 233–39.

Nephi is not the only one to mix words indicating written and oral communication. Mormon records: "And now, *I speak somewhat concerning that which I have written*" (Words of Mormon 1:3); and again: "*Hearken*, O ye Gentiles, and *hear the words of Jesus Christ*, the Son of the living God, which he hath *commanded me that I should speak concerning you*, for, behold he commandeth me that *I should write, saying*: (3 Nephi 30:1)."

In these cases, Nephi and Mormon are quite clearly writing. They both slip into a vocabulary that suggests that they most often expect their communication to be oral. Thus they write, but write as they might speak—using the vocabulary of an oral presentation.

Of course, this kind of evidence is highly circumstantial as it is not unusual to use oral vocabulary even when referring to writing. We often cite what someone has written by indicating that he or she *said* that information. Conventions are strong enough that even the blind might respond, "yes, I see."[41] Nevertheless, the fact that texts were read out loud in antiquity may be seen to underlie this juxtaposition of orality and textuality in the same way that we see it in Isaiah 29:8: "And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book." The deaf could *read* the book if they were literate, but would not understand it properly unless it was read aloud; thus, the importance of *hearing* the words written in the book.

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41   Carnoldi, Cesare and Rosanna DeBeni. "Imagery and Blindness," in *Tall Tales About the Mind and Brain: Separating Fact from Fiction*, ed. Sergio Della Sala (Oxford, England and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 370. "There have also been reports showing that blind people tend to use linguistic expressions referring to a visual experience (e.g., 'I lost sight of you' or 'See you tomorrow') more often than sighted people do, including expressions which directly refer to a visual act (e.g., 'Let's go and watch TV.'"

There is one very clear case where a text is read aloud (the most common method of textual communication of antiquity). The peoples of Limhi and Alma were both descendants of people of Zarahemla who had left for the land of Nephi. They had recently split into two groups in the land of Nephi and both had returned to Zarahemla. They were literate and produced a written record. As part of the public occasion welcoming them into Zarahemlaite society, their documents were read:

> And now all the people of Nephi were assembled together, and also all the people of Zarahemla, and they were gathered together in two bodies.
>
> And it came to pass that Mosiah did read, and caused to be read, the records of Zeniff to his people; yea, he read the records of the people of Zeniff, from the time they left the land of Zarahemla until they returned again.[42]
>
> And he also read the account of Alma and his brethren, and all their afflictions, from the time they left the land of Zarahemla until the time they returned again. (Mosiah 25:4–6)

This was certainly more pragmatic than copying and disseminating the records, but based on the abridgement that we have from Mormon, the original reading would have required a fair amount of time. This suggests two things. The first is the reverence for that which was written, and the second is the expectation of an oral performance of the text in a public

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[42]   We have the rare opportunity to have one of the documents that was read to the population at this time. Mosiah 9–10 reproduce the first-person record of Zeniff, Limhi's grandfather. Mormon entered that document into the record without editing. Mormon provides his edited version of the remainder of the record.

setting. The ability of an audience to participate in very long oral presentations continued through the 19th century in the United States where both political and religious speeches from a single speaker could last multiple hours.

On the other hand, there are also texts that appear to support widespread literacy. The first of these is the conversion of an oral event into a written event. King Benjamin's discourse held critical information for all his people. Consequently, we learn: "And it came to pass that he began to speak to his people from the tower; and they could not all hear his words because of the greatness of the multitude; therefore he caused that the words which he spake should be written and sent forth among those that were not under the sound of his voice, that they might also receive his words" (Mosiah 2:8).

Understanding of this event relies upon our interpretive assumption. From the assumption of widespread literacy, this can easily be read as distributing a large number of written copies, so that people could read them for themselves. However, from the cross-cultural assumption of limited literacy, there is another explanation. Van der Toorn notes: "Decrees were produced in numerous copies to be displayed in public places throughout the land, at city gates and temple gates, so as to inform the population. However, this alone would not have reached the general public. Dissemination was achieved through formal oral proclamation of these texts by appointed readers. Thus, in Israel, the royal decision to prohibit sacrifice in local temples in order to centralize worship in Jerusalem was communicated to the population through copies of the decree that were posted at the gates and read out loud by public readers."[43]

In a culture with limited literacy, King Benjamin's written text would be carried to separate communities and read to them.

43   Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 12–13.

Given the logical difficulties of preparing sufficient written texts for popular distribution and individual consultation, economic considerations strongly support an oral presentation of a few texts as opposed to a literate population consuming a large number of texts. Mesoamerican living patterns suggest that there were clan compounds for related families. In that setting, a written copy is taken to the clan compound and read to a more locally gathered people who would then be close enough to hear clearly. When Mosiah$_2$ declared the change from kings to judges, he also "sent again among the people; yea, even a written word sent he among the people" (Mosiah 29:4). This passage also shows the ambivalent language or orality in literacy: "And these were *the words that were written, saying*" (Mosiah 29:4).

The most intriguing passage in the Book of Mormon with respect to literacy comes as Alma$_2$ is preaching to the rural population supporting the Zoramites in Antionum:

> And now Alma said unto them: Do ye believe those scriptures which have been written by them of old?
>
> Behold, if ye do, ye must believe what Zenos said; for, behold he said: Thou hast turned away thy judgments because of thy Son.
>
> Now behold, my brethren, *I would ask if ye have read the scriptures?* If ye have, how can ye disbelieve on the Son of God? (Alma 33:12–14)

The plain sense of this verse is that Alma$_2$ has an expectation that these people had access to and were able to read the scriptures, which would suggest a very widespread literacy by the very nature of this group of people. These are the people who were "not permitted to enter into their synagogues to worship God, being esteemed as filthiness; therefore they

were poor; yea, they were esteemed by their brethren as dross; therefore they were poor as to things of the world; and also they were poor in heart." (Alma 32:3). This is precisely the class of people who should not be literate in the ancient world.[44]

There are only two possible ways to understand this verse. Either, contrary to all known human experience in the ancient world, the Nephites were literate on a very broad scale, or the text doesn't mean what it appears to mean. With trepidation, I suggest the latter. As a text in translation, there is always the possibility that the translation does not accurately reflect the source language. In this case, we have no way to know what the plate text said. We have only the translation. I suggest that in this verse, the verb "read" is either a reversal of the anomalous conflation of verbs of reading and speaking as noted above, or it is an artifact of a translation assumption that scriptures are to be read. Joseph Smith, as translator, would certainly be familiar with and be able to readily produce, a phrase asking if someone had read their scriptures.[45] For the translator, it had none of the striking anomaly that the phrase does when set in antiquity. Although my analysis leans heavily upon what is known of the ancient world, there are passages in the Book of

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44   Werner H. Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q.* 1993; rpt. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 17. "In antiquity, writing was essentially a product of urbanization and compact settlements; in rural areas language was almost entirely confined to face-to-face communication." Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 6: "We must assume, then, that the large majority of Christians in the early centuries of the church were illiterate, not because they were unique but because they were in this respect typical. The ancient world had virtually no system of education. What structures were did not suffice to cultivate general literacy at even a basic level, indeed, no such aim was ever envisioned. The opportunity for formal schooling even at the primary level was a luxury although it occasionally existed for slaves and freedmen. Thus, access to education was not closed to Christians but was limited by social class."

45   The phrase has a ready model for Joseph as translator in the New Testament. Matt. 21:42 "Jesus saith unto them, Did you never read in the scriptures." Also Mark 12:10 "And have ye not read this scripture."

Mormon that further suggest that the vocabulary surrounding accessing the scriptures is problematic.

When Aaron, one of the sons of Mosiah$_2$, is preaching before the king of the Lamanites, Mormon records:

> And it came to pass that when Aaron saw that the king would believe his words, he began from the creation of Adam, reading the scriptures unto the king— how God created man after his own image, and that God gave him commandments, and that because of transgression, man had fallen.
>
> And Aaron did expound unto him the scriptures from the creation of Adam, laying the fall of man before him, and their carnal state and also the plan of redemption, which was prepared from the foundation of the world, through Christ, for all whosoever would believe on his name. (Alma 22:12–13)

Aaron is relating scriptural stories from the brass plates. He certainly doesn't have the brass plates with him, and even carrying a perishable copy of the brass plates' text would constitute a rather large volume of material considering anciently available media. As he is in the court of the Lamanite king, it is also certain that he is not reading from the king's copy. The whole point is that this is new information for the king. Thus, we have another anomalous use of the verb "read." Aaron is reading when there is nothing before him to read. This same issue occurs with Abinadi.

Abinadi the prophet was apprehended in a public place and brought before Noah's court, consisting of the king and his priest-advisors. Those priests interrogated Abinadi. They attempted to find fault in Abinadi's understanding of scripture and therefore pose questions of exegesis to him. Abinadi stood before the court and presented his defense. At one point, he said:

"And now I *read* unto you the remainder of the commandments of God, for I perceive that they are not written in your hearts; I perceive that ye have studied and taught iniquity the most part of your lives" (Mosiah 13:11).

As with Aaron before the king of the Lamanites, it is highly unlikely that Abinadi had a scriptural text before him. In Abinidi's case, he was taken captive to the court of the king and even if he had carried some form of scripture into the city, it would likely have been taken from him before he entered the court. The priests certainly had access to a copy of the scriptures and had themselves read and studied them, but nothing suggests that they were consulted during the proceedings. Nevertheless, Abinadi indicated that he would "read." In this case, if nothing else, it is a beautiful turn of the phrase because his "reading" of the commandments contrasts with an inability of Noah's priests to "read" because they do not have the scriptures "written in your hearts."

However, the metaphorical reading of scriptures written in their hearts may have had a more direct reference. Van der Toorn provides the key: "The scroll served as a deposit box for the text; for daily use, people consulted their memory."[46] Even though Nephite scriptures clearly existed in a written form; even though Aaron and Abinadi could and did read and study them in the written form; their typical use of the scriptures would have relied upon memory. Aaron and Abinadi were "reading" the scriptures "written in their hearts." In more literal terms, they recited from memory. The existence of a text did not diminish the need for or use of memory as a primary means of storing information. Even in the Middle Ages, memorization and training the memory was emphasized as an important part of becoming learned and literate.[47]

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46   Van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 23.

47   Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece*, 23. She explains: "Memorization was not made redundant by the presence of books, but on the

Louis C. Midgley, retired professor of political science at Brigham Young University, suggested:

> Careful attention to one particular word used in the Book of Mormon yields some surprising dividends. For example, Lehi pled with his sons to remember his words: "My sons, I would that ye would remember; yea, I would that ye would hearken unto my words" (2 Nephi 1:12; italics added here and in subsequent scriptures). Such language may go unnoticed, or it may seem to be merely a request to recall some teachings. The word remember seems rather plain and straightforward. But when looked at more closely, the language about remembrance in the Book of Mormon turns out to be rich and complex—conveying important, hidden meaning.

> The Book of Mormon uses terms related to remembering and forgetting well over two hundred times. The ideas intended with these words must be significant. By looking carefully at what the Book of Mormon says about "the ways of remembrance" (1 Nephi 2:24), we can better understand the book's overall message.

> The first thing to note is that "ways of remembrance" does not mean simply inner reflections, or merely awareness of or curiosity about the past, or even detailed information to be recalled. True, in a number of places the idea of remembrance in the Book of Mormon seems to carry the meaning of recalling information about the past (see, for example, Ether 4:16; Alma 33:3). More commonly, however, remembrance refers to action.

contrary, books were regarded as only one way to remember and therefore to attain knowledge."

This action springs from realizing the meaning of past events. Thus, in the Book of Mormon, remembrance results in action.[48]

Although it is certain that *remembering* was a call to action, it may also represent the reality of the way in which the message of scripture was most effectively manifest in both Old Testament and Book of Mormon scripture. *Remember* may have signaled the same injunction as *search the scriptures*. The assumption of the primacy of orality would strongly suggest that remembering was the most important way in which most people interacted with the message of the scriptures.[49]

Structural Suggestions of Oral Primacy

When a text is encoded from a primarily oral culture, it might be expected that some of the structural devices used to assist in memorization or in the oral impact of the text might be encoded in the written version. For many Near Eastern texts, Van der Toorn explains: "Oral cultures dictate a particular style in

48 Louis C. Midgley, "The Ways of Remembrance," in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon. Insights You May Have Missed Before*, ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City and Provo: Deseret Book Company and Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1991), 168. These ideas were reprised in a shorter note the following year. See also Louis C. Midgley, "'O Man, Remember and Perish Not' (Mosiah 4:30)" in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City and Provo: Deseret Book Company and Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1992), 127–29.

49 In the Bible, "search the scriptures" is unique to the New Testament (John 5:39 and Acts 17:11). It occurs with greater frequency in the Book of Mormon (Jacob 7:23; Alma 14:1, 17:2, 33:2; 3 Ne. 10:14). The translation method I have proposed for Joseph Smith would allow his English translation of the Book of Mormon plate text to borrow the phrase "search the scriptures" from the Bible, making it difficult to know whether the presence of that phrase is due to meaning on the plates or to Joseph's translation. The 3 Nephi example is suggestive of limited literacy even as it suggests literacy: "And now, whoso readeth, let him understand; *he that hath the scriptures*, let him search them." (3 Nephi 10:14). This appears to be a recognition of limited access to scriptures in their physical form.

written texts, In Israel and Babylonia, texts were an extension, so to speak, of the oral performers. This is not to say that all texts were in origin oral artifacts, but that the oral delivery of the texts determined their style, even if they had originated in writing. The traditional texts from Israel and Mesopotamia are full of the stylistic devices of oral performance such as rhythm, repetition, stock epithets, standard phrases, and plots consisting of interrelated by relatively independent episodes."[50] This strongly suggests that if the Book of Mormon comes from a primarily oral culture, that it too would show signs of oral techniques. However, the Book of Mormon differs from the types of texts that Van der Toorn describes in that there is no indication that the Book of Mormon was ever meant to be read to an ancient audience. It was a sacred record, but one that presupposed a future literate audience. Therefore, some of the features of orality, such as the relatively independent short narratives, are not as clearly present in the Book of Mormon.

Eggington's discussion of orality in the Book of Mormon focused on structural evidence of an oral primacy. Following studies of oral poetry, Eggington suggests memory-aiding techniques such as repetition and formulaic phrases demonstrate that underlying oral primacy in the Book of Mormon text.

The Book of Mormon contains numerous examples of topic development through repetition. Topics are also developed through the oral, culturally-influenced parallel balanced patterns, such as chiasmus. In addition, there are many examples of other balanced discourse styles. Eggington states:

> Formulaic expressions occur frequently including such expressions as "and it came to pass", "and now", "but/and/or behold." As an aid to memory, oral societies tend to develop meaning through reference

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50   Van Der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 14.

to aggregative noun phrases, or word chunks. Thus… oral societies seldom refer to a soldier, rather "a brave soldier." Likewise, in the Book of Mormon account of Lehi's dream, it is never just a "rod," but a "rod of iron." Two examples of this word chunk occur in the same verse (1 Ne. 8:24, 1 Ne. 8:30), and six uses of this mnemonic chunk of language in eleven verses (1 Ne. 8:19–30). Likewise, in the same account it is never a "building" but always a "great (or large) and spacious building."[51]

Eggington also understands the inherent difficulty of using the vocabulary of a translated document to infer the nature of the underlying text. He concludes the above paragraph by noting: "However, I need to qualify this last point. It could be that the plates had single words for 'rod of iron' and 'large and spacious building.' Joseph Smith would then have had to translate them into English as aggregates or chunks."[52]

The process of oral or written textual creation by chunking is the best explanation behind some similar phrases found in widely separate locations in the Book of Mormon. John W.

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51 Eggington, "Our Weakness in Writing," 13–14.(Internal references to tables silently removed).Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece*, 29–51 provides an overview of the work on oral poetry and its manifestation through written texts. Importantly, she cautions (p. 49): "Formulae lie at the heart of the discovery that the Homeric poems were composed orally, and the idea that the composition of oral poetry is mechanically traditional. It is the formulaic system that helps an oral poet improvise in performance. It is still commonly thought—but incorrectly—that the presence of formulae shows that poem has been composed orally."

Thomas underscores Eggington's appropriate cautions. The presence of these structural elements do not indicate a prior oral composition. They rather represent the continuation of oral elements as the text is being created. For the Book of Mormon, it is unlikely that anything but the recorded speeches were first orally composed. Nevertheless, the primary orality of the culture would have, and I believe demonstrably did, influence the ways in which the text is presented in writing.

52 Eggington, "Our Weakness in Writing," 14.

Welch sees these as examples of intertextual quotation. The first case is the repetition of the phrase "saw God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God." Welch notes: "These words in Alma 36 are not merely a loose recollection of the scriptural record of Lehi's vision. There are twenty-one words here that are quoted verbatim from 1 Nephi 1."[53]

The second example comes from Helaman 14:12 where Samuel the Lamanite uses the same description of the Savior as is found in Mosiah 3:8: "Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and of earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning." Welch notes: "The twenty-one words…appear to be standard Nephite religious terminology derived from the words given to Benjamin by an angel from God (Mosiah 3:8)."[54]

The appearance of the same phrases in the same order certainly argues for a common source. But was that source

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53   John W. Welch, "Textual Consistency," in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon: The FARMS Updates.* ed. John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1992), 21–22. Welch does not deal with the problem created by the assumption that the text was copied from 1 Nephi. 1 Nephi and Alma were on different sets of plates, 1 Nephi being on the small plates and Alma on the large. Mormon tells us that he was unaware of the small plates at all until he discovered them during his editing of the book of Mosiah (W of M 1:3). There is no clear indication that the large plate writers were aware of the small plates or otherwise copied from them. Welch's suggestion of copying would therefore require that Mormon do the copying, but Mormon never indicates that he uses the small plates in any part of his editing of the large plates and would not have had any reason to consult the small plates while editing the book of Alma, which had no counterpart on the small plates.

It is possible, however, that it was Alma who made the copy from the small plates and then Mormon replicated the text precisely. While that is certainly possible since Alma$_2$ was only perhaps two generations away from the time the small plates were given to Mosiah$_1$, Mosiah$_2$'s grandfather (who was contemporaneous with Alma$_2$'s father, Alma$_1$). Nevertheless, the selection of only that phrase as well the necessity of both the original precise copy and the subsequent precise translation suggest that it is not the most parsimonious explanation of the presence of that particular phrase in the text.

54   John W. Welch, "Textual Consistency," 22.

the plates or the translator? Although it is tempting to use the length of the passages as an indicator of a complexity that relies on a written original, both of these examples comprise a set of phrases that would not be unusual or necessarily uncomfortable in Joseph Smith's language culture.[55] They represent linguistic chunks that would have been common in Joseph's language environment.

We must therefore heed Eggington's caution that it is possible that some of the evidence we see for word chunks could be the result of the translator rather than the plate text. Nevertheless, there are some word chunks that do appear to be related to the plate text. The phrase "father of heaven and of earth" appears multiple times in the Book of Mormon (see 2 Ne. 25:12; Mosiah 15:5; Alma 11:39; Hel. 14:12, 16:18). This particular phrase appears to be related to an ancient name/title for God. This specific phrase does not appear in the King James Bible but occurs seven times in the Book of Mormon.[56]

While the precise phrase does not exist in our current Bible, it may be related to the concept that may underlie the passages in the KJV's rendition of Genesis 14:19, 22 where God

55   An important parallel to the proposal that these were commonly understood phrases comes from the important analysis of oral songs. Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, ed. Stephen Mitchell and Gregory Nagy (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988, 2nd ed.), 4: "Stated briefly, oral epic song is narrative poetry composed in a manner evolved over many generations by singers of tales who did not know how to write; it consists of the building of metrical lines and half lines by means of formulas and formulaic expressions and of the building of songs by the use of themes." The singers have sets of stock phrases that can be easily inserted and require much less effort than the production of new material. In a similar way, the common phrases Joseph Smith employed would not require the same amount of mental effort as producing new material. Hence, a string of twenty-one newly conceived words in phrases would be significant, but a string of twenty-one words in common phrases could be more easily retrieved and even combined from shorter, but related, phrases.

56   2 Ne. 25:12; Mosiah 3:8, 15:4; Alma 11:39; Hel. 14:2, 16:18; Ether 4:7.

is a "possessor" of heaven and earth.[57] Daniel O. McClellan, while engaged in Jewish studies at the University of Oxford as a master's candidate, examined the linguistic history of the Hebrew word *qoneh* (variously translated as *purchaser, begetter, creator,* or *lord*) and concluded that "Gen. 14:19, 22 most likely represents an early expansion on the Syro-Palestinian formula 'El, begetter of the Earth.'"[58] The Book of Mormon phrase could not have borrowed from the KJV model but nevertheless appropriately translates a pre-exilic title that only later lost its procreative implications.[59]

Beginning with John W. Welch's discovery of chiastic passages in the Book of Mormon,[60] there has been an increasing attention to parallel structures in the Book of Mormon.[61]

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57 Gen. 14:19, 22: "And he blessed him, and said, Blessed *be* Abram of the most high God, *possessor* of heaven and earth."

"And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the *possessor* of heaven and earth" (emphasis mine).

58 Daniel O. McClellan, "*qonehshamayimwa'arez*, Genesis 14:19, 22: 'Begetter of Heaven and Earth,'" (unpublished manuscript, copy in my possession, used by permission), 16.

59 McClellan, "Begetter of Heaven and Earth," 16.

60 John W. Welch, "Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies* 10, no. 1 (1969): 69–84.

61 Some examples, arranged by date:

Wade Brown, *The God-Inspired Language of the Book of Mormon: Structuring and Commentary* (Clackamas, Oregon: Rainbow Press, 1988).

Richard Dilworth Rust, "Poetry in the Book of Mormon," *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City and Provo: Deseret Book Company and Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1991), 100–113.

Kevin L. Barney, "Poetic Diction and Parallel Word Pairs in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4, no. 2 (1995): 15–81.

Donald W. Parry, "Power Through Repetition: The Dynamics of Book of Mormon Parallelism," in *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited: The Evidence for Ancient Origins*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1997), 295–309.

Hugh W. Pinnock, *Finding Biblical Hebrew and Other Ancient Literary Forms in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1999).

Eggington looked at even smaller repetitions. For example, 1 Ne. 1:3 is unnecessarily repetitious for modern literary standards:

> And I know that the record which
> *I make* is true;
> and *I make it* with my own hand;
> and *I make it* according to my knowledge. (1 Nephi 1:3)[62]

In oral presentations, the repetitions reinforce and clarify the message. In wholly literary/written texts, such repetition is unnecessary because the presence of the text allows the reader to reread a passage if he or she requires further understanding. Both as remnants of the mnemonic devices of an oral culture and as a remnant of the nature of oral presentation, the repeated words, phrases, and patterns in the Book of Mormon point to a primarily oral culture whose written production mimics the more common orality. Eggington also reformats 2 Ne. 33:8:

> For if ye would hearken unto
> *the spiri*t which
> > *teacheth a man to pray*
> ye would know
> > *that ye must pray*;
> for the *evil spirit*
> > *teacheth not a man to pray*,
> but teacheth him
> > *that he must not pray.*[63]

In this short verse, there is an antithetical parallel between the spirit and the evil spirit.[64] The effects of the good and

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Donald W. Parry, *Poetic Parallelisms in the Book of Mormon: The Complete Text Reformatted* (Provo, Utah: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2007).

62   Eggington, "Our Weakness in Writing," 15.

63   Eggington, "Our Weakness in Writing," 15. I have slightly modified the indenting to make the parallels clearer.

64   For more examples of this type of inverse parallel, see Donald W. Parry, "Antithetical Parallelism in the Book of Mormon," in *Reexploring the Book of*

evil spirit are laid out in two phrases about prayer, where the positive effects of the spirit are directly reversed by adding the negative to the evil spirit's parallel effects. What is most interesting about such parallels is that we might assume that such nice parallelisms occur only with the careful creation and editing of a written text. Nevertheless, such structures are part of the production of oral poetry. While some might have been memorized, oral presentations are often adapted to a particular audience, and the parallels are part of what assist in the creation of the oral experience. Oral poetry can create elegant structural patterns without relying upon the written editing process.[65]

I believe that we can see this process in action in the Book of Mormon in the poetic lament that has become known as the Psalm of Nephi. Richard Dilworth Rust, Professor of English at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, notes: "The dominant poetic feature of the Psalm of Nephi is parallelism."[66] My examination of the parallels confirms his declaration of their importance, although we parse the text differently.[67] I have suggested that there is some evidence that the plate text version may have been even more parallel than what we have in

Mormon, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City and Provo: Deseret Book Company and Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1992), 167–69.

65   Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece*, 39: "If we accept that oral poets are capable of premeditation and reflection, of developing an idea without the aid of writing, then I see no reason to doubt that the final Homeric poet of the Iliad could have worked on the grand structure over a period of many years."

66   Richard Dilworth Rust, "Poetry in the Book of Mormon," in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon. Insights You May Have Missed Before*, ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City and Provo: Deseret Book Company and Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1991), 101.

67   Brant A. Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 2:77–79.

translation, as there are implied parallels that I strongly suspect were explicit in the original.[68]

Even though there are very clear parallel structures in the Psalm of Nephi, there is no overarching structure. The parallels appear to have been created in smaller sections, which suggest that they are the result of spontaneous creation through the use of the literary form rather than a premeditated and edited text. This is further indicated by the contrast between the style of the text leading to the poem.

> And it came to pass after my father, Lehi, had spoken unto all his household, according to the feelings of his heart and the Spirit of the Lord which was in him, he waxed old. And it came to pass that he died, and was buried.

> And it came to pass that not many days after his death, Laman and Lemuel and the sons of Ishmael were angry with me because of the admonitions of the Lord.

> For I, Nephi, was constrained to speak unto them, according to his word; for I had spoken many things unto them, and also my father, before his death; many of which sayings are written upon mine other plates; for a more history part are written upon mine other plates.

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68   Although examining a different type of evidence, Royal Skousen also suggests that the first dictated text was more parallel than our current one. Royal Skousen, "The Systematic Text of the Book of Mormon," in *Uncovering the Original Text of the Book of Mormon: History and Findings of the Critical Text Project*, ed. M. Gerald Bradford and Alison V. P. Coutts (Provo, Utah: The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2002), 52: "Frequently the original text shows a higher degree of parallelism between its linguistic elements."

> And upon these I write the things of my soul, and many of the scriptures which are engraven upon the plates of brass. For my soul delighteth in the scriptures, and my heart pondereth them, and writeth them for the learning and the profit of my children.
>
> Behold, my soul delighteth in the things of the Lord; and my heart pondereth continually upon the things which I have seen and heard. (2 Nephi 4:12–16)

Nephi has been describing events in prose. However, two things he has written appear to trigger this expansive inclusion of his lament. First, he notes Lehi's passing. Certainly that death had occurred some time before writing, but having written of it made it newly present in Nephi's mind.[69] The transition comes in verse 14 where Nephi links his thoughts about his father to recording his father's words on other plates. That combination appears to engender the need to discuss his feelings and reflect upon both his father and the purpose he is occupying so much time in writing on plates. The Psalm of Nephi appears to be a written expansion that occurred as he was writing. Although it is written, it is the result of the process he might have used in an oral presentation. The written text captured what he would have said, and what he would have said uses the parallel structures that Nephi was certainly familiar with from the Hebrew scriptures if not his own scribal training.[70]

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69   John W. Welch, "The Psalm of Nephi as a Post-Lehi Document," in *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon. The FARMS Updates of the 1990s*, ed. John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1999), 73: "Most of all, Nephi's heartfelt psalm reflects the deep sorrow he felt at the time he composed it (2 Nephi 4:17, 19). While he redirected this grief by speaking of his own 'iniquities' (2 Nephi 4:17), it would have been the death of his father that would have made him feel his own mortality and inadequacies so keenly."

70   I have suggested that Nephi was trained as a scribe in the Old World. See Brant A. Gardner, "Nephi as Scribe," *Mormon Studies Review* vol. 23, no. 1

Another structural element found in the Book of Mormon is one that is also found in the Old World scriptures. David Bokovoy, Associate Instructor of Languages and Literature at the University of Utah, describes this structural technique as it is known from the Old Testament: "Repetitive resumption refers to an editor's return to an original narrative following a deliberate interlude. Old Testament writers accomplished this by repeating a key word or phrase that immediately preceded the textual interruption."[71]

One example from Mormon is found in Alma chapter 17. In verse 13, Mormon tells us that when the sons of Mosiah came to the "borders of the land of the Lamanites, that they separated themselves and departed one from another." Then

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(2011): 45–55.

71   David E. Bokovoy, "Repetitive Resumption in the Book of Mormon," *Insights: A Window on the Ancient World* 27, no. 1 (2007): 2.

A careful survey of editorial activity in the Book of Mormon shows that Nephite editors used repetitive resumption in a similar manner. For example, the editor of the book of Alma (in this case apparently Mormon) interrupts the account of Alma's confrontation with Zeezrom by interjecting an outline of the Nephite monetary system (see Alma 11:1–19). Prior to this insertion, the account reads, "Now the object of these lawyers was to get gain; and they got gain according to their employ" (10:32). However, after the editorial interruption that breaks the flow of the primary narrative, the editor returns to the original account by using repetitive resumption: "Now, it was for the sole purpose to get gain, because they received their wages according to their employ" (11:20).

Another example of repetitive resumption in the Book of Mormon occurs in Helaman 5:5–14. In this section the compiler inserts a direct report of Helaman's powerful discourse to his sons Nephi and Lehi (see vv. 6–12). This insertion is intentionally prefaced by the editorial introduction, "For they remembered the words which their father Helaman spake unto them" (v. 5). The compiler's choice of words in this passage proves especially significant. The word remember serves as the Leitwort (key word) recurring throughout Helaman's discourse. In these few short verses, Helaman intentionally emphasizes the word remember by repeating it a total of 12 times. With great editorial skill, therefore, the compiler of this account used repetitive resumption to bracket Helaman's discourse with a return to the original introduction, "And they did remember his words" (v. 14).

Mormon diverts into a diatribe against the Lamanites and why the sons of Mosiah really needed to preach to them. When Mormon returns to his outlined narrative in verse 17, he says, "Therefore they separated themselves one from another, and went forth among them."

Also in Alma, we find a repetition that is much closer together:

> And it came to pass that the curse was not taken off of Korihor; but he was cast out, *and went about from house to house begging for his food.*

> Now the knowledge of what had happened unto Korihor was immediately published throughout all the land; yea, the proclamation was sent forth by the chief judge to all the people in the land, declaring unto those who had believed in the words of Korihor that they must speedily repent, lest the same judgments would come unto them.

> And it came to pass that they were all convinced of the wickedness of Korihor; therefore they were all converted again unto the Lord; and this put an end to the iniquity after the manner of Korihor.

> *And Korihor did go about from house to house, begging food for his support.* (Alma 30:56–58)

I intentionally recut the verses so the process would be clearer. Mormon followed his outline, which requires that we understand that Korihor is begging for food. This is the textual idea that will move the narrative from the story of Korihor to the story of the Zoramites. Mormon then decides to cover the repentance which follows the cursing, which is apparently an aside written during the transcription/writing on the plates. In

order to return to his planned narrative, Mormon repeats the information about Korihor begging for his food, even though the original phrase wasn't that far away in the text.

Where the Old Testament editors used this method to return to an original narrative after a deliberate interruption, Mormon used the technique to return to his outline after a spontaneous interruption. It is a technique well suited to oral presentations: the original line of thought being refreshed by the repetition of words that were used prior to the aside. As the Old Testament is known to have been a written document from a primarily oral culture, it suggests that this is a structural technique developed in oral presentations to make it easier for a listener to return from the aside to the original thread.

Another textual indication of Book of Mormon's authors' stream of consciousness interaction with the text they were engraving is the subject of an interesting article written by Mary Lee Treat of the Zarahemla Foundation (associated with the Church of Christ and dedicated to promoting Book of Mormon scholarship). She describes an important aspect of Book of Mormon textual creation:

> Some time ago while researching a certain topic In the Book of Mormon, I spent several hours a day in a concentrated search. In the course of this study, the frequent use of a certain phrase began to surface in my consciousness. Finally, one day the significance of this phrase dawned upon me.
>
> The configuration I had been noticing was "… or rather…" The context in which I first become aware of its use was in clarifying a preceding thought. For example:

"Now if a man desired to serve God, it was his privilege; or rather, if he believed in God it was his privilege to serve him…" (Alma 30:9)

'And they stood before the king, and were permitted, or rather commanded that they should answer the questions which he should ask them." (Mosiah 7:8)

I had just read that Mormon said they engraved upon plates in a form of Egyptian because it took less space than Hebrew, their spoken language (Mormon 9: 32– 33).

I also knew that Jacob had commented upon the difficulty of engraving on the plates:

"… and I can not write but little of my words, because of the difficulty of engraving our words upon plates …" (Jacob 4:1)

"… and we labor diligently to engraven their words upon plates …" (Jacob 4:3)

All of these thoughts finally jelled together to the point where I could ask, "What happens when an engraver makes a mistake?" It seemed logical that a clarifying phrase could correct an unclear sentence. Hence the phrase "or rather" or something similar would be utilized.

But what did the engraver do if an actual error was made? Did he have a means to erase? Did he throw away the entire plate and start over?

We know from countless references that the answer to the last question is "no." Metal was precious and evidently not easily acquired. When Nephi's small plates were full the writers didn't add more blank plates. The manufacture of metal plates was evidently difficult and the work of engraving laborious.

Eagerly I began to search for phrases correcting actual errors. I began to find places where errors were corrected by a connecting phrase in direct opposition to the preceding thought. Probably the two clearest examples found so far are these:

"And thus we see that they buried the weapons of peace, or they buried the weapons of war for peace." (Alma 24:19)

"Now behold, the people who were in the land Bountiful, or rather Moroni, feared that they would hearken to the words of Morianton …" (Alma 50: 32)

Here the phrase, "people who were in the land Bountiful" should have been erased and "Moroni" inserted. With no erasers and scarcity of metal, the engraver simply inserted the qualifying phrase plus the correction.[72]

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72   Mary Lee Treat, "No Erasers," in *Recent Book of Mormon Developments*, ed. Raymond C. Treat (Independence, Missouri: Zarahemla Research Foundation, 1984), 54. I have changed the references to the Community of Christ chapter and verse numbers to those found in the LDS scriptures. I have also slightly regularized some formatting. A very similar argument is Gary C. Lawrence, "Smell of the Lamp, Smell of Engraving," *Meridian Magazine*, November 2, 2010, accessed June 2013, http://www.ldsmag.com/article/1/6585.

Treat is looking at a very important aspect of the Book of Mormon. The process is one of self-correction. While agreeing entirely with her analysis that these verses indicate a corrected error, I don't see them as related to the difficulty of writing on plates but rather to the habits of the underlying primacy of orality. Self-correction occurs all of the time in both spoken and written texts. However, in written texts we attempt to remove the evidence of our errors. One of the methods employed is the one Treat suggests, which is that we erase. However, the problem of engravers is only slightly different from that of those writing in ink. There are numerous documents that attest to the practice of striking out a word or a phrase. There is no reason to believe that a strikeout or some other method could not have been used on the plates. Nevertheless, we have these examples of self-correction.

Ruth Scodel, D. R. Shackleton Bailey Collegiate Professor of Greek and Latin at the University of Michigan, underscores the oral underpinnings of self-correction: "In genuinely spontaneous speech, self-correction and shifts of direction happen all the time. (Avoiding too much self-correction is an important measure of competence in such everyday oral narration as telling jokes.)"[73] It is also found in written texts. In that context, she notes:

> Self-correction presents very different issues, depending on whether it occurs within a single text or between texts. For a speaker to change his mind, stop himself, or announce that he has spoken inappropriately, generally implies an extemporaneous situation, since with preparation the speaker could presumably have gotten it right the first time (there

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73   Ruth Scodel, "Self-Correction, Spontaneity, and Orality in Archaic Poetry," in *Voice Into Text: Orality and Literacy in Ancient Greece*, ed. Ian Worthington (Leiden, The Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1996), 64.

is, of course, the special rhetoric of abandoning a prepared text in favour of spontaneous speech, but that is not at issue here). Pindar, of course, often engages in self-correction of this kind. On the other hand, when a speaker corrects what he has said before, on another occasion, the situation is somewhat different. There is no necessary implication of spontaneity, but there must be a previous relationship with the audience, since they must understand what is being corrected.[74]

What we have in the Book of Mormon is representative of extemporaneous self-correction. When the extemporaneous trait intentionally appears in a written text, Scodel suggests that "self-correction is the extreme example of pseudo-spontaneity."[75] In the Book of Mormon, it presumes too heavy a burden on literary sensibilities to assume that the self-correction was stylistic. When it occurs, it occurs just as it would in spontaneous speech and I suggest that it is an artifact of the oral style that is replicated in writing precisely because the oral style informs the literary. It becomes pseudo-spontaneity only in literature that is subject to revision and editing before being committed to final written form. As with the repetitive resumption, self-correction in the Book of Mormon is an indication that there was some spontaneous writing on the plates, even though there is also evidence that there was at least an overall outline.[76]

In spite of the difficulties of engraving, it appears that Mormon did not have a full copy of his text composed on

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74   Ruth Scodel, "Self-Correction," 62.

75   Ruth Scodel, "Self-Correction," 64.

76   Gardner, "Mormon's Editorial Method," 84–97. Noel B. Reynolds ("Nephi's Outline," in *Book of Mormon Authorship: New Light on Ancient Origins*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds [Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1982], 53–74) examines intentional structuring in 1 Nephi. Also suggesting that Nephi had an outline is Frederick W. Axelgard, "1 and 2 Nephi: An Inspiring Whole," *BYU Studies* 26, no. 4 (Fall 1986): 53–65.

perishable form and then simply copied to the plates. Although the elements of oral primacy might still have informed his draft, the presence of these self-corrections point to changes made as he composed. They would have been easily caught in the copying process and we would have copy errors in the text rather than self-corrections.

> A possible confirmation of oral primacy comes from Christ's teachings at Bountiful:

> Therefore give heed to my words; write the things which I have told you; and according to the time and the will of the Father they shall go forth unto the Gentiles.

> And whosoever will hearken unto my words and repenteth and is baptized, the same shall be saved. Search the prophets, for many there be that testify of these things.

> And now it came to pass that when Jesus had said these words he said unto them again, after he had expounded all the scriptures unto them which they had received, he said unto them: Behold, other scriptures I would that ye should write, that ye have not. (3 Nephi 23:4–6)

Christ commands that they write his teachings, but not for their own benefit. They are to "go forth unto the Gentiles." For the present audience, the oral presentation was intended as the primary means of transmitting the message. Note that in verse 6 he repeats what he had taught. In the oral setting, the repetition allowed them to better remember what had been said. The implication is that they are to remember what was said, but the written text was for a different audience. Further understanding of the role of literacy in Nephite society will come from understanding both who is writing and to whom.

Function of Writing in the Book of Mormon

Rosalind Thomas reminds us that "throughout history many more people have been able to read than write."[77] This does not suggest that they would not be able to reproduce a letter or word that they could read, but that they were unable to translate their thoughts (or oral presentations) in a written form. The greater training required to produce a document suggests that we can understand some of the functions of literacy in a culture by examining what is written and who its audience might have been. The nature of the limited data source we have in the Book of Mormon is a caution that conclusions based upon that limited data may not represent the complete picture. We can only reconstruct a full picture of Nephite written production from the evidence at hand.[78]

We have explicit indications that three members of Lehi's family, Lehi, Nephi, and Jacob, wrote. From Nephi we have the two books he created that form our current beginning to the Book of Mormon, as well as the record he entitled the book of Lehi (which Mormon abridged and which was translated but lost in the 116 pages given to Martin Harris). Lehi also wrote a record (1 Ne. 6:1). While not conclusive, it is not unreasonable to assume that the social status of the family allowed for literacy for all of its members. Once established as a family trait, it is also likely that literacy would have continued among Nephi's and

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77   Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece*, 10.

78   Seeing Nephites as participants in greater Mesoamerican culture, and given the plausible location of their lands, it is plausible to assume that they also participated in the Maya text-producing culture. We can be certain that they were aware of it based on Mosiah$_1$'s translation of the stone with the Coriantumr's history (Omni 1: 20–21). That is expressly a stone brought in from another location, so although we are certain that they were aware of the written culture surrounding them, there is no internal evidence that they also participated in monumental texts such as are found in other Mesoamerican sites.

Jacob's descendants, at least for a few generations.[79] Jacob was not raised in Jerusalem and certainly learned to read and write from his family. Enos, son of Jacob, also writes as do others in that line (Jarom, Omni, Ammoron, Chemish, Abinadom, and Amaleki). Unlike Jacob, who clearly had an important role in Nephite society, we know nothing of the social status of his descendants. Omni and Abinadom specifically mention that they fought to defend their people. Perhaps they were military leaders and were both, therefore, of a lineage and caste that might write.[80] We know that at least some military leaders were literate. Both Captain Moroni$_1$ (Alma 54:5–14, 60:1–36) and Helaman1 (Alma 56:2–58:41) wrote letters while in the field.[81]

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79   Rollston, Writing and Literacy in the World of Ancient Israel, 124:
Based on a substantial amount of empirical data it has been argued in a cogent manner that "home experiences" have a formative impact upon such fundamental aspects of literacy as phonological awareness and knowledge of letters. There are a number of variables, but among the most important contributors is the practice of reading in the home, parental attempts at instruction in reading and writing, parental emphasis on the importance of literacy, and even the nature of general conversations in the home…. There is, therefore, a "generational component" to literacy in a family: literacy begets literacy. Conversely, illiteracy begets illiteracy. Nevertheless, there are exceptions.

80   John A. Tvedtnes ("Book of Mormon Tribal Affiliation and Military Caste," in Warfare in the Book of Mormon, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin [Salt Lake City and Provo: Deseret Book Company and Foundation for Ancient research and Mormon Studies, 1990], 313) notes that "other evidence for the importance of tribal/family descent in the Book of Mormon is found in the fact that some of the offices seem to be hereditary." He then discusses a possible military caste among the Nephites (pp. 317–22).

        If this were part of earlier Nephite society, then some of Jacob's descendants could have been in positions of military leadership and retained literacy to better function in that position. We also see the continuation of literacy in a family rather than just individuals in the fact that Amaron and Chemish are brothers and Chemish receives the records and charge to write from his brother (Omni 1:8).

81   Other letters are written by Pahoran, Chief Judge of the Nephites (Alma 61:2–21), and Giddianhi, the leader of the Gadiantons (3 Ne. 3:2–10). Ammoron, the Lamanite king, received and sent letters to Moroni1 (Alma 54:16–24).

When we return to the portion of the Book of Mormon based on the large plates of Nephi, we are clearly in the top tiers of Nephite society. Nephi had established that plate tradition to be "an account of the reign of the kings, and the wars and contentions of my people" (1 Ne. 9:4). As a record of the reigns of kings, it is clearly associated with the highest social tiers. Those listed as the writers are the kings, or the High Priests.

Who read what these people wrote? Of course, the reader depends directly upon the purpose for writing. Korihor (of unknown social status) could clearly both read and write (Alma 30:50–52). His writing clearly provided for immediate communication when he no longer had access to hearing or speaking. A similar function of relatively rapid communication is seen in the exchange of military letters that we see at the end of the book of Alma. Although it is possible that some might be sent with the expectation that they be read to the recipient, there is no textual indication that they were. It is best to assume that both those who sent them and those who received them had the ability to read and write. Benjamin and Mosiah$_2$ both created written versions of important political declarations and circulated them. In this case, the ultimate audience was the entire population, but pragmatism suggests that they were read to the final audience rather than the audience reading them directly. Still, there is clearly a function of relatively immediate communication in some of the writing attested in the Book of Mormon.

There were other records, however, that appear to have an archival function more than one of direct communication. In one case, Alma$_1$ receives a revelation and records it specifically, so that it becomes a reference against which his people might

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It is possible, however, that the text simply glosses over the use of scribes. However, if the leadership were among the upper class of society, as is probably in an ancient society, they would be those more likely to be literate.

be judged: "And it came to pass when Alma had heard these words he wrote them down that he might have them, and that he might judge the people of that church according to the commandments of God" (Mosiah 26:33). The function of the writing in this case appears to be the creation of a referenceable law, which might be consulted when needed.

The most important case is the non-perishable records kept on metal. There were three sets: the brass plates, the large plates of Nephi, and the small plates of Nephi.[82] The very act of inscribing the text on this material declares an assumption that they have a future audience for which they are being preserved. The fact that they were recorded for the millennia does not necessarily preclude their use in the living community. In fact, the brass plates are the source of the vast majority of identifiable quotations in both the small plates of Nephi and in Mormon's book which used the large plates of Nephi as a source. John Hilton III, an assistant professor of Ancient Scripture at Brigham Young University, points out a time when information that we know must have been on the large plates of Nephi (through Mormon's redaction) are referenced in such a way that it is both likely that they had not only been consulted but also distributed, so that others might understand them. He notes:

> Later textual evidence suggests that words from Alma, Amulek, and Zeezrom had been circulated among the people generally. When speaking to a group of Lamanites and apostate Nephites, Aminadab said, "You must repent, and cry unto the voice, even until ye

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82   The designation "large plates of Nephi" and "small plates of Nephi" are modern conventions to help us distinguish the records that had two different transmission paths in Nephite history. Nephi simply called both of them "plates of Nephi." The "large" and "small" refer to the quantity rather than the physical size of the plates.

shall have faith in Christ, who was taught unto you by Alma, and Amulek, and Zeezrom" (Hel. 5:41).[83]

The fact that later Nephite prophets had access to the words of earlier ones opens the possibility for intentional intertextual quotations and allusions within the Book of Mormon.

He also cautions in his footnote to this incident:

These words had been spoken forty-five years previously, indicating a reli¬ance on oral or written traditions, as opposed to the people in Helaman 5 having recently heard these words. It is also clear that a wide variety of people had access to the words on the brass plates, including both the wealthy priests of King Noah and the poor Zoramites (see Mosiah 12:20–21 and Alma 33:15). However, the fact that these words were circulated does not necessarily indicate widespread literacy among the Nephites. It is possible that the words were given to literate individuals in the community who then read them to others. Either way, it is clear that many people in the Book of Mormon were expected to be familiar with the teachings of earlier Nephite prophets.[84]

It is certain that the audience was being reminded of teachings that they should remember having been taught, even if they had forgotten to live according to those teachings. It is less clear what the source of their remembrance would have been. Certainly in the incident as described, there is an expectation of memory rather than the consultation of a source. Nevertheless, it is yet possible that there were sermons that were circulated

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83   John Hilton III, "Textual Similarities in the Words of Abinadi and Alma's Counsel to Corianton," *BYU Studies* 51, no. 2 (2012): 39-41.

84   Hilton, "Textual Similarities": 40n2.

just as royal decrees were, and parallel to instructive letters that were circulated among the early Christian church.

It is problematic to discover clear cases when those recorded on the large or small plates provide quotations from earlier writings on the large or small plates (obviously excepting Mormon who quotes often). Just as early Christian writers considered the Old Testament to be the scripture one quoted, so Book of Mormon writers overwhelmingly quote from the brass plates. There have been studies suggesting times when the Book of Mormon writers consulted the records.[85] The value of such studies has a direct correlation to one's understanding of the type of translation represented by the Book of Mormon, because they necessarily depend upon the repetition of phrases in English because the original language text is unavailable to us.

The explicit reader for both the small plates of Nephi and Mormon's book is in the distant future. The material from Words of Mormon through Moroni (including Ether) as well as the text from Jacob to Omni is clearly written to a future

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85   John W. Welch, "Textual Consistency," 21–22. John A. Tvedtnes and Kevin L. Barney ("Word Groups in the Book of Mormon," in *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon: The FARMS Updates of the 1990s*, ed. Melvin J. Thorne and John W. Welch [Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1999], 213) illustrate the problem of this type of analysis. It is suggested:

I first noted the possible presence of word groups in the Book of Mormon in connection with 3 Nephi 6:14. It struck me, when reading that passage, that the words "firm, and steadfast, and immovable" seemed to be a quote from Lehi's words to his son Lemuel in 1 Nephi 2:10. It seemed beyond coincidence that Mormon, who abridged the record in 3 Nephi, should have used the same three words employed by Lehi. Either Mormon was quoting Lehi's words or the combined use of these words was common among the Nephites.

Unfortunately, there is another more probable cause. The pairing "stedfast, unmoveable" appears in 1 Corinthians 15:58. Joseph's vocabulary included a facility for paralleling New Testament language and phrases. More importantly, Mormon tells us that he did not find the small plates until he was well into writing (Words of Mormon 1:3). There is little indication that he consulted that set of records as he continued to write, since he found those plates only after he had already written his account for the time period they covered.

audience. It is only Nephi's writing that gives us perhaps mixed signals about whom he believed his audience to be. Nephi specifically writes:

> Wherefore, for this cause hath the Lord God promised unto me that these things which I write shall be kept and preserved, and handed down unto my seed, from generation to generation, that the promise may be fulfilled unto Joseph, that his seed should never perish as long as the earth should stand.

> Wherefore, these things shall go from generation to generation as long as the earth shall stand; and they shall go according to the will and pleasure of God; and the nations who shall possess them shall be judged of them according to the words which are written.

> For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.

> And, notwithstanding we believe in Christ, we keep the law of Moses, and look forward with steadfastness unto Christ, until the law shall be fulfilled.

> For, for this end was the law given; wherefore the law hath become dead unto us, and we are made alive in Christ because of our faith; yet we keep the law because of the commandments.

> And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what

source they may look for a remission of their sins. (2 Nephi 25:21–26)

Verses 21 and 22 make it explicit that Nephi's writings would be seen in distant generations. While Nephi slips into the present when he writes that they "talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ," he still points out that "we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins." It is probable that *children* is used to represent lineal descendants in the future rather than their immediate progeny. Nephi clearly preached to a living audience, but he wrote for a distant one.[86]

In one special case, the audience was clearly and intentionally broad:

And when Moroni had said these words, he went forth among the people, waving the rent part of his garment in the air, that all might see the writing which he had written upon the rent part, and crying with a loud voice, saying:

Behold, whosoever will maintain this title upon the land, let them come forth in the strength of the Lord,

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86   There is a possibility that Nephi did intend something of what he wrote in the small plates to be read to his current population. He writes:

And now I write some of the words of Isaiah, that whoso of my people shall see these words may lift up their hearts and rejoice for all men. Now these are the words, and ye may liken them unto you and unto all men. (2 Nephi 11:8)

Wherefore, I write unto my people, unto all those that shall receive hereafter these things which I write, that they may know the judgments of God, that they come upon all nations, according to the word which he hath spoken. (2 Nephi 25:3)

In both of these cases, Nephi writes to "his people." However, it is unclear whether that people consisted of the current population or his descendants. With other statements indicating the future purpose, the reading of his descendant population may be the better.

and enter into a covenant that they will maintain their rights, and their religion, that the Lord God may bless them. (Alma 46:19–20)

The Title of Liberty was intentionally a visible symbol, and an important part of that visual symbol was the writing it contained: "And it came to pass that he rent his coat; and he took a piece thereof, and wrote upon it—In memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children—and he fastened it upon the end of a pole" (Alma 46:12). It is the only occasion in which the intended audience for writing included all who would see the banner. Does that mean that everyone who saw it was literate?

Answering that question requires that we remember that literacy is seldom an all or nothing proposition. We saw the example of the man whose knowledge of letters extended only to that which was carved in stone. Recognizing the word *STOP* on a stop sign does not require the same level of literacy as does reading a novel. Similarly, there are many who can understand *e pluribus unim*, which appears on money in the United States, even though they cannot read or understand any other Latin phrase.

The ability to recognize some words, then, provides some level of literacy. It does not represent the ability to read (and especially not to create) complex documents. For the Maya, Stephen Houston suggests: "I believe Maya writing developed in ways that reflected increased literacy, particularly for the Early Classic on, although from various clues it seems that writing and perhaps reading were still restricted to relatively few people."[87] Much of what remains of Maya writing is explicitly public. However, that does not necessarily mean that all could read all of the text. Houston notes: "I agree with Thompson and Kubler that the pictorial features of the writing were

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87   Houston, "Literacy Among the Pre-Columbian Maya," 40.

maintained—that is, prevented from achieving the abstraction that characterizes Chinese logographs—by the need to preserve superficial reading ability among a larger group of people."[88] The Title of Liberty, by its visibility and repetition, likely became a recognizable symbol that most could "read" because they already knew what it said.

Conclusion

The Book of Mormon is a literate product of a literate culture. It references written texts. Nevertheless, behind the obvious literacy, there are clues to a primary orality in Nephite culture. The instances of text creation and most instances of reading texts suggest that documents were written by and for an elite class who were able to read and write. Even among the elite, reading and writing are best seen as a secondary method of communication to be called upon to archive information, to communicate with future readers (who would have been assumed to be elite and therefore able to read), and to communicate when direct oral communication was not possible (letters and the case of Korihor). Even as Mormon and Moroni wrote, they wrote as though speaking, using techniques appropriate to oral performance adapted to the written text.

None of this changes the essential message of the Book of Mormon, but it does suggest that as we approach the text, the primacy of oral presentation may influence how we see the creation of the text. For example, there are numerous speeches recorded in the Book of Mormon. They exist in written form, but there is no indication that they were first written and then presented orally. Thus, the recording of the oral presentation is secondary and probably an incomplete and a post hoc edited version of what was originally presented. As we approach the text, we may gain new insights into the art with which it was

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88   Houston, "Literacy Among the Pre-Columbian Maya," 40.

constructed by examining it as the literate result of a primarily oral culture.

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The Time of Sin

Joseph M. Spencer

Abstract: *This essay provides a close theological reading of Helaman 13, the first part of the sermon of Samuel the Lamanite. Beginning from the insight that the chapter focuses intensely on time, it develops a theological case for how sin has its own temporality. Sin opens up a disastrous future, deliberately misremembers the past, and complicates the constitution of the present as the past of the future.*

In a well-known passage in the Book of Mormon, the visiting Christ reprimands his New World disciples for having omitted an important detail from their historical record: the fulfillment of a prophecy uttered by Samuel the Lamanite (see 3 Nephi 23:7–13). It might be worth asking exactly why the Nephite record-keepers were less than fully diligent on this score, less than fully attentive to Samuel's prophetic pronouncements. Whatever their (unjustified) reasons—and one suspects, frankly, that it unfortunately had something to do simply with the fact that he was a Lamanite—there is a sense in which we, today's readers of the Book of Mormon, replicate the ancient Nephites' relative lack of interest in Samuel's prophecies. Of the many sermons in the Book of Mormon, Samuel's is perhaps still the least studied. This may be because Samuel has relatively little to say in a direct fashion about "doctrine," and it is generally doctrine that draws Latter-day Saints to the Book of Mormon's major sermons. Or it may be because Samuel's sermon is at the end of a somewhat undeveloped and remarkably depressing book made up mostly

of rough sketches of war, apostasy, and wickedness. Whatever our (unjustified) reasons, we would do well to rectify this situation, revising our own accounts, written and unwritten, of what the Book of Mormon teaches by ensuring that Samuel has a place in them.

This essay is an attempt at a close reading of part of Samuel's prophetic sermon and thus an attempt in part to rectify our collective lack of theological interest when it comes to Samuel. My reading is guided at every moment by what seems to me to be Samuel's interest in time. This interest is in evidence throughout the sermon (as well, in interesting ways, as in the chapter that precedes the sermon), but the focus on time is most intense—and most instructive—in Helaman 13, where Samuel's theme is repentance. My own focus here, consequently, is limited to what Samuel has to say in that chapter. What I mean to develop from Samuel's discussion is a basic theological exposition of what might be called the time of sin. What that means will have to become clearer as my reading progresses. What follows comes in four parts: (1) an analysis of Samuel's opening words concerning the disastrous future and how it follows from the sinful present (see Helaman 13:5–23); (2) a study of Samuel's subsequent brief analysis of how the sinful present misremembers the past (see Helaman 13:24–28); (3) a look at how Samuel then returns to focus on the disastrous future, richly complicating his original account (see Helaman 13:29–37); and (4) a few concluding words concerning Samuel's final call to repentance (see Helaman 13:37–39).

The method I employ in what follows is that of scriptural theology. I aim neither to provide an exegesis of the text (which would require that Samuel's sermon be contextualized with respect to traditions on display in the Book of Mormon regarding remembrance and keeping covenant) nor to raise questions concerning the authorship or authenticity of the text (I assume the historicity of the text here and focus just on theological traces

in Samuel's words). My sole aim is to use the scriptural text as a resource for theological reflection. (In order to keep close just to the text of Helaman 13, I even omit outside resources, avoiding footnotes and other scholarly apparatus necessary in exegetical work.) Those words, "theological reflection," should not be understood in an overly narrow sense, as if the point were to do something like the sort of systematic theology exemplified in the writings of scholastic theologians. Like biblical theologians in the larger Judeo-Christian tradition today and following a tradition that has been productively active for at least a century, I mean to do something quite different from such "systematic" work. Beginning from the philosophical insight that human beings are fundamentally temporal beings—beings enmeshed in time, woven of memories and anticipations, riveted to the fleeting present—I mean to see how Samuel's constant use of temporal terminology in his diagnosis of Nephite sin might help us to understand the human condition, the experience of our passage through this fallen world as a "time of sin."

The Future (Helaman 13:5–23)

Samuel opens his sermon in Helaman 13 with an articulation of the causal relationship between sin and disaster, presented in terms of the way the (sinful) present leads directly to the (disastrous) future. This link between present and future is summed up in Samuel's word "awaiteth," already in the second verse of his address: "heavy destruction awaiteth this people" (13:6). The verb suggests that "heavy destruction" is already in place and that the Nephites are at least halfway down the road to that place where their fate awaits them. This is, of course, a familiar scriptural theme. There is nothing very surprising about it. But there *is* something surprising about the way Samuel explains this familiar link between present and future in the preceding verse (in fact the opening words of Samuel's sermon): "Behold, I, Samuel, a Lamanite, do speak the words of the Lord which

he doth put into my heart; and behold he hath put it into my heart to say unto this people that the sword of justice hangeth over this people; and four hundred years pass not away save the sword of justice falleth upon this people" (13:5). Here, too, the connection between present and future is starkly clear: "the sword of justice" hangs over the Nephites in the present, and it will fall on them in the future. But what is surprising is *the amount of time* Samuel says it will take for the present to lead to the future: *four centuries!*

This is not the only time Samuel places destruction so distantly in the future. A few verses later he says, "and there shall be those of the fourth generation who shall live, of your enemies, to behold your utter destruction" (13:10). Samuel is consistent, then, but one wonders whether it might be a bit excessive for Samuel to be criticizing *his* generation for their sinfulness if he goes on to predict not *their* inevitable destruction or the inevitable destruction even *of their children* but the inevitable destruction of a generation to come *in the relatively distant future*—in fact at the end of Nephite history. This is especially odd given all that will take place over the four centuries in question. Not only will the resurrected Christ come to visit Lehi's children, but that visit will result in the longest and most glorious period of righteousness and peace in world history! That such a remarkable turn toward righteousness intervenes between the present of sin and the future of disaster would seem to call Samuel's essentially causal link between present and future in question: What has the wickedness of the Nephites of Samuel's day to do with that of the Nephites who would live only after a period of such unmistakable goodness has passed?

The link Samuel makes between the sinfulness of his own generation and the disastrous end of the Nephites is all the stranger in light of the fact that serious destruction would also precede the visit of Christ to the New World. In fact, many of

Samuel's hearers in Zarahemla would themselves experience those events, and Samuel actually goes on to mention those more imminent destructions later in his sermon (see Helaman 14:20–27). Why should Samuel focus here on the destruction that would come only much later and without an obvious connection to the sinfulness of his actual addressees? This is curious, but perhaps there is something of an answer in another connection Samuel mentions:

> Nothing can save this people save it be repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ, who surely shall come into the world, and shall suffer many things and shall be slain for his people. And behold, an angel of the Lord hath declared it unto me, and he did bring glad tidings to my soul. And behold, I was sent unto you to declare it unto you also, that ye might have glad tidings; but behold ye would not receive me. Therefore, thus saith the Lord: Because of the hardness of the hearts of the people of the Nephites, except they repent I will take away my word from them, and I will withdraw my Spirit from them, and I will suffer them no longer, and I will turn the hearts of their brethren against them (13:6–8).

Here Samuel notes that he had (as the first verses of Helaman 13 recount) originally attempted to preach in Zarahemla concerning the good news of Christ's imminent advent, but he was rejected. Because of that rejection, his original message concerning the future of the Messiah's coming was replaced with a message concerning the future of the Nephites' destruction. Glad tidings had been replaced with dire warnings. Here, then, a rather different tie between present and future is articulated. The present of prophetic anticipation is tied through faith to the future of messianic redemption. Apparently because the Nephites rejected *this* present-future connection, the *other*

present-future connection—that of disaster—had to be presented to them.

The time it takes for a sinful present to arrive at a disastrous future is thus opposed to the time it takes for a faithful present to arrive at a promised future, and the former apparently only occurs when the latter is rejected. How does this speak to the strangeness of the link Samuel makes between the wickedness of his own generation and the destruction of the rebellious Nephites of four centuries later? At the very least, it seems that that link is guaranteed by the Nephites' lack of interest in the good things the prophet said would come before destruction. Because the Nephites of Samuel's day refused to believe in the good things that would come before rebellion and punishment would bring an end to Nephite history, Samuel presented them with a future from which those good things were subtracted. Although goodness *was* coming—and coming soon (see Helaman 14:2–19)!—those who rejected that goodness in advance were more closely tied to the sad events several centuries in the future than they were to the happy (as well as the sad) events that would happen in their own generation.

Despite that close tie, however, the fact remains that the destruction of which Samuel speaks oddly lies far in the future. A more direct explanation comes in verses 12–14. The predicted disaster is actually *postponed*, Samuel explains, and it is apparently "because of those who are righteous" who remain in Zarahemla (13:12). Thus "it is for the righteous' sake that [the city] is spared" (13:14), despite the fact that "there are many, yea, even the more part of this great city, that will harden their hearts" (13:12). Most startlingly put: "if it were not for the righteous who are in this great city, behold, [the Lord] would cause that fire should come down out of heaven and destroy it" (13:13). All these statements concern the present and serve to explain why the present does not entail a disaster in the immediate future. But Samuel goes on to say something about

why that disastrous future would eventually come: "the time cometh, saith the Lord, that when ye shall cast out the righteous from among you, then shall ye be ripe for destruction" (13:14). Here the unfortunate future, postponed but inevitable, will come precisely when the righteous are ejected from among the people.

This theme—that of destruction being postponed because of the presence (or, sometimes, the prayers) of the righteous—deserves reflection, even if it is relatively familiar. Samuel has already made clear that the future of disaster replaces the future of promise for the Nephites because they give the present to rejecting God's messengers rather than to trusting in the coming glory. But the realization of the future of disaster, it now becomes clear, depends on more than just the Nephites' lack of trust in the promise. If the future to which their faithless present leads is to come about, they must reject not only the message concerning Christ but also every person who *would* receive that message happily. The sinfulness of the present lies in *un*belief, but the disaster of the future lies in *anti*-belief. The road that leads from the sinful present to the disastrous future is the road along which develops a real suspicion concerning believers, the road of growing intolerance for those who profess to open themselves to a future of promise. The future of the faithless is an always-more-intense distrust of those who hope—a distrust that leads them to seal their own disavowed fate. The fixed fate of the faithless—if they do not repent—is deeply opposed to the open possibilities that lie in the messianic future of the faithful.

In the verses following his discussion of postponement, Samuel once more sketches the connection between the present of sin and the future of disaster already outlined. This further sketch is, however, transitional in nature, since it introduces the theme of the next part of Samuel's sermon: the link between the present and the past. It deserves at least brief comment.

First, it should be noted that the disastrous future is at this point in the text never given an exact date: there is no talk of four centuries or four generations. For that reason, it is difficult to know whether the disastrous future talked about here (in verses 17–23) is the same disastrous future talked about earlier in the chapter (in verses 5–10). If it is *not* the same disastrous future, there is the possibility that it describes a disastrous future actually to be experienced by Samuel's hearers (the destruction, for instance, that would occur at the time of Christ's death in the Old World). The text, however, suggests that the same disaster is intended. The disaster in question—which Samuel consistently calls a "curse"—concerns the irredeemability of treasure that will be hidden up, but not to the Lord. Why would the Nephites hide their treasures? Samuel explains: they "will hide up their treasures when they shall flee before their enemies" (13:20). Here the likely identity of the two predictions is suggested. The curse that marks the irredeemability of treasures hidden up, but not to the Lord, is associated with a destruction of the Nephites by their enemies. Even more suggestive is the fact that Samuel alludes to the possibility of treasure being redeemed if it is buried by "a righteous man" who "shall hide it up unto the Lord" (13:18). It is not difficult to hear in these words a foreshadowing allusion to the one person who would, during the destructions of four centuries later, bury up his treasure to the Lord: the wandering Moroni who would bury the record of the Nephites (along with other Nephite treasures).

Curiously, though, when Samuel returns to this theme of a curse later in verses 30–37, it seems clear that the curse in question is associated not with the far-distant future in which the Nephites are collectively destroyed but with the disaster accompanying Jesus Christ's death in the Old World. Mormon, at any rate, as editor and narrator seems intent on drawing a connection between the curse here predicted (especially the Nephites' predicted response to that curse in verses 33 and 37)

and the narrative of destruction in 3 Nephi 8–10 (especially as reported in 3 Nephi 8:24–25; 9:2). This reading may be all the more appropriate given the fact that Samuel will go on in Helaman 14 to predict the destructions associated with Christ's death (see especially Helaman 14:20–27). But even if this interpretation is the better one, it should be noted that Samuel's words are at this point in the sermon—and perhaps intentionally—ambiguous. His hearers, it seems, would have been as likely as not to interpret his words as referring to the far-distant disaster he has already fixed chronologically (in verses 5–10).

Turning to a second point regarding verses 17–23, it might be noted that Samuel's elaboration of the disastrous future (in terms of a curse concerning treasure) provides an important clarification of the sinfulness of the present. The sinfulness of the present is not only a question of a rejection of the future preached by the prophets, it is also a question of a problematic relationship to the past. This becomes clear toward the end of Samuel's discussion of the curse that will come on the land: "ye are cursed because of your riches, and also are your riches cursed because ye have set your hearts upon them… Ye do not remember the Lord your God in the things with which he hath blessed you, but ye do always remember your riches, not to thank the Lord your God for them" (13:21–22). With these words, Samuel introduces the next part of the chapter, in which the focus turns emphatically from the way the present entails the future to the way the present is constituted by a problematic relationship to the past. Here already, in addition to making clear that the love of wealth is what lies behind the Nephites' rejection of the messianic message, Samuel points to that problematic relationship to the past by distinguishing between remembering the Lord in all blessings and remembering one's riches, pure and simple. If the sinful present is what organizes the disastrous future, it is helpful to determine what exactly the

sinful present consists of—and Samuel finally begins to clarify that point by explaining that the sinful present is first and foremost a wrong relationship to the past.

It is not, however, until the passage that follows that the details of this entanglement of present and past are worked out fully. Samuel's brief talk of remembrance is only an indication of where he is going next. In order really to see how the time of sin functions, it is necessary to leave behind the link between the present and the future, articulated at length in verses 5–23, and to turn to the link between the present and the past, articulated more compactly in verses 24–28. As will be seen, it is as he begins to dwell on this link that Samuel's talk of time becomes particularly instructive, and theologically compelling.

The Past (Helaman 13:24–28)

To this point in Helaman 13, Samuel's focus has been more on the (disastrous) future to which the (sinful) present leads than on the nature of the (sinful) present itself. In other words, to this point Samuel has not said much about what exactly constitutes the present of sin. He has only said (1) that the sinful present is in part a question of a rejection of a certain future—the future of prophetic promise—and (2) that it is a matter of one sort of remembrance (of one's riches) rather than another (of the Lord). Beginning with a sudden emphasis in verse 24 on "this time which has arrived," however, Samuel now gives his attention first and foremost to the constitution of the sinful present, and that constitution is surprising in certain ways. Given the already-discussed transition in verse 22 from anticipation to remembrance, it should not be surprising that Samuel portrays the present as bearing a certain relationship to the past. But what *is* surprising is the way that relationship works. One might expect that, just as the sinful present leads to a disastrous future, the problematic past led to the sinful present. In other words, one might expect Samuel to continue

emphasizing the way that choices at one time determine what happens thereafter. This, however, is not what Samuel does. His focus in verses 24–28 is not on how the past led to or determined the present; rather his focus is on how the present retroactively shapes or organizes the past.

Before coming to the question of *how* the Nephites (mis)remember the past, Samuel says something about *what* they (mis)remember. When he summarizes the sinful present in verse 24, he calls it "this time which has arrived, that ye do cast out the prophets, and do mock them, and cast stones at them, and do slay them, and do all manner of iniquity unto them, even as they did of old time." Here, on Samuel's account, the present is effectively a repetition of the past. The present is basically the same as the past. Remembering, it would thus seem, should not be too hard because the Nephites have right before them a kind of mirror image of the past, its recurrence. If, then, the Nephites have a problematic relationship to the past, it will obviously be because they remember the past as different from their own time—or perhaps they remember the past correctly but completely misunderstand the present. Either way, when Samuel asserts that the past and the present are the same, the unrepentant Nephites assert that a fundamental difference distinguishes the two periods.

Having asserted the continuity of the present with the past, Samuel goes on: "And now when ye talk, ye say: If our days had been in the days of our fathers of old, we would not have slain the prophets; we would not have stoned them, and cast them out" (13:25). It is fascinating that Samuel phrases this next point in terms of "talk." His accusation is not simply that the Nephites repeat the past without recognizing that they do so. His claim is rather that their sinful present is characterized by a certain sort of discourse, a certain way of talking. The Nephites *explicitly deny* the

identity of past and present, and the fact that they do so loudly and frequently makes clear that their denials are actually a sort of confession ("the lady doth protest too much, methinks"). At any rate, it is important to note that it is not *Samuel* but *the Nephites* who first introduce the comparison between present and past, even if they introduce the comparison only in order to deny it. In delivering his message, Samuel points out only that the Nephites' obsessive talk is symptomatic and suggestive: If they are so different from their "fathers," why do they have to keep bringing it up, insisting on it every time they "talk"?

Strikingly, Samuel seems to indicate that the only real difference between the Nephites and their predecessors, when it comes to killing the prophets, is precisely this business of ideological "talk." If, in other words, there is a difference between Samuel's hearers and those in the past they constantly condemn, it is just that those in the past went about their abominable murders more authentically! This seems to be the meaning of Samuel's next statement, anyway: "Behold ye are worse than they" (13:26). The sinful relationship to the past that constitutes the Nephites' present (the denial or disavowal of the real identity or repetition that links present with past) makes the present actually worse than the past. Ironically, then, the failure to recognize that the present is identical with the past makes the present in an important respect non-identical with the past—different just in that the present turns out to be worse than the past. The Nephite present repeats the past except that it fails to recognize that it repeats the past. Apparently in this way the Nephites of Samuel's day trumped their predecessors in wickedness.

But how serious is "talk"? Is it really so much worse to murder *and* misremember than it is just to murder? Samuel says more about how the Nephites are "worse than" their predecessors by explaining that their ideological talk has real effects that go well beyond "mere talk":

> If a prophet come among you and declareth unto you the word of the Lord, which testifieth of your sins and iniquities, ye are angry with him, and cast him out and seek all manner of ways to destroy him; yea, you will say that he is a false prophet, and that he is a sinner, and of the devil, because he testifieth that your deeds are evil. But behold, if a man shall come among you and shall say: Do this, and there is no iniquity; do that and ye shall not suffer; yea, he will say: Walk after the pride of your own hearts; yea, walk after the pride of your eyes, and do whatsoever your heart desireth—and if a man shall come among you and say this, ye will receive him, and say that he is a prophet. (13:26–27.)

It should be noted that Samuel continues to focus on "talk" all the way through this passage: "you will say," "ye will…say." Here, then, he provides a bit of clarification of how sinful talk translates into real (wicked) action. Whereas the Nephites' forebears presumably rejected in a forthright manner the message of repentance that came to them, the Nephites of Samuel's day accuse those bearing such a message of being specifically *false* prophets, and they call *true* prophets anyone who calls them to live lives of selfishness and pride.

Importantly, Samuel provides a clue as to what focuses the Nephites in such a problematic way on the present. It seems to be the love of money—something that has already come up in Samuel's sermon. At any rate, it is wealth that the Nephites lavish on those they falsely regard as true prophets: "Yea, ye will lift him up, and ye will give unto him of your substance; ye will give unto him of your gold, and of your silver, and ye will clothe him with costly apparel" (13:28). Here, then, Samuel comes back to his transitional words of verse 22, that is, to his discussion of what the Nephites remember. They remember only their "riches," though "not to thank the Lord [their] God

for them." As before, it is obsession with wealth that drives the sinful misrepresentation of the past, therefore spoils the present, and organizes a disastrous future. But where in verse 22 wealth is simply the wrong focus of remembering, in verse 28 it seals the present against the (true) past. By giving ostentatious gifts to false prophets—to those who obscure the links between the present and the future and the present and the past by saying that "all is well" (13:28)—the Nephites use their idolatrous wealth to attempt to isolate the present both from what precedes and from what follows it. Putting their money where their mouths are, the Nephites feel the need to support with their wealth whatever confirms their idolatrous refusal to see either the past or the future for what it is. They pay off the prophets who tell them that the present is all that matters and that the present should be a time of enjoying what wealth they have.

At this point it is possible to provide a preliminary outline of what Samuel might be said to regard as "the time of sin." Sin, it seems, is peculiarly focused on inhabiting the present but in a way that closes the present off from both the (real) future and the (real) past. It refuses a future of real possibility—the messianic future, specifically—and ignores the consequent future of real disaster. And it disavows the past with which it is strikingly continuous. It is as if the time of sin is the time of a walled-off present, a present that wrongly pretends to be different from what has gone before it and a present that wrongly pretends that the future does not matter. It is, it seems, the imaginary time one gives oneself when one pretends the past is without consequences and the future without implications. Moreover, the time of sin is the time in which one remembers only wealth, but ironically, it is also the time in which one spends all one's wealth on securing the present against anything that might compromise it. It is thus the time in which one both *gains* one's wealth without compromising influences from the past and the

future and *loses* one's wealth by spending it all to keep those compromising influences from imposing themselves. The time of sin is thus, in short, the time in which wealth exists only as a means employed to the end of pretending that one is unendingly wealthy.

Sin inhabits—perhaps better: occupies—the present by organizing both an imaginary future and an imaginary past. Setting up borders so as to sustain the fantasy of a prolonged enjoyment of wealth, sin closes its eyes to the devastating consequences of its self-imposed blindness. Ironically, precisely to the extent that sin refuses to regard the past it repeats and insists that its future remains indeterminate, it traps itself within a fully deterministic history, positioning itself on a timeline that leads from sin to bondage to utter destruction. The fantasy of consequenceless freedom is precisely what compromises the freedom that *should* characterize the present, what compromises the freedom the present *would* support were sin to be rejected through repentance.

Such is Samuel's account of the time of sin—its prescient past, its horrifying future, and its desperate present. With that account clear, at least in outline, Samuel turns next to a kind of exhortation to repentance, although a largely indirect one. It too turns on the question of time—if anything, more intensely than what precedes it. What has been sorted out here in determining the nature of the time of sin can only help to make sense of Samuel's generally frustrated message of repentance in the last part of Helaman 13.

The Future Again (Helaman 13:29–37)

Samuel opens the last part of Helaman 13 with three questions, all poignantly constructed through the use of the phrase "How long?": "O ye wicked and ye perverse generation; ye hardened and ye stiffnecked people, how long will ye suppose that the Lord will suffer you? Yea, how long will ye suffer yourselves

to be led by foolish and blind guides? Yea, how long will ye choose darkness rather than light?" (13:29). With each of these questions, Samuel asks how much time has to pass before the time of sin will give way to the time of repentance—*if*, that is, it ever will. If the present time of sin is, as outlined above, the time in which one fantasizes about an indeterminately prolonged period of the pure enjoyment of wealth, Samuel's questions are most appropriate. How long can the fantasy last? How much can one prolong the unsustainable vision of uninhibited enjoyment—particularly when the only thing that sustains that unsustainable vision in the meanwhile is the indiscriminate spending of what is supposed to be enjoyed? How long can one stave off waking up from the sweet but deceptive dream of sin?

The triple repetition of Samuel's question—"How long?"— forces a certain recognition of the link between the way the present dissimulates the past and the way the present leads in-exorably to future disaster. How long can a present built on the sandy foundation of denial hold against the storm and flood of destruction? The answer, unfortunately, is that it can hold out long enough to ensure complete destruction; the time of sin, its present, can be prolonged just enough to seal the fate of future disaster. But if the present of sin is not prolonged, if it is cut short by repentance, there remains the possibility of escape. From what Samuel says in the wake of his triple question, how-ever, it appears that the Nephites of his day were only moments away from sealing their fate. His desperately repeated "How long?" was offered in the faint hope that his hearers might turn from their wickedness in the final moments before they gave themselves completely to darkness.

How close Samuel's Nephite audience was to losing the possibility of repentance is clear from the tension between the several "How long?" questions in verse 29 and the use of the word "already" in verse 30: "Yea, behold, the anger of the Lord is already kindled against you; behold, he hath cursed the land

because of your iniquity." There are two essentially opposed ways this "already" can be understood. On the one hand, it seems to lend a sense of *urgency* to the triple "How long?" of the preceding verse. Repentance cannot be delayed much longer if God's anger is already kindled ("How long?" means "How long will you wait to repent?"). On the other hand, though, the "already" marks the triple "How long?" with a kind of *futility*. If God's anger is already kindled, there seems to be little hope that repentance will do any good ("How long?" means "How long will God wait to destroy you?"). Is the "already" meant to cut short the Nephites' attempt to prolong the time of sin, or is it meant to suggest that they have already prolonged that time beyond the possibility of cutting it short? Samuel himself seems to hover between these two interpretations of his own words. The next few verses hold little hope for a reversal of the situation, but verse 39 will conclude the chapter with a call to "repent and be saved." However, Samuel's "already" is meant to inflect his "How long?" and it is clear that change has become expedient. The time is short.

Importantly, Samuel next addresses anew the relationship between the present and the future, something he has already done. This time, however, he addresses that relationship in a different way. In the first part of Helaman 13 discussed above, Samuel speaks of how the *future* looks (or ought to be seen) from the perspective of the *present*; in this last part of the chapter, though, he speaks of how the *present* will look retrospectively from the perspective of the *future*. It is not difficult to see why Samuel makes this move. In light of verse 30's "already," it is plain that the sinful present is on the verge of giving way to the kind of disastrous future Samuel has already predicted. Understanding how the present will soon be remembered might help those trapped in that present to escape it before it is too late. There is, moreover, an apparent rhetorical purpose in Samuel's shift in perspective as well. Samuel's Nephite audience

is skeptical that what they are doing in the present will lead directly to disaster, but by addressing how the present will look from the perspective of the future, Samuel rhetorically eliminates the openness of the future. The future of disaster is the only future the Nephites have at this point, and it is a future in which they will realize how their present actions led inexorably to destruction. Samuel is effectively saying that in the future they will recognize the truth of his present message.

Interestingly, returning to the theme of wealth, Samuel now gives titles to both the present and the future. The future he calls "the days of [the Nephites'] poverty" (13:32), and the present (still as viewed from the perspective of the future) he calls "the day that [God] gave [the Nephites' their] riches" (13:33). Here reference is obviously to the curse already outlined in verses 17–23. When that curse becomes a reality that cannot be ignored, the Nephites will themselves distinguish between the days of their poverty and the day that God gave them their riches. Hence their future reaction of *mourning*, which Samuel describes:

> And in the days of your poverty ye shall cry unto the Lord; and in vain shall ye cry, for your desolation is already come upon you, and your destruction is made sure; and then shall ye weep and howl in that day, saith the Lord of Hosts. And then shall ye lament and say: O that I had repented, and had not killed the prophets, and stoned them, and cast them out. Yea, in that day ye shall say: O that we had remembered the Lord our God in the day that he gave us our riches, and then they would not have become slippery that we should lose them; for behold, our riches are gone from us. (13:32–33.)

The wealth of time-related terms here should be noted: "the days of your poverty," "already," "that day," "the day that he

gave us our riches," etc. These terms crucially govern the tenses of the verbs throughout Samuel's projection of the Nephites' devastation: those that refer to the future lamentation on the part of the Nephites ("shall cry," "shall…weep and howl," "shall…lament and say," "shall say"); those that refer to the irreversible fulfillment of prophetic predictions concerning the future, which is what causes their lamentation ("is…come," "is made sure," "are gone"); those that refer to what should have happened in the present, from the perspective of the future ("had repented," "had not killed," "had remembered"); those that refer to what the future could have been, had it followed from a repentant present ("would not have become," "should [not] lose"); and, perhaps most significantly, the one—and only one—that refers to the simple present the Nephites refuse to see: God's ignored grace to the Nephites ("gave").

There is much to think about in this complex weave of times and tenses, but there is reason to focus on one word in particular here because it draws into this recasting of the relation between the present and the future the matter of the relationship between the present and the past: "remembered." When Samuel describes the Nephites in the future as wishing things had gone otherwise, pining after the possibility that their riches might "not have become slippery," he has them wish they "had remembered the Lord [their] God in the day that he gave [them their] riches." If in the first part of Helaman 13 Samuel means to make clear how the present's organization of a future of disaster is predicated on the present's organization of an imaginary relation to the past; in the second part of Helaman 13 he means to make clear how the future's lamentation about what should have been done in the present entails a recognition of that problematic imaginary relation between present and past. The key to repentance, and so to giving oneself to a future of real promise and possibility, is remembrance. And as Samuel's sermon makes painfully clear, this is something

generally learned too late, only after "desolation is already come" and "destruction is made sure."

Samuel's prediction of the Nephites' lamentation continues beyond what was quoted above, and what Samuel says in that continuation is particularly striking: "Behold, we lay a tool here and on the morrow it is gone; and behold, our swords are taken from us in the day we have sought them for battle" (13:34). At first, this passage appears to be little more than a brief elaboration of what it means when the Nephites say that their "riches are gone from [them]." But the element of time in this elaboration is remarkable: "we lay a tool here and on the morrow it is gone"; "our swords are taken from us in the day we have sought them for battle." At this point, the calamity of the future is described as a kind of malfunctioning of time itself: the future, because it is the dawn of real and irreversible destruction, does not *itself* have a future. Disaster is a kind of cessation of time's flow, the beginning of a kind of discontinuity between present and future. Time misfires in the disastrous future, at least to the extent that time is usually understood to be an experience of the continuity of objects in space. In disaster nothing remains, and time no longer holds the world together in coherence.

The Nephites of Samuel's predicted future appear to realize this because of the way they *attempt* to orient themselves to a future: "Yea, we have hid up our treasures and they have slipped away from us, because of the curse of the land" (13:35). The act of hiding up treasure is a way of trusting that there is a future— indeed, a future of possibility. Fleeing from destruction but hiding up their treasure before doing so, the Nephites of the disastrous future seem to believe their destruction is only temporary, a passing matter beyond which lies a future. But when they find that everything they store up for the future— for the supposed future of the future—is irredeemable, they are forced to recognize that time has come to an end for them.

They are futureless, and this they cannot help but see whenever they attempt to live in light of a future.

Crucially, it seems this recognition leads the Nephites Samuel projects into the disastrous future to revise their lament about their failure to repent. Before, Samuel described them as wishing that they had repented "in the day that [God] gave us our riches." Now, however, he has them wish that they "had repented in the day that the word of the Lord came unto us" (13:36). Upon recognizing the collapse of time, the Nephites rethink the past of grace, no longer interested solely in the gift of wealth and the promised possibility of (temporary) enjoyment but interested as well—and hopefully more intensely—in the gift of the prophetic word, the gift of an announced future of real possibility. When time itself ceases to function, the unrepentant not only recognize that they should have remembered God but also that what God had offered to them was the possibility of eternal happiness, of life without end, of timeless joy. Instead of receiving that offer in remembrance and repentance, the Nephites gave themselves to a future dominated by "demons" and "the angels of him who hath sought to destroy [their] souls" (13:37).

Conclusion (Helaman 13:37–39)

At the end of verse 37, Samuel subtly shifts from speaking about "that day" in the disastrous future to "those days" in the disastrous future, pluralizing his reference: "And this shall be your language in those days." Various interpretations might be given of this shift, but among them would be the idea that Samuel means to indicate a kind of prolongation—not of the imaginary present of sinful enjoyment (the Nephites' fantasy), but sadly of the real future of disaster and suffering. Apparently "that day" of "weep[ing] and howl[ing]" (13:32) will stretch into "those days" of sorrowful "language," a futureless end of all time that ironically seems never to end. This curious ambiguity

between "day" and "days" at the end of time is captured beautifully in a phrase in verse 38: "everlastingly too late." All days, it would seem, have disappeared into the past, since it is at that point "too late," and yet that final day itself becomes days (and weeks, and months, and years) because it is too late "everlastingly."

More of verse 38 deserves quotation and analysis, though, because the phrase "everlastingly too late" appears within another weaving of the singular "day" and the plural "days," specifically directed to the Nephites of the disastrous future: "But behold, your days of probation are past; ye have procrastinated the day of your salvation until it is everlastingly too late, and your destruction is made sure." Here the singular "day" is "the day of your salvation," a day that could have dawned but never did, as those addressed "procrastinated" it "until it is everlastingly too late." That most singular day that never arrived would have interrupted the plural "days of probation," the prolonged time of possible repentance. Hence a kind of formula: because the plural days of probation were never interrupted by the singular day of salvation, the singular day of disaster and destruction stretches into the plural days of nostalgic self-torment. It is most interesting here that the day of *salvation*—not, say, the day of *repentance*—is something that could be "procrastinated." For that day to have dawned, for it to have interrupted the days of probation, it was necessary only for the Nephites to have remembered the past correctly, to have listened to the prophet's word concerning the future earnestly. They could have initiated the day of salvation, even if salvation itself came as a gift from God. Their procrastination, of course, is equivalent to their prolongation of the imaginary present of pure enjoyment, walled off from any real past and any real future.

As Samuel goes on, he refers to the imaginary status of that present of pure enjoyment: "ye have sought all the days of your

lives for that which ye could not obtain" (13:38). It should be noted that Samuel speaks rather suddenly of "all the days of [the Nephites'] lives" as a kind of totality, a history that has been brought to an end. Importantly, in doing so Samuel assigns to that totality the nature of an impossible quest: the Nephites filled their days with the pursuit of what "is contrary to the nature of that righteousness which is in our great and Eternal Head" (13:38). The time of sin is the time of attempting to transform the untransformable nature of things, the time of being contrary by insisting that wickedness itself is happiness. Of course, it has already been made clear how one attempts this: by insisting that the wicked present is distinct from the wicked past, by refusing to remember. The time of sin, a present self-deceptively closed off from the reality of its continuity with the past and from the promise of a glorious future, can be interrupted only by an untimely remembrance—a willingness to hear the untimely words of a prophet who calls for repentance, ruining everyone's "good time."

The final words of Helaman 13, then, remain poignant even if they are echoed a thousand times elsewhere in scripture: "O ye people of the land, that ye would hear my words! And I pray that the anger of the Lord be turned away from you, and that ye would repent and be saved" (13:39). Samuel's final plea and its accompanying prayer are as crucial today as in the day he risked preaching to the Nephites. We today, readers of the Book of Mormon, would do well to hear his words, whether or not the ancient Nephites ever did.

It is, in a word, always a good time to repent.

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The Inevitability of Epistemology in Historiography: Theory, History, and Zombie Mormon History

Alan Goff

Abstract: *Fundamental changes have occurred in the historical profession over the past thirty years. The central revolutionary change is that workers in the historical profession can no longer ignore theory and philosophy of history. A built-in resistance to theory causes historians to abjure philosophical analysis of their discipline at a time when such analysis is recognized to be indispensable. If one doesn't have an explicit theory, one will appropriate one uncritically, without the felt need to articulate and defend the theory. The dominant theory in history over the past century has been positivism, a conception of disciplinary work that ruled history and the social sciences during the twentieth century but has been stripped of rhetorical and persuasive power over the past three decades. Although positivism has been overwhelmingly rejected by theoretically informed historians, it continues to dominate among the vast majority of historians, who fear adulterating history with philosophical examination. The most common version of positivism among historians is the assertion that the only evidence from the past that is valid is testimony based on empirical observation. This essay focuses on recent comments by Dan Vogel and Christopher Smith, who deny this dominance of positivism in the historical profession, and in Mormon history in particular, by misunderstanding positivism without even consulting the large scholarly literature on the topic that rebuts their assertions. They make no attempt to engage the sophisticated literature on the transformation in historiography and philosophy of history that has made most of history written*

to standards of the 1970s obsolete and revealed it as ideologically inspired; while at the same time these historical researchers assert their own objectivity by appealing to a conventional wisdom that is now antiquated. This version of positivism is especially hostile to religious belief in general, and in particular to that embodied in the LDS tradition.

> The problem with hidden epistemologies is that they can mislead practitioners into believing that "common sense" (for which we should read "the currently prevailing idea of naïve empiricism") or personal empathic insight or rhetorical persuasiveness are the only possible arbiters of interpretation and explanation. In that case the rational idea of "truth" is rejected in favor of pre-rational or irrational "understanding," which cannot be shared widely. The rejection by many historians of any attempt by philosophers and methodologists to criticize their practices and arguments from some external methodological and historical point of view must arouse the suspicion that they do not wish to be confronted with the logical and explanatory implications of their own assumptions and presuppositions, and hence do not wish to have the strength of their own arguments and conclusions tested at all.[1]

> Empiricism in its crudest form is probably the epistemology which is most generally accepted by people without philosophical training. It embodies the most common beliefs about successful science and scientists and is implicit in the images used in the media to depict them. Crude empiricism assumes

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1   Christopher Lloyd, *The Structures of History* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993), 4.

that the scientist is a sort of *spectator* of the object of inquiry.[2]

The principle is this: We are not primarily concerned in an historian with his philosophy but with his or her history. There is no doubt that bad philosophy must always make bad history.[3]

Of all the Japanese soldier holdouts who hid for decades after World War II on Pacific islands, not surrendering in a cause long lost, the best known was Hiroo Onoda, who after the Japanese defeat in 1945, held out for nearly thirty years. Onoda had explicit orders neither to commit suicide nor surrender. He and a few comrades went to the hills, occasionally attacking Filipino police and peasants. As early as October 1945 the Onoda group had read leaflets asserting the war was over, but they discounted the claim as Allied propaganda; their conceptual scheme didn't permit the idea that Japan had lost the war. Over the years, newspapers were left to the group and appeals were made over loudspeakers by relatives (authorities knew the names of the leftover soldiers because one of the group had given himself up), all to no avail. Orders from Japanese generals to surrender were dropped from airplanes. Onoda's comrades eventually surrendered or were killed by search parties or police, leaving Onoda as the last holdout. Onoda's long refusal to admit defeat ended when a Japanese adventurer, Norio Suzuki, set out to discover three things: Lieutenant Onoda, a panda, and the Abominable Snowman; he found the first item on that list in the Philippines and returned to Japan with news of the soldier and photos of the two together, although he could not

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2   Len Doyal and Roger Harris, *Empiricism, Explanation, and Rationality: An Introduction to the Philosophy of the Social Sciences* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 2.

3   Hillaire Belloc, *A Companion to Mr. Wells's "Outline of History"* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1926), 90.

persuade the soldier to turn himself in. In March 1974, Onoda's former commanding officer flew to the Philippines to order Onoda to end his long war.[4]

The academic study of history has undergone a revolution over the past thirty years,[5] a conceptual revolution that most historians are only vaguely aware of, and fear as a declaration of war on the traditional concept of history. A revolution almost completely unnoticed in Mormon historical studies (until the last decade, when younger, more sophisticated historians have been apprenticed into the profession), despite its enormous eventual impact in that area. The epistemological foundation of the discipline has been entirely overthrown during that period. Yet most who toil in the fields of Mormon history continue to act as though the status quo ante is still a viable epistemological position from which to advance their arguments. The upheaval has fundamentally uprooted the previous conceptual framework that guided historical research, but because the turn originated in the discipline's history of ideas, the lack of interest most historians share toward the philosophy of history, historiography, and intellectual history has left practitioners inadequately prepared to engage the changes. Peter Burke calls that conceptual adhesive that previously held the historical profession together "the Ranke paradigm," consisting of the following four interlocking ideas: (1) that "historical writing could and should be impartial and even objective," (2) that such research should be archivally based, (3) that historical method was based on the discovery of and critical analysis of sources, and (4) that the subject matter was politics (at least for Ranke).[6] Every intellectual framework both enables

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4   "Hiroo Onoda," *Wikipedia*, 11/8/12.

5   Michael Bentley, "Past and 'Presence': Revisiting Historical Ontology," *History and Theory* 45 (Oct. 2006): 349.

6   Peter Burke, "Paradigms Lost: From Göttingen to Berlin," *Common Knowledge* 14.2 (2008): 247.

possibilities and precludes others. Those who operate within the paradigm are blinded to the limits it places on what ideas and evidence will be considered rational or possible, because they equate their own parochial horizon with all of rationality and good research. What Burke calls the Rankean paradigm is also commonly called "scientific history," or positivism;[7] and it became the dominant paradigm as historians professionalized their discipline.[8] This prevailing intellectual scheme has been confronted and its weaknesses exposed by the shift to theory in historiography. But since historians are trained to distrust theory,[9] they have reacted with puzzlement and outrage when their "foundational concepts such as 'truth,' 'fact,' and 'objectivity' have been exposed as at worst meaningless, and at best in need of radical redefinition."[10]

Every historical account operates from within one or another intellectual framework that isn't founded on objective, empirical, factual evidence but looks more like an ideology or a faith commitment; that is how we ought to think of positivism, as just another of the many churches within modernity. A parallel is contemporary Protestantism, where Baptist, Presbyterian, Episcopal, Methodist (and the list could be expanded) traditions, within which the modernity of the pragmatist, positivist, romantic, historicist traditions leads each to claim to have the truth, while faulting opposing frameworks for not living up to the fidelity criteria of that particular sect. New Testament scholar N. T. Wright notes

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7   Burke, "Paradigms Lost," 248.

8   Burke, "Paradigms Lost," 249. Franklin says the thrust of that Rankean paradigm was positivistic as both history and the social sciences went through their professionalizing phases toward the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. V. P. Franklin, "Reflections on History, Education, and Social Theories," *History of Education Quarterly* 51.2 (May 2011): 264.

9   Beverley Southgate, *Postmodernism in History: Fear or Freedom?* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 28.

10   Southgate, *Postmodernism in History*, 29.

that "when you abandon one framework of ideas you do not live thereafter in a wilderness, without any framework at all. You quickly substitute another, perhaps some philosophical scheme of thought. Likewise, those who ignore one community of discourse (say, the church) are inevitably loyal to another (perhaps some scholarly guild, or some drift of currently fashionable ideology)."[11] An example of reading from within some historical context that denies interpretations claiming to explain the past as it really happens is the difference between ancient and modern ways of reading a book such as the Bible.

According to James Kugel, despite some difference among themselves, ancient readers read the Bible using consistent assumptions: that (1) the Bible is basically cryptic, not always meaning what a plain reading would assert, (2) the book is more relevant to contemporary circumstances than to those of its origins (this is a fundamental denial of modern historicism, which asserts that the original meaning and context is the only one that really matters) as a series of moral lessons aimed at readers today to provide moral guidance, (3) the Bible is free of contradiction despite the variety of writers and compilers, and (4) the scripture is divine, in that God inspired the whole through prophetic intermediaries. Like all assumptions, ancient readers took these beliefs for granted rather than as conscious and explicit arguments.[12] Modern readers often consider these assumptions nonsensical, not because they have been disproved but because modern readers operate from a different set of assumptions that are no less commitments of faith, no less taken for granted.

Modern biblical criticism is built on a set of assumptions articulated by Spinoza, presuppositions that must be

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11   N. T. Wright, Scripture and the Authority of God: How to Read the Bible Today (New York: HarperOne, 2013), 136.

12   James L. Kugel, *How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture, Then and Now* (New York: Free Press, 2007), 14–16.

accepted as articles of faith in order to get the project going, faith commitments that as a group directly challenge the commitments of ancient biblical readers: (1) scripture must be understood on its own (no commentary or tradition, no typology or midrash), (2) scripture must be read historically, in its original context without later concepts or events superimposed on it, (3) scripture should be read literally unless it explicitly invites a metaphorical interpretation, (4) one must examine the text historically (its composition and transmission, its author's life, and the historical circumstances of its production) in order to understand the author's intention and meaning, and (5) the subsections of the book often contradict each other, and even within an individual book conflicting information emerges.[13] Because we are moderns, we have a natural tendency to prefer the modern textual assumptions against the ancient ones, because modernity is the culturally conditioned and ubiquitous environment around us, much like we rarely think about the air we breathe. This happens frequently, because we uncritically accept another of those modern assumptions— progress. We assume that whatever is latest is best, whatever is newest is superior. Thus, modern readings of the Bible have a built-in rhetorical and persuasive advantage because we are obliged to think through or past modern presuppositions in order to give the Bible a fair hearing.

In particular we (and not just biblical critics) are trained to return over and over to the same questions (not just about the Bible but about the Book of Mormon and many other texts from antiquity) phrased as the historicity of the text: is the text historically dependable? can we assent to its historical claims? Consider, for example, ancient assumption 3, that the Bible never contradicts itself nor does it engage in identical repetition. Repeated stories, then, through the repetition

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13   Kugel, *How to Read the Bible*, 31–32.

make the old story new. "The Bible never repeats itself or says anything for emphasis, and when it seems to, there must be some additional, hidden meaning."[14] Therefore when modern readers take up typological figurations in the text, they dismiss the repeated stories as plagiarisms or derivative copying, and therefore nonhistorical. When in the book of Genesis we have three stories about a patriarch passing his wife off as his sister in a foreign land, we view the repeated stories as faults, imitations, piracies.

This exact approach is that used to denigrate the Book of Mormon. If the Mormon scripture has stories similar to those in the Bible, Joseph Smith must have plagiarized them. Fawn Brodie, Wayne Ham, and a host of other under-readers have made this assertion about the Book of Mormon, but more relevant here is Dan Vogel's assertion that if Alma's conversion story in the Book of Mormon is similar to Paul's in the New Testament, the only plausible explanation is that Smith pilfered the story: of the experience of Alma and the sons of Mosiah, "their conversion story is patterned after that of Paul in Acts 9:1-31."[15] I think much more plausible is a reading I have not yet published which traces stories of prophetic callings like both Paul's and Alma's stories to stories used dozens of times in the New Testament, and many more times in the Old Testament (and in pseudepigraphal literature), which fit this pattern. In other words, Vogel, Brodie, Ham, and others see the pattern as a fault; I see it as a complication that makes us appreciate the book more. Finding patterns and repetitions in ancient writings is an indication of their antiquity, not their modernity. Vogel may not even be aware that he adheres to modern assumptions in reading the text, but both he and I approach the scripture with presuppositions that greatly bias both readings. Kugel

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14   Kugel, *How to Read the Bible*, 124.

15   Dan Vogel, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature, 2004), 196.

notes that the point isn't to label the modern or the ancient approach as defective, scientific, fictional, or derivative; "what truly separates these two groups of interpreters is the set of unwritten instructions that guide them in reading the biblical text. Accept the one's, and the other's interpretations appear irrelevant at best, at worst a willful and foolish, hiding from the obvious. It is thanks to this crucial difference in assumptions that these two groups can read exactly the same words and perceive two quite different messages."[16] Modern readers tend to absolutize their own reading practices without realizing that they are operating with a system of assumptions and beliefs. We have to permit a challenge to modern ways of reading the past—reading through the assumptions of modernity often isn't the best way to read. "Disquieting as it may be, one is left with the conclusion that most of what makes the Bible *biblical* is not inherent in its texts, but emerges only when one reads them in a certain way, a way that came into full flower in the closing centuries BCE."[17] But as much as modern historians like to think of themselves as open minded, it is excruciatingly difficult to acquiesce to the possibility that your most valued fundamental assumptions might not be up to the explanatory task at hand and might need alteration or abandonment, and that the assumptions of antiquity account for the text better.

Biblical scholarship, as one form of the modern historical enterprise, has commonly asserted its own neutrality and objectivity, although it has never been either objective or neutral.[18] Recognizing the context of the modern historian's interpretive framework requires historians to think differently about their work than has been standard for the past two hundred years. We can never have virgin readings of the past or a scripture free of ideology or philosophical assumptions.

16   Kugel, *How to Read the Bible*, 136.
17   Kugel, *How to Read the Bible*, 668.
18   Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God*, 90.

Even the anti-intellectual believer depends on some form of scholarship (often from three or so generations earlier, when the pastor attended divinity school or the scholar apprenticed through graduate school). "Scholarship of some sort is always assumed; what the protest means, unfortunately, is that the speakers prefer the scholarship implicit in their early training, which is now simply taken for granted as common knowledge, to the bother of having to wake up mentally and think fresh thoughts. Again and again, such older scholarship, and such older traditions of reading, turn out to be flawed or in need of supplementing."[19] The changes that have swept through history (and the other disciplines, including the historical subdiscipline of biblical studies) have transformed the historical profession, and one can't merely go on assuming the state of the discipline as it was in the 1960s is its current state. History has to be examined historically, and the need for continual reassessment doesn't stop once you finish graduate school.

The revolution isn't limited to history but has occurred in all the disciplines—the humanities, the social sciences, even the "hard" sciences. The vehicle of these changes usually goes under the names of *theory* or *postmodernism*. Because the latter is driven by the former, I'll refer to this transformation of ideas as the expansion of theory (philosophically oriented examination of foundational concerns) into historiography (although the imperialistic impulse of theory was driven more by literary theorists than philosophers); an ineluctable philosophical foundation exists in all disciplines, which can be ignored only at great peril. This approach that challenges a now-faded view of how history ought to cause historians to be suspicious and resist theory, because "they have been seduced by attractive yet crude caricatures both of their own disciplinary identity, goals and practices as well as the identity, goals and

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19   Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God*, 91–92.

practices of philosophers, theorists and literary critics."[20] But it is impossible to move beyond theory and philosophy. One can generate history only from within one or another philosophy of history. Daddow refers to the "fraught relationship between philosophy and history": as much as the historian desires to abandon philosophy, he or she can do so only by taking up another philosophical theory. Those who believe they have no philosophy of history are merely naïve and deluded about the philosophy they are committed to. That philosophy which claims to be free of philosophy we call *positivism* (historians often betray this theory-denial when they assert they don't do metaphysics, leaving that to poets, philosophers, and theologians). In Mormon studies, as in religious studies more generally, "the scientistic-positivist ethos that is still virulent in religious and biblical studies is the main obstacle to a paradigm shift" to a more adequate theory of history.[21] This positivism dominates not just biblical and religious studies but all of traditional history.[22] Positivism is deployed in order to "avoid theoretical considerations and normative concepts" in an attempt to circumvent ideological commitments.[23] Neglect of theoretical concerns is probably the best theorists can hope for among the vast majority of historians. "Even the most celebrated historians of the twentieth century display little concern for the epistemological problems attending the writing of history, and sometimes attack those who even raise such issues for discussion."[24] The avoidance of philosophical

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20   Oliver J. Daddow, "Still No Philosophy Please, We're Historians," *Rethinking History* 9.4 (Dec. 2005): 492.

21   Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Changing Paradigms: The Ethos of Biblical Studies," *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1999), 33.

22   Fiorenza, "Changing Paradigms," 34.

23   Fiorenza, "Changing Paradigms," 42.

24   Elizabeth Ann Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge: Harvard U P, 2004), 84.

exploration was coupled in the historical profession with assertions of objectivity as the Rankean method developed to eschew "all theoretical reflection. Ranke became for many American scholars the prototype of the nontheoretical and the politically neutral historian." This Rankean framework of objectivity and theory independence was the foundation of "the positivist nineteenth-century understanding of historiography as a science" that became the basis of biblical studies.[25]

The older view of good historical research (and political scientific, sociological, psychological, biblical critical, economic, and anthropological research) has been undermined to the point of debilitation by this wave of theory. Although this dated view has been declared dead by its opponents from its birth, it continued to rule for at least a century and a half until the 1980s, "yet for many it lives on, at least in an everyday commitment to science, a belief that reality can by and large be truthfully and systematically represented in reason" and the practical successes of science and technology. But the future looks dark indeed for this intellectual paradigm. "Empiricism, scientism, naturalism and progressivism—core strands of positivism—are nowadays hedged with doubts and qualifications"[26] to such an extent that the adherents of this, the ultimate of modernity's projects, almost always disavow their patrimony. Despite its philosophical indefensibility, still this "theory of knowledge based on the tenets of positivism dominates academic scholarship,"[27] and not just the academy but our entire culture,[28] often without

25   Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: Decentering Biblical Scholarship," *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1999), 24–25.

26   Peter Halfpenny, "Positivism in the Twentieth Century," *Handbook of Social Theory*, ed. George Ritzer and Barry Smart (London: Sage, 2001), 382.

27   Jennie Hornosty, "Academic Freedom in Social Context," *Academic Freedom and the Inclusive University*, ed. Sharon E. Kahn and Dennis Pavlich (Vancouver: UBC, 2000), 42.

28   Fergus Kerr, "Logical Positivism," *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Thought*, ed. Alister E. McGrath (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell,

those who adopt the positivistic stance even being aware of the influence.

In response to Peter Novick's book on the question of historiographical objectivity, Henry Ashby Turner, Jr. calls the study "an obituary for the historical profession of the 1980s in America." Turner insists that the obituary is premature, for although the profession adheres to the goals of Rankean methodology and historiography, "the obituary lacks, in short, a corpse."[29] Turner invents a strangely narrow definition of Rankean historiography as it was adopted by the American historical profession; but unlike those obituaries that are pre-written for the well known and celebrated, and occasionally are mistakenly released before the person dies (Coleridge, Hemingway, Bob Hope), the philosophical framework that supported the historical profession in the twentieth century can now be declared dead—your nose will help you track down the corpse.

Since those with a vested interest in asserting that the body isn't a carcass keep insisting that the intellectual corpus that animated American historiography during the twentieth century is merely suffering from a flesh wound, an issue that should have expired years ago and must be revisited again and again. The scent of putrefaction can easily be detected. During the twentieth century the historical profession was dominated by a particular approach to the writing of history. That theoretical paradigm emphasized an empirical method: a desire to free the researcher from bias, presupposition, and ideology; and a fetishization of the archive as the source of historical facts out of which an objective historical account can be rendered. Variously known as *positivism* and *empiricist*

1993), 348.

29   Henry Ashby Turner, Jr., "Symposium: History: As It Really Was?; Peter Novick and the 'Objectivity Question' in History," *Academic Questions* 8 (1995): 22–23.

history, it is also known by other names, such as *objectivism*, or *scientific history*, so we shouldn't be surprised if historians are still in thrall to this intellectual agenda. "The dominant *habitus mentalis* of modern Western societies has been 'positivism.'"[30] Academic culture has been ruled by a positivism that was only seriously challenged starting in the 1980s. Since then positivism has gone into precipitous decline as a theoretical position, but it was the prevailing way of justifying historical positions during the twentieth century, so most historians are reluctant to abandon it.

Criticisms of positivism emerged from philosophy, and as each discipline was theorized after the 1980s (that is, as philosophical explorations of the discipline's claims began to be required of practitioners, more historians and social scientists had to go back and bone up on contemporary continental and analytic philosophy), positivistic claims became more liability than advantage, but many disciplinary practitioners—especially in history—were reluctant to cut loose from the anchor that had held the profession firmly for a century. Development of a theory-based historiographical account was complicated by the fact that "the overwhelming majority of historians are utterly indifferent to issues involving epistemology and philosophy of history";[31] only a small fraction of historians are sufficiently philosophically sophisticated to engage in the argument. Doing theory became a necessity for historians, but there is nothing historians dislike more than being asked to do philosophy: "Professional historiography has presupposed the existence, although not necessarily the telling, of a vision of coherence has been largely invisible to historians

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30   Richard Harvey Brown, *Social Science as Civic Discourse: Essays on the Invention, Legitimization, and Uses of Social Theory* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987), 9.

31   Michael Kammen, *Selvages & Biases: The Fabric of History in American Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell U P, 1987), 17.

themselves."[32] Not only is positivism the predominant intellectual current in most academic disciplines, so it is in history also: "Today positivist historiography is considered the mainstream of History (at least in North America and Western Europe)."[33] The Rankean model of historical research became particularly entrenched in America. This idea cluster combined a professionalizing trend with a dread rejection of theoretical reflection, where "in the American historical profession, anti-theoretical and anti-philosophical objectivist empiricism had been the dominant stance";[34] even today many historians

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32 Allan Megill, "'Grand Narrative' and the Discipline of History," *A New Philosophy of History*, ed. Frank Ankersmit and Hans Kellner (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995), 153.

33 Gabrielle A. T. Durepos, *ANTi-history: Theorizing the Past, History and Historiography in Management and Organization Studies* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2012), 65. See also Jonathan B. Isacoff, "Pragmatism, History, and International Relations," *Pragmatism in International Relations*, ed. Harry Bauer and Elisabetta Brighi (New York: Routledge, 2009), 67. "Positivism has been the dominant Anglo-American approach to historiography and the social sciences." Terry Eagleton has also asserted that "most historians are unwitting positivists," in *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture* (New York: Verso, 1995), 22. However, I ought to note that one can as easily find sources that assert the opposite—that most historians are against positivism; but it is the unwittingly positivistic historians who make the latter claim. Historians have a long tradition of being committed to a vulgar positivism, "but it is doubtful whether many academic historians (outside the Latin countries) knew that they were positivists." E. J. Hobsbawm, "Karl Marx's Contribution to Historiography," *Ideology in Social Science: Readings in Critical Social Theory*, ed. Robin Blackburn (New York: Vintage, 1972), 266.

34 Beatriz Inés Moreyra, "History: Mutations, Crisis and Disciplinary Identity," *An Assessment of Twentieth-Century Historiography: Professionalism, Methodologies, Writings*, ed. Rolf Torstendahl. Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, 2000), 198–99. Oliver J. Daddow applies the name "the ideology of apathy" to this reluctance of historians to examine their own theoretical commitments in "Still No Philosophy Please, We're Historians," 419–20. This apathy about reading any source that would challenge the historian's positivistic commitments is a choice, not something that happens by default. This reticence has a long history in historiography; and "when eminent historians eschew thorny philosophical problems simply because they are difficult to resolve, it hardly inspires faith in the intellectual foundations of the discipline and it hardly encourages their protégés to take seriously the philoso-

proudly proclaim their indifference to theoretical concerns, sometimes wearing the dismissal as a badge of honor. Elizabeth Clark and Jerzy Topolski agree that "historians generally assume their epistemological positions without reflection or argument."[35] And Clark notes that "historians have been hard pressed in recent years to provide compelling responses when challenged by philosophers and theorists."[36] We shouldn't be taken aback if a strong reluctance exists to subject truth claims to philosophical analysis in the macrocosm of the historical profession; we would find an even stronger unwillingness to theorize in the microcosms of the discipline, such as in Mormon history. Dan Vogel is one such historical writer in Mormon studies who is completely ignorant of the literature that takes up positivism: the philosophical literature, the historiographical literature, the social scientific literature; he never cites references that are easily available and contradict his own definitions and views on the issues. He has an obligation to consult the references, because they so overwhelmingly refute his assertions; he instead attempts to muddle through by avoiding the topic, labeling it "esoteric and irrelevant." If appealing to covert epistemological positions while denying the need to articulate them is unsatisfactory, most historians are either uninterested in or ill equipped to explore the nature of historical representations but prefer to "leave the philosophical struggles to the philosophers" and go about working with sources.[37] Historians have built their standing as a profession

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phy and theory of history." Oliver J. Daddow, "Still No Philosophy Please, We're Historians," 432.

35   Clark, *History, Theory, Text*, 205 n. 78.

36   Clark, *History, Theory, Text*, 17.

37   Thomas Postlewait and Charlotte M. Canning, "Representing the Past: An Introduction on Five Themes," *Representing the Past: Essays in Performance Historiography*, ed. Charlotte M. Canning and Thomas Postlewait (Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 2010), 12. The same is true of teachers of history in Britain, most of whom "still regard philosophy of history (if they give it a thought) as an alien, even pretentious, activity, irrelevant to their practical concerns," while they

on the objectivity ideology which asserts the historian's freedom from ideology by appealing to a "scientific objectivist method" that can be maintained "only by resisting incursions into the discipline by potentially damaging philosophical and epistemological debates can historians retain their reputations as credible purveyors of knowledge about the past which they have spent 150 years constructing."[38] Always, always it should be remembered that "the language and rhetoric of positivism is most often invoked (perhaps unconsciously) when ideology is most nakedly displayed."[39] The reader needs to appreciate the irony that ideology is never more manifest than when its advocates assert the absence of ideology.

Sol Cohen is a good case study, because he is representative of how the larger historical profession was disciplined "in the tenets of realist or positivist historiography" in graduate school.[40] Cohen is representative of how historians, at least in post-WWII university education, were trained to be positivists and reject theoretical examination of their discipline; he is still teaching at UCLA. He received his PhD in history from Columbia University in 1964 and another PhD from Teachers College (presumably in education), Columbia University in 1966. That means he finished his graduate education at the height of the positivistic paradigm in the American historical profession,

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transmit to their own pupils the simplified and "often unexamined" version of the historiography they were taught at university. P. J. Lee, "History Teaching and Philosophy of History," *History and Theory* 22.4 (Dec. 1983): 19. This simplistic variety of historiography usually comprises an uncritical view of history that opposes the subjective to the objective, the relative to the certain, the probable to the absolute, and the biased to the unbiased; in other words, history teachers too often just pass on a naïve variety of objectivism. P. J. Lee, "History Teaching and Philosophy of History," 22.

38   Oliver J. Daddow, "Still No Philosophy Please, We're Historians," 494.

39   Carl W. Ernst, *Eternal Gardens: Mysticism, History, and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Center* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), 21.

40   Sol Cohen, "An Essay in the Aid of Writing History: Fictions of Historiography," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 23 (2004): 318.

at the same time the New History and the New Mormon History were emerging as the dominant forces in their areas of influence (the 1970s saw the ascendance of social history, and then shortly after that cultural history became dominant—but all these trends were founded on positivistic presuppositions of Rankean orthodoxy). This positivistic paradigm ruled history until its underlying philosophical foundations were attacked beginning in the 1970s and continues ascendant today but has been shorn of its philosophical taken-for-grantedness. So Cohen's trajectory has been from positivistic disciple to critic of the dominant view; and like most historians who walked that path, he travelled that trajectory largely on his own without graduate courses or mentors to help him work through the servitude to positivism, because the orthodoxy and institutions of the historical profession remained wedded to a positivistic empiricism (they still are, but with some cracks in that system); but the dominant ethos was taught to him without irony or reservation in his graduate training. Cohen's graduate school mentor at Columbia, Lawrence A. Cremin, was a microcosm of the discipline in that he "scorned theorizing or introspection about historiography" as "the previous generation eschewed open discussion of philosophy of history or any kind of meta-theoretical reflection about historical writing."[41] The positivistic generation of historians viewed concern with philosophical issues as debilitating to the historical task—"the philosopher's business, not the historian's."[42] But historians must operate under one or another philosophy of history. Doing without one is not an option. So like Vogel, "Cremin renounced philosophy of history only to submit to it unaware."[43] As Cremin trained his students to become history professors and history teachers, he tutored them in the conventional wisdom of the profession:

41   Cohen, "An Essay in the Aid of Writing History," 319.
42   Cohen, "An Essay in the Aid of Writing History," 320.
43   Cohen, "An Essay in the Aid of Writing History," 320.

the documentary model of research, the fetish of the footnote, the notion that "subjectivity, ideology, presentism, or any other contaminant of historiographic scientism was to be suppressed."[44] Foundational to all other concerns was the avoidance of any theoretical reflection that currently gives the impression of ignorance: "Cremin's commitment to historiographic positivism and antipathy toward theoretical reflection about the nature of historical knowledge now seems a kind of willful philosophical naiveté."[45] Cremin's deliberate obliviousness to his own theoretical foundations and rhetorical stances reflected the entire discipline's innocence of its own ideology and philosophy; "I am astonished at how unsophisticated, historiographically speaking, Cremin seems, that is to say, how historiographically unsophisticated we all were at the time."[46] Cremin, and the discipline as a whole, was committed five decades ago to an uncritical positivism that still resonates in the profession today, although Cohen was fortunate to escape from an unchallenged version of positivism. Cremin is representative of the historians in this regard, and Vogel has adopted the prevailing prejudices of the profession against philosophical examination. "It is clear that there is still some reluctance among historians to acknowledge any relevance of theoretical concerns to their own practice," wrote Beverley Southgate in 2012.[47] Dan Vogel is a contemporary case study of how traditional and conservative the pursuit of history is; the same claims are the unstated, but they are *the* assumed position that Vogel believes the entire profession endorses.

I have written several essays criticizing Vogel's ventures into Mormon history as permeated by an uncritical positivistic

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44   Cohen, "An Essay in the Aid of Writing History," 320.

45   Cohen, "An Essay in the Aid of Writing History," 321.

46   Cohen, "An Essay in the Aid of Writing History," 324.

47   Beverley Southgate, "'Faddish Theories' and Historical Practice," *Annual Bulletin of Historical Literature* 96.1 (Dec. 2012): 16.

understanding. Vogel, frustrated at being called a positivist, has responded several times in online discussion groups, vociferously insisting that he isn't a positivist; his most recent foray into denial is posted on the Signature Books website.[48] The other critics Vogel responds to can take care of themselves, so I'll confine my comments to the last short portion of Vogel's piece in which he takes up my critiques.

Having demonstrated his theoretical lack of awareness in previous discussions when he has taken up the issue of his own philosophical commitments, Vogel begins his most recent sortie into the matter by attempting to change the subject away from his own epistemological position: "In his 2004 critique of *American Apocrypha*, Alan Goff failed to discuss the specifics of my essay—whether or not the three and eight witnesses viewed the plates subjectively and the possibility that they hallucinated—but instead attempted to derail the discussion with an esoteric and irrelevant discussion about epistemology, using a postmodern critique of knowledge as an apologetic against a position I did not take. Indeed, it is Goff's extreme anti-positivist stance and lack of familiarity with the sources and subject that cause him to distort my arguments."[49] Vogel may believe that critique of his epistemology is "esoteric and irrelevant,"[50] but that is the primary and major issue at stake

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48   Dan Vogel, "Book of Mormon Witnesses Revisited: A Response to Richard L. Anderson, Stephen C. Harper, Daniel C. Peterson, Richard L. Bushman, and Alan Goff." 29 Mar. 2012. <http://signaturebooks.com/2012/03/book-of-mormon-witnesses-revisited/>. It appears the article was posted in March 2012.

49   Vogel, "Book of Mormon Witnesses Revisited."

50   Schlesinger notes that most historians are very bad at engaging in abstract thought and argumentation, because they are disciplined to prefer the concrete and empirical, even if they don't understand the philosophical arguments. "We happily leave the philosophy of history to philosophers, whose analyses we imperfectly follow and whose theories of knowledge we habitually dismiss as irrelevant to historical practice." Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "History: Text vs. Context," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 103 (1991): 4.

here. If Vogel starts from a positivistic foundation, his entire discussion of the issues will be skewed by that commitment. Perhaps Vogel believes that one can eschew metaphysics altogether and just begin from the empirical facts of the matter, free of all philosophical entanglements, but that would be to engage in another variety of positivism. Many historical practitioners assert that they don't have a philosophy, and that epistemological examination is a waste of time because it is irrelevant to the historian's task. Too little overlap exists between historians who practice the theory of history and those who write historical accounts, a gap that leaves the largest part of the discipline unaware of the avalanche of changes that has occurred in historiography[51] in the past few decades: "Many historians have felt that what is going on in philosophy is more or less irrelevant to what they themselves do. However,

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51   Scientists have a theoretical hierarchy: (a) the vast majority of practitioners who know nothing about the philosophy of science conceive of their endeavor in simplistic terms, (b) a few are aware of the history of science and understand how views of science have varied widely over the generations, and (c) some engage in a rarified philosophy of science. The last position is so intellectually forbidding that most scientists have little awareness of the philosophy of science (on campuses the teaching of that function is usually carried out by a philosophy department). The history of science proves a halfway house for some scientific practitioners to become informed about the issues. The situation is similar in history: most (a) practitioners are oblivious to the theoretical issues; then there is (b) historiography (the accounts historians give about how historical knowledge is generated), and (c) philosophy of history. Historiography is a halfway house (kind of philosophy of history for dummies) that permits some historians who reside there to free themselves from the positivistic conventional wisdom of the discipline. Few historians have the background to dip into the philosophy of history. "Fewer than 1 percent of the members of the American Historical Association list 'historiography and philosophy of history' as either a primary or secondary field of interest," Richard T. Vann, review of Richard Rorty's *Philosophical Papers*, in *American Historical Review* 97.4 (Oct. 1992): 1173. So when (c) philosophers of history or (b) historiographers write publications on the subject, there is no choir to preach to in the historical profession; the audience consists virtually of a congregation who don't want any theory with their sermon (although theory is precisely what historiographers and philosophers of history do).

as long as these same persons in their very practice also do make methodological statements based on epistemological and ontological presuppositions, they simply cannot pretend that philosophy is irrelevant. They are all in fact practicing some sort of philosophy, and it would certainly not hurt their work if they had realized this";[52] Vogel may contemptuously dismiss philosophy as irrelevant and esoteric, but he nevertheless can't avoid engaging in amateurish philosophical speculation. John Tosh notes that most historians just ignore philosophical debates about the status of historical knowledge claims, and the result has been confusion in the profession.[53] Joey Sprague notes that this tendency to dismiss epistemological concerns isn't limited just to historians; "most researchers think of epistemology as a nonissue—or, more precisely, do not think of epistemology at all. We have learned to equate science with positivist epistemology, and for most people, the assumptions of positivism do not appear to be assumptions—they seem like common sense."[54] Hunter refers to Whitehead on this issue of assumptions that are naturalized by their advocates (that is, taken as natural facts that no sane person could doubt): "These underlying assumptions are unspoken and undefended because, as Whitehead put it, 'Such assumptions appear so obvious that people do now know what they are assuming because no

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52   Hans M. Barstad, *History and the Hebrew Bible: Studies in Ancient Israel and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 10.

53   John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, and New Directions in the Study of Modern History*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1991), 131. Similarly, Finley notes that historians are trained to ignore philosophical and methodological questions and "get on with their proper business, the investigation of the concrete experiences of the past, and leave the 'philosophy of history' (which is a barren, abstract and pretty useless activity anyway) to the philosophers." But in doing so the historian risks tremendous harm. M. I. Finley, *The Use and Abuse of History* New York: Viking, 1971), 61.

54   Joey Sprague, *Feminist Methodologies for Critical Researchers: Bridging Differences* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira, 2005), 31.

other way of putting things has ever occurred to them.'"[55] The problem with taking your fundamental ideas for granted is that most of them have a short shelf life, and positivism is way past its expiration date, so its price is subject to drastic discounts. This positivism is so dominant in our culture that every child in school is taught that subjectivity must be eliminated from the research process and an empirical approach used in sifting evidence to achieve objectivity.[56]

Vogel also wants to change the subject from my argument, which touches on the issues of the Book of Mormon witnesses only when it comes up in Vogel's arguments about methodological concerns (that is, when Vogel goes the positivistic route while venturing into philosophical territory): "It is Goff's extreme anti-positivist stance and lack of familiarity with the sources and subject that cause him to distort my arguments." Since Vogel has misunderstood my argument, let me state it straightforwardly here (it has been the same argument I have made for the ten years I have been engaging Vogel on the issue of positivism, so his desire to change my argument from the one I make to the one he wishes I would make betrays an unwillingness to engage the positions but instead throw up distractions and red herring arguments): Vogel brings to his explanation a positivistic epistemology that affects which interpretations he allows as permissible. That epistemology is the subject of my argument, not the witnesses and not the sources. My concerns are much more fundamental than Vogel's are, and my concerns are philosophical (disciplinary territory through which Vogel is loath to tread because of demonstrated incompetence). That epistemology is a conceptual filter for the evidence he adduces and the conclusions he arrives at. It is Vogel's "lack of familiarity with the sources" relevant to

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55   Cornelius G. Hunter, *Science's Blind Spot: The Unseen Religion of Scientific Naturalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2007), 7.

56   Sprague, *Feminist Methodologies for Critical Researchers*, 32.

these issues of positivism and epistemologies that makes his historical arguments superficial and uncritical. After referring to citation of his quotation about the Book of Mormon witnesses and reality, Vogel throws in a straw-man argument to divert attention away from his positivistic claims and revert to the sources, always a congenial rhetorical strategy for positivistic historians who believe the sources provide an escape from the entanglement of ideologies:

> The connection Goff makes between my argument and positivism as he defines it is loose and his understanding of my argument is incomplete and amounts to a straw man. My *goal* here was not to argue that visionary experiences are *automatically* discounted, as Goff asserts, but to controvert Richard Anderson's superficial reading of the published Testimony (that the three witnesses' experience was a 'natural-supernatural appearance' of the angel and plates, that the angel was literally, physically, and objectively present) by bringing into the discussion the subsequent statements of Whitmer and Harris, which make it clear that it was spiritual, supernatural, and subjective. Thus the discussion was about the nature of the three witnesses' experience, not about the nature of reality. Goff conveniently ignores this context and tries to force the discussion into a path he understands better. If my discussion stresses the non-physical subjective nature of the witnesses' experience, it's not necessarily because I'm a positivist, naturalist, empiricist, or naive realist, but because apologists have presented the published Testimonies as *empirical evidence* for the existence of the gold plates.[57]

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57   Vogel, "Book of Mormon Witnesses Revisited." One can't discuss "the nature of the three witnesses' experience" without resolving questions about

Vogel's statement is not, however, a claim about the sources: this is a philosophical claim about what kind of historical evidence is more reliable (and by the way, Vogel confuses the most basic philosophical distinctions, for discussion "about the nature of reality" is ontological rather than epistemological, the latter of which deals with knowledge and truth claims; perhaps Vogel wants to insist that ontology is irrelevant to historical argumentation as he clumsily works that district of philosophy also). It is Vogel's truth claims that are relevant to the question "Is Vogel a positivist?" rather than his relationship to his sources (although an archival positivism could make the resort to sources relevant). Vogel misconstrues my position because to address the real issue would require philosophical arguments which he eschews, which he is not fit to provide, and which he scorns to even consider.

Vogel doesn't recognize that epistemological issues are fundamental; he can't make judgments about the strength of various arguments until he has first made epistemological commitments. Typically those without philosophical training undervalue epistemological and metaphysical analysis, or worse, dismiss its relevance altogether; writers who can't do philosophy end up doing it ineptly through presupposition if they neglect explicit discussion: "Metaphysics may be a mug's game, but those who think they can avoid it by burying their heads in the sand are likely to wind up playing the game anyway but from the other end."[58] As Robert Eaglestone says about Holocaust issues, the same is true of Mormon history conflicts: "Just as with more historical accounts [that is, more historical than purely philosophical accounts], it is in the

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"the nature of reality," so it is a delusion to sever the two in favor of the local and particular. Inevitably the particular interpretive issues raise larger philosophical concerns.

58   Berel Lang, "Is It Possible to Misrepresent the Holocaust?" *History and Theory* 34 (1995): 84.

'choice' of explanation that the central problem behind this debate is revealed. It is impossible to accept an explanation without revealing or uncovering a truth about ourselves that may not be amenable to rational debate or discussion. Philosophical decisions are, as it were, the result of what is 'pre-philosophical,'"[59] and philosophical judgments precede historiographical conclusions. Vogel's assertions about the historical past are deficient because of his refusal to take them up philosophically, which leaves him at the mercy of his ideological commitments untempered by epistemological analysis; this flaw marks the weakest part of his feeble argument. Unsurprisingly, Vogel wants to change the subject away from my philosophical argument to arguments more amenable to his ideological goals.

Vogel's red herring attempt to shift the discussion away from epistemology and methodology and back to the concerns about sources and witnesses conceals the fact that sources aren't the root of my disagreement with him. Even before Vogel can discuss evidence, he must resolve questions about epistemology, something he can do so explicitly or surreptitiously. Instead of being forthright in his philosophical commitments, Vogel chooses to reject epistemology as "esoteric and irrelevant." Perhaps he means more narrowly to dismiss my particular epistemological inquiries as "esoteric and irrelevant," but that would require an epistemological argument from him. He provides none and is incapable of providing any, as long as he views epistemology as esoteric and irrelevant.

Dan Vogel says about the Book of Mormon witnesses that what appears to be empirical evidence of David Whitmer, Martin Harris, and Oliver Cowdery's touching the plates and hearing an angel bear testimony has to be redefined as internal, psychological, and therefore not empirical: "Despite the use of

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59   Robert Eaglestone, *The Holocaust and the Postmodern* (New York: Oxford U P, 2004), 305.

naturalistic language in the Testimony of Three Witnesses—particularly the emphasis on seeing the plates with their 'eyes' as well as the failure to mention the angel's glory—subsequent statements by Harris and Whitmer point to the visionary aspects of the their experience. In other words, the event was internal and subjective in the fullest sense of a vision."[60] Even when some historical actors assert empirical evidence, it is redefined by the positivistic researcher to be non-empirical (to grant that it is empirical to a positivist requires taking it seriously as evidence, exactly what Vogel wants to avoid). Discussing the Book of Mormon witnesses' testimony, Vogel contrasts the merely psychological/inward experience with the objective/outward experience: James Henry Moyle asked David Whitmer about the experience by trying "to ascertain whether the angel's appearance could be considered an objective event or if it was only experienced inwardly."[61] Vogel denies the physical elements of the witnesses' event by saying that "despite the naturalistic wording of the printed testimony, Whitmer's candid personal account described what might be called a waking dream";[62] and the account "was subjective and in the fullest sense a vision."[63] For Vogel, sensory experiences are (or at least are potentially) objective and visionary (or "nonsensory") experiences are subjective, for visions fall short of empirical or actual events and are therefore not historically valid evidence; this is an issue to which Vogel devotes so much time because of his positivistic commitments:

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60   Dan Vogel, "The Validity of the Witnesses' Testimonies," *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon*, ed. Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature, 2002), 86. See similar wording in Vogel, *Joseph Smith*, 467.

61   Vogel, *Joseph Smith*, 445. These are Vogel's words, not Moyle's.

62   Vogel, *Joseph Smith*, 445.

63   Vogel, *Joseph Smith*, 444.

> The manner in which Smith introduced later priesthood concepts into his 1823 interview with the angel makes one wonder if he ever viewed the vision as an empirical event. Indeed, it is difficult to treat as historical an experience which Joseph himself so freely recast. His willingness to change this and other visions in order to meet later needs prompts one to wonder whether the visions were invented to serve utilitarian purposes. I will treat Smith's visions in terms of the evolving stories he told people about them rather than as actual events.[64]

In Vogel's mind, all of this discussion of visions depends on a sharp distinction between mystical experiences (which are merely psychological) and empirical events (which are amenable to sensory analysis), and only the empirical can count as valid historical evidence: "One might therefore suggest that although Smith's vision had all the power and life-changing force of any mystical experience, it may have been less concrete to the senses than he would later imply," but may (Vogel speculates) have just used sensory language to describe purely psychological events: so perhaps "Smith used visual language to describe an experience that was nonsensory."[65] This is positivism in the fullest sense of the term. Similarly, seeing angels and speaking in tongues are too subjective to qualify as evidence to the positivist; "The evidently subjective nature of these experiences is attested to by William E. McLellin, David Whitmer, and others, who (contradicting the official version) reported they had no such experiences and suggested that the others only imagined them."[66] The following notion was developed by Comte but had a broad impact on historical

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64   Vogel, *Joseph Smith*, 44.

65   Vogel, *Joseph Smith*, 31.

66   Dan Vogel, *Religious Seekers and the Advent of Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: Signature, 1988), 128 n. 92.

writing in the twentieth century and became the dominant way of thinking about how to do science and "scientific history": "Positivism can be briefly defined as the claim that true knowledge is derived from empirical inquiry and is subject to verification. Knowledge that cannot be verified is 'merely subjective.'"[67] This word *verification* is key for positivists, who insist that the only valid form of knowledge is what can be empirically verifiable.[68] When applied to religious belief, the verifiability principle has the curious effect of requiring that religious statements no longer function religiously. Explicit versions of this positivistic criterion are seldom stated in philosophy of religion—except by those like Vogel, who haven't

[67] William Austin Stahl, Robert A. Campbell, Yvonne Petry, and Gary Diver, *Webs of Reality: Social Perspectives on Science and Religion* (Piscataway, N.J.: Rutgers U P, 2002), 42.

[68] The positivistic verifiability criterion would invalidate whole fields of knowledge that nonpositivists are loath to discard: ethics, morality, and art, to name a few. In addition, professional judgment and expert opinion would be dismissed out of hand. I think I exercise professional judgment when I discuss literature and philosophy with my students and colleagues because over a lifetime of analysis I have developed expertise in the areas that is neither quantitatively measureable nor empirically derived. But a positivist completely discounts such experience and judgment as noncognitive. We expect radical (and now naïve) empiricists to assert that only knowledge based on sensory experience is valid and cognitive, but "there are too many things we know for certain but could not possible know from experience. We know, for example, that there are time differences between New York, London and Tokyo, though we could not be in three places simultaneously to experience those differences. Any highly literate person's 'stock of knowledge' includes a vast amount of information, irreducible to sense data, which she has understood and assimilated." Bernard Waites, "In Defense of Historical Realism: A Further Response to Keith Jenkins," *Rethinking History* 15.3 (Sep. 2011): 324. In fact, the vast bulk of what Vogel thinks he knows has not been derived from empirical observation but from reading other people's written accounts or testimonials, especially when he puts his hand to writing biography. If we granted Vogel his wish and permitted only those bits of knowledge which he arrived at through his sense data as historical testimony, well, a small plastic bucket would suffice for transport. We should instead swear in trainloads, container ships, and transport airplanes as vessels of knowledge rather than the miniscule pile of sand guileless empiricists want to admit as witnesses before the historical bar of justice.

read any, because they have lost credibility; nevertheless, "the effects of that historical delegitimation are still with us today. Religious wisdom, if it is even granted this status, is commonly considered to be affective or ornamental, as opposed to offering real knowledge or insight."[69]

When I assert that Vogel makes the stereotypically positivistic claim that positivists accept as valid evidence only that which can be empirically derived, Vogel says, "Of course, I never made that argument."[70] If Vogel never made these positivistic claims, then the identity thief publishing under his name is an extreme positivist. We shall yet see if Vogel "never" made such an assertion; since my last engagement on the issue of Vogel's positivism (on Chris Smith's blog), I have read as much of Vogel's writing as I could find. Vogel has been quite consistent in making this positivistic claim, which he now asserts he never made. Vogel avows I have mistaken his arguments, which are confined to the immediate context of trying to counter Richard Lloyd Anderson's position on the three witnesses. Vogel asserts that his positivistic-sounding claims aren't really positivistic but are merely tied to the specific Mormon sources he is responding to. But Vogel connects the specific context of the three witnesses to larger concepts about truth, knowledge, and method. He runs the argument up and down the ladder of abstraction, not just staying with "just the facts, ma'am," although after the fact he asserts that he merely stays low on that ladder, resting on the concrete and specific rungs. Vogel is delusional to believe he can quarantine his analysis to the historical events without mixing concepts and abstractions into the recipe. Even the vocabulary he uses— "mystical" versus "empirical," "subjective" versus "objective," "naturalistic" versus "supernatural"—pushes the analysis

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69   Ronald A. Kuipers, *Critical Faith: Toward a Renewed Understanding of Religious Life and Its Public Accountability* (New York: Rodopi, 2002), 67.

70   Vogel, "Book of Mormon Witnesses Revisited."

to higher levels of abstraction where Vogel's positivism can't help but leak out the seams of his decrepit conceptual bucket. Facts become facts only under the aegis of larger conceptual structures that tell the interpreter what to make of the facts. In Vogel's case, his discussion of the three witnesses is put in the service of a positivistic interpretive scheme which asserts that only empirical evidence deserves the name of evidence, while at the same time he violates his own rule by becoming conceptual.

Vogel can't resist writing letters to publications airing his grievances about "misreadings" of his work. He proclaims his positivism too straightforwardly in those letters for there to be much doubt about what he means.[71] Religious experiences (*paranormal* is the word he sometimes uses) for Vogel are not valid historical evidence because "revelations and visions are subjective." When positivism emerged, it challenged religion "as something meaningless and nonsensical. Positivism claims that scientific knowledge is the only genuine knowledge for it can be verified empirically"; and therefore religion is nonsense (that is, non-sense), since it can't meet the requirement of empirical verification or sensory observation.[72] Religion is thus relegated to the realm of the private, the emotional, the subjective.[73] According to Vogel, revelations can't be "verified" empirically, but "translations of ancient texts are subject to historical analysis and verification. My skepticism about some of Joseph Smith's metaphysical claims stems primarily, but not

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71   Historians attempt to keep their theoretical commitments covert when they write their narratives, but they often must make them explicit when forced to defend their interpretations. So it is unsurprising that Vogel's positivism is most manifest in these letters to the editor or when he is responding to criticisms. Everybody working with historical material has a philosophy of history, but many historical researchers aren't aware of those allegiances until they turn from covert to overt apologists.

72   Basil Pohlong, *Culture and Religion: A Conceptual Study* (New Delhi: Mittal, 2004), xviii.

73   Pohlong, *Culture and Religion*, xix.

exclusively, from my conclusion that the Book of Mormon is not an authentic ancient document."[74] Note that Vogel thinks he is in the business of verifying or disconfirming events by applying an empirical criterion to them; there is that crucial word *verify*—or as we shall soon see, the words *to test*—so vital to positivists as they filter subjective claims from objective evidence; Vogel also considers that he is the business of dismissing "Joseph Smith's metaphysical claims" because they aren't empirical.

I am curious to know what Vogel means by "verifying historical claims." I know in the physical sciences how one might verify or disconfirm the claim that planets such as Mars move through the night sky according to an explanation called e*picycles*, the phenomenon we now call *retrograde*. One would go out, like Tycho Brahe, on repeated nights (and over a couple of years) to chart the movement of a wandering planet against a grid. Similarly, if I want to see if certain bacteria are killed by a particular mold, I would repeat the exposure many times in a controlled lab environment; I would perform empirical observations with my own senses. How would one verify or disconfirm a historical event that happened nearly two centuries ago? Vogel does it by applying mistaken positivistic presuppositions about empiricism based on a false analogy between history and the physical sciences. Vogel isn't making any empirical observations himself, so using the word *verify* the way Vogel does is a false analogy based on a comparison to the way events are verified or tested in physics or biology. When Vogel claims to be able to empirically verify (or falsify) events that occurred 185 or so years ago, he shows no recognition

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74   Dan Vogel, "Is This Academic Discourse?" (letter) *Journal of Mormon History* 33.1 (Spring 2007): vi. In addition to his use of positivists' keyword *to verify*, here is another keyword, *metaphysical*. For positivists the empirical world is set against the metaphysical, the latter being too conceptual or subjective to qualify as real knowledge because it isn't available to sensory examination.

that both terms (*empirical* and *verification*) are profoundly epistemologically and methodologically problematical. Vogel moves forward with this claim only through uncritical bluff and presupposition.

I shouldn't have to note that to deny particular metaphysical claims is to engage in philosophizing, particularly bad philosophizing by use of archaic notions, but philosophizing nevertheless: "As the positivists used it, verification serves as something like a litmus test to discriminate the genuinely factual statements of scientific philosophers from what they consider the pseudo-factual variety put forth by metaphysicians, theologians, and other philosophically retarded types."[75] This principle is less a conclusion and more a presupposition in Vogel's work (although as with most of us, Vogel's presuppositions and conclusions are all jumbled together). In another reply to critics posted on the Signature Books website, Vogel again asserts he is testing and verifying Joseph Smith's claims: "While it is true that Joseph Smith and his supporters held a different world view, I have no problem reporting their beliefs, nor do I doubt that these 'paranormal phenomena' were real to Smith and his followers. That is not the issue. More relevant is that among all these various claims is one that is testable: the Book of Mormon. Prophecy, revelation, and visions are subjective, but translations of ancient texts are subject to historical analysis and verification."[76] To Vogel, "paranormal" phenomena are untestable, unverifiable, and subjective. I submit that Vogel's readings of the Book of Mormon are no less subjective (if you want to get caught in the trap of dividing the world into evidence that is subjective versus

75   Malcolm L. Diamond, Review of James Edwards's *Wittgenstein and Religion* and Kai Nielsen's *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* in *Religious Studies Review* 12 (Jan. 1986): 17.

76   Dan Vogel, "Seeing through the Hedges: A Response to Andrew H. and Dawson W. Hedges," 24 April 2006. <http://signaturebooks.com/excerpts/making2.html>.

evidence that escapes subjectivity; the objectivity ideology has proven as fragile as other positivistic enterprises)—dependent on prior assumptions and ideologies—than are assertions about divine communication. Vogel's "verification" and "testing" proceed hermeneutically and ideologically (rather than empirically, in any ordinary sense of that term), just like other historical interpretations.[77] Vogel's "verification" method

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77   Aviezer Tucker notes that epistemological inquiry recognizes five types of evidence (and like a true positivist, Vogel insists that to be valid the evidence must be of Tucker's first kind): (1) *empirical* evidence from direct sensory perception, (2) *a priori reasoning*, such as mathematical truisms, (3) *memory* from witnesses who recall an event, (4) *self-knowledge* from introspective examination (such as "I know I am tired right now"), and (5) *testimony* from people who tell us about some event we have not experienced ourselves. The epistemological tradition has until recently just examined numbers 1 and 2 (mostly because those are the procedural reasoning most commonly used in the sciences), but the other forms of knowledge have been explored more consistently in the past few decades. Historical inquiry is largely grounded on the last type: "the historiography of the human past relies on testimonies such as eyewitness accounts, diaries, and archived official reports." "Where Do We Go from Here? Jubilee Report on *History and Theory*," *History and Theory* 49 (Dec. 2010): 71–72. Virtually none of the evidence Vogel uses when writing up his historical research is empirical (that is, based on his own sensory observation) but is rather testimonial. So there is some irony to his insistence that the only valid form of historical evidence is empirical. Invalidating all the evidence adduced to support your own argument by committing a simple category mistake is a drastic failure of logic and the morals of epistemological inquiry. David Yamane notes that the religious experience the historian (or sociologist) takes up isn't the historian's experience: "I argue that when we study religious experience we cannot study 'experiencing'—religious experience in real time and its physical, mental, and emotional constituents—and therefore must study retrospective accounts—linguistic representations—of religious experiences" ("Narrative and Religious Experience," *Sociology of Religion* 61.2 (2000): 173). The sociologist, the historian—none can study an event such as the First Vision or the translation of the Book of Mormon. "Sociologists cannot empirically study experiencing, thus understood, for it is a wholly private, individual affair inaccessible to any currently known methods of social scientific research" (174). The rub in Yamane's position (why Vogel can't plausibly use it buttress his position that religious experience is subjective) is that Yamane would also assert that just as religious experiencing is beyond the reach of the historian and sociologist absent textual mediation, so is empirical experiencing. The researcher studies linguistic representations and fragments,

is textually based and depends as much on the presuppositions he brings to the task and the quality of his own reading ability as my readings of the Book of Mormon do;[78] Vogel's Book of Mormon readings aren't instances of exegesis but are shallow and compare very badly (they really don't compare at all) to the readings of Terryl Givens, Joseph Spencer, Grant Hardy, John Welch, and those of others, which move beyond superficiality

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not the events themselves; we study narratives, written narratives reflected on and interpreted dozens of times over.

78   Citing several sources, Kaya Yilmaz ("Postmodernism and Its Challenge to the Discipline of History: Implications for History Education," Educational Philosophy and Theory 42.7 [2010]: 786) comments on the problem for historians who claim also to be empiricists. The postmodern challenge burdens such positivists, because "when this critique is applied to the discipline of history or the way historians do history, its epistemological vulnerability becomes evident in several respects. First of all, in contrast to natural sciences, which enable scientists to directly observe their object of study, when this critique is applied to the discipline of history or the way historians do history, its epistemological vulnerability becomes evident in several respects. First, of all, in contrast to natural sciences which enable scientists to directly observe their object of study, the discipline of history does not allow historians to observe their object of study, the past or what has occurred in the past. There is an ontological gap between the past and history." Even the act of deciding what from the past is relevant to the study at hand is an interpretive act. Combine the hermeneutical aspect of the historian's task with the recognition that language is the medium of understanding, and you have a serious problem. Language isn't transparent, "something to be looked through"; rather it is "something to be looked at," as Yilmaz cites Toews. "What is explicit, therefore, in the postmodern critique of the conventional practice of history is the fact that history is essentially a textual subject or written sources and full of grand historical narratives" (787). Postmodernism poses a serious threat to Vogel's positivism, and the only way to counter that menace is to get philosophical. Rather than engaging their own philosophical assumptions and arguing them philosophically, "the majority of historians simply ignore or reject the postmodernist critique of history, continuing to practice history with older historicist conceptions and frameworks laid down by Ranke in the Nineteenth Century" in the hope that nobody will notice that their presuppositions are straightforwardly based on a more-than-century-old epistemology. Despite the fact that these postmodern challenges have been available for decades and have prompted "a great deal of discussion on such fundamental topics as the nature of historical work, the epistemology of history, and the mode of explanation and interpretation of history, [the] traditional empiricist approach to the study of the past still dominates the discipline" (788).

into the real depth of the Book of Mormon narrative. If you ask for close textual analysis of the Book of Mormon performed with subtlety and attention to detail and the text's intertextual and narrative qualities, Vogel's readings will be a terrible disappointment. Vogel's readings of the text are superficial because he begins from superficial assumptions. If that is what Vogel means by "verifying" the Book of Mormon, then Vogel's readers will be sorely tested.

The primary source of Vogel's ideological position is his prior commitment to a crypto-positivistic epistemology. While trying to distance himself from the New Mormon History, Vogel nevertheless admits that he shares positivistic assumptions (without recognizing that they are positivistic) with these historians: "While I agree with the New Mormon Historians that the metaphysical aspects of religion cannot be tested by historical means, artifacts, such as books, and events are completely different matters."[79] Religious experience, to positivists, isn't veridical (that is, an event in the real world) but is merely metaphysical or psychological: "To positivists and empiricists, religious or other symbolic meaning belongs (if anywhere at all) 'in the head': it is a psychological phenomenon pertaining to the realm of the subjective, a 'something' as individual and private as are other entities of the world of (scientifically ungrounded) opinion and taste."[80] Vogel's multiple appeals to this positivistic principle make it implausible that his assertion is tied to the specific context of the Book of Mormon witnesses argument; this positivistic

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79   Dan Vogel, "Don't Label Me," (letter) *Dialogue* 22.1 (Spring 1989): 6. Again, let me highlight Vogel's use of the words *metaphysical* and *test*: they carry a certain weight from the positivistic tradition, especially when used uncritically, and ought to set against their larger historical context, as I am doing here.

80   Jeppe Sinding Jensen, "Meaning and Religion: On Semantics in the Study of Religion," *New Approaches to the Study of Religion, Volume 1: Regional, Critical and Historical Approaches*, ed. Peter Antes, Armin W. Geertz, and Randi R. Warne (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 225.

rule about religious experience not being subject to empirical verification (and therefore being invalid historical evidence) is more like an overarching interpretive principle for Vogel, because it comes up in multiple contexts but always with the goal of denigrating religious claims as unverifiable, as noncognitive, as meaningless. One can dismiss the house of epistemology and not even condescend to enter the front door, but that doesn't mean one can be free of epistemology. Vogel still must make epistemological claims, and that means he must try surreptitiously to sneak in the back door—but that makes him an epistemological burglar. It is no defense to go before the judge and say, "Well, I was just entering my own house, the house of history, when I broke through the lock of truth claims." The house of history is unavoidably a house of epistemology. Bad or uncritical epistemology inevitably makes bad history, if for no more reason than because it is uncritical history.

Joseph Smith's claims can't be tested using the empirical tools of the historian as long as Smith stays in the realm of visions and revelation, say positivists; however, once Smith creates empirically accessible evidence, according to Vogel he has left the realm of the subjective and entered the domain of the objectively confirmable or disconfirmable: "There are several reasons to reject the unconscious fraud theory but the most conclusive evidence is the plates themselves, as an objective artifact, which Smith allowed his family and friends . . . to handle."[81] The same is true of a contemporary spiritual experience, such as what Mormons call a testimony; it is not sufficiently empirical to satisfy a positivist: "As for testimony: spiritual experience is subjective and therefore cannot resolve historical questions."[82] Vogel asserts, and on

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81   Dan Vogel, "Either/Or," (letter) *Dialogue* 36.1 (Spring 2003): xi.

82   Dan Vogel, "Out of the Question," (letter) *Sunstone* 133 (July 2004): 4. It would indeed be problematical to attempt to resolve a historical conflict with the

this I don't disagree with him, that spiritual experiences occur in all sorts of cultures. However, Vogel believes that these spiritual experiences are produced in the limbic system and various lobes of the brain; they are, therefore, subjectively based on the emotional needs that religions satisfy and not objective conclusions, not on the "scientific" tools he thinks he deploys: "Scientific method was invented to override emotional biases and help us overcome our tendency to make subjective judgments";[83] that is how positivists reductively impoverish religious claims to measurable (at least in principle) brain activity. Those tangible plates are for Vogel valid empirical evidence of Joseph Smith's fraud. "Actually, Smith probably should not be compared to most other mystics since he tried to provide tangible evidence for his claims. When he produced the plates to be felt through a cloth or lifted in a box, he left the mystical realm of subjective truth and entered into the physical world of conscious deception."[84] Vogel often returns to this claim—that religious experiences occur only in the brain and are subjective, while any evidence that could be empirically

kind of testimony Mormons hear in a testimony meeting, so Vogel and I agree on this point.

83   Dan Vogel, "The Real Conflict," (letter) *Sunstone* 132 (May 2004): 4. Positivists attempt to model their inquiries on the method used in science to cross into the promised land of objective, emotion-free, empirical analysis. This statement in itself isn't sufficient to accuse Vogel of that other positivistic claim (that inquiry must follow the unity of science model—that is, all research must in some way be modeled on physics or some other "hard science"), but its presence should provoke more questions about whether Vogel believes he is doing "scientific history." Is he applying the term *scientific method* to his own research? These appeals to "objective" evidence are, as both John Schmalzbauer and Gaye Tuchman note, "a credibility-enhancement rhetorical strategy that can be mobilized in situations in which professional claims to expertise or detachment come under attack." John Schmalzbauer, *People of Faith: Religious Conviction in American Journalism and Higher Education* (Ithaca: Cornell U P, 2003), 104. In other words, assertions about objectivity such as Vogel appeals to here should be viewed not as objective but as broadly political and rhetorical.

84   Dan Vogel, "Serving Two Masters," (letter) *Dialogue* 37.3 (Winter 2004): xi.

examined (not by the historian, so it isn't the historian who proceeds empirically—only the historical actors—and the historian must proceed textually[85] by interpreting the actors' accounts; at least positivistic scientists restrict their evidence to empirical factors they can repeat themselves, such as mixing chemicals in a lab or observing insects in the Amazon, not like historians, who proceed textually based on the reports of others)

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85   History and the social sciences can't achieve perception of reality as it is or as it really was. "This reality is a chaos of events." Instead, historians apply concepts or models to evidence from the past. "Although these conceptualizations are not taken directly from empirical observations but rather represent 'intellectual apperceptions' by which the historian or the social scientist seeks to penetrate and understand human actions, they nevertheless are capable of a degree of empirical validation." Georg E. Iggers, *New Directions in European Historiography* revised ed. (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan U P, 1984), 38. In other words, even empirical events are alloyed with ideas, with what Vogel dismisses as the metaphysical. An empirical event happens in the past, and it is interpreted at the time by the actor. At least another layer of interpretation occurs when the event is recorded, by the same actor or another person. When the document is stored in an archive or written up in a secondary text, it goes through some layer of interpretation. When the researcher goes to the archive or recovers the event from a secondary source, another hermeneutical intervention happens (these hermeneutic geological deposits may well conflict with each other in specific contexts, but that makes them no less interpretive). The historian, even the positivistic historian, has an empirical event reading the narrative in the archive, but it would be naïve to assert the historian is proceeding empirically in examining the event that occurred 185 years earlier. The historian may impose positivistic requirements about the event from the past, but the researcher is advancing through texts, each layer of which requires interpretation. Even using the word *text* applied to both the recording of the event by the actor and the document the historian reads involves some ambiguity. "But can we qualify as a text both the written document (the only remaining trace of an older practice) and the practice itself?" asks Roger Chartier about ritual performances such as cockfights in Bali or cat massacres in Paris. "The massacre of the cats is not the cockfight: in relating it and interpreting it the historian is dependent on a report that has already been made of it and a text that is already in existence, invested with its own specific ends. This text exhibits the event, but it also constitutes the event as the result of the act of writing." Roger Chartier, "Texts, Symbols, and Frenchness," *Journal of Modern History* 57.4 (Dec. 1985): 685. The historian proceeds not empirically but textually and hermeneutically unless the historian is writing memoir (and then she or he is still working hermeneutically but also has access to the traces of the empirical event in memory).

using the physical senses is objective and valid (although still possibly mistaken): "In providing proof for his claims, Smith moved out of the mental/spiritual realm into the physical world and thereby created the either/or situation himself."[86] This is classic textbook positivism, remarkable only for the persistence of those who deny it is positivism, people like Dan Vogel and Christopher Smith. Positivism began its intellectual decline when the main criterion of logical positivists (any proposition that is neither analytical—that is, true by definition—nor based on empirical observations is non-sense) was shown to be self-refuting. This claim itself is not based on empirical inputs. Yet those innocent of philosophy still adhere to this simplistic way of sorting what is valid proof from invalid evidence. The entire positivistic program began to collapse once this primary support was undermined. In these citations from Vogel, you can see his constant return to this venerable, outdated concept. It has also become clear over the past thirty years' critique of empiricism that empirical data are also theory laden, never free of interpretation but bound up in conceptual, historical, and cultural ideas.

If facts are always theory laden, this poses a serious barrier for the historian who believes that historical facts are somehow free of concepts, ideologies, or ideas, because then all facts "contain metaphysical elements, [and] it becomes impossible to justify simple objective tests for theories because one is testing against theories, not against the facts. Further, if two theories differ radically in their fundamental metaphysical assumptions, it will become impossible rationally to compare them without using unwarranted standards."[87] Even empirical evidence loses its purity in the account of the positivist, because Vogel's positivistic metaphysics that helps create the facts is radically

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86   Dan Vogel, "Old Apologetics," (letter) *Dialogue* 33.1 (Spring 2000): xi.
87   George Couvalis, *The Philosophy of Science: Science and Objectivity* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1997), 6.

different from my hermeneutical metaphysics. This notion of researchers working within paradigms that are internally consistent but can never be seen from the outside to determine which paradigm is superior to rivals was used by Kuhn and is more commonly discussed in the social science literature than in historiography, so I'll draw upon the philosophy of social science. Vogel is working within a paradigm called *positivism*, and while he thinks he is describing the past as it actually happened, all his facts are shaped and even made possible by a theory that empirical evidence is the only valid form of evidence. These "paradigms involve a shared set of symbols, metaphysical commitments and values, as well as criteria of judgement and the worth of work done. So, becoming a member of a scientific community involves enculturation into the paradigm,"[88] and members of such a community operation, under conditions of normal science most of the time, merely apply the criteria of that paradigm to the world to solve puzzles.

The work of historians rarely involves challenging the theoretical framework that holds the community together. Most histories, according to this explanation, aren't even aware they operate within a paradigm. They think they have some direct access to the facts of the matter free of metaphysical entanglement. But "all history is (whether the historian is conscious of this or not) intrinsically a theoretical enterprise. Historians cannot even begin to work, or, more precisely, begin to determine the object of their inquiries, without some form of analytical framework which construes the subject to be investigated."[89] So if Vogel is operating from within a rival paradigm to mine, he would quite naturally see my explanations as filled with bias and error: "Constructions of the subject that may seem absolutely 'normal' or a-theoretical to

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88   John Hughes, *The Philosophy of Social Research*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1990), 73.

89   Mary Fulbrook, *Historical Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 86.

one historian may seem very one-sided or biased to another."[90] Vogel's construction of his story is "theory-drenched," as Mary Fulbrook puts it. That isn't necessarily a bad situation, because one can't avoid it; everybody's explanations are theory-drenched. The real problem is that Vogel doesn't recognize that positivism isn't just the way the world or the facts are free of all interpretation and ideology. If Vogel doesn't recognize his positivism as problematical in this way, then you get him fulminating against my metaphysics as though he has none, sighing that these damned religious folk just don't get it that facts are facts, and the only ones that count as facts are those that are empirically derived. This idea challenges "logical positivism's central premises of the separation of theory from facts."[91] Add to the notion that facts are theoretically constructed (at least partially) to the assertion that these paradigms are incommensurable (that is, they may use the same vocabulary but they mean different things and therefore one can't get outside a paradigm to compare it to another but must always describe a rival's paradigm from within your own).

If theories or models are circular, then they are almost impossible to disconfirm because of that circularity (perhaps not viciously so). Methods, theories, paradigms, they are preinterpretive interpretations because they assemble a particular explanation of a host of data, only part of which are needed to complete the interpretation based on "specific ontological and epistemological considerations. In David Easton's pithy formulation, 'A fact is a particular ordering of reality in terms of a theoretical interest,' and methodological considerations are never absent from concrete empirical

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90   Fulbrook, *Historical Theory*, 87.

91   Brian C. Schmidt, *The Political Discourse of Anarchy: A Disciplinary History of International Relations* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998), 7.

research."[92] Models, theories, methodologies already start sorting the evidence before the researcher is even aware of that function. "The use of a model has more in common with the act of interpreting a text than it does with the act of testing a hypothesis."[93] Researchers have "an unfalsifiable core" in their preinterpretive character[94] because they assert that only evidence fitting its criteria will be viewed as valid evidence. So empirical evidence is always and inevitably interpretive. Empirical data are never brute facts free of interpretation. "The pervasive role of theoretical assumptions upon the practice of science has profound implications for notions such as empirical 'reality,' and the 'autonomy' of facts, which posit that facts are 'given' and that experience is ontologically distinct from the theoretical constructs that are advanced to explain it. The post-positivist conception of a 'fact' as a theoretically constituted entity calls into question such basic assumptions."[95] Empirical facts are no longer the protected category of evidence that Vogel thinks they are. Facts are mediated by theories, by metaphysics, by ideologies. As Hawkesworth notes, this notion that facts are free of ideas and epistemologies is left over from a positivistic view designed with particular methodological commitments. "Chief among these is the dichotomous division of the world into the realms of the 'empirical' and the nonempirical.' The empirical realm, comprising all that can be corroborated by the senses, is circumscribed as the legitimate sphere of scientific investigation. As a residual category, the nonempirical

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92   Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, "A Statistician Strikes out: In Defense of Genuine Methodological Diversity," *Making Political Science Matter: Debating Knowledge, Research, and Method*, ed. Sanford F. Schram and Brian Caterino (New York: NYU Press, 2006), 90.

93   Jackson, "A Statistician Strikes out," 90.

94   Jackson, "A Statistician Strikes out," 91.

95   Mary Hawkesworth, "Contesting the Terrain: Flyvbjerg on Facts, Values, Knowledge, and Power," *Making Political Science Matter: Debating Knowledge, Research, and Method*, ed. Sanford F. Schram and Brian Caterino (New York: NYU Press, 2006), 158.

encompasses everything else—religion, philosophy, ethics, aesthetics, and evaluative discourse in general as well as myth dogma and superstition—and is relegated beyond the sphere of science. Within this frame of reference, science, operating within the realm of the observable, restricting its focus to descriptions, explanations and predictions that are intersubjectively testable, can achieve objective knowledge."[96] Vogel's positivism, as my citations demonstrate, falls squarely within the mainstream of positivism. It also sets boundaries about what can be counted as evidence that are designed specifically to exclude rival interpretations (not based on empirical evidence but on metaphysical and ideological commitments) that might challenge his positivistic interpretation.

Each theory is self-contained in a way that doesn't permit it to describe opposing positions except in its own terms. What Vogel doesn't recognize is that his notion of facts having to be empirically based in order to qualify as valid historical evidence belongs to a theoretical framework that can no longer be defended. And note that Vogel doesn't even attempt to defend it. He merely takes it for granted. All researchers with some foundation in the philosophy of their disciplines agree on the "demise of positivist orthodoxies" so that the disciplinary consensus that supported it has now evaporated.[97] The rapid decline of positivism doesn't mean that its adherents either know about its demise or admit it, but "problems and theories are often tightly intertwined, such that many problems are detectable as problems only from the standpoint of an alternative theory,"[98] and "much hinges on the epistemological and methodological choices we make."[99] If you think that

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96 Hawkesworth, "Contesting the Terrain," 168.

97 Keith Topper, *The Disorder of Political Inquiry* (Cambridge: Harvard U P, 2005), 8–9.

98 Topper, *The Disorder of Political Inquiry*, 185.

99 Topper, *The Disorder of Political Inquiry*, 184.

the outside world imposes those choices on you rather than your deciding among rival theories and metaphysics, then you assent to a theory called *positivism*. Until the last fifty years of the twentieth century, most political scientists (and other disciplinary practitioners, for that matter), Murray Edelman notes, were "not self-conscious about the theories that guided the choice of topics, the generation of hypotheses, the procedures for examining them, or the interpretation of findings"; researchers were unwitting about the theories guiding their work and were "inclined to take their theoretical orientations for granted or regarded them as self-evidently valid."[100] No conventional wisdom will be challenged in such a circumstance, and positivism was the conventional wisdom of much of the twentieth century. Since that collective agreement is no longer unchallenged, the situation is fraught with danger for those who continue to endorse (however unwittingly) the former consensus. "The collapse of the 1960s consensus around positivism and logical empiricism in the philosophy of social science has generated a variety of responses,"[101] but denial and ignorance shouldn't be one of the responses tolerated. Researchers have a responsibility to know what they are talking about before they enter these debates, rather than just taking the previous conceptual framework for granted.

We never encounter the past as it actually happened, but we interpret those events from the perspective of the present. If the interpreter's present is founded on a positivistic metaphysics,

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100   Murray Edelman, "Veiled Uses of Empirical Theories," *Contemporary Empirical Political Theories*, ed. Kristen Renwick Monroe (Berkeley: U of California P, 1997), 100.

101   Alexander Wendt and Ian Shapiro, "The Misunderstood Promise of Realist Social Theory," *Contemporary Empirical Political Theories*, ed. Kristen Renwick Monroe (Berkeley: U of California P, 1997), 166. I have dipped into the literature about positivism in political science just to show that a similar discussion is happening in that discipline. Positivism is being routed in the philosophy of social science, but the large percentage of a-theoretical practitioners still continue as though such a revolution hasn't occurred.

then positivism is the screen through which the evidence from the past is filtered to separate the valid from invalid evidence. I have demonstrated that the empiricist variety of positivism is Vogel's fundamental conceptual scheme for determining what did and what didn't happen in the past. Even when the historical actors assert a supernatural interpretation of events, the positivist will insist on reducing that explanation to something amenable to his or her own positivistic/naturalistic ideology.

When Vogel encounters narratives told by David Whitmer, we see his positivistic naturalism at work, substituting a naturalistic understanding of the events for that offered by those involved. Vogel must invent a little fiction to try to displace Whitmer's account of a trip from Harmony to Fayette, which includes supernatural claims. As he does throughout his biography, Vogel permits himself way too much speculation about what might have happened instead of what the historical actors reported and the historical record states. Joseph Smith and David Whitmer set out in a wagon to move back to New York. Travelling with the Book of Mormon manuscript but not the plates, they overtook a man to whom they offered a ride. The man declined, and shortly after, Smith explained that the man was one of the Nephites carrying the plates.[102]

All historical accounts are mediated through language. Past events are mediated through contemporary language and concepts. "A major but often unacknowledged problem with historical knowing is that the past is not an object of sense perception that can be experienced empirically in the present."[103] Doing history isn't like interviewing witnesses to an event and sorting out the facts. The witnesses are dead (especially the farther past the past) or are operating from a memory that can be fragile, so the historian's ideological commitments

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102   Vogel, *Joseph Smith,* 379

103   Clark, *History, Theory,* 18.

and understandings play a large role in constituting the past. History is created by the historian from the shards that remain behind.[104] Whitmer told the story at various times later in life—in 1876, 1877, and 1886—including in the latter account that the man "suddenly disappeared." Vogel needs to retool this story to accommodate his ideological agenda, because a divine agent disappearing from view runs against the grain of a naturalistic positivism, which asserts the non-empirical nature of divine agents. Here is Vogel's transfiguration of the narrative:

> Interpreting this event is difficult, not only because of the conflicting details but because of Whitmer's need to tell the story in such a way as to head off skepticism. In 1877, he told Stevenson that he and the others felt strange, stopped the wagon, and then noticed the stranger was gone. This version leaves open the possibility that the stranger had simply left the road unnoticed. The following year, Whitmer told Smith and Pratt that the man seemed to vanish into thin air when Whitmer momentarily turned to look at Smith, which makes a naturalistic explanation more difficult. Nearly a decade later, Whitmer would remove speculation by rearranging the story's elements so that they see the stranger disappear, stop the wagon, and then experience a strange feeling. This seems to be an instance where Whitmer's fairly reliable memory shifted over time to conform to his subsequent psychological needs. The first version is likely closer to the truth, at least as initially perceived by Whitmer.[105]

Vogel's clear positivistic/naturalistic prejudice provides the psychological need for him to prefer one of Whitmer's accounts to the other, imputing to Whitmer a faulty memory when he

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104   Clark, *History, Theory, Text*, 19.
105   Vogel, *Joseph Smith*, 380.

recounts the story involving supernatural events, despite the fact that Whitmer uses empirical terminology and evidence, such as *seeing*, *talking*, and *feeling*. Here is where Vogel invents a fictional story not in the historical record or archives but still necessary to harmonize the narrative with Vogel's ideological needs and causes Vogel to prefer the least supernatural version as closest to history as it actually happened. Vogel even obliges the reader by referring to his own imaginative reconstruction of the account:

> By giving the 1877 version priority, we can imagine that the stranger left the road and passed into the woods or disappeared behind a bluff while Whitmer and the others were distracted. Oddly, the account suggests this by explaining that they noticed the stranger's absence "soon after they passed." Was this soon after they passed the stranger or when they passed something else—some change in the terrain such as a clearing, woods, or gully? Smith may have given this a supernatural interpretation when, in reality, it was merely an old Methodist circuit preacher carrying his Bible to his next meeting.[106]

It is a real stretch to reinterpret "soon after they passed" to mean something so counterintuitive to the context. As a biographer, permitting yourself such wide latitude to substitute the account the actors gave for one more acceptable to naturalistic and positivistic tendencies through imagining a story of your own novelistic invention is an extraordinary liberty. Here Whitmer provides empirical description of the stranger's appearance and disappearance, yet Vogel prefers to swap his own speculative account of the trip for that offered by those who experienced it. Here, Vogel overrules the empirical

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106   Vogel, *Joseph Smith*, 381.

evidence (Whitmer's own record of what he saw and heard) for that of his own conjecture. Vogel's commitment to a naturalistic ideology trumps his commitment to the only empirical eyewitness evidence offered (that by Whitmer).

Similarly, just a few pages previous to this wild speculation and discounting of the witness provided by someone actually present, Vogel uses a similar tactic in reinterpreting David Whitmer's account of his trip to Harmony. Whitmer notes that Smith and Cowdery were already out on the road coming to welcome Whitmer. "After greeting his friend, Cowdery introduced him to Smith and explained that the seer had seen Whitmer in his seer stone, which is why they had known he was approaching."[107] In fact, Vogel notes that Smith told Whitmer when he left on his trip and each place he had stayed on the three-day trip. Vogel invokes the notion of a cold reading often used by psychics, palm readers, and frauds: "This involves moving gradually from general to more specific statements based on educated guesses and reactions from the client."[108] Overruling the experience of the historical agents who reported the event, Vogel substitutes for the spiritual/religious interpretation one of his own based on his own presumption of Smith's deception. "Smith perhaps surmised the place Whitmer had lodged the previous night by calculating wagon speed and time of arrival. With this information, he might have been able to calculate where Whitmer would have stayed the first night as well as the approximate time of his departure from Fayette. It is also possible that Smith ran into someone who had seen Whitmer along this major thoroughfare through northern Pennsylvania, which came within feet of Smith's front door. In a slow-moving wagon, Whitmer would have been passed several times by travelers on horseback on their

107   Vogel, *Joseph Smith*, 377.
108   Vogel, *Joseph Smith*, 70.

way to Harmony or beyond."[109] Vogel's fictional story doesn't account for the fact that Cowdery and Smith knew to leave their house to go out to meet Whitmer on the road, so it doesn't even bother with certain nonnaturalist parts of the narrative. Vogel much prefers his own speculation to the evidence offered by the witnesses, but evidence and experience that contradict Vogel's ontological and epistemological presuppositions are dismissed as Whitmer's faulty memory or Smith's duplicity. Vogel's commitment to empirical evidence in these two examples is overruled by his antisupernaturalist creed. Now a certain type of positivist would respond to my criticism by asserting that the supernatural connection is precisely what there can be no empirical evidence for. Whitmer empirically observed the stranger on the road and experienced Smith telling him about his journey from Fayette to Harmony, but the attribution to divine causation is what can't be defended. So deploying his positivistic metaphysics, Vogel doesn't deny that there was an old man on the road or that Joseph Smith accurately told Whitmer about his journey; with no empirical evidence beyond his own conjecture, Vogel suggests his own alternative account, because for a positivist the intervention of a deity in human affairs is among the explanations that are precluded a priori because of previous ideological commitments. For the positivist the divine element is all subjective or psychological, all in the

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109   Vogel, *Joseph Smith*, 378. Notice that in his recounting of this story, Vogel uses "passed by" to mean one traveler overtaking another on a road, which fits the context quite well. He doesn't assert the bizarre notion that some fictional traveler might have passed by hills or gullies and made it to Harmony before Whitmer to report the progress of the wagon. One's ideological preference can be a powerful tool in determining which explanations are offered. In the account Vogel invents, "passed by" means what it normally means; when Vogel wants to cast doubt on an actor's story in the historical record, the phrase "passed by" gains all sorts of strange and wondrous possible meanings. Vogel's highly selective skepticism is a rhetorical tool deployed in ideological fashion. I here deplore neither rhetoric nor ideology, for they are both inescapable, but Vogel asserts a lack of subjectivity—an objectivity—for his accounts that is hardly in evidence.

subject's mind but not in the veridical, empirical world. But then, so is Vogel's alternative explanation of these exchanges with David Whitmer, except they are all Vogel's "subjective" interpretations based on his own psychological needs.

At times the historian might need to overrule the explanations offered by the historical agents (the latter may suffer from delusions, from misapprehensions, from deception, or some similar problem in the historian's judgment); such interpretive freedom should be the last resort rather than the common resort. Because the historian has preconceived notions about the world, he or she inevitably makes the evidence fit into those preconceptions, even if it means overruling the most important evidence (which is usually the statements of the historical actors). Despite the fact that traditional historians abhor the thought of having to do theory, they are natural-born theorists. They just don't recognize their empiricism or positivism as a theory. It is, however, a theory that organizes the evidence, discards some facts as nonhistorical and noncognitive and endorses other evidence as valid and factual. "Any writer, regardless of standpoint, must approach historical problems as theorists do, abstracting from the welter of events in terms of some preconceived scheme, which is why claims for the virtues of intuition or common sense are evasions of the problem rather than any kind of solution to it."[110] Empirical evidence, just like all other evidence, must go through a screening process that is itself not empirical but philosophical and theoretical. Empirical evidence is already the result of interpretation.

When the secularist historian rejects the religious claims of actors in the past, care should be taken not to be reductive or dismissive of the interpretations of the experience offered by the actors themselves; historical writers who are unwitting ideologues, like Vogel, need particularly to guard against this

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110   Fred Weinstein, *History and Theory after the Fall: An Essay on Interpretation* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990), 18.

tendency. The interpretations must take into account two different languages: (1) that of the people who reported them and (2) that of the observer. "Choosing only one of the two languages distorts the experience of one of the two groups of people involved, a situation that must lead to ideologically contaminated conclusions."[111] Weinstein notes of the Protestant reformers that if their motives are simplistically reduced to enacting the ideology of capitalism or of an aspiring ruling class, that interpretation would distort the experience of the actors elucidated by the actors. "Such an argument, which does not rely on data, denies the authenticity of the religious experience of the people involved, falsifying the world that they lived in by denying the reality of the problems of the world as they perceived them. In other words, the observer's interpretive stance must include the perspectives of the people who lived through events so that the observer's abstract, ordered, unifying version of events could arguably or conceivably have made sense to them. At least, an observer must be able to imagine that, if he or she explained an interpretation of events to the people who participated in them, they could acknowledge the truthfulness of it."[112] Dismissing the claims of the actors involved should be done carefully and in a measured way, not cavalierly and routinely.

After noting that history is a discipline too little theorized, Davies notes that the dominant epistemology of historians is similarly underanalyzed. "For the last 200 years at least, most historians have drawn their professional ideas and beliefs from one theory. This is empiricism. The central doctrine of empiricism, that true knowledge of the world comes ultimately

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111   Weinstein, *History and Theory after the Fall*, 80. One can talk of "ideo-logically contaminated conclusions" only if it is possible to have conclusions uncontaminated by ideology. So I think Weinstein's terminology is unfortunate here.

112   Weinstein, *History and Theory after the Fall*, 80.

from sense impressions, underlies most of the practices and arguments of professional historians."[113] Empiricism depends on the correspondence theory of truth, notes Davies, and that makes it an epistemological theory. It has been a tough half century for the correspondence theory. Among historians, empiricism has been little analyzed, while it remains the predominant attitude among them.[114] It also means that empiricism has particular philosophical weaknesses that historians are seldom aware of. "The main one is that the past cannot be experienced directly beyond the lifetime of a living observer. Therefore, our knowledge of the past is indirect and rests upon the testimony of evidence that has survived to the present."[115] So when Vogel uses empiricist distinctions to deny that the three or the eight witnesses saw physical plates, he is relying on empiricist and positivistic notions to divide what is objective from what is subjective.[116] But the philosophical merit of empiricism/positivism has been radically undermined, whether Vogel dismisses that sweep of history or not. One thing is certain: the fragility of those positivistic and empiricist claims has been made increasingly apparent, whether or not the researcher disregards such philosophical work as esoteric and irrelevant.

For Vogel, only the physical, empirical experience can reach the status of the objective. In Vogel's words, when James Henry Moyle asked David Whitmer about the experience of the gold plates and angelic testimony, Moyle was disappointed with the "metaphysical aspect" of the witness. Moyle, again in Vogel's positivistic phraseology, "attempted to ascertain whether the angel's appearance could be considered an objective event

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113   Stephen Davies, *Empiricism and History* (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 1.
114   Davies, *Empiricism and History*, 3.
115   Davies, *Empiricism and History*, 5–6.
116   Vogel, *Joseph Smith*, 442–49.

or if it was only experienced inwardly."[117] So even though Whitmer described empirical sensations, Vogel redescribes them as "mystical, "subjective," and "metaphysical." "Despite the naturalistic wording of the printed testimony, Whitmer's candid personal account described what might be called a waking dream."[118] It takes a high degree of incompetence and unexamined ideological commitment to scorn examination of the entire superstructure of your own ideas as irrelevant simply because of your own disdain for such interrogation.

Empirical evidence is never immaculate perception; it comes trailing clouds of concepts. Empiricism is a theory of reality and of knowledge conjoined. "No empirical activity is possible without a theory (or at least elaborate presuppositions) behind it, even if these remain implicit, perhaps unconscious. All historians have ideas already in their minds when they study primary materials—models of human behavior, established chronologies, assumptions about responsibility, notions of identity, and so on. Of course, some are convinced that they are merely gathering facts, looking at sources with a totally open mind and only recording what is there, yet they are simply wrong to believe this."[119] Vogel's positivism and naturalism[120]

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117   Vogel, *Joseph Smith*, 445.

118   Vogel, *Joseph Smith*, 445.

119   Ludmilla Jordanova, *History in Practice*, 2nd ed. (London: Hodder Arnold, 2006), 62.

120   Vogel claims he is a naturalist, not a positivist. Roy Bhaskar's definitions of the concepts are mainstream, while Vogel's are loopy. Bhaskar notes that initially, naturalism was offered as a contrast to supernaturalism; the supernaturalist appealed to some explanation beyond nature, such as God. The naturalist asserted that the physical world around us is enough to account for everything. Today, naturalism is usually a series of interlocking views (most researchers don't believe in God, so they have moved beyond that initial definition of naturalism): (1) human and social life need no resort outside nature or matter (explanations should be naturalistic or materialistic), (2) both social and natural explanation should be explained scientifically using the same method (this is often called the unity of science argument), and (3) a denial of the fact-value distinction asserted by Hume, among others. Roy Bhaskar, *Scientific Realism*

don't permit divine messengers to mingle with humans, so even when Martin Harris and David Whitmer assert physical objects (that is, potential empirical observations) as part of their divine manifestation, Vogel raises logical fallacies to undermine the physicality of the vision. "Harris's and Whitmer's accounts have common elements: the angel, the table, the plates and other objects, the angel speaking, the voice of God. Yet, one does not know if the two men saw the same angel, the same table, and the same plates. One does not know if they heard the same voices or the same words or if their experiences lasted the same length of time."[121] The logical fallacy here is an appeal to silence or an appeal to ignorance: if we don't know that something didn't happen, we can make the logical inference that it did. If we don't know that Harry Truman isn't a communist, then we can conclude that he is. You can't prove that a vast conspiracy didn't combine to kill Martin Luther King, so it is logical to assert that one did. Since Vogel lives several time zones ahead of me, we don't know that the same sun that sets in his sky also sets in my sky. We don't know that when Vogel refers to the current President of the United States, he is referring to the same person as when I use the same phrase. We don't know that when my daughter called a few days ago on Skype, she is the same person who left in June for the Dominican Republic, so we can assume that the recent caller was an imposter. This assertion by the positivist Vogel is more worthy of the idealist George Berkeley than by an intellectual descendent of Auguste Comte. Such radical skepticism can be raised hypothetically, but Vogel must be very selective in his use of such doubt, for if he applied it to his own empirical observations, his theory of knowledge would be radically undermined, because he

and Human Emancipation (New York: Verso, 1986), 118. Throughout the history of debate about naturalism the dominant argument for naturalism has been positivistic. Roy Bhaskar, *Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation*, 119–20.

  121   Vogel, *Joseph Smith*, 447.

constantly makes causal and explanatory connections that we don't know are true, so we can therefore conclude that they are false. Vogel applies his extreme skepticism so selectively that it is easy to discern the ideological content behind it. He never subjects his own assertions to such radical doubt; he does it only when attempting to undermine the veracity of historical evidence he wants to discount.

Callum Brown notes three definitions of empiricism that often get conflated to the confusion of those involved; and this problem is compounded for those not accustomed to thinking philosophically, but particularly for those who dismiss philosophy as esoteric and irrelevant: (1) empiricism as an event happened when the Enlightenment introduced the empiricist approach and refined it, (2) empiricism as a method emerged out of the Enlightenment approach to knowledge with the view that "knowledge is acquired through an apparatus of human observation, experience, testing of authenticity, verification, corroboration and presentation for judgement (or peer review) by others in a value-free form." The third view of empiricism is full of difficulties and burdens in these postmodern times. "In the work of many academics across science and non-science disciplines, there is an implicit notion that empiricism constitutes all that is necessary to knowledge—that it is a complete system of knowledge with no other connections."[122] The problematical nature of the last definition of empiricism is that "empiricism gives the illusion of delivering fact, truth and reality, by slipping from the event to a human narrative that describes the event. This slippage is from empiricism as method, to empiricism as a philosophy of knowledge. In the process of slippage, the fact becomes colured by all sorts of influences and biases, becomes an interpretation, but masquerades as truth."[123]

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122   Callum G. Brown, *Postmodernism for Historians* (New York: Pearson, 2005), 23–25.

123   Brown, *Postmodernism for Historians*, 30.

Nobody is against empirical observations. They are some of the best evidence for constructing a sense of nature, human nature, society, and even the past. Empirical evidence becomes problematical only when it becomes an –ism—empiricism. When the positivist insists that empirical observations are the only avenue to knowledge, empiricism becomes an ideology, a dogma, a religion. Vogel's positivism is foundational for the structure erected on it. Its footings and foundations are so haphazard and dangerously unstable that the entire edifice will have to be torn down. That the builder and architect isn't even aware that the structure was built to a code forty years obsolete means the house will have to be built on less sandy soil or supports sunk down to bedrock after the current building is razed. The interpretations are unreliable because the base is so unstable.

In his attempt to shift the issue away from philosophical questions and back to the sources, Vogel must resort to discussion of ontology and epistemology, even though he has declared philosophy "esoteric and irrelevant": "Of course, to count visionary experiences as historical evidence one would have to decide that visionary experiences were real, as opposed to hallucination or deception."[124] Discussions about reality are in the realm of ontology. This assertion about hallucination is not an argument relevant to the question I was asking in my critique of Vogel (does Vogel make positivistic assertions? and what are the consequences for his argument if they are positivistic?), but it is relevant to Vogel's denial that he is a positivist. In other words, Vogel admits he has to make an epistemological argument that visions aren't sufficiently empirical to amount to historical knowledge; he does that only through smuggling in positivistic claims and not arguing for the presupposition behind his argument. Let me rephrase Vogel

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124   Vogel, "Book of Mormon Witnesses Revisited."

just to make obvious what is at stake: of course, to discount visionary experiences as historical evidence one would have to decide that visionary experiences are merely "subjective," "hallucinatory," or "deceptive"—a decidedly epistemological assumption for someone who insists epistemology is esoteric and irrelevant. Later in the same paragraph, Vogel makes the epistemological argument that he has neglected to make explicitly except through appeals to what every positivist knows: "We know humans hallucinate; we don't know that they have extrasensory experiences with real angels and plates. Before we treat visions as historical evidence, Goff needs to tell us how to distinguish hallucination from a real vision, or at least acknowledge the ambiguous nature of such evidence."[125] To use the word *know* is make an epistemological claim, one that Vogel makes only implicitly, because to make explicit what he surreptitiously builds into his argument would be to make his positivism overt. By the way, I don't need "to tell us how to distinguish hallucination from a real vision, or at least acknowledge the ambiguous nature of such evidence" in order to make the argument I was making (that Vogel is a positivist); Vogel may want to shift that burden of proof on me, but to do so is to engage in a logical fallacy as well as a different argument. I acknowledge that religious experiences are ambiguous and require interpretation; empirical observations are also equivocal and just as surely require a hermeneutical approach—there are no brute, interpretation-free facts. The more general the claim about all empirical evidence or all spiritual experience, the more tentative should be the conclusion; the evidence needs to be examined in its particularity.[126] Vogel does philosophy, but he does it covertly,

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125   Vogel, "Book of Mormon Witnesses Revisited."

126   In other words, Vogel works too uncritically in deductive fashion: (1) mystical/religious/paranormal experience is merely subjective/mental/emotional and insufficiently empirical, (2) the claims Joseph Smith made were reli-

uncritically, and badly. He engages in what he has termed "an esoteric and irrelevant discussion about epistemology" without even being aware that he is doing so and without the slightest resort to the relevant scholarly literatures; more seriously, Vogel shows not the slightest hint of recognition of the irony in dismissing epistemology while engaging in it (uncritically) himself. Haskell notes the discomfort historians have with analysis of ideas. Possession of a PhD is no guarantee against "epistemological naiveté," and "as long as historians continue to flee from theory, confuse description with explanation, and make a fetish of accumulating redundant empirical detail, the approach set forth here will seem to most members of the profession an unduly abstract and exotic enterprise."[127]

Vogel then does ontology (that is, he talks about the nature of existence) in the very process of explicitly avoiding philosophy: "Is Goff willing to concede the possibility of hallucination? Thus I conclude: 'Given the fact that the three witnesses saw a vision and that the experience of the eight witnesses seems to have been similarly visionary, there is no compelling evidence that Joseph Smith actually possessed anciently constructed plates.' Note that this conclusion is a rejection of the empirical-evidence arguments of the apologists, not a categorical rejection of supernaturalism. Nevertheless, Goff veers off topic into a discussion of the nature of reality."[128] By the way, I willingly concede the possibility of hallucination; I just don't think you should get there by building a positivistic logic into

gious, (3) therefore they weren't veridical but merely psychological. In this argument all the work is being done by the positivistic presupposition of the first premise.

127 Thomas L. Haskell, "Responsibility, Convention, and the Role of Ideas in History," *Ideas, Ideologies, and Social Movements: The United States Experience since 1800*, ed. Peter A Coclanis and Stuart Bruchey (Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 1999), 2–3. Haskell doesn't seem to be aware that the dichotomy of explanation versus description is another inheritance of the positivistic tradition.

128 Vogel, "Book of Mormon Witnesses Revisited."

the argument. Vogel here is talking about fundamental reality, and he was doing the same in the original argument; he just isn't and wasn't aware that he was and is sneaking ontological and epistemological assumptions into his position without recognizing the need to argue for them.

Vogel then asserts that my response to him is incoherent as he reels off a series of straw man arguments he imputes to me:

> Goff has also smuggled in a question-begging definition of "reality" that includes the supernatural and then argues that materialism can't explain all reality. Obviously, one must assume reality includes supernaturalism before one can accept Goff's criticism of materialism as an incomplete worldview. Like assuming invisible purple elephants exist before conceding the categories of grey and white (and rare pink) elephants are incomplete. Thus Goff begs the question by assuming what he has yet to demonstrate, and that's a problem for him. So he attempts to shift the burden by suggesting that materialists need to prove supernaturalism doesn't exist—otherwise they hold a "naïve" worldview based on metaphysics, the same as the supernaturalists. This is not only a highly questionable way of attaching the label of metaphysics, but also a feeble attempt to defend faith by attacking naturalists and materialists with *tu quoque* ("you too") *ad hominem*. My own skepticism of the supernatural is not based on naturalism or materialism, but rather on the insufficient warrant and incoherence of the supernaturalists' position.[129]

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129   Vogel, "Book of Mormon Witnesses Revisited." Look again at Vogel's use of the word metaphysics—a perfect example of how someone qualifies as an unwitting positivist. He asserts that I attach the word to what he does, as if he believes he doesn't do metaphysics but I unfairly impose a metaphysical apparatus on his metaphysics-free interpretations."

Vogel's version of my argument totally misconstrues my

I unfairly impose a metaphysical apparatus on his metaphysics-free interpretations. Everybody has a metaphysics, a conceptual understanding of the world prior to any empirical inputs; empirical evidence wouldn't make any sense without a metaphysical foundation that preexists the physical facts. Vogel can't stop making positivistic claims in the very same essays he vehemently denies he is a positivist. I don't "attach" the "label of metaphysics" to his interpretations as if metaphysics were an alien imposition, icing that goes on the cake once the cake is finished but can easily be scraped off; I merely point out the metaphysics he builds into it. His cake is metaphysical from the point he gets the flour (even from the point the wheat is grown in Iowa), the baking powder, and the sugar out of the cupboards. Everybody has a metaphysics (including those who metaphysically deny having a metaphysics), and it is only the positivistic tradition that asserts the possibility and desirability of avoiding metaphysics. "Every historical discourse contains within it a full-blown, if only implicit, philosophy of history," says Hayden White (Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U P, 1978], 126–27). Summarizing White, Clark notes that a metahistory is embedded in the history "well before the so-called writing stage" in the historian's choice of tropes to configure the history. "And this prefiguration is not some incidental embellishment, but shapes the entire narrative from start to finish. Choosing a mode of emplotment consciously or unconsciously commits a historian to a philosophy of history" (Clark, History, Theory, Text, 99). That historians have a long history of denying their own metaphysics is another variety of positivism I have taken up elsewhere and won't comment on further here. Anti-metaphysical positivism is merely the opposite side of the empirical-positivist coin. Empiricists believe they get at the brute, uninterpreted facts of the matter free of all conceptual frameworks. No empirical approach will answer the question "What is knowledge and how can we filter true historical claims from false ones?" One needs a metaphysics to do that work; Vogel himself furtively does that metaphysical work, unaware that he is doing metaphysics. When positivists declared metaphysics meaningless, "the effect of this [positivist] argument was extraordinary. Metaphysics, religion, aesthetics, and ethics, all ceased, virtually overnight, to be philosophically respectable. Since subjects like these simply throw around statements that can never be verified" (Stephen Ross, "Positivism, Pragmatism, and Everyday Life," Society 28 [1990]: 43). Vogel's positivism is so pervasive and so uncritical that he makes these positivistic assertions even as he denies making positivistic assertions; I don't attach the label of metaphysics to Vogel's claims but merely point out the metaphysics he smuggles in. Vogel does epistemology and metaphysics, but particularly defectively. "Social scientists, like everybody else, are philosophers of knowledge. In other words, they all have theories of knowledge—epistemologies—of which they may not be clearly aware" (Len Doyal and Roger Harris, *Empiricism, Explanation, and Rationality,*

position. It attributes to me arguments I never made but ones Vogel no doubt wishes I did. Vogel is awful at constructing historical arguments but quite expert at assembling logical fallacies. I don't "assume reality includes supernaturalism": I do assert that positivists too often smuggle the denial of the supernatural into their arguments through presupposition. Vogel attributes all these logical fallacies to me because I accused him of them first. It is a cute rhetorical trick and a red herring, but not relevant to the assertion that Vogel is a positivist.

Christopher Smith has criticized me for describing Vogel as a positivist.[130] In the discussion following his blog entry, Smith says that Mormon historians, and Vogel in particular, write positivistic-sounding claims, but they don't really mean them. They are really just enhancing their own rhetorical positions among other historians; they are merely insufficiently philosophically sophisticated to state what they mean in non-positivistic terms. Smith says that although Vogel is using questionable terms, such as referring to religious experience as subjective and by saying non-empirical evidence doesn't stand up to the standard of real historical evidence that is objective and empirical,[131] Vogel is not making the positivistic assertion

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1). Most historians want to be no philosophers at all, but consequentially they end up instead being bad philosophers by default.

130   Christopher Smith, "Sgoffing at Positivism," *Mild-Mannered Musings: A Miscellaneous Collection of Musings on Theology, Philosophy, Science, History, and Sacred Texts* 18 Sep. 2009. 25 Mar. 2012 <http://chriscarrollsmith.blogspot.com/2009/09/sgoffing-at-positivism.html>. Smith is Vogel's friend and thinks I have treated Vogel unfairly.

131   The "subject-object dualism may be considered to be a root of positivism" (678), because "*objective* reality consisted of the physical, material world, whereas everything that was not physical or material, e.g., feeling, belonged to a *subjective* realm." This notion of a solidly empirical objective realm of knowledge opposed to a subjective ideological realm stretched from Descartes to contemporary times because it became the common idea of how the scientific method works. Abhijit Jain, "Non-Dualism and Information Systems Research," *Information Systems Research: Relevant Theory and Informed Practice*, ed.

that evidence must be empirical before it counts as valid, he is just saying that we should trust our everyday experience more than we trust putatively supernatural events. Smith has to rephrase Vogel's claim to try to ease it out of what informed commentators consider to be positivistic territory.

While I think everyone involved in the debate (including Smith) would concede that Vogel is philosophically naïve, excusing Vogel for making positivistic assertions by rephrasing his claims in a nonpositivistic way shouldn't be the first resort; people should be taken to mean what they say, especially when those statements represent the conventional wisdom of the last few generations of historical researchers and are repeated so many times by Vogel before they were brought into question by critics that they can't so easily be recast as declaring something entirely different from what they say. Vogel and Metcalfe have elsewhere asserted that the model of revelation asserted by Mormons can't be true, but should be redescribed as Joseph Smith taking elements from his environment and reworking them in imaginative ways:

> Where does this leave inspiration and revelation? Where they have always been: in the realm of subjective judgment. We are free to explore the historical and human aspects of scripture, but determining whether a concept is "inspired" or the "word of God" must always remain purely individualistic. When we realize that there is no empirical evidence either for or against scriptural inspiration, we begin to avail ourselves of

Bonnie Mae Kaplan, Duane P. Truex, III, David Wastell, A Trevor Wood-Harper, and Janice I. DeGross (Norwell, MA: Kluwer, 2004), 677–78.

a more sensitive, responsible scholarship as well as a more honest faith.[132]

Vogel's "more honest faith" entails making a leap of faith into positivistic dichotomies between subjective (Vogel and Metcalfe use that word, but that is also what I take "purely individualistic" to mean here) and objective, between the empirical and merely psychological. This division between what is rational and objective in opposition to what is subjective and personal seems so natural to positivists because of the triumph of positivism in the various disciplines.[133] Many working in history want to limit true knowledge to that which can be "ascertained via the scientific method. This approach to epistemology is variously referred to as empiricism, positivism, naturalism, or objectivism," and its goal is to eliminate subjective information in order to focus "on what can be measured quantifiably in the natural or seen world." Because the positivist attempts to limit what can be considered true knowledge, what ends up being discarded as metaphysical can be dismissed in one of two ways: first, "anything that could not be measured via the scientific process could be private, unverifiable knowledge .… A person could believe in a supernatural realm, but that had nothing to do with real knowledge gained through scientific investigation. Thus, what one knows can be divided into the public and personal realms, resulting in objective and subjective 'truths.'" The second approach is for the positivist to dismiss any supernatural claims as nonsense.[134] The assertion

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132   Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe, "Joseph Smith's Scriptural Cosmology," *The Word of God: Essays on Mormon Scripture*, ed. Dan Vogel (Salt Lake: Signature, 1990), 212.

133   Michael Loughlin, "Reason, Reality and Objectivity—Shared Dogmas and Distortions in the Way Both 'Scientistic' and 'Postmodern' Commentators Frame the EBM Debate," *Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice* 14, no. 5 (2008): 666.

134   Bruce W. Speck, "Spirituality in Higher Education: A Literature Review," *Searching for Spirituality in Higher Education*, ed. Bruce W. Speck and

that religious experience doesn't count as historical evidence because it is insufficiently empirical, and empirical evidence is the opposite of the subjective—that is, it is objective—is what the rest of the world calls positivism.[135] This is the type of claim that outside of revisionist Mormon historical circles theorists recognize as such.

Positivists responding to religions claims, at least since A. J. Ayer, have asserted that religious experience isn't really cognitive—capable of producing genuine knowledge—because such experience is merely subjective and psychological, not based on empirical demonstrations where real knowledge comes from. "A believer's experiencing God is not given through sense-experience, but he/she experiences God as an object of his/her emotion. . . . Therefore the positivist concluded that religious experience has purely subjective content and was psychological in nature."[136] Every informed commentator recognizes this

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Sherry Lee Hoppe (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 4–5.

135   Vogel knows that using the word *objectivity* is now rendered problematical, so he avoids it. Instead he asserts his objectivity by implication, suggesting that interpretations which disagree with his are subjective, thus making his claim to superior objectivity through implication. But this is still a claim to objectivity. "What is the nature of objectivity? First and foremost, objectivity is the suppression of some aspect of the self, the countering of subjectivity. Objectivity and subjectivity define each other, like left and right or up and down. One cannot be understood, even conceived, without the other" (Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (New York: Zone, 2007), 36–37). Subjectivity is a difficulty, as Vogel asserts, only if it can be avoided; else why make the point repetitively? Vogel's own arguments are highly subjective and highly questionable, but they rely on an unstated faith in an obsolete notion of objectivity, in which the influence of the interpreter and the interpreter's ideology can be minimized or extirpated. "It is perhaps conceivable that an epistemology without an ethos may exist, but we have yet to encounter one. As long as knowledge posits a knower, and the knower is seen as a potential help or hindrance to the acquisition of knowledge, the self of the knower will be at epistemological issue" (Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity*, 40). Additionally, as Vogel demonstrates, "objectivity fears subjectivity, the core self" (Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity*, 374). Perhaps we ought to inquire into Vogel's own subjectivity as the source of his obsessive fear of subjectivity.

136   Pohlong, *Culture and Religion*, 36.

as a positivistic assertion (that is what it means to be informed on this topic, to recognize positivism when it presents itself, especially in such easy cases as Ayer, Vogel, and McMurrin[137]). A summary of Ayer (the arch-positivist of the twentieth century) and the tradition following him is also referred to by Jensen, where she notes that Ayer dismissed religious claims as cognitively meaningless, and this positivistic view of religion became widespread after the 1950s. "To positivists and empiricists, religious or other symbolic meaning belongs (if anywhere at all) 'in the head': it is a psychological phenomenon pertaining to the realm of the subjective, a 'something' as individual and private as are other entities of the world of (scientifically ungrounded) opinion and taste."[138] Vogel's classic and stereotypically positivistic assertions duplicate those taken by most of the scholarly world to indicate positivism. These positivistic assertions were the common currency, the taken-for-granted way to create historical knowledge, while positivism was the dominant mode of producing history at least through the 1980s. Positivism continues to govern the historical profession, but since its intellectual foundation has been radically undermined, it rules by falling back on a disciplinary consensus that no longer exists and by attempting to avoid discussion of its epistemological foundations. A primary feature of positivistic claims is the argument that assertions must be analytical (true by definition) or empirically verifiable, else they are nonsense. Other assertions are metaphysical and therefore inaccessible to

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137   That Smith and Vogel can't get the simplest notions about positivism right doesn't inspire confidence in their other historical interpretations, for "when intellectual dishonesty (or gross incompetence) is discovered in one part—even a marginal part—of someone's writings, it is natural to want to examine more critically the rest of his or her work" (Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont, *Fashionable Nonsense: Postmodern Intellectuals' Abuse of Science* (New York: Picador, 1998), 7). Smith's and Vogel's ruminations on positivism are nothing if not uninformed and incompetent.

138   Jensen, "Meaning and Religion," 225.

experience. "Assertions about alleged matters of fact that transcend sense experience—theological and ethical statements, for example—are declared to be meaningless." Almost all statements about God are therefore dismissed as irrelevant. Citing John Wisdom, Henry then notes the positivistic denial of statements about God's existence or actions in history "would be not claims about what is actually the case in the externally real world but characterizations of one's personal perspective"[139]— whether you call them subjective or purely individualistic.

Vogel wants to continue making the same claims that have been diagnosed as positivistic through the last generation of theorists' work but at the same time avoid having them called such, all without consulting any of the relevant literature or engaging epistemological argumentation; Smith didn't know about this pattern of positivistic claims asserted by Vogel, so we ought to give him the opportunity to recant the statement that Vogel has never unambiguously made positivistic assertions. Before I gathered these citations in this essay, the only person who was aware of the widespread resort to this persistent positivism was Vogel (because, after all, he wrote them), and even he denied that he ever made these positivistic claims. It is unsurprising that Vogel calls epistemology "esoteric and irrelevant"; epistemological examination threatens Vogel's ideological enterprise by putting it into the context of recent intellectual history. From the exact match between what positivists say and what Vogel says, the reader can see that epistemological discussion is anything but esoteric and irrelevant; no discussion could be more relevant, as difficult as metaphysical and epistemological argument might be. Smith wants to aid and abet in the denial and continuation of positivism. One result of the turmoil about positivism in

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139   Carl Ferdinand Howard Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority: God Who Speaks and Shows, Fifteen Theses, Part Two*, vol. 3 (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1999), 347–348.

sociology (and all other disciplines, for that matter) since the 1960s has been that the word *positivism* has become a pejorative. The methodological positivism that still dominates sociology is "a combination of an empiricist ontology, a positivist epistemology, and a scientistic version of naturalism. The reason for initially defining this conglomerate object in such abstract terms is that it allows me to identify positivist positions even where writers eschew the self-description."[140] Almost all positivists deny being positivists. Sociologists have responded in one of four ways (the first best describes what has happened the subfield of Mormon history): "First, many sociologists have continued to work in the same way as before but have simply renamed their positions or ceased to describe their own work in epistemological terms at all"; second, some have attempted modernizing positivism to include the insights of the logical positivists; third, some reformulate their positivistic approaches in a move to separate the epistemological weaknesses from the quotidian research projects; and finally, some take the criticisms of positivism seriously and abandon what can't be defended;[141] obviously, the fourth approach is the preferred one, but it is difficult to stop justifying historical claims in the way that work has been done for a century. Chris Smith insists that Vogel may make positivistic-sounding assertions but is not simply based on that a positivist: "The claim that Dan Vogel fundamentally *is* a positivist because he supposedly sometimes

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140   George Steinmetz, "Sociology: Scientific Authority and the Transition to Post-Fordism: The Plausibility of Positivism in U.S. Sociology since 1945," *The Politics of Method in the Human Sciences: Positivism and Its Epistemological Others*, ed. George Steinmetz (Durham: Duke U P, 2005), 277–78.

141   Steinmetz, "Sociology: Scientific Authority," 277. Note that for those working in Mormon history, positivism is a revolving door with a single exit, which is also the only entrance. These researchers adamantly insist they aren't positivistic, but the denial has no impact on the positivistic claims they make except they intensely desire to no longer discuss the issue. But they always, always end up exiting the door exactly where they entered and exclaim that to have made the circuit means they always won't be and never were positivists.

says things that are positivistic (though you've not yet quoted a convincing example of such a positivistic statement from Vogel himself) simply does not bear scrutiny. When one examines Dan's historical inferences and conclusions, one is hard-pressed to find any sign of positivistic reasoning."[142] I assume Smith would be satisfied that Vogel is a positivist if I found a number of Vogel's assertions that repeat this positivistic claim in a variety of contexts that it is (at least way before he realized positivism is problematical) a fundamental epistemological tenet of Vogel's historiography. I count a multitude of instances, in more than twelve different sources, where Vogel asserts what both Smith and Vogel deny he claims. These citations range from the late 1980s virtually until this essay is published. Vogel maintains the positivistic claim that religious experiences are invalid historical evidence because they are insufficiently empirical is "a position I did not take,"[143] but one can see that Vogel consistently *did* make this argument, and it is his *habitus mentalis* when he interprets historical evidence, his taken-for-granted, how-could-any-reasonable-person-think-in-any-other-way? approach to religious experience. That Vogel makes this positivistic assertion, about religious experience not rising to the level of real evidence which must be empirical, so many times demonstrates a certain recidivist positivist appeal that bodes ill for either Vogel or Smith correcting their courses on

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142   Christopher Smith, "Sgoffing at Positivism," *Mild-Mannered Musings: A Miscellaneous Collection of Musings on Theology, Philosophy, Science, History, and Sacred Texts.* 5 Feb. 2010 1:51 p.m. 25 Mar. 2012. <http://chriscarrollsmith. blogspot.com/2009/09/sgoffing-at-positivism.html>. Now, Smith is and was wrong. I had in that post-blog entry discussion cited some of Vogel's positivistic claims, but here I cite a host more. I don't see how Smith can continue to assert that he is unaware of "a convincing example of such a positivistic statement from Vogel himself" anymore. To assert that "one is hard-pressed to find any sign of positivistic reasoning" in Dan Vogel's writing is simply astonishing and betrays a straightforward lack of understanding about the relevant issues and the content of Vogel's publications.

143   Vogel, "Book of Mormon Witnesses Revisited."

this issue; any remedy would require a direct contradiction of the positions they have already taken and therefore a retraction and apology.

Since Vogel persistently made these positivistic assertions in various contexts before (even after) he was sensitized to the issue by my criticisms, I think we can take him at his word that he means what he says, although both he and Smith would like now to withdraw these claims, since positivistic declarations have proven philosophically problematical and rhetorically disadvantageous, Smith by reinterpreting what Vogel said and Vogel by redefining what positivism is. Vogel was voicing what he believed was the common sense of the scholarly world when he articulated his positivistic claims in the 1980s, 1990s, and the twenty-first century; it was a consensus that had already become outdated by the 1980s, requiring mental gymnastics, such as explaining the positivistic claims by asserting that the researcher just wasn't sufficiently informed to say what he or she really meant.

Smith is slightly philosophically better informed than Vogel (although woefully unacquainted with the expansive and easily accessed literature about positivism) but is still an apologist in offering up these ad hoc justifications that positivistic claims are something other than positivistic. But Smith's strategy of recasting positivistic claims by saying that when researcher X said P, what he really meant to say was not P, might work in an instance or two, but when the examples start to pile up, then the reader must conclude that these writers assert what they really mean, and we don't need to transfigure the claims by alleging that the person making the claim didn't express himself well. Smith has taken up the task of explaining away positivism rather than explaining it. Smith asserts that Vogel really means what he never says in those passages (when Vogel himself comments at the end of the online discussion, he denies Smith's interpretation that these positivistic assertions

are merely rhetorical devices aimed at other historians; Vogel insists they are what he avows they are—claims about what should and should not count as valid evidence). I think it more plausible to believe that when someone reiterates an idea so many times, the researcher really means it. When campaigning, FDR promised at a rally in Pittsburgh that he would never raise taxes. When in the White House, he had to raise taxes, but that recalcitrant promise stood in the way. He asked a speech writer what to do. Sam Rosenman told him, "Deny you have ever been in Pittsburgh."[144] Smith's strategy for saving Vogel from charges of positivism seems similar. Deny that the writer ever said what he said; instead assert that he meant something entirely different from what he persistently said.

When Vogel entered the Liberty Pages online discussion about matters historiographical, he defended the idea that he himself and all other Mormon revisionists were not positivists. Like other apologists for Mormon historical positivism, Vogel advanced outlandish definitions of what positivism is and isn't:

> I think the introduction to my biography makes it abundantly clear that I'm not a positivist. Positivist historians would not attempt an interpretive biography, nor would they draw on psychology and sociology. They certainly would not describe themselves as "ontological naturalists."

> Whereas a positivist seeks to establish history on positive grounds, I'm comfortable with interpretations that carry various degrees of probability. Hence, I would describe my position as basically a post-positivist ontological naturalist.[145]

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144   Kathryn Schulz, *Being Wrong: Adventures in the Margin of Error* (New York: Ecco/HarperCollins, 2010), 230.

145   Dan Vogel, "Goff on Positivism at Signature," *Mormon Metaphysics: Contemplations within Philosophy and Theology*, 28 Sept. 2004 posting <http://

Vogel has never made a statement about positivism that hasn't been fundamentally wrong, a basic misunderstanding of the position; Vogel has never defined positivism, identified positivism, or attributed or denied positivism in regard to a researcher either adequately or accurately. In taking up Vogel, who has gotten virtually every assertion about positivism incorrect, the reader ought to have qualms about other statements he makes when addressing complementary epistemological matters, so vast and deep is his ineptitude. As they are usually defined, naturalism is the ontology that fits most comfortably with the epistemology that is positivism, so the two tend to fit like a custom key and lock (naturalism can cross over and become epistemological when it is defined as a methodology—the historian should use the same empirical method as the physicist); the naturalism Vogel confesses fits the positivism he disavows like spandex fits a cyclist—tightly and form fittingly once you mount that bike. Vogel seems unaware that psychology and sociology are two disciplines where positivism has remained more resilient than others (in other words, his drawing on psychology and sociology strengthens suspicions of positivism rather than relieving them); most positivists are also anti-supernaturalists—the two categories broadly overlap (the majority of practitioners in all disciplines are positivists—but the position is widely rejected by theorists in each field). Positivism and its related cluster of ideas (empiricism, behaviorism, naturalism, and in some minds science)[146] governed as the orthodoxy of social scientific research during the twentieth century; and became "the philosophical epistemology that currently holds intellectual sway within the domain of social research," although its influence is on a definite downward arc.[147] The disciplines Hughes mentions

www.libertypages.com/clark/10110.html>.

146 Hughes, *The Philosophy of Social Research*, 16.

147 Hughes, *The Philosophy of Social Research*, 16.

regarding the dominance of positivism in a chapter entitled "The Positivist Orthodoxy" are sociology, political science, psychology, and history. In those fields, positivism is still the (weakening) orthodoxy, which was never the unanimous position of the social sciences during the twentieth century, but "it served to set the lines of debate, and in so far as this took place, about the nature of the social sciences. It was positivist philosophy of social science that had to be argued against" that became what Kuhn calls normal science of the period. Positivism was the orthodoxy that "for the greater part of this century . . . was the dominant philosophy of science and it has been influential in sociology since the discipline first developed."[148] Azevedo notes that positivism, empiricism, and naturalism are such closely related ideas that "the most commonly used generic term for these positions in the social sciences is *positivism*"; and "while positivism is no longer dominant in philosophy of science, it still dominates sociology, at least in the United States."[149] The "esoteric and irrelevant" turns out to be the "essential and primary," because it uncovers what the uninformed feel they can take for granted in their claims about reality, society, and the past while attempting to slither out of having the name *positivism* applied to their approach. When Vogel first took up the issue of positivism in 2004, he started from a position of complete ignorance, and in half-a-dozen interventions (in online discussions and postings on the Signature Books website) since then he has known less about positivism with each iteration.

Although naturalism and positivism can be distinguished, they are almost always fellow travelers. Note that Vogel's positivism corresponds to the definition provided by Robert Frykenberg when he discussed the types of presuppositions

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148 Jane Azevedo, *Mapping Reality: An Evolutionary Realist Methodology for the Natural and Social Sciences* (Albany:SUNY Press, 1997), 14

149 Azevedo, *Mapping Reality*, 41.

historians usually bring to their work (of all these keywords positivists use to make their arguments, so many of them are expressed by Vogel):

> The second category of presuppositions is itself, like the first, also a form of bias. Sometimes labeled "positivist," sometimes "verificationist," "scientistic," "empiricist," or even "physicalist," this category is intrinsically just as much an ideology as any other. Positivism in its more extreme forms has also been secularistic and antisupernaturalistic. Its underlying presupposition has been that no valid understanding of any event is possible that does not come to us directly from empirical observation. Only findings modeled by empirical methods and verificationist procedures, especially those used by the physical sciences, have been seen as sufficient or valid. Coming into vogue during the Enlightenment and becoming increasingly popular among historians during the nineteenth century, this view has consisted in a belief that *methodology*, in and of itself, could bring about a more *perfect*, if not a more total, comprehension of events. At last, a fully "objective," "pure," and "untainted" grasp of events could be possible. Cleansed of all bias and preconception, especially of anything supernatural or theological, a historian could distill "true facts" from more solid data. Solid data, taken from validated evidence, could produce facts. Facts of pristine authenticity, once established and rigorously tested, could speak for themselves.[150]

Vogel's is the empiricist brand of positivism. The more he discussed his historical explanation of the Book of Mormon

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150   Robert Eric Frykenberg, *History and Belief: The Foundations of Historical Understanding* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 316–317.

witnesses and the plates on that discussion board, the more he convinced the other participants that he was indeed a positivist, despite his adamant denials.[151] He also entered the discussion trying to defend the notion that Sterling McMurrin wasn't a positivist (a pretty good test of whether or not Vogel grasps the relevant issues and definitions),[152] another proposition on which he failed, because Vogel simply hadn't read the relevant sources. No matter how many times Mormon revisionists make positivistic claims, these revisionists refuse to admit that any of their company are positivistic. It is a matter of principle and presupposition among these researchers that none of them are positivistic, no matter what claims the researchers make in their writings. One ought to look at the epistemological claims made by historians to determine whether or not they are positivists, not dogmatic and bizarre definitions that preclude the possibility regardless of evidence. George Steinmetz notes a certain methodological positivism with a "specific

151   Clark Goble, "Goff on Positivism at Signature,"*Mormon Metaphysics: Contemplations within Philosophy and Theology*, 2 Oct. 2004 posting and 3 Oct. 2004 posting <http://www.libertypages.com/clark/10110.html>. See also Blake Ostler, "Goff on Positivism at Signature, *Mormon Metaphysics: Contemplations within Philosophy and Theology*, 3 Oct. 2004 posting <http://www.libertypages.com/clark/10110.html>.

152   McMurrin's writings are filled with an orthodox, simple positivism. Take for example his assertion that he can't endorse claims about the existence of a personal God. McMurrin's response is boilerplate positivism: "My reservations rest rather on the conviction that, when tested by rigorous empirical criteria of meaningfulness, much of the content of metaphysics, including theology, proves to be quite meaningless, however interesting and attractive, and that the meaningful remainder such as it may be, is so highly speculative that even if we come out of the ordeal with the truth we nevertheless have no way of knowing that it is the truth." Sterling M. McMurrin, *The Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion* (Salt Lake City: U of Utah P, 1965), 119. Admitting that McMurrin is a positivist is perilous for Vogel because the latter makes the exact same epistemological claims as does the former. One understands the vehemence and emotion with which Vogel has denied that McMurrin is a positivist, but understanding of the issues and literature is lacking. Admission that McMurrin is a positivist is tantamount to admitting that Vogel is a positivist.

cluster of ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions" among sociologists in the particular, which includes "a combination of an empiricist ontology, a positivistic epistemology, and a scientist version of naturalism."[153] All of this analysis allows Steinmetz to deal with the problem we have among Mormon historians—we can define positivists as such even when they "eschew the self-description."[154]

These epistemological issues that Vogel asserts are "esoteric and irrelevant" (keep in mind that back in 2004 in the Liberty Pages forum, Vogel didn't think the discussion about positivism was esoteric and irrelevant, but he set about attempting to argue his position—very badly—on philosophical grounds; it is only since he experienced the abject failure of his philosophical arguments that Vogel has decided that they are irrelevant anyway; it is too easy to dismiss as inconsequential those intellectual fields in which the researcher is inept) can only be viewed as unimportant from within an epistemological position that takes for granted its own notions of truth. If a researcher is uncritical and uninformed about his or her epistemology and truth claims, then the ideas tend to be advanced as self-evident truths without a need for argumentation. "The more ideas about truth are taken for granted and not discussed (in literary studies and in history, for example), the more significant, perhaps, is their role. Whether implicitly or explicitly, truth has been central not only to the major debates in philosophy, but the humanities in general."[155] Recent discussion (since about the 1980s) in historiography has severely questioned the traditional empiricist view of historical research that most historians accept without questioning. When Vogel assumes uncritically the traditional historiographical view about empiricism, he fails to subject his own epistemology to analysis:

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153 Steinmetz, "Sociology: Scientific Authority," 277–278.

154 Steinmetz, "Sociology: Scientific Authority," 278.

155 Eaglestone, *The Holocaust*, 6.

"The discipline of history has a history and is constructed as a particular form of knowledge and approach. Most significantly, because it represents itself as akin to a positivist science, it aims to recreate the past by representing *wie es eigentlich gewesen*, 'what actually happened.' … Second, it demands that the historian must be objective and stand outside his or her location in the world. Third, it demands that the historian follow an empirical method and, passive in the face of the facts, simply marshal the evidence."[156]

This positivistic epistemology of history has been most explicitly articulated in Mormon studies by Sterling McMurrin, the same philosopher Vogel adamantly insisted wasn't a positivist. So McMurrin is a good measure of Vogel's distorted ideas about what constitutes positivism. McMurrin noted that "the main gift to theology [of the previous half-century's philosophy] has been to question its very meaningfulness. Unless a proposition has cognitive meaning, it can be neither true nor false, and the verdict of much analytical philosophy has been the key propositions of the theology basic to the intellectual foundations of cultured religion are meaningless."[157] This is a standard positivistic assertion commonly made fifty years ago. For McMurrin, these claims are meaningless because there is no referent for terms such as "God" and "soul." McMurrin goes on to assert that if theologians and metaphysicians are careful enough, they will be able to "formulate cognitively meaningful sentences in theological discourse";[158] for a positivist the claim that "these people assert God and Jesus appeared to Joseph Smith" is meaningful because it is verifiable, but to claim that "God and Jesus appeared to Joseph Smith in the grove" would be meaningless because it is not verifiable. McMurrin

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156   Eaglestone, *The Holocaust*, 233.
157   Sterling M. McMurrin, *Religion, Reason, and Truth* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah P, 1982), 15.
158   McMurrin, *Religion, Reason, and Truth*, 16.

not only applies this positivistic criterion of meaningfulness to theological claims, he himself also notes that this claim is positivistic.[159] The only disagreement with this positivistic claim McMurrin voices is that he believes, unlike some positivists, that a few theological claims may be able to pass muster as cognitively meaningful claims.

In his lectures delivered in 1992 but published after his death, McMurrin once again restated his commitment to a positivistic epistemology. He notes that claims made by the theist, the agnostic, and the atheist all fall short of knowledge according to a positivist epistemology, because neither the theist nor the atheist can articulate what kind of evidence would falsify the claim that God either does or doesn't exist.[160] McMurrin calls this position *positivistic*, and he expresses his agreement with it.[161] One must only compare McMurrin's epistemology (and Vogel's, for that matter) to one of the classic statements of positivistic philosophy. A. J. Ayer asserts that the claims made by the theist are meaningless, for "as he says nothing about the world, he cannot justly be accused of saying anything false, or anything for which he has insufficient grounds. It is only when the theist claims that in asserting the existence of a transcendent god he is expressing a genuine proposition that we are entitled to disagree with him."[162] The religious believer, as long as he or she doesn't make any propositions, is quite entitled to belief. According to this positivist position, when propositions are asserted, then the believer is in opposition to science. For Ayer, claims to having religious experiences are interesting only for what they reveal about the psychology of the believer, "but it does not in any way imply that there is

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159   McMurrin, *Religion, Reason, and Truth*, 17.

160   Sterling M. McMurrin, *Sterling M. McMurrin Lectures on Religion and Culture* (Salt Lake City: Tanner Humanities Center, 2004), 112–13.

161   McMurrin, *Sterling M. McMurrin Lectures on Religion and Culture*, 113.

162   A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (New York: Dover, 1952), 116.

such a thing as religious knowledge," for unless the theist "can formulate his 'knowledge' in propositions that are empirically verifiable, we may be sure that he is deceiving himself."[163] Notice also how similar Ayer's and McMurrin's claims are to Vogel's. Same words, same phrases, same concepts, same intellectual heritage—positivism.[164]

Sociologist Michael Hill notes that explanations of religion that explain away the supernatural or religious experience themselves involve a judgment of what is and is not real. Anything that cannot be reduced to this approach is left behind as nonsensical:

> The questionable aspect of this procedure is the assumption that such a translation is possible without eliminating a meaningful part of the phenomenon being studied, and since religious adherents themselves regard certain kinds of non-empirical statement as meaningful, this would seem to indicate that a satisfactory explanation of their actions must at some point include—at least in part—this aspect of their definition of the situation. Any attempt to explain away religion in naturalistic terms presents the sociologist with an unnecessary and, I think, misguided task, but

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163   Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, 119–20.

164   Note that Vogel's almost exact repetition of these positivistic claims undermines the notion that he is thinking for himself. He is thinking through a tradition, and doing so uncritically, because he isn't even aware of the connection to that tradition. Vogel's rote reiteration of these positivistic ideas that have been stated in these exact words for over a century shows how deeply these positivistic ideas have penetrated even popular thought if the devotees of that tradition don't show even the slightest awareness of the intellectual heritage they are lifting ideas and phrases from. It is understandable that McMurrin, who was trained as a philosopher during a time when positivism reigned with little challenge, would articulate such positivistic catch phrases, but for Vogel, who shows no evidence of having read a word of philosophy, to repeat these positivistic verities shows how strong positivism's influence is over the modern mind.

since this approach has a long pedigree in sociology it
is worth studying at length.[165]

Hill calls this approach "positivistic." Filtering the
hallucinated from the empirical, the subjective from the
objective, the mystical from the experienced, is all part of this
tradition. The privileging that goes on when the revisionist
historian claims that the authority of science doesn't recognize
the ideological assumptions inherent in science: "The hold that
positivism has on science, including the social sciences, has
blinded many to the biases that are inherent in our ethnocentric
acceptance of science as a superior cognitive system. While
we need not apologize for our belief in science, we must
acknowledge it as one belief system among many."[166] So when
Mormon commentators claim science for their team, such an
idea operates oblivious to the double ideological commitments:
the ideological commitments carried by the researcher and the
ideological commitments associated with claiming science for
the historian. In denying the faith claims of Mormons, these
positivists do the double reversal of adhering to what Poloma
calls "the faith of positivism."[167]

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165   Michael Hill, *A Sociology of Religion* (New York: Basic, 1973), 13.

166   Margaret M. Poloma, "Toward a Christian Sociological Perspective:
Religious Values, Theory and Methodology," *Sociological Analysis* 43 (1982): 96.

167   Poloma, "Toward a Christian Sociological Perspective," 105. It is
understandable that Vogel and other revisionist historical researchers are
committed to the belief system called positivism. It dominated the self-image
historians (and researchers in every other field) had of their discipline during
the 20th century. We should recognize how disconcerting it must be to have one's
most fundamental beliefs challenged. Referring to Tocqueville, the Zuckerts
note that most people live by opinion, and "few have the leisure or inclination
to examine their own fundamental beliefs; most find it unproductive and
frustrating when they or others do so." Catherine and Michael Zuckert, *The Truth
about Leo Strauss: Political Philosophy and American Democracy* (Chicago: U of
Chicago P, 2006), 44. In the passage from *Democracy in America* the Zuckerts
refer to, Tocqueville cites dogmatic beliefs held by people. A person must accept
so many beliefs based on common opinion because to examine every single
commitment individually would consume all of one's time. "No philosopher

Vogel asserts that my definition of positivism and its vocabulary is "highly specialized" and therefore odd or out of the ordinary: "I think Alan too easily overlays his highly specialized definitional language on what he reads. I use the term 'subjective,' and that opens a whole discussion on what that implies about my beliefs in objectivity. I don't think we have direct access to 'reality,' but I think we can still talk about what is real and what is imagined. Alan thinks that I automatically discount visionary experience because I'm an empiricist. Given the human propensity for hallucination, and the myriad of failed religions that have started with visions, I think we are justified in being skeptical. The point of my essay on the Book of Mormon witnesses was to show that the experiences of both the three and eight witnesses were visionary and that the possibility of hallucination exists."[168] Vogel's own definition of the terms is what causes him the problem, because they fit

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in the world, however great, can help believing a million things on trust from others or assuming the truth of many things besides those he has proved." Positivism was the conventional wisdom of scholarly inquiry during the 20th century; and for most historical researchers, examining its foundations would be like questioning every single breath one takes. So everybody must accept on faith many propositions. "It is true that any man accepting any opinion on truth from another puts his mind in bondage. But it is a salutary bondage, which allows him to make good use of freedom." Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. George Lawrence, ed. J. P. Mayer (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 434. Vogel takes his epistemological orientation on faith from a tradition that includes Comte, Mill, Ayer, Mach, and McMurrin; and because Vogel suffers from conceptual confusion he ends up being a Converso Positivist; his mystification about positivism is ideologically useful to him. Bringing that belief system into question is a painful process if the best answer one can offer to that questioning is to deny the tradition so fundamental to the dogma to which one is in bondage. The cognitive dissonance caused by consciously denying positivism at the same time one unwittingly relies so fundamentally on its claims to support one's ideological position must be unsettling.

168   Dan Vogel, "Sgoffing at Positivism," *Mild-Mannered Musings: A Miscellaneous Collection of Musings on Theology, Philosophy, Science, History, and Sacred Texts.* 17 Mar. 2010 2:53 p.m. 24 Mar. 2012. <http://chriscarrollsmith. blogspot.com/2009/09/sgoffing-at-positivism.html>.

so squarely within the mainstream of a discredited positivism that he now wants to distance himself from; definitions have consequences, and it is Vogel's definitions of evidence, of objectivity, of subjectivity that are the issues, because his historical claims are so straightforwardly within positivistic conventions: "Objective knowledge, according to the positivist, is verifiable, and typified by scientific knowledge. It is of two types—empirical propositions, and analytical propositions." For positivists, ethical and religious claims don't measure up to valid knowledge; "being merely subjective in nature, they represent no more than the feelings or emotions of the persons who express them."[169] Vogel's initial comments on Chris Smith's blog site assert that he just doesn't care about defining terms, and that there is something perverse with my "umbrella" definition of positivism (Vogel somehow believes my classifications of positivism are both "highly specialized" and "umbrella" definitions, the latter implying too broad, the former implying excessively narrow; even Vogel's metaphors are contradictory): "Given Alan's 'umbrella' definition of positivism, I think it impossible for anyone except a thoroughgoing relativist to avoid his label. For those between the extremes of relativism and positivism—the fundamentalists, as Alan calls them—there is bound to be a mix of traits. Alan implies that he is also in the middle, and so I might suggest that he is just better at hiding his positivism. But for Alan, apparently, a little leaven leavens the whole lump. In my view, it's a waste of time arguing about the definition of words. I'd rather talk about specific arguments and evidence in terms of strengths and weaknesses—not in terms of proof or verification."[170] I should note that I am

169   Douglas Walton, *Ethical Argumentation* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2003), 240.

170   Dan Vogel, "Sgoffing at Positivism," *Mild-Mannered Musings: A Miscellaneous Collection of Musings on Theology, Philosophy, Science, History, and Sacred Texts*. 17 Mar. 2010 1:51 p.m. 24 Mar. 2012. <http://chriscarrollsmith.blogspot.com/2009/09/sgoffing-at-positivism.html>. Even though he dismisses

working within the published confines of disciplinary practice when I define positivism. It is Vogel's definitions that are weird and skewed, the result of ignorance of the relevant disciplinary discussions and ideologically inflected to avoid the problem of being labeled positivistic while enabling him and ideological allies to still make positivistic assertions. Of course, Vogel's argument is sheer nonsense, and I have exhausted my ten-year supply of patience with it; I am determined now to speak and write bluntly, because diplomatic language couched in the obliqueness and euphemism of the academy have done nothing to stem the tsunami of ignorance about positivism in Mormon studies, in Mormon history, and in Dan Vogel's denials. It is time for forthrightness when work doesn't measure up to the standards of academic scholarship. Lots of people avoid making positivistic arguments,[171] and only Vogel's false

definitions of terms as waste of time, Vogel spends an awful lot of time defining when he thinks it is in his interest. Definition of key terms is crucial if one is to be critical. To say that it is better to define evidence in terms of strengths and weaknesses instead of proof and verification is just another way of defining terms. But Vogel has the right impression here—that using terms such as *proof* and *verification* is one indication of positivism; and if he wants to shift away from talking in positivistic terms about verification and proof to some looser notion of strengths and weaknesses of arguments, I think that would be useful to stop using positivistic phraseology (passages I have quoted from Vogel show how often in the past he referred to what he was doing historically as testing and verifying; now Vogel seems reluctant to talk in such positivistic terms). And Vogel himself used to write persistently about verification of empirical evidence, so this change in rhetoric and method represents a major reversal for Vogel. I have baked bread; my experience tells me that a little yeast does indeed leaven the whole loaf, so Vogel gets that one assessment right about what I believe; even a small amount of a powerful agent such as a positivistic epistemology can leaven an entire batch of loaves.

171   In fact, to see an interesting and fruitful epistemological account by a Latter-day Saint who moves beyond the sterile debate between modernism/positivism versus relativism (both are futile because they are the flip side of each other's counterfeit coin), see James E. Faulconer's essay "Scripture as Incarnation," in *Faith, Philosophy, Scripture* (Provo: Maxwell Institute, 2010), 151–202. See also Faulconer's essay "Truth, Virtue, and Perspectivism," in *Virtue and the Abundant Life*, ed. Lloyd D. Newell, Terrance D. Olson, Emily

dichotomy between positivism and relativism makes such an absurd claim possible. It is again Vogel's ignorance of how the word *positivism* is used by the philosophically informed that makes such a claim plausible to him. Vogel doesn't care to focus on definitions when they work to his disadvantage; earlier in his Liberty Pages argument, Vogel did care to argue "about the definition of words," even though he did so unaware of the way the terms are used in the relevant literatures.

Since all disciplines (even history) have been theorized over the past three decades, it has been necessary for practitioners to become philosophically capable. As Hans Kellner notes about most historical practitioners, "Historians operate on the basis of 'tacit knowledge' that they rarely make explicit to themselves,"[172] so the vast majority of historians have resisted or denied the duty to become philosophically sophisticated, and being theoretically informed would automatically mean the renunciation of positivism in both word and deed in our post-positivistic era. These historians pay a high price in credibility because their argument rests on a tacit knowledge that in almost all instances is a taken-for-granted version of positivism. As Frank Ankersmit states when interviewed in the same volume, historians have a strong aversion to theoretical work, and much to the discipline's detriment, "history is the only discipline that has successfully resisted all attempts to introduce theory."[173] The price of philosophical incompetence is the inability to give an adequate account of what the

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M. Reynolds, and Richard N. Williams (Salt Lake City: Deseret, 2012), 65–89. Both of these essays easily avoid anything approaching positivism while building an epistemology not incompatible with the Restoration. If Vogel's writings demonstrate the worst possible way to approach epistemological issues, Faulconer's writings demonstrate the best approach.

172   Ewa Domańska, *Encounters: Philosophy of History after Postmodernism* (Charlottesville: U P of Virginia, 1998), 41.

173   Domańska, *Encounters*, 84–85.

historian or biographer is doing in a particular circumstance; consequently, historians tend to fall back on the tacit positivism they imbibed in graduate school or from the prevailing ethos of the discipline as a whole if they didn't attend graduate school.[174] And yet, philosophical competence is required of any would-be historian, because "all historical writing is inevitably theoretical," and "all historical writing inevitably entails taking a stand on key theoretical issues, whether or not the historian is aware of these—and many practicing historians are not. There is no escape from having a theoretical position, whether explicit or implicit."[175] So when Vogel fulminates against my "esoteric and irrelevant" epistemological inquiries, he is out of step with the expanding group of theoretically informed historians who insist that philosophical issues are foundational, prior to issues about sources, archives, or evidence. Philosophical issues have to be resolved (whether by presumption or argumentation) before the interpretation of sources, archives or evidence can begin and always proceed concurrently with the source work of the historian. Even historians who claim to have no philosophy, no theory, implicitly operate within one they have given no thought to.[176] If any researcher, such as Vogel, believes epistemology is "esoteric and irrelevant," that person is uncritical about the operative epistemology, because "even the most willfully 'a-theoretical' historians actually operate— and have to operate—within a framework of theoretical

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174   The rising generation of Mormon historians and historians of religion in general are more theoretically sophisticated, so they largely know the futility of investing in an implicit positivistic historiography. Generational change will largely eliminate the positivism that still dominates the New Mormon History or whatever remains of it. In fact, because of Vogel's lack of graduate training in history, he is more likely to make rhetorical appeals to what he believes the historical profession takes for granted in attempting to position himself inside its mainstream.

175   Fulbrook, *Historical Theory*, ix.

176   Fulbrook, *Historical Theory*, 4.

assumptions and strategies."[177] So there is considerable irony that Vogel is unaware of and uncritical about the epistemology that guides his historical interpretations at the same time he declares deliberation on the topic "esoteric and irrelevant." If someone is unaware of his or her epistemology, positivistic or otherwise, that person can't be critical or reasoned about it. Researchers who, because they are maladroit at epistemology, declare epistemological inquiry "esoteric and irrelevant," have neglected their duty to be informed, because "historians cannot even begin work, or, more precisely, begin to determine the object of their inquiries, without some form of analytical framework which construes the subject to be investigated."[178]

Vogel may think discussion of philosophical issues is "esoteric and irrelevant," but an increasing number of historians assert the need to develop theoretical competence as part of professional historical training. Nancy Partner posits that even many historians who have acquired some philosophical training have merely filtered off a few simple lessons about the theoretical positions without acquiring the necessary depth about how it impacts historiography and the subspecialties in history.[179] Vogel has shown broad incompetence when taking up epistemological issues, and this inability to theorize adequately is representative of the larger historical profession (although taken to a reductio ad absurdum by Vogel). "It is fair to say that history is an undertheorized discipline, its practitioners not generally concerned to explore the methodological foundations of their subject. Recently, this has changed,"[180] and that change brings with it the expectation that historians

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177   Fulbrook, *Historical Theory*, 4.

178   Fulbrook, *Historical Theory*, 86.

179   Nancy F. Partner, "Historicity in an Age of Reality-Fictions," *A New Philosophy of History*, ed. Frank Ankersmit and Hans Kellner (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995), 35.

180   Stephen Davies, *Empiricism and History*, 1. Let me note that Davies generally sees empiricism and positivism to be opposed to each other but he does

be philosophically informed. An uncritical empiricism has been the accepted philosophy of the historical profession until recently, unchallenged because of a near-universal consensus among the practitioners. "Consequently, many historians have denied that there is a theory behind what they do: instead, professional practices are defended on the grounds that they are common sense, that is, self-evidently correct."[181] Other historians have justified their neglect of epistemology as a necessary element of doing history: "This deliberate avoidance of theoretical speculation is cheerfully acknowledged by many historians. Far from trying to disguise it, they maintain that a preoccupation with the principles of historical study can actually prove an obstacle to scholarly creativity."[182] Vogel declines to do epistemology himself—he dismisses the need to do so—while, ironically, making bold declarations about epistemological issues. Peter Novick notes about his own book that he will spend a good deal of time "talking about what historians do worst, or at least badly; reflecting on epistemology."[183] Not much has changed in the past two decades since the book was published; theoretical reflection by historians is done by a small, but increasingly sophisticated, segment of the historical profession, and that situation will almost certainly be turned

note intellectual circumstances in which positivism is a subset of empiricism (35–38).

181   Davies, *Empiricism*, 2.

182   Theordore S. Hamerow, *Reflections on History and Historians* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1987), 207. Citing Joseph R. Strayer, who justified neglecting philosophical issues because history is more art than science and artists are never asked to explain how their work produces knowledge, Hamerow notes the charming attitude this represents among average historians: "How long the historical profession will be able to go on dodging problems of epistemology, however, is an open question" (208). I think we have an answer: historians can no longer disregard the issue;the theorizing of the profession began forty years ago. Dodging problems of epistemology is now viewed as culpable and scandalous among the minority of historians who are aware of theoretical developments.

183   Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (New York: Cambridge U P, 1988), 15.

around only by generational change. Even if the historical researcher doesn't make his or her theory explicit, a theory still operates, yet hidden even from the researcher: "History as a study of society cannot proceed without theory." Green also notes historians' reluctance to articulate their own theory: "No large body of scholars has been more immune to the theoretical properties of their discipline than historians."[184]

I don't like the division of labor in these discussions of positivism with Dan Vogel: I spend hundreds of hours finding thousands of books and articles in order to present the most informed possible position on positivism, and Vogel never cites a single source but merely makes stuff up, including bizarre definitions of the term, while contemptuously denying the need to be philosophically aware. Of all the philosophies out there today, positivism is one of the simplest to understand. It is nowhere near as complex as understanding Derrida, Heidegger, Marion, Badiou, or Foucault.[185] And Vogel can't grasp the simplest philosophy in the history of the pursuit; it is dishonest to know that whole bodies of literature exist that directly controvert his position, while he never engages or

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184   William A. Green, *History, Historians, and the Dynamics of Change* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993), 7.

185   Take, for example, concepts of truth. As the deficiencies of the correspondence theory of truth (I assume it is uncontroversial that an almost universal overlap exists between positivists and those who believe in a correspondence theory; that is, almost all positivists also adhere to a simple correspondence view) have become more evident, a productive discussion about a replacement notion of truth has been going on. The best candidate to replace that outmoded version of modern thought is Heidegger's definition of truth as *alêtheia*, as "unconcealment." Chapter 5 of Robert Eaglestone's *The Holocaust and the Postmodern* takes the issue up in a discussion of truth in history. Eaglestone there notes that "truth as correspondence is well established and is taken for granted, perhaps in an unreflective way, in most work done in history and historiography" (142). Mark A. Wrathall takes up a more philosophical examination of the concept in *Heidegger and Unconcealment: Truth, Language, and History* (New York: Cambridge U P, 2011). If a writer can't comprehend simple ideas such as those advanced by positivism, how will that writer take up complicated ones, such as a Heideggerian notion of truth?

acknowledges them.[186] I have referred to these sources in my previous criticisms of Vogel and others who operate at the center and periphery of the New Mormon History, so it is impossible that Vogel is unaware that a literature contrary to his position is out there to be engaged (Vogel refers to the essays in which I cite the sources; and each time I publish another criticism of Vogel, I largely use sources I haven't previously cited in order to show the vast bulk of the discourse that Vogel entirely ignores). Awareness of the historiographical literature, the philosophical literature, the literature of the various disciplines demands that those who openly deny positivism but practice it covertly need to recognize the death of the philosophy and move into the twenty-first century. "Although it is becoming fashionable today, particularly in philosophical circles, to speak about the death of positivism, we should recognize its rather formidable impact upon nineteenth and twentieth-century modes of thought." Positivism was so authoritative that it continues to exert a powerful influence even over those who reject it.[187] Recognition of the death of positivism will come painfully for its adherents, but will still be considered a mercy killing. George Steinmetz says in the introduction to the book *The Politics of Method in the Human Sciences* that positivism has this surprising life span in the social sciences, "especially

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186   I know it is difficult for historians to give up generations of thought on doing philosophy; historians have always quite proudly announced that they "don't do metaphysics but leave that to philosophers, theologians, and poets." But recent discussion points out that everybody does metaphysics, whether or not they are aware they are doing so. Those who work in the province of Mormon history will just have to adjust to the requirement that they be capable of engaging competently in philosophical exchange. In book reviews, historians have always used the primary sources as the mainstay in denting each others' credibility; they assert that the study under review depends too much on secondary sources. In the future, undertheorized historical works will be dinged for not engaging theoretical concepts sufficiently in a way that primary sources are used today to diminish a historian's credibility.

187   Calvin O. Schrag, *Radical Reflection and the Origin of the Human Sciences* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue U P, 1980), 86.

in latent, unexamined, or unconscious forms."[188] This is the argument I am making for Vogel's historical enterprises: his guiding epistemology is positivistic, but his ideological commitments don't permit him to admit that influence, so his positivism is invisible to himself but fairly obvious to those who don't share the allegiance. "Despite repeated attempts by social theorists and researchers to drive a stake through the heart of the vampire, the disciplines continue to experience a positivistic haunting."[189] As is the case with those positivists working in the Mormon historical tradition, identifying positivists is made difficult by the fact that "social scientists designated as working in a positivist way often refuse this description of their work. Raymond Williams once remarked that positivism has become 'a swear-word, by which nobody is swearing.'"[190] Positivism is still robust in disciplines such as history and the social sciences, even though it is too often denied, misrecognized, and disguised by its proponents.[191] What Steinmetz says about the social sciences in America is true a fortiori in the field of Mormon history: "positivism is still an important folk category among social scientists,"[192] especially those insufficiently adept at philosophy to recognize the situation. The ghost of positivism is omnipresent in historical studies, especially studies of religion. "Positivism is often said to be dead, supplanted by philosophical naturalism, one might suppose; but if it is dead, its ghost lingers ubiquitously and its empiricistic and verificationist offspring are often seen."[193]

188   George Steinmetz, "Introduction: Positivism and Its Others in the Social Sciences," *The Politics of Method in the Human Sciences: Positivism and Its Epistemological Others*, ed. George Steinmetz (Durham: Duke U P, 2005), 3.

189   Steinmetz, "Introduction," 3.

190   Steinmetz, "Introduction," 29.

191   Steinmetz, "Introduction," 30.

192   Steinmetz, "Introduction," 30.

193   Robert Audi, *Rationality and Religious Commitment* (New York: Oxford U P, 2011), 182.

Some kind of exorcism of the ghost of positivism must be attempted before progress is possible in moving beyond the notion. Simple denial is not a reasonable alternative to knowing about positivism, because that simplistic denial results in the continuation of positivistic assumptions rather than their examination.

Additionally, allowing that positivism aimed its most potent guns at religious belief when it held the high ground during the twentieth century, as positivism went into rapid retreat over the past few decades, it abandoned trench line after trench line. Some of that territory ought to be ceded back to religious belief because it was taken illegitimately by using weapons such as the verifiability criterion. "Like Thucydides, modern historians have eschewed the gods as part of the landscape of objects with which they needed to deal. Too often, they offered only neglect or some form of reductionism or contempt when something needed saying."[194] A researcher can argue that positivism was illicit, but its fruits merited only through logical gymnastics. The reductive empiricism of Vogel's position ought to be exposed for what it is: one religious belief upbraiding another for not living up to its own particular criteria of truth (and one that it doesn't adhere to itself). Vogel, and his supporters, have never turned a critical gaze on their own presuppositions and ideologies. Jon Levenson, a biblical critic, makes a crucial point about the larger study of religion as it usually emerges from the academy's institutions and practices: he says of Elaine Pagel's *The Origin of Satan* that the study "nicely reflects how the academic method known as the 'hermeneutics of suspicion' is usually applied in religion departments and divinity schools today. What gets 'suspected' is principally traditional religious belief, never the (unexamined) beliefs of those doing the

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194   David Gary Shaw, "Modernity between Us and Them: The Place of Religion within History," *History and Theory* 45 (Dec. 2006): 2.

suspecting."[195] We should add history to that list of academic courses of study that too often apply an uncritical anti-religious ideology to the subject.

An inarticulate positivism still dominates the study of things Mormon by too many historians and researchers who came after (even before) the New Mormon History (the only notable exception among historians is Richard Bushman; that is why Bushman isn't a New Mormon Historian—he isn't a positivist). "If positivism is philosophically 'dead,' it survives and kicks in the sciences—as a current of thought in the natural sciences, and as considerably more than that in many of the human ones."[196] Once one becomes philosophically aware, then positivism seems less and less plausible. But one must first be aware of what positivism is before the wounds it has inflicted can begin healing. When Samuel Beckett was asked what life would be like after death, he stated that "in hell, we'll sit around talking about the good old days, when we wished we were dead."[197] Although the walking dead who still adhere to some variety of positivism don't know it yet, the immediate future will bring a time when they will sit around nostalgically at Sunstone Symposia and Mormon History Association conferences wistfully recalling the time when Mormon historians and their fellow travelers could without irony and in complete innocence talk about objectivity and brute empirical facts. The period during which positivism was dominant in the social sciences and history was a long sleep of reason that can lead to a resurrection of a more humble concept of reason and evidence; and we should praise the death of positivism and the rebirth of a more chastened and realistic rationality, but that

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195   Jon D. Levenson, "The Devil in the Details," *Commentary* 100.3 (Sep. 1995): 56.

196   Bhaskar, *Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation*, 229.

197   Louis Menand, "Dangers Within and Without," *Profession 2005* (2005): 16.

would be to believe in the resurrection of the dead, and we all know how the naturalistic philosophers on Mars Hill reacted to Paul when he first mentioned the resurrection of a dead body (Acts 14). The more likely conclusion is that positivism will have to be overthrown rather than resuscitated.

I have previously cited Vogel and a coauthor urging a "more sensitive, responsible scholarship as well as a more honest faith"[198] in the writing of Mormon history. That goal can never be accomplished until a more honest and responsible theoretical understanding of historiography also becomes an aspiration, and recent intellectual history (including developments in historiography over the past few decades) is taken into account. Vogel never acknowledges the huge theoretical literature that shows the identity between his own claims and the history of positivism. Vogel's positivism is now disreputable; ignoring and denying the correspondence between his uninformed assertions and the appropriate literature undermines any drive toward that more honest and up-to-date history. No discussion could be more relevant to Vogel's historical writings than an epistemological examination of positivism, because his words, phrases, claims, and arguments fit so precisely within the positivistic tradition. To keep the focus narrow in this essay and reduce the length, I have omitted references to the many positivistic claims made by New Mormon Historians and others working in the Mormon revisionist tradition; I have previously published criticisms of those writers,[199] and those

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198   Vogel and Metcalfe, "Joseph Smith's Scriptural Cosmology," 212.

199   Alan Goff, "Uncritical Theory and Thin Description: The Resistance to History." In *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 7.1 (1995): 170–207. Alan Goff, "Historical Narrative, Literary Narrative." *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5.1 (Spring 1996): 50–102. Alan Goff, "The Mormon *Positivismußtreit*: Modern vs. Postmodern Approaches to Telling the Story of Mormonism" in the Proceedings of the 2002 Symposium of the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History volume called *Telling the Story of Mormon History*, William G. Hartley, ed. (Provo, UT: Smith Institute, 2004), 49–64. Alan Goff, "Dan Vogel's Family Romance and the Book of Mormon as Smith Family

synoptic essays can provide a broad view of the situation. But it is also helpful to focus in a detailed way on just one Positivism Denier, as I have done here (well, two, including Christopher Smith, who isn't a positivist but is a Positivism Denier) as a case study. Just as the intellectual framework of those who write about Mormon history depends on an uncritical and unexamined positivism, the same is true of the historical profession at large. The difference is that among historians generally there is a small body of theoretically informed and philosophically sophisticated historians who have criticized this positivistic orientation to the extent that historians know that they don't want to be called positivists, even if they don't yet know how to stop making positivistic assertions. A more honest historiography requires a thorough defense of that positivism if historians aren't going to abandon it. Rather than be in denial, Vogel could mount an epistemological argument for his claims about empirical assertions and subjective evidence, his positivistic claims.[200]

Denying that you advance positivistic arguments isn't enough; you must no longer assert them, and you must acknowledge that you made them in the past but have had a change of heart and mind. Uncritical historical researchers may not have heard the wild man assert that "Positivism is dead, and we have killed him,"[201] but they must have some inkling of the end from having embraced the cadaver for so long. The grieving and lamentation stage is delayed only by the denial. We have found the corpse, and its decomposing parts

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Allegory." In *FARMS Review* 17.2 (2005): 321–400. Alan Goff, "Positivism and the Priority of Ideology in Mosiah-First Theories of Book of Mormon Production." In *FARMS Review* 16.1 (2004): 11–36.

200   I would welcome a philosophical defense from the ground up of positivism, but let us keep in mind that really good minds have failed to mount a credible justification of positivism over the past few decades. It is now a defunct intellectual tradition bereft of intellectual credibility, but with lots of acolytes.

201   Although Popper claims to have done it singlehandedly.

are scattered across a number of disciplines, but the largest convocation of worms is archived in Mormon history.

In the historical vignette I sketched at the beginning of this essay, Dan Vogel is Hiroo Onoda: a long holdout defending positivism but in deep denial and hiding in the jungles of the past, not knowing that the positivistic claims he asserts are no longer defensible, more than thirty years out of date. For Vogel and Smith, my assertion that Vogel is a positivist is a moral claim they are certain is false, for to them positivism is less an epistemological position and more a moral statement. To be called a positivist is a very bad thing, but to *be* a positivist even worse, something akin to a moral failing. That Vogel is a positivist isn't a moral fault, but the fact that he doesn't know that he is one is the ethical shortcoming, for one can't imagine a justification for this ignorance about the meaning of the philosophy. As Jonathan Haidt demonstrates in his *The Righteous Mind*, moral intuitions come first in human thought and strategic reasoning second (the Enlightenment heritage mistakenly insists that reason comes first and is somehow free of emotions and moral commitments). Smith and Vogel assert the moral position that nobody they agree with could end up such an execrable character as to be a positivist, so their inner lawyer, their strategic reasoning, kicks in to explain how Vogel's arguments may shadow precisely positivistic claims from three decades ago, but the assertions really mean something other than what they say. In my historical analogy, Vogel is Onoda, still holding out in an intellectual war that was lost decades ago. One can't help but admire tenacity and loyalty, even to bankrupt ideas; however, loyalty exaggerated or to a bad cause becomes stubbornness and recalcitrance. Smith could have played the parts of Suzuki and Major Taniguchi in this morality play, helping to ease Onoda/Vogel back into the real world of ideas as they currently exist. Suzuki/Smith could do the service of bringing Vogel from the depths gradually so

he doesn't suffer from the bends (to mix metaphors); I have been attempting that feat for a decade now, but Vogel merely dismisses my leaflets as propaganda, no matter how many historiography and philosophy of history sources I cite, no matter how often I resort to the historiographical literature that he as a self-identified historian is more responsible to know that I, as a literary critic, am. As much as I say, "Stand down soldier and come down from the mountain; yours is a cause lost long ago," Vogel/Onoda won't listen to me. No matter how many times I take up the bullhorn, Vogel always posts another claim on the Signature Books website (doesn't Signature have any editorial standards for the claims that are made under its imprimatur? thus converting their website into the equivalent of an online edition of a newspaper where anyone with a groundless opinion can leave behind uninformed but adamant arguments if the ideological positions agree with Signature's) asserting obsessively that positivism is something entirely different from his interpretive scheme, and it is an act of meanness to refer to him as a positivist. His commanding officer will have to be brought in before he turns over his sword and rifle; it doesn't help the situation that the officer is himself suffering from some of the same disconnect from the larger world of ideas (at least in Onoda's case, Major Taniguchi had moved on and was no longer an army officer but living back in Japan as a bookseller). Accommodation to contemporary historiography can be painful and vertiginous for those caught in a historical time warp, but it is still necessary, and much more comfortable than living off the land, reconnoitering the enemy (even if they are just fishermen and farmers going about quotidian pursuits), hoping eschatologically that your army will someday return as promised so you can prove valuable in victory. These are the delusions of the vanquished and the uninformed.

Alan Goff is a professor in the department of Liberal Arts and Sciences at DeVry University, Phoenix, where he has taught humanities and history classes for 20 years. He received his baccalaureate degree from BYU with a double major in political philosophy and English. He also received master's degrees in those two fields from BYU. In 1993 he received a Doctor of Arts degree in Humanistic Studies from the University at Albany where he was able to combine the study of philosophy and literary theory in the interdisciplinary program. His main publishing focus since 1989 has been on Mormon scripture and history, staking out that overlapping territory between literary criticism and history called narrative theory. Part of the necessary preparation for publishing in this area is to study the scholarly literature from philosophy, historiography, philosophy of history, biblical criticism, and literary theory to apply approaches from these disciplines to the writing of Mormon history and the Book of Mormon. He is also currently the president of the learned society Mormon Scholars in the Humanities.

The Case for the Documentary Hypothesis, Historical Criticism, and the Latter-day Saints

Colby J. Townsend

Review of David Bokovoy. *Authoring the Old Testament: Genesis–Deuteronomy* . Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2014). Foreword by John W. Welch. 272pp. Paperback and hardcover.[1]

Abstract: *Bokovoy's new volume substantiates the claim that faithful Latter-day Saint students of Holy Scripture can apply the knowledge and methods gained through academic studies to the Bible.*

Latter-day Saints have sometimes viewed critical studies in the history and text of the Bible negatively, which has led to a common view today that any sort of study involving the methods or "criticisms" prevalent in biblical studies can only lead to a secularized view of holy scripture. This is not necessarily true, and the volume under review is the best example that I am aware of in Mormon Studies of the claim that faithful Latter-day Saint students of Holy Scripture can apply the knowledge and methods gained through academic studies to the Bible.

David Bokovoy holds a PhD in Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near East Studies from Brandeis University. He is fluent in five

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1   I am reviewing an advanced reading copy. Some of the material I review may be updated in the final printed form, with some of my quotations and page numbers of Bokovoy's book possibly being updated by then.

ancient Near Eastern languages[2] and has studied with some of the leading scholars in the field of the history of the Pentateuch. This volume is the first of three that will be released in the set, *Authoring the Old Testament*. The set is a part of the forthcoming Greg Kofford Books *Contemporary Studies in Scripture* series, with an open number of books written by numerous authors.

Following the order of the books in the Hebrew Bible (the Jewish version of the Old Testament), *Authoring the Old Testament: Genesis–Deuteronomy* covers the Torah, or the first five books of the Old Testament. In Volume Two he will cover the *Nevi'im*, the Hebrew term for the prophets, and in Volume Three he will cover the *Kethuvim*, the writings.

Authoring is introduced by a "Foreword" by John Welch, which is followed by a prologue that serves as an introduction for the inexperienced reader of biblical studies. Bokovoy works through a critical reading of the Bible. He introduces the Documentary Hypothesis and the sources in the Pentateuch, indicating how we are to identify the sources, how scholars date them, and the influence of other Mesopotamian cultures and texts on the writing of the Pentateuch. He sketches how he believes Latter-day Saints should study the Bible critically. He ends with three chapters exploring how the rest of the book can help in a faithful, academic approach to the Book of Mormon, the Book of Moses, and the Book of Abraham. Bokovoy then concludes with multiple new points that help the LDS student appreciate the academic study of the Bible.

John Welch's "Foreword" introduces Bokovoy's book to the LDS reader.[3] Welch states that this "is a welcome introduction,

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2   David is fluent in Akkadian, Biblical Hebrew, Moabite, Official Aramaic (700-300 BCE), and Ugaritic. See his biographical information on the University of   Utah's   webpage: https://faculty.utah.edu/u0339845-David_Edward_Bokovoy,_Dr./biography/index.hml (Last accessed 2/21/2014).

3   It is highly recommended, as Bokovoy does (see Bokovoy, *Authoring the Old Testament*, xv, nt. 2), that the reader not jump ahead in the book, especially if one is not experienced in biblical studies. The chapters on the Book of Mormon,

from a faithful Latter-day Saint perspective, to the academic world of Higher Criticism of the Hebrew Bible." However, Welch resists some of Bokovoy's arguments, even though he has praise for the book. Welch has done much to introduce biblical studies to an LDS audience, so his insights are invaluable.[4] He defines Bokovoy's use of Higher Criticism in a way that any reader of the book should take into account. Higher criticism is neither higher nor critical but springs from Enlightenment thought and means that the scholar is attempting to get "above or behind the wording of the text," and criticism deals with adopting standards of interpreting information. The term "Higher Criticism" could easily be understood as a negative approach, one that wants to criticize rather than uplift. Higher criticism is just the opposite.[5]

Bokovoy begins his treatment with a prologue offering reasons that a Latter-day Saint audience can and should work within a historical-critical paradigm when approaching the scriptures. This is done through reviewing statements made by Joseph Smith Jr., Elder John A. Widtsoe, Elder B. H. Roberts, and others highlighting the importance of academic studies in the life of a Latter-day Saint. He notes that although he is providing a scholarly introduction into the authorship of

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Book of Moses, and Book of Abraham will most likely make very little or no sense if they are read outside the context of the preceding chapters.

4   Welch has served on the executive committee of the Biblical Law Section of the *Society of Biblical Literature*. See the back flap of his book *The Legal Cases in the Book of Mormon* (Provo: BYU Press and The Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2008). He has also edited numerous titles in the field of Biblical studies, for example see Edwin B. Firmage, Bernard G. Weiss, and John W. Welch, *Religion and Law: Biblical-Judaic and Islamic Perspectives* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990).

5   The author of this review is aware that at times certain scholars have attempted to utilize Higher Criticism to discredit or downplay religion. This is not always the case, and, again, David Bokovoy, among other scholars in various religious groups, is a perfect example of how this can be used to build faith while answering the more difficult questions of history.

the five books of Moses, his work is not comprehensive.[6] The prologue works as a nice introduction to Chapter One, which discusses the necessity of reading the Bible critically. It will probably be new to many readers, but an important aspect in accomplishing the task is the ability to see the Bible as a book. This may sound strange at first, but viewing the Bible as a piece of real history, with human authors writing it and human groups passing it down over centuries, is essential to an understanding of the text. Bokovoy spends time discussing the understanding in modern scholarship that the five books of Moses were written largely by ancient Israelite scribal schools, critically viewing the history of the text with the realization that many aspects of the text require a much later date for the composition of these books than the time of Moses. When a sacred text is not viewed this way, when it is held to different standards than other texts, then the approach is the opposite of critical as outlined in Welch's foreword.

This can easily be seen in antagonistic arguments against the Book of Mormon. Many critics complain about the Book of Mormon, concluding that it is not from God, when they do not use those same standards on the Bible. For many with this viewpoint, the Bible is inerrant and infallible. It has no mistakes, not only theological, but historical or in its presentation of narrative. This could be no further from the truth. Our job is to simply be open to those mistakes present or introduced in the history of the transmission of sacred texts (as Bokovoy points out, like Joseph Smith was!), and utilize biblical studies in our search for deeper meaning and truth. The Bible needs to be seen as a real piece of history.

Doing this does not necessarily downplay the inspired nature of the text. As Bokovoy points out, "By reading scripture critically, a believer in the text's inspiration can gain

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6   David Bokovoy, *Authoring the Old Testament: Genesis–Deuteronomy* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2014), xi.

an increased understanding of the various ways in which God has touched the hearts and minds of his children."[7] He also politely notes that there are places in the book where there will be "a certain degree of discomfort for believers."[8] This need not worry anyone. Whenever an individual begins the task of studying a subject in greater detail, there will be things that person has never heard before. This is learning. If we are completely comfortable with everything that we are reading or hearing on a given subject all the time, the likelihood that we have not learned anything new is very high. There may be a degree of discomfort for Bokovoy's readers, but he does an incredible job of providing faithful grounds for seeing why he thinks the way he does.

Bokovoy spends the first five chapters surveying the state of scholarship on the five books of Moses. He discusses such topics as how scholars separate the sources, how the sources are dated, and how ancient Mesopotamian text and culture influenced the writing of the five books of Moses. He begins chapter one with an interesting note that will catch the attention of his readers. He explicates the two creation stories as separated by critical scholarship and notes that Joseph Smith also noticed that there were different creation stories found in Genesis 1 and 2–3. Bokovoy points to the JST (the Book of Moses) and D&C 77 as evidence of this, where the first creation is seen as a spiritual creation, and the second as physical.[9]

The remaining chapters of the book describe the ways in which Latter-day Saints may apply historical criticism to the Book of Abraham, the Book of Moses, and the Book of Mormon. As with Bokovoy's work on the Pentateuch in the early chapters, his focus here is on building faith and offering new ways of answering the problems historical criticism poses

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7 Bokovoy, *Authoring the Old Testament*, xiv.
8 Bokovoy, *Authoring the Old Testament*, xv.
9 Bokovoy, *Authoring the Old Testament*, 4.

for Restoration scripture. Although there will be many readers who do not fully accept Bokovoy's conclusions, readers will be left with a lot of information to chew on. Like Welch states in his foreword, though he might not agree with all of Bokovoy's "holds," he still finds great value in his work.

Bokovoy has done a service for an LDS audience who are interested in learning and knowing more about our standard works. He provides a bibliography that can act as a starting point for those interested in the given topics, and, most importantly, he shows that it is possible to appropriate modern critical studies into a faithful approach for Restoration scripture. Any Latter-day Saint interested in the history of the Bible and Book of Mormon will do well to spend time getting lost in Bokovoy's book. I am sure this will also be the case with the upcoming two volumes.

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Sorting Out the Sources in Scripture

Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

Review of David E. Bokovoy, Authoring the Old Testament: Genesis-Deuteronomy. Contemporary Studies in Scripture. *Salt Lake City, UT: Greg Kofford Books*, 2014. *272 pp. $26.95 (paperback); $70.00 (hardcover).*

Abstract: *To date, LDS scholars have largely ignored the important but rather complex questions about how primary sources may have been authored and combined to form the Bible as we have it today. David Bokovoy's book, one of a projected series of volumes on the authorship of the Old Testament, is intended to rectify this deficiency, bringing the results of scholarship in Higher Criticism into greater visibility within the LDS community. Though readers may not agree in every respect with the book's analysis and results, particularly with its characterization of the Books of Moses and Abraham as "inspired pseudepigrapha," Bokovoy has rendered an important service by applying his considerable expertise in a sincere quest to understand how those who accept Joseph Smith as a prophet of God can derive valuable interpretive lessons from modern scholarship.*

An impressive array of evidences for the seeming heterogeneity of sources within the first five books of the Bible has converged to form the basis of the Documentary Hypothesis, a broad scholarly consensus whose most able popular expositor has been Richard Friedman.[1]

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1   See, e.g., Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997); *The Hidden Book in the Bible* (San Francisco,

The idea that a series of individuals may have had a hand in the authorship and redaction of the Old Testament should not be foreign to readers of the Book of Mormon, where inspired editors have explicitly described the process by which they wove separate, overlapping records into the finished scriptural narrative. The authors and editors of the Book of Mormon knew that the account was preserved not only for the people of their own times, but also for future generations,[2] including our own.[3]

With this understanding in mind, it should not be disturbing to Latter-day Saint (LDS) readers that events such as the story of the Flood, in the form we have it today, might be read not only as an actual occurrence but also "as a kind of parable"[4]—its account of the historical events shaped with specific pedagogical purposes in mind. "If this is so," writes Blenkinsopp, "it would be only one of several examples in P [one of the presumed sources of the Genesis account] of a paradigmatic interpretation of events recorded in the earlier sources with reference to the contemporary situation."[5] More simply put, Nephi plainly declared: "I did liken all scriptures

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CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998). Note, however, that even those who find the Documentary Hypothesis—or some variant of it—compelling have good reason to admire the resulting literary product on its own terms. For example, in the case of the two Creation chapters, Friedman himself writes that in the scriptural version of Genesis we have a text "that is greater than the sum of its parts" (*Commentary on the Torah* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2001), 16).

   Sailhamer aptly summarizes the situation when he writes that "Genesis is characterized by both an easily discernible unity and a noticeable lack of uniformity" (John H. Sailhamer, "Genesis," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein(Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990). 5).

   2   E.g., 2 Nephi 25:8, 21–22; Jacob 1:3; Enos 1:15–16; Jarom 1:2; Mormon 7:1, 8:34–35.

   3   E.g., Ezra Taft Benson, "The Book of Mormon—Keystone of Our Religion," *Ensign*, November 1986, 4-7.

   4   Joseph Blenkinsopp, "The Structure of P," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (1976), 284.

   5   Blenkinsopp, "The Structure of P," 284.

unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning."[6] Indeed, Nephi left us with significant examples where he deliberately shaped his explanation of Bible stories and teachings in order to help his hearers understand how they applied to their own situation.[7]

Of course, in contrast to the carefully controlled prophetic redaction of the Book of Mormon, we do not know how much of the editing of the Old Testament may have taken place with less inspiration and authority.[8] Joseph Smith wrote, "I believe the Bible as it read when it came from the pen of the original writers. Ignorant translators, careless transcribers, or designing and corrupt priests have committed many errors."[9]

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6   1 Nephi 19:23.

7   E.g., 1 Nephi 4:2, 17:23–44. André LaCocque describes how the Bible "attributes to historical events (like the Exodus, for instance) a paradigmatic quality" (André LaCocque, *The Captivity of Innocence: Babel and the Yahwist* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010), 71). "[A]ny conceptual framework which merely purports to reconstruct events 'as they really were' (Ranke)," writes Michael Fishbane, "is historicistic, and ignores the thrust of [the Bible's] reality. For the Bible is more than history. It is a religious document which has transformed memories and records in accordance with various theological concerns" (Michael A. Fishbane, "The Sacred Center," in *Texts and Responses: Studies Presented to Nahum H. Glatzer on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday by His Students*, ed. Michael A. Fishbane and P. R. Flohr (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1975), 6).

8   Cf. Brant A. Gardner, *The Gift and Power: Translating the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City, UT: Greg Kofford Books, 2011), 295.

9   *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1969), 327. Cf. 1 Nephi 13:24–28. Of course, there are similar difficulties that have come into play in the textual, editing, and publishing history of the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants (e.g., Section 27), a fact that should help us better understand the idea of a textual history described by source criticism for the Old Testament.

As Ben McGuire explains: "Within the short history of our scripture we see numerous such changes (even with the existence of printing technology) that help us to understand that these changes occur quite naturally — and are not necessarily the results of translational issues or corrupt priests. We can, of course, completely identify the history of some of these changes, we can detail corruptions in the Book of Mormon that have occurred from the original manuscript. We can speculate about the existence of these errors where the

To date, most LDS commentaries have treated the Bible primarily from a canonical perspective. In other words they have focused on interpreting the Bible as a finished product, largely ignoring the important but rather complex questions about how primary sources may have been authored and combined to form the scriptural text as we have it today. David Bokovoy's book, one of a projected series of volumes on the authorship of the Old Testament, is intended to rectify this deficiency, bringing the results of scholarship in Higher Criticism into greater visibility within the LDS community.

Authorities, Authors, Oral Tradition, and Scribes

The first part of *Authoring the Old Testament: Genesis–Deuteronomy* (hereafter ATOT) provides a clear synopsis of current scholarship relating to Higher Criticism in general and the Documentary Hypothesis in particular. Especially useful for LDS readers are the book's examples of analogs between the process of composition involved in the Bible and those that appear to have taken place in the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants.[10] Substantive sections detail how the major sources of the Bible have been identified and dated by scholars in this research tradition.[11] Contained within the introductory sections is also a brief discussion of some of the problems encountered in trying to explain anomalies in the Flood account if one posits a strict theory of textual unity.[12]

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original manuscript does not exist, and so on. And the fact that we can talk about [D&C 27] as a composite work is itself another symptom of the process by which our texts come into existence in a way that doesn't reflect a single author with a single pen, providing us with the perfect word of God" (Benjamin L. McGuire, e-mail message, 17 March 2014).

    10   David E. Bokovoy, *Authoring the Old Testament: Genesis-Deuteronomy, Contemporary Studies in Scripture* (Salt Lake City, UT: Greg Kofford Books, 2014), 20–22, 127–129.

    11   Bokovoy, *Authoring Genesis-Deuteronomy*, 41–87.

    12   Bokovoy, *Authoring Genesis-Deuteronomy*, 34–36.

One issue that is understandably not emphasized in an introductory text of this kind—but that should be mentioned at this juncture—is that scholarly conversation on the Documentary Hypothesis and other important issues in Higher Criticism is, of course, ongoing. Although broad agreement persists on many issues, the state of research on the composition of the Pentateuch continues to evolve in important ways. In 2012, Konrad Schmid gave the following assessment:

> Pentateuchal scholarship has changed dramatically in the last three decades, at least when seen in a global perspective. The confidence of earlier assumptions about the formation of the Pentateuch no longer exists, a situation that might be lamented but that also opens up new and—at least in the view of some scholars— potentially more adequate paths to understand its composition. One of the main results of the new situation is that neither traditional nor newer theories can be taken as the accepted starting point of analysis; rather, they are, at most, possible ends.[13]

That said, there is little doubt that the basic ideas of source criticism behind the Documentary Hypothesis are here to stay.

Following a substantive chapter that reviews the results of scholarship on significant relationships between the Bible and texts from Mesopotamia,[14] Bokovoy turns his attention

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13   Konrad Schmid, "Genesis in the Pentateuch," in *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*, ed. Craig A. Evans, Joel N. Lohr, and David L. Petersen, *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum, Formation and Interpretation of Old Testament Literature* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2012), 28–29. Cf. David M. Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2011), 102–125.

14   Bokovoy, *Authoring Genesis-Deuteronomy*, 89–122. Elsewhere I have written about affinities between Mesopotamian sources in temple ritual (Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and Ronan J. Head, "The Investiture Panel at Mari and Rituals of Divine Kingship in the Ancient near East," *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* 4 (2012), 1-42) and the Bible accounts of Noah and the Tower of Babel (Jeffrey M.

to additional questions that will be of specific interest for LDS readers. He is aware that the ideas he is presenting will be new to many readers and that they differ from traditional views of scriptural figures as the authors for the books associated with their names. Important to the case that biblical figures did not author their works directly is the idea that textual anonymity, rather than named authors, is the biblical pattern: "Historically, the concept of identifying the author of a text (such as Moses, Enoch, Abraham, etc.) was a tradition that entered into Judaism through the influence of Greek culture during the later Hellenistic era."[15]

Wanting to help Latter-day Saints readers understand how these findings might be approached from a perspective of faith, ATOT allows for two possibilities—not mutually exclusive— by which one might reconcile the findings of Higher Criticism with the view of the Bible as a sacred text: "(1) we can assume that these were historical figures whose stories, as told in the Hebrew Bible, reflect early Israelite and Near Eastern oral traditions incorporated into the documentary sources;[16] or

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Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, *In God's Image and Likeness* 2: *Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel,* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2014)).

15   Bokovoy, *Authoring Genesis-Deuteronomy*, 141. Cf. Karel van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 31–33. John S. Thompson, e-mail message, 21 March 2014, however, qualifies this conclusion as follows: "While the Pentateuch does seem to have an anonymous narrator/editor who speaks of Moses and others in third person, the prophetic books have more first person narrative and autobiographical flavor that lends itself to the possibility of direct prophetic authorship."

16   Ronald S. Hendel, "Historical Context," in *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*, ed. Craig A. Evans, Joel N. Lohr, and David L. Petersen, *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum, Formation and Interpretation of Old Testament Literature* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2012), 72, notes that Deuteronomy 32:7 "evokes the family and tribal setting of oral traditions of the collective past": "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee."

(2) we can assume that some of these men were not historical figures of the material past, and rather than having the purpose of providing a chronological record of the past, with scripture God uses ideas, assumptions, mythology, and even foreign texts to help us establish a relationship with Him and others."[17]

In my estimation, the idea mentioned as part of the second possibility that "some of these men were *not* historical figures of the material past" will be of limited interest to Latter-day Saint readers. After all, Joseph Smith has left accounts of personal visions and manifestations that include many prominent characters of the Book of Mormon[18] and the Bible.[19] Of course, when determining whether the "people and events portrayed in narrative about the real past are fictional or literary constructs," our decisions "must be driven by our best assessments of what the biblical narrator intended.… We may still find reason to discuss whether the author of Job intends every part of the book to represent real events in a real past or whether it is literature built around a historical core. The point is that any conclusion that seeks to maintain authority will conform to the demonstrable intentions of the narrator."[20]

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17   Bokovoy, *Authoring Genesis-Deuteronomy*, 133.

18   These included Lehi, Nephi, Moroni, and apparently others. See Trevan G. Hatch, *Visions, Manifestations, and Miracles of the Restoration* (Orem, UT: Granite Publishing, 2008), 129–131.

19   These included, among others, the Old Testament figures of Adam, Noah, Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Elias, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Elijah. New Testament figures included John the Baptist, Peter, James, John, Paul, Stephen, Philip, Matthew, James the Lesser, Matthias, Andrew, Mark, Jude, Bartholomew, Thomas, Luke, Simon, Barnabas, and others of the Apostles—and, of course, Jesus Christ Himself. See Hatch, *Visions*, 135–155. For additional accounts of divine manifestations to the Prophet, see John W. Welch and Erick B. Carlson, eds., *Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations, 1820–1844* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2005).

20   John H. Walton and D. Brent Sandy, *The Lost World of Scripture: Ancient Literary Culture and Biblical Authority* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 304.

So far as I have been able to determine, in the case of modern scripture, named figures from ancient times are consistently represented as historical individuals.

With respect to the first possibility mentioned, the idea that scriptural figures may sometimes be more accurately regarded as the *authorities* rather than the direct authors or scribes for biblical books associated with their names is not inconsistent, in my view, with LDS acceptance of the Bible as scripture "as far as it is translated [and transmitted] correctly."[21] Though I have no quarrel with the idea that the Old Testament, as we have it, might have been compiled at a relatively late date from many sources of varying perspectives and levels of inspiration, I accept that its major figures were historical and that the sources may go back to authentic traditions (whether oral or written), associated with these figures as authorities. John Walton and D. Brent Sandy express their views of this process as follows:

> Authority is not dependent on an original autograph or on an *author* writing a *book*. Recognition of authority is identifiable in the beliefs of a community of faith (of whom we are heirs) that God's communications through authoritative figures and traditions have been captured and preserved through a long process

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21   Articles of Faith 1:8. In this connection, Bokovoy, *Authoring Genesis-Deuteronomy*, 131, cites the following from President Gordon B. Hinckley ("The Great Things Which God Has Revealed," *Ensign*, May 2005, 81):

> The Christian world accepts the Bible as the word of God. Most have no idea of how it came to us.

> I have just completed reading a newly published book by a renowned scholar. It is apparent from information which he gives that the various books of the Bible were brought together in what appears to have been an unsystematic fashion. In some cases, the writings were not produced until long after the events they describe. One is led to ask, "Is the Bible true? Is it really the word of God?"

> We reply that it is, insofar as it is translated correctly. The hand of the Lord was in its making.

of transmission and composition in the literature that has come to be accepted as canonical. That authority can be well represented in translation, though it can be undermined to the extent that interpretation (necessary for a translation to take place) misrepresents the authority.…

Documents used in the compilation of Genesis are likely identified in the text itself (in eleven occurrences of "This is the account of…"). No identification of the source of the traditions represented in the individual documents is offered, and this is not unusual. Documents such as those found in the first part of the book (Genesis 1-11) as well as those in the second part (Genesis 12-50) would correspond well, if only generally, to the sort that would be familiar in the ancient world. Likewise no indication is given in the book itself of the time or circumstances under which these documents were compiled into the book as we know it. Earliest tradition associated the work with Moses, and given the stature of Moses that is not unreasonable, but we need not decide the matter. As discussed above, his role is best understood as tradent [i.e., transmitter of traditions], not likely that of actually generating the traditions (though he may have generated some of them—we particularly think of the creation accounts in this regard).… Compilation of those documents into the complex literary work we call Genesis may not have happened for many centuries, though the traditions would have been well known.[22]

22   Walton and Sandy, *Lost World of Scripture*, 68, 69. With respect to Genesis in particular, "it is fairly obvious that the book of Genesis serves as a kind of introduction or prologue to what follows in Exodus through Deuteronomy" (Schmid, "Genesis," 29). "Nevertheless," continues Schmid in his highlighting of

In a discussion on Bible authorship, it is appropriate to introduce another class of ancient writings known today as pseudepigrapha. James Charlesworth notes that the term "pseudepigrapha" (literally "with false superscription"[23]) has a "long and distinguished history,"[24] with changes in the way it has been applied to various writings over the years that mirror major shifts in the general field of biblical studies itself.[25]

one prominent theme in the most recent thinking on the topic ("Genesis," 30, 32, 45), "the function of Genesis to the Pentateuch is apparently not exhausted by describing it as an introduction to the Moses story.… Genesis … shows … clear signs of having existed as a stand-alone literary unit for some portion of its literary growth. Genesis is a special book within the Pentateuch: it is the most self-sufficient one.… In current scholarship, it is no longer possible to explain the composition of the book of Genesis from the outset within the framework of the Documentary Hypothesis."

For a broader survey of current research, see Jan Christian Gertz, "The Formation of the Primeval History," in *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*, ed. Craig A. Evans, Joel N. Lohr, and David L. Petersen, *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum, Formation and Interpretation of Old Testament Literature* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2012). For details of textual transmission and reception history of Genesis in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, see Craig A. Evans, Joel N. Lohr, and David L. Petersen, eds., *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum, Formation and Interpretation of Old Testament Literature* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2012), 303–632.

23 See Eusebius, *The History of the Church*, trans. G. A. Williamson and Andrew Louth (London, England: Penguin Books, 1989), 190.

24 James H. Charlesworth, ed. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1983), *xxiv*.

25 For good summaries of the history of the usage of the term, see Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha*, *xxiv–xxv*; and Richard Bauckham et al., eds., *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2013), *xvii–xx*. The trend in the application of the term "pseudepigrapha" to characterize ancient writings is tending to greater inclusivity since, as Bauckham et al. observe, "there is simply no 'magic bullet' (such as date of composition, authorship, genre, etc.) which allows us as historians rather than theologians to distinguish between canonical ancient revelatory books and noncanonical ones" (Bauckham, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, xix). Complicating the search for a clear dividing line are examples like *1 Enoch*, a book once highly prized by Christians to the point of being quoted in the New Testament, but which is no longer included in the biblical canon except by the Ethiopic Christian Church.

For the purposes of this review, however, we will follow the definition given us by ATOT, which defines pseudepigrapha as: "a revised version of… documentary sources as revelations dictated by earlier prophetic figures."[26] This is similar in spirit to the definition in the *American Heritage Dictionary*, namely "spurious or pseudonymous writings, especially Jewish writings ascribed to various biblical patriarchs and prophets."[27] Importantly, however, the tenor of these definitions would seem to exclude the following situation:

> For example, if the sixth-century Daniel was the authority figure[28] who gave oracles that were duly recorded in documents that were saved until the second century, when someone compiled them into the book we have now and perhaps even included some updated or more specific information (provided by recognized authority figures in that time), that would not constitute pseudepigraphy or false attribution.[29] If that sort of process was an accepted norm, the attribution claims are not as specific and comprehensive as we may have thought when we were using more modern models of literary production. Authority is not jeopardized as long as we affirm the claims that the text is actually making using models of understanding that reflect the ancient world.[30]

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26 Bokovoy, *Authoring Genesis-Deuteronomy*, 142.

27 "American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (Fourth Edition, 2000)," http://www.bartleby.com/61/. The definition adds: "but composed within approximately 200 years of the birth of Jesus Christ." This is a typical criterion for inclusion in modern collections of pseudepigrapha.

28 It should be noted that many scholars see Daniel as a fictional character.

29 In a footnote, Walton refers to Craig Blomberg's term: "benign pseudonymity."

30 Walton and Sandy, *Lost World of Scripture*, 305.

The views expressed in ATOT about the authorship of the Old Testament are consistent with the increasing recognition of the importance of the role of oral transmission in the preservation of religious traditions that were later normalized by scribes—both with respect to the Bible[31] and the Book of Mormon.[32] It should also be noted that vestiges of otherwise lost oral traditions[33] are sometimes included in extracanonical

31 E.g., van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*; Hendel, "Historical Context," 73–84; Carr, *Formation*, 4–7, 13–36.

32 E.g., Brant A. Gardner, "Literacy and Orality in the Book of Mormon," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 9 (2014). Of course, LDS scripture also emphasizes the important role of written scripture going back to the earliest times (e.g., Moses 6:5–8, 46).

33 Note that valuable religious traditions are not confined to accounts from Abrahamic lands and faiths (see Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *In God's Image and Likeness 1: Creation, Fall, and the Story of Adam and Eve,* (Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Publishing, 2014 Update Edition), 29, n. 0-36). As God pointedly told Nephi: "I shall also speak unto *all nations of the earth* and they shall write it" (2 Nephi 29:12, emphasis mine; cf. Alma 29:8, Gerald E. Jones, "Apocryphal Literature and the Latter-Day Saints," in *Apocryphal Writings and the Latter-Day Saints*, ed. C. Wilfred Griggs, *Religious Studies Monograph Series* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1986), 28–29; cf. Brigham Henry Roberts, *Defense of the Faith and the Saints*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret News, 1907, 1912; repr., Brigham City, UT: Brigham Distributing, 2002), 1:512; Smith, *Teachings*, 10–11, 61).

     Considering this fact, it should not be at all surprising if genuinely revealed teachings, promulgated at one time but subsequently lost or distorted (see Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, 29, n. 0-37), may sometimes appear to have survived in heterodox strands of religious traditions the world over (see Spencer W. Kimball, N. Eldon Tanner, and Marion G. Romney, "Statement of the First Presidency: God's Love for All Mankind (February 15, 1978), Excerpted in S. J. Palmer Article on 'World Religions, Overview'," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York City, NY: Macmillan, 1992); Spencer J. Palmer, ed. *The Expanding Church* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1978), *v*; Orson F. Whitney, "Discourse (April 1928)," in *General Conference Report of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Ninety-Eighth Annual Conference* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1928), 59; "Respect for Diversity of Faiths," The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/commentary/respect-for-diversity-of-faiths).

Robert F. Smith, http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/sorting-out-the-sources-in-scripture/#comment-13917, 6 March 2014 observes that "ancient Near

texts.[34] Significantly, such writings rarely if ever constitute de novo accounts. Rather, they tend to incorporate diverse traditions of varying value and antiquity in ways that make difficult the teasing out of the contribution that each makes to the whole.[35] As a result, even relatively late documents rife with midrashic speculations unattested elsewhere,[36] unique Islamic assertions,[37] or seemingly fantastic Christian

Eastern creation stories generally differ in details, but agree in the broad schema — as Speiser shows in his Anchor Bible translation-commentary on Genesis (Doubleday, 1964), 9-13. The same is true of the various Flood and Tower stories… What would be truly odd would be the lack of divergent accounts."

34 In evaluating evidence of antiquity for traditions preserved in extracanonical literature, scholars must maintain the careful balance articulated by Nickelsburg: "One should not simply posit what is convenient with the claim that later texts reflected earlier tradition. At the same time, thoroughgoing skepticism is inconsonant with the facts as we know them and as new discoveries continue to reveal them: extant texts represent only a fragment of the written and oral tradition that once existed. Caution, honest scholarly tentativeness, and careful methodology remain the best approach to the data" (George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Ancient Judaism and Christian Origins* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 25–26).

35 For a discussion of the difficulties in teasing out, e.g., Jewish from Christian contributions to the pseudepigrapha, see Robert A. Kraft, "The Pseudepigrapha in Christianity," in *Tracing the Threads: Studies in the Vitality of Jewish Pseudepigrapha*, ed. John C. Reeves (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1994).

36 For example, Schwartz asserts that "a great many rabbinic myths, as found in the Midrashim, are not new creations of the rabbis, as might appear to be the case. Rather they are simply the writing down of an oral tradition that was kept alive by the people, when there was no need to suppress it any longer" (Howard Schwartz, *Tree of Souls: The Mythology of Judaism* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2004), *lxiv*). Moreover, he points out that "the rabbinic texts themselves claim that these traditions are part of the Oral Torah, handed down by God to Moses at Mount Sinai, and are therefore considerably ancient" (*Tree*, *lxxxiv*).

37 For example, Reeves has concluded "that the Qur'an, along with the interpretive traditions available in Hadīth, commentaries, antiquarian histories, and the collections of so-called 'prophetic legends' (*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*), can shed a startling light on the structure and content of certain stories found in Bible and its associated literatures (such as Pseudepigrapha and Midrash). [Thus, the] Qur'an and other early Muslim biblically-allied traditions must be

interpolations[38] may sometimes preserve fragments of authentically inspired principles, history, or doctrine, or may otherwise bear witness of legitimate exegetically derived[39] or ritually transmitted[40] realities.

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taken much more seriously as witnesses to 'versions of Bible' than has heretofore been the case" (John C. Reeves, "The Flowing Stream: Qur'anic Interpretations and the Bible," *Religious Studies News: SBL Edition* 2, no. 9 (2001); see also Tarif Khalidi, ed. *The Muslim Jesus: Sayings and Stories in Islamic Literature, Convergences: Inventories of the Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 7–9, 16–17).

Wasserstrom refers to "arguments to the effect that active reading of 'biblical' or 'extrabiblical' narratives by Muslims was an exercise which reflexively illuminates those 'original' sources'" and cites Halperin's argument that transmitters of these stories in the Islamic tradition "tended to make manifest what had been typically left latent in the Jewish version which they had received" (Steven M. Wasserstrom, "Jewish Pseudepigrapha in Muslim Literature: A Bibliographical and Methodological Sketch," in *Tracing the Threads: Studies in the Vitality of Jewish Pseudepigrapha*, ed. John C. Reeves (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1994), 100).

For a discussion of the complex two-way relationship between Jewish pseudepigrapha and Muslim literature, see "Muslim Literature." For a specific discussion of Islamic sources and interpretation in Genesis, see Carol Bakhos, "Genesis, the Qur'an and Islamic Interpretation," in *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*, ed. Craig A. Evans, Joel N. Lohr, and David L. Petersen, *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum, Formation and Interpretation of Old Testament Literature* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2012).

38   For example, as Lipscomb observes, even some of the late medieval compositions that "do not derive directly from earliest Christianity" may be of "great importance… in the antiquity of some of the traditions they contain, the uniqueness of some of their larger contribution to the development and understanding of Adam materials and of medieval Christianity" (W. Lowndes Lipscomb, ed. *The Armenian Apocryphal Literature*, University of Pennsylvania Armenian Texts and Studies (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, 1990), 1–6).

39   See, e.g., James L. Kugel, "Some Instances of Biblical Interpretation in the Hymns and Wisdom Writings of Qumran," in *Studies in Ancient Midrash*, ed. James L. Kugel (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 156. Kugel observes: "To make sense of these [brief and sometimes] offhand references— indeed, even to identify them as containing exegetical motifs—it is necessary to read the text in question against the background of the whole body of ancient interpretations" ("Instances," 156).

40   See, e.g., Hugh W. Nibley, "Myths and the Scriptures," in *Old Testament and Related Studies*, ed. John W. Welch, Gary P. Gillum, and Don E. Norton, *The*

In trying to imagine more concretely how authority and authorship may have come together in the writing of prophetic teachings and revelations that may have originated, in part, in oral sources, we have modern day analogs. Consider, for example, the fact that Joseph Smith's Nauvoo sermons were neither written out in advance nor taken down by listeners verbatim as they were delivered. Rather, they were copied as notes and reconstructions of his prose (sometimes retrospectively) by a small number of individuals, generally including an official scribe.[41] These notes were in turn shared and copied by others.[42] Later, as part of serialized versions of history that appeared in church publications, many (but not all) of the notes from such sermons were expanded, amalgamated, and harmonized; prose was smoothed out; and punctuation and grammar were standardized. Sometimes the wording of related journal entries from scribes and others was changed to the first person and incorporated into the *History of the Church*[43] in order to fill in gaps, an accepted practice at the time.[44]

Over the years, various compilations drew directly from these published accounts[45] while, more recently, transcriptions of contemporary notes (including sources that were unavailable to historians who produced the standard amalgamated versions) were also collected and published.[46] Translations of

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Collected Works of Hugh Nibley (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1986), 42.

41 *The Words of Joseph Smith*, comp. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1980), *xvii–xviii*.

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

43 *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Documentary History)*, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1978).

44 Dean C. Jessee, "The Writing of Joseph Smith's History," *BYU Studies* 11 (1971), 439-73.

45 E.g., Joseph Smith, Jr., *Teachings; Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2007); *The Teachings of Joseph Smith* (later republished as *Encyclopedia of Joseph Smith's Teachings)* (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1997).

46 Smith, *Words of Joseph Smith*.

these accounts into different languages sometimes created new difficulties.[47] The important point in all this is that while each of these published accounts of the Prophet's Nauvoo sermons has been widely used to convey his teachings to church members on his authority, it is likely that none of these accounts was written or reviewed by him personally.[48] Moreover, less than two hundred years after these sermons were delivered, multiple variants in their content and wording—none of which completely reflect the actual words spoken—are in common circulation. In some cases, imperfect transcriptions of Joseph Smith's words led to misconstruals of doctrine by early Church leaders and, in consequence, have been explicitly corrected by later Church leaders. One need look no further than the March 2014 edition of the *Ensign* for an apostolic correction of this sort.[49]

What this example is intended to show is how easily divergence in written records can happen, even in the best cases where like-minded "scribes," recording events as they occurred, are doing the best they can to preserve the original words of a prophet. This phenomenon also helps explain the great lengths Joseph Smith went to in order to preserve an accurate written record of the doings of his day.

The Books of Moses and Abraham as Pseudepigrapha?

Considerable diversity of opinions regarding the specific revelatory process by which Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon and works attributed to Moses and Abraham is accommodated among faithful LDS scholars.[50] However, one

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47   E.g., Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, 643–644, 750.

48   According to Jessee, "Joseph Smith's History," 441, Joseph Smith and his scribes had only progressed to the date August 5, 1838, in the history by the time of the Prophet's death.

49   David A. Bednar, "Faithful Parents and Wayward Children: Sustaining Hope While Overcoming Misunderstanding," *Ensign*, March 2014, 30–33.

50   See, e.g., John Gee, *A Guide to the Joseph Smith Papyri* (Provo, UT: FARMS at Brigham Young University, 2000); Gardner, *Gift and Power*; Royal

conclusion that will be difficult for many LDS readers to accept is ATOTs characterization of the Book of Moses and the Book of Abraham as works of inspired pseudepigrapha[51]—in other words, the idea that these books, though affirmed as containing divine truths, are falsely attributed to those two prophets. Putting it another way, ATOT makes the argument that the content of these two books is not ultimately derived from the experiences and teachings of Moses and Abraham, but rather that they consist of descriptions of what Joseph Smith believed these prophets *would* have written if given the chance.[52] As applied to the Joseph Smith's translation of the Bible, ATOT argues that

> the issue of the Book of Moses' status as inspired scripture can be seen as independent from the question of its historicity as the literal words of the Bible. To quote LDS scholar Philip Barlow, "If certain truths were not originally included in the Bible, they are truths nonetheless and readers will be edified by studying them; it is not the text of the Bible as such, but rather the truths of God that are sacred."[53] To this might be added, if ancient prophets did not originally write certain truths within scripture, they are truths nonetheless, and studying them will edify readers. Though the attributed author may serve as a conduit by conceptually bridging dispensations together, it is not the author of the text but rather the truths of God that are sacred.[54]

Skousen, "Joseph Smith's Translation of the Book of Mormon: Evidence for Tight Control of the Text," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 7, no. 1 (1998), 22-31.

51   Bokovoy, *Authoring Genesis-Deuteronomy*, 141–147, 169–173.

52   Bokovoy, *Authoring Genesis-Deuteronomy*, 144–146, 172.

53   Philip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-Day Saints in American Religion* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1991), 57.

54   Bokovoy, *Authoring Genesis-Deuteronomy*, 159.

With respect to the Book of Moses, ATOT makes the case that casting a fully modern source as an ancient text fulfilled a significant rhetorical function: "The Book of Moses not only defends the inspired nature of Genesis's prehistory, it elevates the text to a revelatory status by using the biblical prophet Moses as a conduit for Joseph's own revelations that corrected the Bible."[55] ATOT cites an article by Christopher C. Smith,[56] who takes the textual history of Joseph Smith's United Firm revelations[57] as an instance of "inspired fictionalization" within the Prophet's revelations, intentionally used "in order to [make them] sound like ancient texts."[58] However, the analog between the United Firm revelations and the Book of Moses is not convincing. There seems to be no compelling reason why the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants would have needed the kind of additional legitimization that ATOT claims was the motivation for a deliberate archaizing of the Book of Moses text. This is especially true since the principals named in the United Firm manuscripts knew of the original wording of the revelations and doubtless were aware of the changes made at the time of their publication. In my view, the practical need for discretion in light of potential anti-Mormon opposition specifically mentioned by Orson Pratt,[59] an intimate of the Prophet who witnessed the events relating to the modifications

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55   Bokovoy, *Authoring Genesis-Deuteronomy*, 146.

56   Christopher C. Smith, "The Inspired Fictionalization of the 1835 United Firm Revelations," *Claremont Journal of Mormon Studies* 1, no. 1 (2011). The study updates the 1983 article, David J. Whittaker, "Substituted Names in the Published Revelations of Joseph Smith," *BYU Studies* 23, no. 1 (1983), with new findings from the Joseph Smith Papers Project.

57   D&C 78, 82, 92, 96.

58   Bokovoy, *Authoring Genesis-Deuteronomy*, 129.

59   Orson Pratt, "The Seer," (1853–1854; reprint, Orem, UT: Grandin Book Company, 1994), 2:3, p. 228: these changes were made "on account of our enemies, who were seeking every means to destroy the Prophet and the Church." Cf. Orson Pratt to Brigham Young, 20 November 1842, cited in Whittaker, "Substituted Names," 106n11.

to these revelations firsthand, sufficiently justifies the later efforts made to obfuscate the contemporary setting of the revelations.

Another difficulty with ATOT's description of the Book of Moses as an inspired pseudepigraphon is that tends to paint LDS readers into discrete camps. As a label, the term "pseudepigrapha" has an all-or-nothing feel. For that reason, it fails to capture a more nuanced view that could allow for the possibility of not only significant *theological* connections with ancient Israel—a position explicitly adopted by ATOT— but also authentic *historical* material reflecting memories of events in the lives of Moses and Abraham embedded in the text that Joseph Smith produced (even though he produced it in the nineteenth century). The result of this oversimplification is a sort of caricature that doesn't fit well with relevant LDS scholarship on these books of scripture.

As scholars have observed,[60] the Prophet's Bible translation in general, and the Book of Moses in particular, is not a homogeneous production. Rather, it is composite in structure and eclectic in its manner of translation: some chapters contain long sections that have little or no direct relationship to the text of Genesis (i.e., the vision of Moses and the story of Enoch), while other chapters are more in the line of clarifying commentary that takes the text of the King James Version as its starting point, incorporating new elements based on Joseph Smith's prophetic understanding.[61] Classing the entire Book of

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60   E.g., Philip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion*, Updated ed. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 55–57.

61   McGuire cautions against the adoption of extremes at either end of the spectrum with respect to translation issues. "On the one end of the spectrum we could (as believers) hold to a view in which [the Books of Moses and Abraham] are modern pseudepigrapha—a notion which contradicts what appears to be the opinion of the text held by Joseph Smith and his contemporaries (and this makes us appropriately uncomfortable…). On the other end, the view that they

Moses with a single label obscures the complex nature of the translation process and the work that resulted from it,[62] just as study of the Bible without taking into account its multiple sources obscures its richness. I will have more to say about the translation process of the Book of Moses below.

As to the Book of Abraham, two explanations are offered by ATOT for those wishing to accept both the Documentary Hypothesis and the inspired nature of the Book of Abraham, namely, that it is: "(1) a pseudepigraphic work of scripture written by an unknown (though possibly inspired) author in the fourth through first century BC, which was later lost and then restored by the Prophet Joseph Smith; or (2) an inspired pseudepigraphic work written by the Prophet Joseph Smith."[63]

Faced with only these two alternatives, it would be natural to conclude that the second is the simpler (and most reasonable) one. However, it seems premature to rule out an additional, unmentioned alternative: namely, that the Book of Abraham may have been translated (by whatever means) from a text that was not purely pseudepigraphal in origin, but rather included material that was rooted in authentic Abrahamic traditions— whether or not one considers the possibility of *written* versions

are wholly revealed translations of ancient texts seems, at least on the surface, to be unsupportable."

62 Cf. Kevin L. Barney, "Authoring the Old Testament," http://bycommonconsent.com/2014/02/23/authoring-the-old-testament/. In his review of ATOT, Barney summarizes his more open view of the Prophet's translations as follows: "Since with Joseph's revealed 'translation' projects we are not talking about conventional translations but textual productions grounded in the 'gift of seeing,' I think it is important to remain open-minded as to what that might mean in any given case. Perhaps Joseph has restored material that is authentic to an ancient prophet; perhaps he has restored material that is authentic to antiquity generally if not that prophet in particular; or perhaps he has used the method of pseudepigrapha as the medium to convey his own prophetic insights."

63 Bokovoy, *Authoring Genesis-Deuteronomy*, 172. See also 170.

of the text going back to Abrahamic times to be a reasonable possibility.[64]

Whether Joseph Smith translated the Book of Abraham from papyri he once possessed but that are no longer available[65] or from one or more manuscripts that were revealed to him directly need not enter into this question. Latter-day Saints accept that Joseph Smith was able to translate records that were shown to him in vision as capably as he was from those that he possessed tangibly, like the Book of Mormon plates. For example, according to the section preface, D&C 7 "is a translated

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64   Of course, the hypothesis of authentic Abrahamic roots for a given manuscript would always remain beyond the bounds of direct testability from a scholarly perspective. As Walter Brueggemann points out with respect to the "historical David," we cannot speak "as though we could isolate and identify the real thing. That is not available to us" (Walter Brueggemann, *David's Truth in Israel's Imagination and Memory* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1985), 13)—at least not through the later, textual sources we have available to us.

65   See, e.g., John Gee, "Book of Abraham, I Presume," http://www.fairmormon.org/perspectives/fair-conferences/2012-fair-conference/2012-book-of-abraham-i-presume. John A. Tvedtnes, Brian M. Hauglid, and John Gee, eds., *Traditions About the Early Life of Abraham, Studies in the Book of Abraham* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, Brigham Young University, 2001) collects the many stories that were circulating about the sacrifice of Abraham in antiquity, noting resemblances in this motif to the related story in the Book of Abraham.

More recently, Gee translated from Coptic a story that, unfortunately, was not available when this collection was assembled. He finds this manuscript "closer than any of them to the Book of Abraham" (Gee, "Book of Abraham, I Presume"). In general terms, this is an "Egyptian account in which a king attempts to put Abraham to death only to have him delivered by an angel and also have Abraham afterwards attempting to teach the king and his court about the true God through the use of astronomy" ("An Egyptian View of Abraham," in *Bountiful Harvest: Essays in Honor of S. Kent Brown*, ed. Andrew C. Skinner, D. Morgan Davis, and Carl W. Griffin (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Brigham Young University, 2011), 155–156).

Also noting the frequent skepticism among non-Mormon scholars about the phrase in the introduction to the Book of Abraham that reads "the Book of Abraham, *written* by his own hand, upon papyrus," Gee points out a manuscript containing a mention of a text that is, "written by his own hand on papyrus" (Gee, "Book of Abraham, I Presume").

version of the record made on parchment by John and hidden up by himself"—a parchment that was not physically in the possession of the Prophet. To those who accept the direct claim made in the section preface at face value, Section 7 is no more a pseudepigraphal work than is the Book of Mormon.

In addition to brief discussions of the biographical narratives, revelations, and facsimiles of the Book of Abraham, ATOT provides a relatively longer critique of its Creation chapters from the perspective of Historical Criticism and the Documentary Hypothesis.[66] In evaluating these arguments, it seems important to recognize the composite nature of the Book of Abraham and the possibility that, for example, Joseph Smith's translation process for chapters 4 and 5 of Abraham may have differed in some respects from that used for chapters 1 through 3—just as the translation process seems to have varied across different parts of the Book of Moses. More on this issue below.

In the end, however, what is most at stake here in the use of the label pseudepigrapha to describe the Books of Moses and Abraham is authority. While the term "pseudepigrapha" may be a useful construct for textual studies, it doesn't work as well for the characterization of scripture, where the question of authority is far more significant. Latter-day Saints recognize authority in works of modern scripture because they were produced by a modern prophet, without having to establish a priori that they connect in some fashion to authorities from ancient times. This important point is eloquently argued in ATOT.[67]

Unlike its explicit rejection of the idea of named authorial narrators in the Books of Moses and Abraham, ATOT takes a more nuanced view of authorial lines in the Book of Mormon: "despite the fact that named authorial narrators is a technique

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66 Bokovoy, *Authoring Genesis-Deuteronomy*, 165–169.

67 Bokovoy, *Authoring Genesis-Deuteronomy*, 158–159, 170–173, 189.

foreign to biblical patterns, the accounts attributed to these characters in the Book of Mormon carry a strong sense of authenticity."[68] With respect to the Nephite culture of scripture authorship, Brant A. Gardner states his position as follows:[69]

> The situation we have in the New World differs from the scribal community from which the Lehites came. Nephi (I believe) was trained as a scribe, which certainly would suggest that he would lean to what he knew. However, he was also now writing for himself and not serving as the writer for another's story. The essence of Nephi's record is his own story. That suggests to me that there is a direct causal link between the need and the nature of the autobiographical nature of what we have as 1 Nephi. With that very important beginning point, the new tradition begins. So I don't see the autobiographical history of the Old World as particularly determinative for what Nephi needed to do.

In his volume on the translation of the Book of Mormon, Gardner summarizes a perspective that bounds his views of the conceptual distance between plate text and its English translation:[70]

> The most extreme version of a conceptual theory of translation would make the plates extremely remote and essentially unrelated to the English text. It might even suggest that it was not really a translation, but simply a story based on real events.

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68   Bokovoy, *Authoring Genesis-Deuteronomy,* 197.

69   Gardner, "Comments on *Literacy and Orality in the Book of Mormon*," http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/literacy-and-orality-in-the-book-of-mormon/#comments.

70   Gardner, *Gift and Power*, 151-152.

The danger of that slippery slope is apparent in the way [Elder John A.] Widtsoe applied the brakes by declaring Joseph's text "far beyond" his normal capabilities. That same desire to set the brakes while accepting some distance between the plate text and the translation can be seen in Robert Millet's description of the process:

> We need not jump to interpretive extremes because the language found in the Book of Mormon (including that from the Isaiah sections or the Savior's sermon in 3 Nephi) reflects Joseph Smith's language. Well, of course it does! The Book of Mormon is translation literature: practically every word in the book is from the English language. For Joseph Smith to use the English language with which he and the people of his day were familiar in recording the translation is historically consistent. On the other hand, to create the doctrine (or to place it in the mouths of Lehi or Benjamin or Abinadi) is unacceptable. The latter is tantamount to deceit and misrepresentation; it is, as we have said, to claim that the doctrines and principles are of ancient date (which the record itself declares) when, in fact, they are a fabrication (albeit an "inspired" fabrication) of a nineteenth-century man. I feel we have every reason to believe that the Book of Mormon came through Joseph Smith, not from him. Because certain theological matters were discussed in the nineteenth century does not preclude their revelation or discussion in antiquity.[71]

71 Robert L. Millet, "The Book of Mormon, Historicity, and Faith," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2, no. 2 (1993): 5.

It should be made clear that ATOT explicitly rejects the idea that the Prophet was a conscious deceiver in presenting the Books of Moses and Abraham as ancient works. For example, with respect to the Book of Abraham, ATOT concludes that while "Joseph believed he was producing a literal translation," we "should not assume … that the Prophet fully understood the revelatory process in which he was engaged."[72] Likewise, in ATOT's apparent leaning to an understanding of the Book of Mormon as an expanded modern redaction of an ancient core source,[73] it is concluded from a statement of the Prophet where he refrained from relating the details of translation[74] that "Joseph himself most likely did not understand the exact manner by which he translated the Book of Mormon."[75] However, others have argued—more plausibly in my view—that Joseph Smith was reluctant to share specific details of these events, not because he failed to understand them,[76] but rather because of his respect for their sacred nature.[77]

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72   Bokovoy, *Authoring Genesis-Deuteronomy*, 172.

73   Bokovoy, *Authoring Genesis-Deuteronomy*, 211–214; cf. Blake T. Ostler, "The Book of Mormon as a Modern Expansion of an Ancient Source," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 20, no. 1 (1987), 66-123; "Updating the Expansion Theory," http://timesandseasons.org/index.php/2005/04/updating-the-expansion-theory/. For a critique of this view of the Book of Mormon translation process, see Stephen E. Robinson, "The 'Expanded' Book of Mormon?," in *The Book of Mormon: Second Nephi, the Doctrinal Structure*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1989), 391-414. Gardner, *Gift and Power*, 244–246 gives a few examples that seem to indicate modern expansion, but on the whole sees the Book of Mormon translation as closer to the underlying plate text than Ostler (*Gift and Power*, 150-152, 244–247, 282–283).

74   Smith, *Documentary History*, 25–26 October 1831, 1:220.

75   Bokovoy, *Authoring Genesis-Deuteronomy*, 214.

76   Though I would agree that the Prophet may have found it difficult to put a description of the specific spiritual, sensory, and cognitive processes by which revealed text was produced, it is more difficult to argue that he did not understand, for example, the role of manuscripts and artifacts he relied on in his translation of the Book of Mormon. It seems equally unlikely that he did not understand whatever relationship existed between the Egyptian papyri and the Book of Abraham.

77   See, e.g., Ronald O. Barney, "Joseph Smith's Visions: His Style and His Record," http://www.fairlds.org/fair-conferences/2013-fair-conference/2013-joseph-smiths-visions-his-style-and-his-record; Roger Nicholson, "The Cowdery

Readers will savor the sections of the book in which Bokovoy highlights selected passages providing evidence of inspiration in the Books of Moses and Abraham, giving examples of significant links with both ancient conceptions of religion and modern LDS beliefs. Bokovoy discusses the Book of Moses as a temple text, featuring biblical and temple motifs that prefigure the Nauvoo endowment.[78] He also explores additional connections with Near Eastern traditions, including the ideas of how Moses was granted authority to control the waters in the likeness of God, the reference to God as a "Man of

Conundrum: Oliver's Aborted Attempt to Describe Joseph Smith's First Vision in 1834 and 1835," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 8 (2014). See also Bradshaw and Larsen, *God's Image 2*, 8. Of course, there is no reason to throw doubt on the idea that the translation process relied on instruments and procedures such as those described by Joseph Smith's contemporaries. However, by restricting his description to the statement that the translation occurred "by the gift and power of God" (Smith, *Documentary History*, 4 January 1833, 1:315, in a parallel to the wording found in Omni 1:20 that was later taken up in the account and testimony of the Three Witnesses (Joseph Smith, Jr. et al., *Joseph Smith Histories, 1832–1844*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, Histories (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church Historian's Press, 2012), 318–323). See also D&C 1:29, 20:8), the Prophet disclaimed the futile effort to make these sacred events intelligible to others who had not experienced what he had. Instead he pointed our attention to what mattered most: that the translation was accomplished by divine means.

78   Bokovoy, *Authoring Genesis-Deuteronomy*, 147–149. See Bokovoy, "'Thou Knowest That I Believe': Invoking the Spirit of the Lord as Council Witness in 1 Nephi 11," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 1 (2012), 1-23 for an insightful essay highlighting how selected Book of Mormon accounts echo an ancient temple motif. For additional perspectives on temple themes in the Book of Moses, see Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, "The LDS Book of Enoch as the Culminating Story of a Temple Text," *BYU Studies* 53, no. 1 (2014), 39-73; "The Tree of Knowledge as the Veil of the Sanctuary," in *Ascending the Mountain of the Lord: Temple, Praise, and Worship in the Old Testament*, ed. David Rolph Seely, Jeffrey R. Chadwick, and Matthew J. Grey, *The 42nd Annual Brigham Young University Sidney B. Sperry Symposium* (26 October, 2013) (Provo and Salt Lake City, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University and Deseret Book, 2013), 49-65.

Council"[79] and its resonances with the divine council in Israelite theology, elaborations about the cursing of the earth in the Book of Moses stories of Cain and Enoch, and concepts about the nature of God that not only "restored ancient truth" but also "build upon and enhance earlier historical constructs."[80]

Likewise, with respect to the Book of Abraham, Bokovoy provides examples of theological connections with ancient Israel. He discusses the Book of Abraham's rich imagery of the altar as a place of covenant-making and divine deliverance, including thematic links between the scene of Abraham's deliverance from a sacrificial death and the near sacrifice of Abraham's son Isaac. Seeing the Prophet's explanations of Facsimile 3 "as a religious adaptation of ancient images that reflects newly revealed teachings,"[81] Bokovoy explores how the interpretations provided by Joseph Smith relate Old Testament theology and LDS temple worship. Finally, Bokovoy draws on his extensive studies of divine councils to bring together ideas from the astronomical and creation accounts in the Book of Abraham, the Mesopotamian epic of creation (*Enuma Elish*), the Hebrew Bible, and the New Testament.

Some Observations on Book of Moses Authorship

At this juncture, I would like to make some personal observations about Book of Moses authorship, a subject that has been of special interest to me as I have attempted to understand

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79   See Moses 7:35. This spelling, as opposed to "Man of *Counsel*" as in the current edition of the scriptures, derives from first manuscript of the JST (Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews, eds., *Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2004), OT1, 106). The subsequent manuscript version spells the term as "Man of *Councel*" (*Original Manuscripts*, OT2, p. 619).

80   Bokovoy, *Authoring Genesis-Deuteronomy*, 156.

81   Bokovoy, *Authoring Genesis-Deuteronomy*, 179.

the meaning and significance of this important work of LDS scripture.[82]

What is the Book of Moses? As a starting point, it is essential to understand that the Book of Moses is an extract from the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible (JST).[83] In the JST, a high priority of time and attention was specifically accorded to the translation of Genesis 1–24. For example, a close look at the number of verses modified in the translation process reveals that more than half of the changed verses in the JST Old Testament and 20% of those in the entire JST Bible are contained in Moses 1 and Genesis. As a proportion of page count, changes in Genesis occur four times more frequently than in the New Testament, and twenty-one times more frequently than in the rest of the Old Testament. The changes in Genesis are not only more numerous, but also more significant in the degree of doctrinal and historical expansion.

Looking at it from the perspective of translation *time* rather than the number of revised verses, the same picture holds. By mid-1833, three years after the process of translation started, Joseph Smith felt the JST was sufficiently complete that preparations for publication could begin.

From the perspective of the known durations of periods when each part of the translation was completed, the first 24 chapters of Genesis occupy nearly a quarter of the total time for the entire Bible. Though we cannot know how much of Joseph Smith's daily schedule the translation occupied during each of its phases, it is obvious that Genesis 1–24, the first 1% of the Bible, must have received a significantly more generous share of the Prophet's time and attention than did the remaining 99%.[84]

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82   Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*; Bradshaw and Larsen, *God's Image 2*.

83   For a summary of the background of the JST and its relationship to the Book of Moses, see Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, 1–9.

84   I have argued elsewhere for the possibility that the increased emphasis accorded to certain sections of the Bible in the translation effort could be seen as part of divine tutorial for the Prophet on temple and priesthood matters, given

During the process of translation, Joseph Smith made several types of changes. These changes ranged from "long revealed additions that have little or no biblical parallel, such as the visions of Moses and Enoch" and the passage on Melchizedek, to "common-sense" changes and interpretive additions, to "grammatical improvements, technical clarifications, and modernization of terms"—the latter being the most common type of change.[85] Of course, even in the case of passages that seem to be explicitly revelatory, it remained to the Prophet to exercise considerable personal effort in rendering these experiences into words.[86] As Kathleen Flake puts it, Joseph Smith did not see himself as "God's stenographer. Rather, he was an interpreting reader, and God the confirming authority."[87]

Does the JST restore the original text of Genesis? LDS teachings and scripture clearly imply that Moses learned of the Creation and the Fall in vision and was told to write it. Moreover, there are revelatory passages in the Book of Moses that have remarkable congruencies with ancient texts. However, I think it fruitless to rely on JST Genesis as a means for uncovering a Moses urtext. Even if, for example, the longer, revelatory passages of chapters 1, 6, and 7 of the Book of Moses were found to be direct translations of ancient documents it is

early in his ministry (*Temple Themes in the Book of Moses* (Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Publishing, 2010), 13–16).

85   Barlow, *Bible* (2013), 55–57.

86   See, e.g., D&C 9:7–9.

87   Kathleen Flake, "Translating Time: The Nature and Function of Joseph Smith's Narrative Canon," *Journal of Religion* 87, no. 4 (2007), 507–508; cf. Grant Underwood, "Revelation, Text, and Revision: Insight from the Book of Commandments and Revelations," *BYU Studies* 48, no. 3 (2009), 76–81, 83–84. With respect to the Book of Mormon, scholars differ in their understanding about the degree to which the vocabulary and phrasing of Joseph Smith's translation was tightly controlled. However, there is a consensus among LDS scholars that at least some features of the plate text of the Book of Mormon survived translation (Gardner, *Gift and Power*, 150-152, 197-204). See more on this issue below.

impossible to establish whether or not they once existed as an actual part of some sort of "original" manuscript of Genesis.

Mormons understand that the primary intent of modern revelation is for divine guidance to latter-day readers, not to provide precise matches to texts from other times. Because this is so, we would expect, rather, to find deliberate deviations from the content and wording of ancient manuscripts in Joseph Smith's translations in the interest of clarity and relevance to modern readers. As one LDS apostle expressed it, "the Holy Spirit does not quote the Scriptures, but gives Scripture."[88] If we keep this perspective in mind, we will be less surprised with the appearance here and there of New Testament terms such as "Jesus Christ" in Joseph Smith's chapters on Enoch when the title "the Son of Man" would be more in line with ancient Enoch texts.[89]

Is there any reason to believe that Moses 1 has any basis in antiquity? The outline of events in Moses 1, a long passage that is not rooted directly in the text of the Bible, fits squarely in the tradition of ancient "heavenly ascent" literature and its relationship to temple theology, rites, and ordinances.[90] It is

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88 Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*, Revised ed. (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1979), 350.

89 Compare Gardner's analysis of Book of Mormon usage of the name/title "Jesus Christ" (Gardner, *Gift and Power*, 241–242). For more on this issue, see the discussion of Moses 6–7 below. Note that acceptance of the general primacy of conceptual rather than literal equivalence in translation undercuts one of the primary tools of the textual critic, i.e., vocabulary analysis (*Gift and Power*, 233–239).

90 Ginzberg reports traditions of "several ascensions of Moses": a first "at the beginning of his career," a second "at the revelation of the Torah," and the third "shortly before his death" (Louis Ginzberg, ed. *The Legends of the Jews*, 7 vols. (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1909–1938; reprint, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 5:417). For a brief overview of accounts that interpreted Moses' ascent to Sinai as an ascent to the holy of holies, see Margaret Barker, "The Great High Priest," *BYU Studies* 42, no. 3 (2003), 218–219. For useful general summaries of ascent literature, see William J. Hamblin, "Temple Motifs in Jewish Mysticism," in *Temples of the Ancient World*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1994),

significant that this account, along with the rest of the Book of Moses, was revealed to Joseph Smith more than a decade before the full temple endowment was administered to others in Nauvoo.[91]

Although stories of heavenly ascent bear important similarities to temple practices, they make the claim of being something more. While ancient temple rituals dramatically depict a figurative journey into the presence of God, the ascent literature tells the stories of prophets who experience actual encounters with Deity within the *heavenly* temple—the "completion or fulfillment" of the "types and images" in earthly priesthood ordinances.[92] In such encounters, the prophet may experience a vision of eternity, participation in worship with

440-76; Joseph Fielding McConkie, "Premortal Existence, Foreordinations, and Heavenly Councils," in *Apocryphal Writings and the Latter-Day Saints*, ed. C. Wilfred Griggs (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1986), 173-98; Margaret Barker, *Temple Theology* (London, England: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), 2004); *The Risen Lord: The Jesus of History as the Christ of Faith* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996). For an interpretation of the Islamic *hajj* pilgrimage as a form of ascent, see Syed Ali Ashraf, "The Inner Meaning of the Islamic Rites: Prayer, Pilgrimage, Fasting, Jihad," in *Islamic Spirituality 1: Foundations*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr (New York City, NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1987), 125, and for the Islamic story of Habib, who "entered [Paradise] alive," see Muhammad Ibn Ishaq ibn Yasar, *The Making of the Last Prophet: A Reconstruction of the Earliest Biography of Muhammad* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), 227–228. For a discussion of Moses' vision on Sinai as an ascent and rebirth, see Peder Borgen, "The Gospel of John and Philo of Alexandria," in *Light in a Spotless Mirror: Reflections on Wisdom Traditions in Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. James H. Charlesworth and Michael A. Daise (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003), 60–65.

For a detailed commentary on Moses 1, see Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, 32–81. See also Hugh W. Nibley, *Teachings of the Pearl of Great Price* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS), Brigham Young University, 2004), 205.

91   See Bradshaw, "LDS Book of Enoch."

92   Hugh W. Nibley, "Apocryphal Writings and the Teachings of the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Temple and Cosmos: Beyond This Ignorant Present*, ed. Don E. Norton, *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 312; cf. 310–311. See Wesley W. Isenberg, "The Gospel of Philip (II, 3),"

the angels, and the conferral of certain blessings that are "made sure" by the voice of God Himself.[93]

Building on the earlier work of Jared Ludlow[94] and Hugh Nibley,[95] David Larsen and I have explored significant resemblances between the first chapter of the Book of Moses and the *Apocalypse of Abraham* (hereafter AA).[96] The major structural and conceptual resemblances include a spirit world prologue, a fall to earth, the details of the protagonist's personal encounter with Satan, and a journey of heavenly ascent. Many additional resemblances in detail accompany these parallels in larger structural features, of which I will give a few examples.[97]

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in *The Nag Hammadi Library*, ed. James M. Robinson (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990), 159.

93   2 Peter 1:10. See Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood* (Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Publishing, 2012), 59–65.

94   Jared W. Ludlow, "Abraham's Visions of the Heavens," in *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, ed. John Gee and Brian M. Hauglid, *Studies in the Book of Abraham* (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS), Brigham Young University, 2005), 57-73.

95   Hugh W. Nibley, "To Open the Last Dispensation: Moses Chapter 1," in *Nibley on the Timely and the Timeless: Classic Essays of Hugh W. Nibley*, ed. Truman G. Madsen (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1978); *Abraham in Egypt,* The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2000), 1–73.

96   Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, "The Apocalypse of Abraham: An Ancient Witness for the Book of Moses" (paper presented at the *2010 FAIR Conference,* Sandy, UT, August 5, 2010, http://www.fairlds.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/2010_Apocalypse_of_Abraham.pdf. (accessed January 9, 2013)). For a brief summary, see Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, Excursus 54, 694–696.

97   For the English translation, I have used Alexander Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha: Toward the Original of the Apocalypse of Abraham*, ed. James R. Adair, Jr., Text-Critical Studies (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), *Apocalypse of Abraham* chs. 9–23, pp. 16–27 unless otherwise noted. The first English translation of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* was made in 1898. Notably, this translation did not appear in a scholarly journal, but rather in the *Improvement Era*, an official publication of the Church (E. H. Anderson and R. T. Haag, "The Book of the Revelation of Abraham: A Translation [from G. Nathanael Bonwetsch's Then Unpublished German Translation]," *Improvement Era* 1, August and September 1898), 705-14 and 793-806.

In both accounts, the prologue to the prophet's heavenly ascent features a setting on a high mountain[98] and an aretology.[99] A scene of sacrifice is explicitly described in AA[100] and may be reasonably inferred in the Book of Moses.[101] In a spirit world scene, the prophet is commissioned[102] and told that he will be shown a vision of eternity.[103]

Then, in a scene that was important enough to the editors of the Sylvester Codex to associate with a specific illustration, we are told that the prophet "fell down upon the earth, for there was no longer strength in me."[104] Similarly, in Joseph Smith's account, "Moses … fell unto the earth .… And … it was for the space of many hours before Moses did … receive his natural strength."[105]

Satan then appears, disrupting the scene and commanding worship.[106] The prophet, in each case, questions Satan's identity,[107] and his own godlike status is contrasted with that of his adversary.[108] In both accounts, Satan is reprimanded for his deceit and told to depart for the first time.[109] The prophet is reminded by God of the difference between his status and that of Satan.[110] Satan is commanded to depart a second time in both texts.[111] Then, Satan makes a final, vain attempt to gain

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98   Moses 1:1; AA 9:8.

99   Moses 1:3; AA 9:3.

100   AA 9:5.

101   Cf. Abraham, Facsimile 2, Figure 2.

102   Moses 1:6; AA 9:6.

103   Moses 1:4; AA 9:6.

104   AA 10:1–3.

105   Moses 1:9–11.

106   Moses 1:12; AA 13:4–5.

107   Moses 1:13; AA 13:6.

108   Moses 1:13–14; AA 13:7.

109   Moses 1:16: "Get thee hence, Satan; deceive me not." AA 13:12–13: "Depart from [Abraham]! You cannot deceive him."

110   Moses 1:16; AA 13:14.

111   Moses 1:18: "Depart hence, Satan." AA 14:7: "vanish from before me!"

the worship of the prophet.[112] In the Book of Moses, this is followed by a description of Satan's frightening tantrum and final departure[113] that is paralleled in an Enoch account.[114]

After the departure of Satan, Moses calls upon God.[115] I understand the reference of where Moses "lifted his eyes unto heaven" in v. 24 as an allusion to the process of heavenly ascent, following the interpretive lead given by AA ("the angel took me with his right hand and set me on the right wing of the pigeon … and carried me up"[116]). The imagery in AA resembles that given by Nephi to describe a similar experience ("upon the wings of his Spirit hath my body been carried away"[117]). Although Moses had previously seen God, he now is shut out by the heavenly veil, hearing only God's voice.[118]

In Moses 1:27, we are told, "And it came to pass, as the voice was still speaking, Moses cast his eyes and beheld the earth." Remarkably, the book of Moses phrase "as the voice was still speaking" parallels a nearly identical phrase—"And while he

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112 Moses 1:19; AA 14:9–10.

113 Moses 1:20, 21: "Moses … commanded, saying: Depart from me, Satan … And now Satan began to tremble."

114 See R. H. Charles, ed. *The Book of Enoch Together with a Reprint of the Greek Fragments*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1912; reprint, Kila, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2005), 13:3 (Gizeh), p. 288. Nibley's English translation reads (Nibley, "To Open," 10–11; cf. R. H. Charles, ed. *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, 2 vols.(Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1913; reprint, Berkeley, CA: Apocryphile Press, 2004), 2:196 n. 13:1): "And Enoch said to Azazel, Depart! … Then he departed and spoke to all of them [i.e., his followers] … and trembling … seized them." Nibley's reading is perfectly coherent. However, Nickelsburg does not see the logic of the Gizeh variant, calling the passage "nonsense" (George W. E. Nickelsburg, ed. *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch*, Chapters 1–36; 81–108, *Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 234n. 13:1a).

115 Moses 1:24–26.

116 AA 15:2–3.

117 2 Nephi 4:25.

118 Moses 1:25.

[the angel] was still speaking"—in AA.[119] In both cases, the phrase might be seen as a stock expression having to do with an exchange of words as one is preparing to pass from one side of the heavenly veil to the other.[120] This idea is suggested in AA by the fact that the phrase immediately precedes Abraham's recitation of certain words taught to him by the angel in preparation for his ascent to receive a vision of the work of God. In such accounts, once a person has been thoroughly tested, the "last phrase" of welcome is extended to him: "Let him come up!"[121] Significantly, following Abraham's ascent, when he passes back through the heavenly veil in the opposite direction on his return to the earth, the expression "And while he was still speaking" recurs.[122]

The change in perspective as Moses passes upward through the heavenly veil is related in subtle beauty in the Book of Moses. Previously, as he stood on the earth, Moses had "lifted up his eyes unto heaven."[123] Now, after ascending to heaven, he "cast his eyes" down to see the earth and all of its inhabitants.[124] Similarly, in AA the prophet is told: "Look now beneath your feet at the expanse and contemplate the creation and those who inhabit it."[125]

Moses' vision is perfectly in line with ancient accounts that speak of a "blueprint" of eternity that is worked out in advance

119   R. Rubinkiewicz, "Apocalypse of Abraham," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1983), 17:1, p. 696

120   Compare Hugh W. Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment*, 2nd ed.(Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2005), 449–457.

121   Michael E. Stone, "The Fall of Satan and Adam's Penance: Three Notes on the Books of Adam and Eve," in *Literature on Adam and Eve: Collected Essays*, ed. Gary A. Anderson, Michael E. Stone, and Johannes Tromp (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2000), 47; cf. Revelation 4:1: "Come up hither"; Matthew 25:21: "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

122   Rubinkiewicz, "Apocalypse of Abraham," 30:1, p. 704.

123   Moses 1:24.

124   Moses 1:27–28.

125   AA 21:1.

and shown on the inside of the heavenly veil:[126] "Those who passed beyond the veil found themselves outside time. When Rabbi Ishmael ascended and looked back he saw the curtain on which was depicted past, present and future. 'All generations to the end of time were printed on the curtain of the Omnipresent One. I saw them all with my own eyes'…[127] [Similarly,] Enoch was taken up by three angels and set up on a high place whence he saw all history, past, present and future."[128]

Moses witnessed its entire history from beginning to end like Adam, Enoch, the Brother of Jared, John the Beloved, and others.[129] Moroni taught that those with perfect faith cannot be "kept from within the veil" (i.e., cannot be kept from passing through the veil[130])—meaning the heavenly veil behind which God dwells, whose earthly counterpart is the temple veil that divides the holy place from the holy of holies.[131] Seeing all this,

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126 Nibley, *Teachings of the PGP*, 117; cf. Smith, *Documentary History*, 27 November 1832, 1:299. Scholem writes that "this cosmic curtain, as it is described in the Book of Enoch, contains the images of all things which since the day of creation have their pre-existing reality, as it were, in the heavenly sphere. All generations and all their lives and actions are woven into this curtain.… [All this] shall become universal knowledge in the Messianic age" (Gershom Scholem, ed. *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York City, NY: Schocken Books, 1995), 72).

127 P. Alexander, "3 (Hebrew Apocalypse of) Enoch," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1983), 45:6, p. 299.

128 Barker, *Temple Theology*, 28; see also "The Veil as the Boundary," in *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy*, ed. Margaret Barker(London, England: T & T Clark, 2003), 215–217. Nibley discusses parallels between the picture presented to Abraham and the "great round" of the hypocephalus (Hugh W. Nibley and Michael D. Rhodes, *One Eternal Round, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2010), 42ff.).

129 D&C 107:56, Moses 7:4–67, Ether 3:25, 1 Nephi 14:25, 1 Nephi 14:26, Luke 4:5, M. Catherine Thomas, "The Brother of Jared at the Veil," in *Temples of the Ancient World*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1994), 388-98.

130 Ether 3:20; cf. Moses 3:26.

131 Alexander, "3 Enoch," 45:1, p. 296 n. a.

Moses asks, "Tell me, I pray thee, why these things are so…?"[132] Likewise in AA, Abraham asks, "Eternal, Mighty One! Why did you ordain it to be so?"[133]

At this point, we observe a significant difference between the Book of Moses and AA. On the one hand, Moses will receive a partial answer to his question about "by what" God made these things through a vision of the Creation.[134] He will also be told something about "why these things are so."[135] On the other hand, in AA, the dialogue between Abraham and the Lord centers not on the creation and purpose of the universe, but rather on recent events of local concern, including the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, and the future of Israel.[136] This seems just the kind of material that a first- or second-century redactor might have wanted to include.[137]

Following his experience at the heavenly veil, Moses enters the presence of God. The granting of the privilege to Moses of seeing God is paralleled both in Old Testament accounts such as Isaiah and Ezekiel, and in the Enoch pseudepigrapha. In a second major difference with the Book of Moses, however, AA explicitly rejects any visualization of God, and insists on the "revelation of the divine Voice" alone.[138] AA seems

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132 Moses 1:30.

133 AA 26:1.

134 See Moses 2.

135 See Moses 1:39.

136 AA 27:1–31. Nibley nonetheless sees parallels between these passages in the *Apocalypse* and the books of Moses and Abraham (Nibley, *Abraham 2000*, 25–26).

137 By way of contrast, questions addressed to God in the Islamic *Mother of Books* provide a closer parallel to the material found in the book of Moses: "My Lord, … From where did he make the spirits? What was the origin of his creation?" (Willis Barnstone and Marvin W. Meyer, "The Mother of Books (*Umm Al-Kitab*)," in *The Gnostic Bible*, ed. Willis Barnstone and Marvin Meyer (Boston, MA: Shambhala, 2003), 685).

138 Andrei A. Orlov, "'The Gods of My Father Terah': Abraham the Iconoclast and the Polemics with the Divine Body Traditions in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*," *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 18, no. 1 (2008), 53;

to be insisting on a theological point when it has Yahoel tell Abraham, "the Eternal One… himself you will *not* see."[139]

Just as Moses is then shown the events of the Creation and the Fall,[140] AA describes how the great patriarch looked down to see the affairs of what is called in modern revelation the "kingdoms of a lower order."[141] The Lord's voice commanded Abraham to "look," and a series of heavenly veils were opened beneath his feet.[142] Like Moses, Abraham is shown the heavenly plan for creation—"the creation that was depicted of old[143] on this expanse" (21:1[144]), its realization on the earth (21:3–5), the Garden of Eden (21:6), and the spirits of all men with certain ones "prepared to be born of [Abraham] and to be called [God's] people (21:7–22:5)"[145] When Abraham is told again to "Look … at the picture," he sees Satan inciting the Fall of Adam and Eve (23:1–14),[146] just as Moses saw these events following his own heavenly ascent.[147]

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see also "Praxis of the Voice: The Divine Name Traditions in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127, no. 1 (2008), 53-70.

139 AA 16:3, emphasis added.

140 Moses chapters 2–4. Other ancient writings affirm what the book of Moses says about how the stories of the Creation and the Fall were revealed in vision. For example, the book of Jubilees prefaces a recital of the Creation and other events of Genesis with the Lord's instructions to Moses to record what he would see in vision (O. S. Wintermute, "Jubilees," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1983), 2:52, p. 54).

141 D&C 130:9.

142 AA 19:1, 4–5, 9; cf. Abraham 3:1–18.

143 I.e., formerly shadowed, sketched, outlined, prefigured (Rubinkiewicz, "Apocalypse of Abraham," 699n21a).

144 Cf. Abraham 5:3–5.

145 Cf. Abraham 3:22–23.

146 Kulik, *Retroverting*, 26–28.

147 The same basic pattern can also be observed in *Jubilees*, where it is made explicit in the opening part of the book that the revelation to Moses about Creation and other matters was given through direct speech by God and disclosures by an angel of the presence (James C. VanderKam, ed. *The Book of Jubilees, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* (Louvain, Belgium: E. Peeters, 1989), 1:1–5, pp. 1–2, 2:1ff, 7ff.), as is observed in Bokovoy, *Authoring*

From his own study of affinities between the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and modern scripture, Hugh Nibley concluded, "These parallel accounts, separated by centuries, cannot be coincidence. Nor can all the others."[148]

While most scholars assign a late date to the composition of the original Hebrew or Aramaic text of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* (i.e., within a few decades of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE), the discovery of this and similar texts commends caution in foreclosing the possibility that elements in the first chapter of the Book of Moses may preserve authentic ancient traditions associated with Mosaic authority, preserved in manuscripts of a similar nature.

Another possibility, of course, is that the experience of Moses in chapter 1 was never put to writing until it was revealed by God to Joseph Smith. Such an idea would not be inconsistent with the epilogue of Moses 1:42, which reads, "These words were *spoken* unto Moses in the mount, the name of which shall not be known among the children of men. And now they are *spoken* unto you."[149] As ATOT observes, "Moses 1 constantly invokes the voice of an omniscient narrator speaking about Moses in the third person.… This pattern stands in stark contrast to the

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Genesis-Deuteronomy, 146 and also has been discussed in E. Douglas Clark, "A Prologue to Genesis: Moses 1 in Light of Jewish Traditions," *BYU Studies* 45, no. 1 (2006), 129-42. The theme of Moses having received the words by direct revelation continues throughout the book. Indeed, VanderKam notes that, after the opening scenes in the Prologue and 1:1–2:1, there are "22 direct or indirect reminders that the angel is dictating to Moses" (James C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees*, ed. Michael A. Knibb, *Guides to Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 24).

148   Nibley, "To Open," 15.

149   Emphasis added. By way of contrast, the account of Creation given in the Book of Moses seems to interact directly with its KJV equivalent. In the prologue of Moses 2:1 and throughout the rest of the chapter, we seem to be reading the result of the Prophet's layering onto the KJV account, not only additional theological concepts, but also bridging context that reinforces the idea that Moses received an account of Creation by direct revelation from God, whether or not the creation account as we have it constitutes the exact words of that revelation.

first-person biographical formulation of Joseph's subsequent scriptural text, the Book of Abraham. Hence, when read critically, the text itself does not view Moses as its author"[150]—though, of course, it *does* view Moses as the one to whom these words were originally *spoken*.

There is much additional work to be done to bring our understanding of the translation process of the Book of Moses to a level approaching our current, more extensive knowledge about the translation of the Book of Mormon.[151] What is important for the present discussion is to know that, whether or not Moses himself recorded his vision in writing, there are reasonable possibilities other than concluding that the account in Moses 1 is a simple pseudepigraphal retrojection of Joseph Smith onto the life of the ancient prophet.

Is there any reason to believe that the story of Enoch found in Moses 6–7 has any basis in antiquity? Another notably long revelatory section of the Book of Moses contains the story of Enoch,[152] an account whose resemblances to other Enoch texts have provoked a variety of explanations.[153] The most popular of these explanations asserts that Joseph Smith derived these

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150   Bokovoy, *Authoring Genesis-Deuteronomy*, 139.

151   See, e.g., Gardner, *Gift and Power*.

152   Book of Moses, chapters 6 and 7.

153   For example, John L. Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology*, 1644–1844 (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1994), seeks to make the case that Sidney Rigdon, among others, was a "conduit of Masonic lore during Joseph's early years" and then goes on to make a set of weakly substantiated claims connecting Mormonism and Masonry. These claims, including connections with the story of Enoch's pillars in Royal Arch Masonry, are refuted in William J. Hamblin, Daniel C. Peterson, and George L. Mitton, "Mormon in the Fiery Furnace or Loftes Tryk Goes to Cambridge," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6, no. 2 (1994); "Review of John L. Brooke: *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644–1844*," *BYU Studies* 34, no. 4 (1994); cf. Philip L. Barlow, "Decoding Mormonism," *Christian Century*, 17 January 1996; Jan Shipps, *Sojourner in the Promised Land: Forty Years among the Mormons* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 204–217) and Jed L. Woodworth, "Extra-Biblical Enoch Texts in Early American Culture," in *Archive of Restoration Culture: Summer Fellows' Papers* 1997–1999,

chapters from acquaintance with the pseudepigraphal book of *1 Enoch*. For example, in his master's thesis,[154] Salvatore Cirillo cites and amplifies the arguments of Michael Quinn[155] that the available evidence that Joseph Smith had access to published works related to *1 Enoch* has moved "beyond probability—to fact." He sees no other explanation than this for the substantial similarities that he finds between the Book of Moses and the pseudepigraphal Enoch literature.[156] However, reflecting on the

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ed. Richard Lyman Bushman (Provo, UT: Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History, 2000), 188–189.

Non-Mormon scholar Stephen Webb agrees with Hamblin et al., concluding that "actual evidence for any direct link between [Joseph Smith's] theology and the hermetic tradition is tenuous at best, and given that scholars vigorously debate whether hermeticism even constitutes a coherent and organized tradition, Brooke's book should be read with a fair amount of skepticism" (Stephen H. Webb, *Jesus Christ, Eternal God: Heavenly Flesh and the Metaphysics of Matter* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2012), 260). For a debunking of the idea that LDS temple ordinances are a simple derivation from Freemasonry, see Matthew B. Brown, *Exploring the Connection between Mormons and Masons* (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2009). Brown's more in-depth manuscript dealing with this topic still awaits publication.

For a summary of the contents of the major Enoch pseudepigrapha and selected points of relevance for LDS readers, see Bradshaw and Larsen, *God's Image 2*, 468–477.

154   Salvatore Cirillo, "Joseph Smith, Mormonism, and Enochic Tradition" (Masters Thesis, Durham University, 2010).

155   D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, Revised and Enlarged ed. (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 1998), 193.

156   E.g., Cirillo, "Joseph Smith," p. 126: "substantial similarities between the [pseudepigraphal Books of Enoch (BE)] and [the LDS Extract from the Prophecy of Enoch (EPE)] are irrefutable proof of influence. The extensive relationship between Noah and Enoch and its expression in the EPE mimics many aspects of [*1 Enoch*]. The concept of the Son of Man and its application in the EPE with Enoch is further proof that Smith had acquired knowledge of [*1 Enoch*]. Nibley's own point that Mahujah and Mahijah from the EPE share their name with Mahaway in the [Qumran *Book of the Giants* (BG)] is further evidence that influence occurred. And additional proof of Smith's knowledge of the BG is evidenced by his use of the codename Baurak Ale."

Apart from the considerable difficulties raised by the argument that Joseph Smith could have had access to Laurence's 1821 translation of *1 Enoch*, note the *impossibility* of any influence of the *Book of the Giants* on the Book of

"coincidence" of the appearance of the first English translation

Moses Enoch account, since the former was not discovered until 1948. Cirillo does not attempt an explanation for how influence might have occurred in this case. The only attempt to explain such a phenomenon of which I am aware comes from two separate remembrances of the well-known Aramaic scholar Matthew Black, who collaborated with Jozef Milik in the first translation of the fragments of the *Book of the Giants* into English in 1976.

Black was approached by Gordon C. Thomasson after a guest lecture at Cornell University, during a year that Black spent at the Institute of Advanced Studies at Princeton (1977–1978) (William McKane, "Matthew Black," http://www.royalsoced.org.uk/cms/files/fellows/obits_alpha/black_matthew.pdf). According to Thomasson's account ("Items on Enoch — Some Notes of Personal History. Expansion of Remarks Given at the Conference on Enoch and the Temple, Academy for Temple Studies, Provo, Utah, 22 February 2013 (Unpublished Manuscript, 25 February 2013)," (2013); email message, 7 April 2014):

> I asked Professor Black if he was familiar with Joseph Smith's Enoch text. He said he was not but was interested. He first asked if it was identical or similar to *1 Enoch*. I told him it was not and then proceeded to recite some of the correlations Dr. Nibley had shown with Milik and Black's own and others' Qumran and Ethiopic Enoch materials. He became quiet. When I got to Mahujah (Moses 7:2), he raised his hand in a 'please pause' gesture and was silent. Finally, he acknowledged that the name Mahujah "could not have come from *1 Enoch*. He then formulated a hypothesis, consistent with his lecture, that a member of one of the esoteric groups he had described previously [i.e., clandestine groups who had maintained, sub rosa, a religious tradition based in the writings of Enoch that pre-dated Genesis] must have survived into the 19th century, and hearing of Joseph Smith, must have brought the group's Enoch texts to New York from Italy for the prophet to translate and publish.

> At the end of our conversation he expressed an interest in seeing more of Hugh's work. I proposed that Black should meet with Hugh [Nibley], gave him the contact information. He contacted Hugh the same day, as Hugh later confirmed to me. Soon Black made a previously unplanned trip to Provo, where he met with Hugh for some time. Black also gave a public guest lecture but, as I was told, in that public forum would not entertain questions on Moses.

In *Teachings of the PGP*, 267–269, Hugh Nibley recorded a conversation with Matthew Black that apparently occurred near the end of the latter's 1977 visit to BYU. Nibley asked Black if he had an explanation for the appearance of the name Mahujah in the Book of Moses, and reported his answer as follows: "Well, someday we will find out the source that Joseph Smith used."

of *1 Enoch* in 1821, just a few years before Joseph Smith received his Enoch revelations, the eminent historian Richard L. Bushman concludes on the basis of his careful analysis: "It is scarcely conceivable that Joseph Smith knew of Laurence's Enoch translation."[157]

Perhaps even more significant than the historical factors for rejecting *1 Enoch* as a source for Moses 6–7 is that, as Woodworth argues, the principal themes of "Laurence's 105 translated chapters do not resemble Joseph Smith's Enoch in any obvious way."[158] Indeed, apart from the shared prominence of themes relating to the Son of Man motif in the *1 Enoch Book of Parables*[159] and the Book of Moses, the most striking resemblances to the Prophet's revelations are found not in *1 Enoch*, but in related pseudepigrapha such as *2 Enoch* (first published in English at the end of the 19th century)[160] and the Qumran *Book of the Giants* (an Enochic book discovered in 1948).[161]

The primary motifs in the Book of Moses' account of Enoch's call, teachings, and glorification are illustrated throughout older texts. For example, Stephen Ricks has shown how the

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157   Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling, a Cultural Biography of Mormonism's Founder* (New York City, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 138.

158   *Rough Stone*, 138. Cf. Woodworth, "Enoch," 190–192.

159   See Bradshaw and Larsen, *God's Image 2*, 117–119. In addition, of course, *1 Enoch* and the Book of Moses share a common interest in the story of Noah and the Flood.

160   See, e.g., Bradshaw, "LDS Book of Enoch," 36–39, 104.

161   Woodworth, "Enoch," 190, 192, concludes: "While I do not share the confidence the parallelist feels for the inaccessibility of Laurence to Joseph Smith, I do not find sharp enough similarities to support the derivatist position. The tone and weight and direction of [*1 Enoch* and the Book of Moses] are worlds apart.… The problem with the derivatist position is [that]… Laurence as source material for Joseph Smith does not make much sense if the two texts cannot agree on important issues. The texts may indeed have some similarities, but the central figures do not have the same face, do not share the same voice, and are not, therefore, the same people. In this sense, the Enoch in the Book of Moses is as different from the Enoch of Laurence as he is from the Enoch in the other extra-biblical Enochs in early American culture. Same name, different voice."

six characteristic features of the Old Testament narrative call pattern identified by Norman Habel are shown in the commissioning of Joseph Smith's Enoch.[162] According to Samuel Zinner,[163] the ideas behind the unusual wording of this commission arose in the matrix of the ancient Enoch literature.[164]

Enoch's self-description as a "lad" in the Book of Moses—the only instance of the term "lad" in the teachings and revelations of Joseph Smith—reflects the prominence of his title of "lad" in *2* and *3 Enoch*.[165] Gary A. Anderson of the University of Notre Dame finds these latter references "curious," noting that "of all the names given Enoch, the title 'lad' is singled out as being particularly apt and fitting by the heavenly host."[166]

In the account of Enoch's teaching mission, there are several interesting resemblances with the fragmentary *Book of the*

162 Stephen D. Ricks, "The Narrative Call Pattern in the Prophetic Commission of Enoch," *BYU Studies* 26, no. 4 (1986), 97-105.

163 Samuel Zinner, "Underemphasized Parallels between the Account of Jesus' Baptism in the Gospel of the Hebrews/Ebionites and the Letter to the Hebrews and an Overlooked Influence from *1 Enoch* 96:3: "And a Bright Light Shall Enlighten You, and the Voice of Rest You Shall Hear from Heaven," http://www.samuelzinner.com/uploads/9/1/5/0/9150250/enochgosebionites.pdf, 5.

164 See Bradshaw and Larsen, *God's Image 2*, 35–36.

165 See F. I. Andersen, "2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1983), 10:4 (shorter recension), p. 119, Alexander, "3 Enoch," 2:2, p. 357; 3:2, p. 257; 4:1, p. 258; and 4:10, p. 259; and Charles Mopsik, ed. *Le Libre Hébreu d'Hénoch ou Livre des Palais*, Les Dix Paroles (Lagrasse, France: Éditions Verdier, 1989), 48D 1, p. 156 (97). See Bradshaw and Larsen, *God's Image 2*, Endnote M6–7, p. 93.

166 Gary A. Anderson, "The Exaltation of Adam," in *Literature on Adam and Eve: Collected Essays*, ed. Gary A. Anderson, Michael E. Stone, and Johannes Tromp (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2000), 107.

Robert F. Smith notes that the title "lad" in *2* and *3 Enoch* "might be compared with Book of Mormon Alma 'Lad, Young Man,' which may be short for hypothetical Hebrew ʿAlma' 'El 'Lad of 'El,' the Ugaritic epithet of King Kirta, ʿlm 'il 'Lad of El,' and taking a hint from Mosiah 17:2 'and he was a young man.' (Matt Bowen sees a pun)" (Robert F. Smith, http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/sorting-out-the-sources-in-scripture/#comment-13917, 6 March 2014).

Giants.[167] These resemblances range from general themes in the story line (secret works, murders, visions, earthly and heavenly books of remembrance that evoke fear and trembling, moral corruption, hope held out for repentance, and the eventual defeat of Enoch's adversaries in battle, ending with their utter destruction and imprisonment) to specific occurrences of rare names and expressions in corresponding contexts.[168] Note that these resemblances with the *Book of the Giants* are not drawn at will from a large corpus but rather are concentrated in a scant three pages of Qumran fragments.

One of the most striking of these correspondences is in the name and role of "Mahijah/Mahujah," the only named character besides Enoch himself in Joseph Smith's story of Enoch.[169] Hugh Nibley observes, "The only thing the Mahijah in the Book of Moses is remarkable for is his putting of bold

167   For recent scholarship on these resemblances, see Bradshaw and Larsen, *God's Image 2*, 41–49. Pioneering insights on Enochic parallels can be found in the writings of Hugh W. Nibley. He wrote a series of magazine articles on resemblances between ancient Enoch writings and the Book of Moses for the Church's *Ensign* magazine in 1975–1977, receiving Milik's English translation of the *Book of the Giants* only days before the publication deadline for the last article in the series. As a result, of the more than 300 pages he devoted to Enoch in the volume that gathered his writings on the subject, only a few pages were dedicated to the Aramaic "Enoch" fragments (Hugh W. Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1986), 276–281). Regrettably, after he completed his initial research at that time, Nibley turned his attention to other subjects and never again took up a sustained study of Enoch.

168   See Bradshaw and Larsen, *God's Image 2*, 41–45, 47.

169   See Moses 6:40, 7:2 and *God's Image 2*, 42–45. Cirillo, "Joseph Smith," 97, following Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *The Book of Giants from Qumran: Texts, Translation, and Commentary* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 27, considers that the most conspicuously independent content in the *Book of the Giants*, "unparalleled in other Jewish literature," is the names of the giants, including Mahaway [i.e., Mahujah]." Moreover, according to Cirillo: "The name Mahaway in the [*Book of the Giants*] and the names Mahujah and Mahijah in the [Book of Moses] represent the strongest similarity between the [LDS revelations on Enoch] and the [pseudepigraphal books of Enoch] (specifically the [*Book of the Giants*])."

direct questions to Enoch. And this is exactly the role, and the only role, that the Aramaic Mahujah plays in the story."[170]

In the Book of Moses, Enoch described how, as he and Mahujah "cried unto the Lord,"[171] they were told to go to Mount Simeon. There, as Enoch stood upon the mount, the heavens opened and he was "clothed upon with glory."[172] *2 and 3 Enoch* purport to describe the process by which Enoch was "clothed upon with glory" in more detail. As a prelude to Enoch's introduction to the secrets of creation, these ancient accounts describe a "two-step initiatory procedure" whereby "the patriarch was first initiated by angel(s) and after this by the Lord"[173] Himself. In *2 Enoch*, God commanded his angels to "extract Enoch from (his) earthly clothing. And anoint him with my delightful oil, and put him into the clothes of my glory."[174] Joseph Smith's Enoch was given a right to the divine throne,[175] and likewise, in *3 Enoch*, God makes a throne for the seer and sits him down upon it.[176]

With regard to the visions of Enoch, the *Book of Parables* holds special interest for students of the Book of Moses. Both books describe visions of Enoch with a central figure and a common set of titles. The title "Son of Man," which is a notable

170   Nibley, *Teachings of the PGP*, 278.

171   Moses 7:2. On reading Mahujah as a personal name rather than a place name, see Bradshaw and Larsen, *God's Image 2*, Endnote M6–13, p. 94.

172   Moses 7:3.

173   Andrei A. Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism* (Tübingen, Germany Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 102.

174   Andersen, "2 Enoch," 22:8 [J], p. 138. Cf. 2 Corinthians 5:1–4. See John J. Collins, "The Angelic Life," in *Metamorphoses: Resurrection, Body and Transformative Practices in Early Christianity*, ed. Turid Karlsen Seim and Jorunn Okland, *Ekstasis: Religious Experience from Antiquity to the Middle Ages* (Berlin, Germany: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 293.

175   Moses 7:59.

176   Philip S. Alexander, "From Son of Adam to Second God: Transformations of the Biblical Enoch," in *Biblical Figures Outside the Bible*, ed. Michael E. Stone and Theodore A. Bergren (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 10:1, 3, p. 263–264.

feature of the *Book of Parables*,[177] also appears in marked density throughout Enoch's grand vision in the Book of Moses.[178] The titles "Chosen One,"[179] "Anointed One,"[180] and "Righteous One"[181] also appear prominently in both texts. Consistent with the conclusions of Nickelsburg and VanderKam about the use of these multiple titles in the *Book of Parables*,[182] the Book of Moses applies them all to a single individual. Moreover, Moses 6:57 gives a single, specific description of the role of the Son of Man as a "righteous judge."[183] This conception is highly characteristic of the *Book of Parables*, where the primary role of the Son of Man is also that of a judge.[184]

177   George W. E. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, eds., *1 Enoch 2: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 37–82*, Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012), 46:2–4, p. 153; 48:2, p. 166; 60:10, p. 233; 62:5, 7, 9, 14, p. 254; 63:11, p. 255; 69:26–27, 29, p. 311; 70:1, p. 315; 71:14, 17, p. 320.

178   Moses 7:24, 47, 54, 56, 59, 65.

179   Moses 7:39. Cf. Moses 4:2. See Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2*, 39:6, p. 111; 40:5, p. 130; 45:3–4, p. 148; 49:2, 4, p. 166; 51:5a, 3, p. 180; 52:6, 9, p. 187; 53:6, p. 194; 55:4, p. 198; 61:5, 8, 10, pp. 243, 247; 62:1, p. 254.

180   I.e., Messiah. See Moses 7:53. See *1 Enoch 2*, 48:10, p. 166; 52:4, p. 187.

181   Moses 6:57; 7:45, 47, 67. See *1 Enoch 2*, 38:2, p. 95; 53:6, p. 194. The term also appears by implication in 39:6, p. 111; 46:3, p. 153; 49:2, p. 166; 62:2–3, p. 254.

182   *1 Enoch 2*, 119, emphasis added. The entire discussion is found on pp. 113–123. For additional discussion of the "Son of Man" title from an LDS perspective, see S. Kent Brown, "Man and Son of Man: Issues of Theology and Christology," in *The Pearl of Great Price: Revelations from God*, ed. H. Donl Peterson and Charles D. Tate, Jr. (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1989). For more on the debate surrounding this title, see Bradshaw and Larsen, *God's Image 2*, Endnote M7–16, p. 191.

183   Cf. John 5:27: "And [the Father] hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man." For a comparison of the claims of Jesus in this verse to related ideas in the Old Testament (Moses, Daniel) and the pseudepigraphal literature, see Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 2 vols.(Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 1:651–652.

184   E.g., Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2*, 69:27, 311: "… and the whole judgment was given to the Son of Man." For a summary of this issue, see *1 Enoch 2*, 119.

Genesis implies that Enoch escaped death by being taken up alive into heaven.[185] In a significant addition to the biblical record, the Book of Moses states that the entire city of Enoch was eventually received up into heaven.[186] Two late accounts preserve echoes of a similar motif. In A. Jellenik's translation of Jewish traditions, *Bet ha-Midrasch*,[187] we find the account of a group of Enoch's followers who steadfastly refused to leave him as he journeyed toward the place where he was going to be taken up to heaven.[188] Afterward, a group of kings came to find out what happened to these people. After searching under large blocks of snow they unexpectedly found at the place, they failed to discover any remains of Enoch or of his followers.

In a Mandaean Enoch fragment,[189] a group of the prophet's adversaries complain that Enoch and those who had gone to heaven with him have escaped their reach: "By fleeing and hiding the people on high have ascended higher than us. We have never known them. All the same, there they are, clothed with glory and splendors.… And now they are sheltered from our blows."

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185   Genesis 5:24.

186   Moses 7:69.

187   Adolph Jellinek, ed. *Bet Ha-Midrasch. Sammlung Kleiner Midraschim Und Vermischter Abhandlungen Aus Der Ältern Jüdischen Literatur*, 6 vols., vol. 4 (Leipzig, Germany: C. W. Vollrath, 1857), 4, pp. 131–132. Cf. Mordecai M. Noah, ed. *The Book of Jasher* (Salt Lake City, UT: Joseph Hyrum Parry, 1887; reprint, New York City, NY: Cosimo Classics, 2005), 3:24–38, pp. 7–8. For a new English translation of the account from the Hebrew by David Calabro, see Bradshaw and Larsen, *God's Image 2*, Endnote M7–23, pp. 193–194.

188   The account is reminiscent in some respects with 2 Kings 2:1-11, though Elisha is left behind when Elijah is taken up to heaven.

189   Jacques P. Migne, *"Livre D'adam,"* in *Dictionnaire des Apocryphes, ou, Collection de Tous les Livres Apocryphes Relatifs a l'Ancien et au Nouveau Testament, Pour la Plupart, Traduits en Français, Pour la Première Fois, Sur les Textes Originaux, Enrichie de Préfaces, Dissertations Critiques, Notes Historiques, Bibliographiques, Géographiques et Théologiques*, ed. Jacques P. Migne, *Troisième et Dernière Encyclopédie Théologique* (Paris, France: Migne, Jacques P., 1856), 21, p. 170.

In addition to these accounts alluding to a group who rose with Enoch to heaven, David Larsen provides a valuable discussion that includes "examples in early Jewish and early Christian literature that depict this motif in a different way. Although they do not feature Enoch or his city explicitly, there is a recurring theme in some of the texts that corresponds to the idea of a priestly figure who leads a community of priests in an ascension into the heavenly realm."[190]

What can we surmise about the process Joseph Smith used to translate the Bible? With respect to the translation of the Book of Mormon, Brant Gardner posits a default view of functionalist equivalence. In other words, "unless a very specific, detailed textual analysis supports an argument that particular words or passages are either literalist or conceptual,"[191] he favors the idea that Joseph Smith's translation "adheres to the organization and structures of the original [plate text] but is more flexible in the vocabulary."[192] Royal Skousen differs to a degree with Gardner in his understanding of the translation process, arguing that the words chosen for the English text were generally given under "tight control."[193]

Despite these differences regarding Book of Mormon translation, however, both Skousen and Gardner would agree

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190 David J. Larsen, "Enoch and the City of Zion: Can an Entire Community Ascend to Heaven?," *BYU Studies* 53, no. 1 (2014), 30. See also Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, "The Ezekiel Mural at Dura Europos: A Tangible Witness of Philo's Jewish Mysteries?," *BYU Studies* 49, no. 1 (2010), 4-49.

191 Gardner, *Gift and Power*, 247. For instance, Gardner considers, among other types of examples, the proper names of the Book of Mormon as specific instances of literal translation. He also finds examples of structural elements (e.g., chiasms and other literary features) in the Book of Mormon that are neither random nor "part of the common repertoire available to a writer in upstate New York in the 1830s. They represent features of the plate text that have survived the translation process" (*Gift and Power*, 204). For summary discussions of the detailed analysis of this issue given throughout the book, see especially *Gift and Power*, 227–247, 279–283.

192 Gardner, *Gift and Power*, 156.

193 Skousen, "Tight Control."

that one should not assume that every change made in the JST constitutes revealed text, tightly controlled. Besides arguments that can be made on the basis of the modifications themselves, there are questions regarding the reliability and degree of supervision given to the scribes who transcribed, copied, and prepared the text for publication. Differences are also apparent in the nature of the translation process that took place at different stages of the work. For example, whereas a significant proportion of the Genesis passages canonized as the Book of Moses look like "a word-for-word revealed text," evidence from a study of two sections in the New Testament that were translated twice indicates that the later "New Testament JST is not being revealed word-for-word, but largely depends upon Joseph Smith's varying responses to the same difficulties in the text."[194]

Was any of the understanding Joseph Smith relied on in making his translation of the Book of Moses received directly as the result of a vision? Some aspects of the Book of Moses, possibly including the comprehensive understanding of the Creation and the Fall that both Moses and Joseph Smith received, may have first come in vision and only later have been put into words. Regarding such visionary experiences, Lorenzo Brown remembered Joseph Smith as saying,

> After I got through translating the Book of Mormon, I took up the Bible to read with the Urim and Thummim. I read the first chapter of Genesis, and I saw the things as they were done, I turned over the next and the next, and the whole passed before me like a grand panorama;

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194   R. Skousen, "The Earliest Textual Sources for Joseph Smith's "New Translation" of the King James Bible," *The FARMS Review* 17, no. 2 (2005), 456–470. For the original study, see Kent P. Jackson and Peter M. Jasinski, "The Process of Inspired Translation: Two Passages Translated Twice in the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible," *BYU Studies* 42, no. 2 (2003).

and so on chapter after chapter until I read the whole of it. I saw it all![195]

However, even if this account is accurate, I do not think that Joseph Smith recorded in a direct fashion everything that he saw and understood relating to the material in the Book of Moses. In the chapters where the Book of Moses closely parallels the Genesis account (i.e., Moses 2-5, 8 vs. Moses 1, 6, 7), he seems to have emended the biblical text only to the degree he felt necessary and authorized to do so, running roughshod, as it were, over the divisions of biblical source texts generally accepted by scholars. In other words, rather than compose a completely new account of Creation and the Fall in the Book of Moses, Joseph Smith wove changes based on his prophetic insight piece-by-piece into the existing Genesis account.[196] As a result, in his effort to fulfill his divine mandate to "translate" scripture, the Prophet gives us enough revised and expanded material in the Book of Moses to significantly impact our understanding of important doctrinal and historical topics, but does not rework existing KJV verses to the point they become unrecognizable to those familiar with the Bible.[197]

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195   Lorenzo Brown in "Sayings of Joseph, by Those Who Heard Him at Different Times," *Joseph Smith Jr. Papers*, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, UT, cited in Flake, "Translating Time," 506n31. Flake notes: "Brown's statement is based on his recollection in 1880 of a conversation that occurred in 1832. For a discussion about the reliability of this account, see Robert J. Matthews, *"A Plainer Translation": Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible — A History and Commentary* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 25–26n12. Elder Orson F. Whitney reported a similar experience in more recent times; see Bradshaw and Larsen, *God's Image 2*, 177.

196   This process seems similar to Gardner's suggestions about how Joseph Smith seems to have translated biblical texts found within the Book of Mormon (e.g., Gardner, *Gift and Power*, 215–225).

197   In this connection, it is interesting to consider how well Joseph Smith's contemporaries might have received his translation of, e.g., the story of the Creation and the Fall had he produced a de novo account as opposed to layering prophetic insights onto the KJV text in a more limited fashion.

Is the Book of Moses in a "final" form? It would be a mistake to assume that the Book of Moses is currently in any sort of "final" form—if indeed such perfection in expression could ever be attained within the confines of what Joseph Smith called our "little, narrow prison, almost as it were, total darkness of paper, pen and ink; and a crooked, broken, scattered and imperfect language."[198] As Robert J. Matthews, a pioneer of modern scholarship on the Joseph Smith Translation, aptly put it, "Any part of the translation might have been further touched upon and improved by additional revelation and emendation by the Prophet."[199]

Though Joseph Smith was careful in his efforts to render a faithful translation of the Bible, he was no naïve advocate of the inerrancy or finality of scriptural language.[200] For instance, although in some cases his Bible translation attempted to resolve blatant inconsistencies among different accounts of the Creation and the life of Christ, he did not attempt to merge these sometimes divergent perspectives on the same events into a single harmonized version. Of course, having multiple accounts of these important stories should not be seen a defect or inconvenience. Differences in perspective between such accounts—and even seeming inconsistencies—composed "in [our] weakness, after the manner of [our] language, that [we] might come to understanding,"[201] can be an aid rather than a hindrance to human comprehension, perhaps serving disparate sets of readers or diverse purposes to some advantage.

In translating the Bible, Joseph Smith's criterion for the acceptability of a given reading was typically pragmatic

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198   Smith, *Documentary History*, 27 November 1832, 1:299.

199   Matthews, *Plainer*, 215.

200   For example, Gerrit Dirkmaat gives examples of Joseph Smith's efforts to revise and update his Doctrine and Covenants revelations as they were prepared for publication (Gerrit Dirkmaat, "Great and Marvelous Are the Revelations of God," *Ensign*, January 2013, 56–57).

201   D&C 1:24.

rather than absolute. For example, after quoting a verse from Malachi in a letter to the Saints, he admitted that he "might have rendered a plainer translation." However, he said that his wording of the verse was satisfactory in this case because the words were "sufficiently plain to suit [the] purpose as it stands."[202] This pragmatic approach is also evident both in the scriptural passages cited to him by heavenly messengers and in his sermons and translations. In these latter instances, Joseph Smith often varied the wording of Bible verses to suit the occasion.[203]

There is another reason we should not think of the Book of Moses as being in its "final" form. My study of the translations, teachings, and revelations of Joseph Smith has convinced me that he sometimes knew much more about certain sacred matters than he taught publicly. Indeed, in some cases, we know that the Prophet deliberately delayed the publication of early temple-related revelations connected with his work on the JST until several years after he initially received them.[204] Even after Joseph Smith was well along in the translation process, he seems to have believed that God did not intend for him to publish the JST in his lifetime. For example, writing to W. W. Phelps in 1832, he said, "I would inform you that [the Bible translation] will not go from under my hand during my natural life for correction, revisal, or printing and the will of [the] Lord be done."[205]

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202   D&C 128:18.

203   See Bradshaw and Larsen, *God's Image 2*, Endnote 0–12, p. 27.

204   For example, Bachman has argued convincingly that nearly all of D&C 132 was revealed to the Prophet as he worked on the first half of JST Genesis (Daniel W. Bachman, "New Light on an Old Hypothesis: The Ohio Origins of the Revelation on Eternal Marriage," *Journal of Mormon History* 5 (1978), 19-32). This was more than a decade before 1843, when the revelation was shared with Joseph Smith's close associates.

205   Dean D. Jessee, *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2002), 273. This is consistent with George Q. Cannon's statement about the Prophet's intentions to "seal up" the work for "a later day"

Although in later years Joseph Smith reversed his position and apparently made serious efforts to prepare the manuscript of the JST for publication, his own statement makes clear that initially he did not feel authorized to share publicly all he had produced—and learned—during the translation process. Indeed, a prohibition against indiscriminate sharing of some revelations, which parallels similar cautions found in pseudepigrapha,[206] is explicit in the Book of Moses when it says of one sacred portion of the account, "Show [these words] not unto any except them that believe."[207] Such admonitions are consistent with a remembrance of a statement by Joseph Smith that he intended to go back and rework some portions of the Bible translation to add in truths he was previously "restrained … from giving in plainness and fulness."[208]

In summary, having spent the last few years in focused study of the early chapters of JST Genesis, I have been astonished

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after he completed the main work of Bible translation on 2 February 1833: "No endeavor was made at that time to print the work. It was sealed up with the expectation that it would be brought forth at a later day with other of the scriptures.… [See D&C 42:56–58.] [T]he labor was its own reward, bringing in the performance a special blessing of broadened comprehension to the Prophet and a general blessing of enlightenment to the people through his subsequent teachings" (George Q. Cannon, *The Life of Joseph Smith, the Prophet*, Second ed. (Salt Lake City, UT: The Deseret News, 1907), 129).

I have argued elsewhere that the divine tutorial that took place during Joseph Smith's Bible translation effort was focused on temple and priesthood matters—hence the restriction on general dissemination of these teachings during the Prophet's early ministry. See Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, 3–6; *Moses Temple Themes*, 13–16.

206   See Bradshaw and Larsen, *God's Image 2*, Endnote 0–13, 28.

207   Moses 1:42. See also Moses 4:32: "See thou show them unto no man, until I command you, except to them that believe."

208   The quoted words are from LDS Apostle George Q. Cannon's remembrance (Cannon, *Life* (1907), 129n): "We have heard President Brigham Young state that the Prophet before his death had spoken to him about going through the translation of the scriptures again and perfecting it upon points of doctrine which the Lord had restrained him from giving in plainness and fulness at the time of which we write."

with the extent to which its words reverberate with the echoes of antiquity—and, no less significantly, with the deepest truths of my own experience. I believe that the Book of Moses is a priceless prophetic reworking of the book of Genesis, made with painstaking effort under divine direction. Although neither "complete," "final," nor "inerrant," it is a text of inestimable value that constitutes a centerpiece of my personal scripture study.

Conclusions

By applying his considerable expertise to the problem of making the issues and results of Higher Criticism available to non-specialists and tailoring his findings to an LDS readership, David Bokovoy has performed an important service. Although our conclusions and approaches differ on some issues, I commend the spirit with which he has undertaken his study and feel a commonality in our love for scripture and our sympathy for all those who seek to understand it "by study and also by faith."[209] I am personally grateful to be the benefactor of his sincere quest to understand how those who accept Joseph Smith as a prophet of God can derive valuable interpretive lessons from modern scholarship.

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209   D&C 88:118. The rest of the verse implies, however, that learning spiritual matters from book study is ultimately a poor cousin to learning by faith—i.e., study "out of the best books" is only necessary because "all have not faith." Though Joseph Smith was a great advocate of schools for the teaching of practical subjects in Kirtland and Nauvoo, on matters of learning for the eternities he wanted the Saints to gain knowledge by direct revelation—to come to the point where they could throw away their crutches, take up their beds, and walk: "The best way to obtain truth and wisdom is not to ask it from books, but to go to God in prayer, and obtain divine teaching" (Smith, *Teachings*, 3 October 1841, 191). Note that the original source for this quote reads "the *only* way" (Smith, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 3 October 1841, 77, emphasis added).

LDS scholarship has a long tradition of focusing on the historicity of Joseph Smith's translations.[210] ATOT encourages us to broaden our focus, engaging the texts more effectively as we continue to study their history.

This is a helpful move, but only the beginning. In tandem with our efforts to sort out the sources, we will need to increase our understanding of how to take in the texts. As Ben McGuire puts it, "We can talk about the text that *was*, but what we have is the text that *is*, and it is this text that displays (more so than

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210   Truman G. Madsen wisely provided both caution and encouragement to scholars engaged in exploring the historicity of Joseph Smith's translations (Truman G. Madsen, "Introductory Essay," in *Reflections on Mormonism: Judeo-Christian Parallels, Papers Delivered at the Religious Studies Center Symposium*, Brigham Young University, March 10–11, 1978, ed. Truman G. Madsen, *Religious Studies Monograph Series* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1978), *xvii*):

> Surface resemblance may conceal profound difference. It requires competence, much goodwill and bold caution properly to distinguish what is remotely parallel, what is like, what is very like, and what is identical. It is harder still to trace these threads to original influences and beginnings. But on the whole the Mormon expects to find, not just in the Judeo-Christian background but in all religious traditions, elements of commonality which, if they do not outweigh elements of contrast, do reflect that all-inclusive diffusion of primal religious concern and contact with God—the light "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9). If the outcome of hard archeological, historical, and comparative discoveries in the past century is an embarrassment to exclusivistic readings of religion, that, to the Mormon, is a kind of confirmation and vindication. His faith assures him not only that Jesus anticipated his great predecessors (who were really successors) but that hardly a teaching or a practice is utterly distinct or peculiar or original in His earthly ministry. Jesus was not a plagiarist, unless that is the proper name for one who repeats Himself. He was the original author. The gospel of Jesus Christ came with Christ in the meridian of time only because the gospel of Jesus Christ came from Christ in prior dispensations. He did not teach merely a new twist on a syncretic-Mediterranean tradition. His earthly ministry enacted what had been planned and anticipated "from before the foundations of the world" (See, e.g., John 17:24; Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:20; Alma 22:13; D&C 130:20; Moses 5:57; Abraham 1:3), and from Adam down.

any hypothetical urtext) an intentionality, and a theological understanding. If we try to place a theological understanding back on a hypothetical urtext it is more likely we come up with a mirror than with some shattering and important insight."[211] Fortunately, in Bokovoy's work of critical scholarship, he has given us a tantalizing foretaste of where such study may lead us in his erudite discussions of a few of the inspired treasures of modern scripture.[212]

Another subject that merits deeper inquiry concerns Joseph Smith's role as a translator. Brant Gardner sees this as "one of the next important discussions that LDS scholars must have. We really have to work out Joseph as a translator based on data rather than assumptions. It will be our own form of Higher Criticism. In this case, however, we won't be discovering the human editorial process but attempting to understand the divine process that merged revelation and translation into Joseph's textual production."[213]

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211   Walter Brueggemann elaborates ("Narrative Coherence and Theological Intentionality in 1 Samuel 18," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 55, no. 2 (1993), 243): "[A]ttention to literary strategy in the narrative advances our theological understanding of the text. Unless we stay with the internal coherence and intentionality of the text, the various fragments and elements fall apart, as they have with many efforts in conventional historical criticism. When the text falls apart methodologically, we face only interesting factual questions and literary fragments; we likely will miss the hidden cunning that the narrative invites us to ponder." Continuing, he writes: "Historical criticism, with its penchant for explication, explanation, and the dispelling of mystery, has in method and in principle denied the hidden cunning of the narrative. There is a growing awareness among scholars that the older historicist methods are, in important ways, incongenial to the material being studied and incompatible with it. A method is required which honors the intentional hiddenness and the artistic subtlety of the narrative."

212   Bokovoy, *Authoring Genesis-Deuteronomy*, 147–158, 173–189.

213   Brant Gardner, e-mail message, 19 March 2014.

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