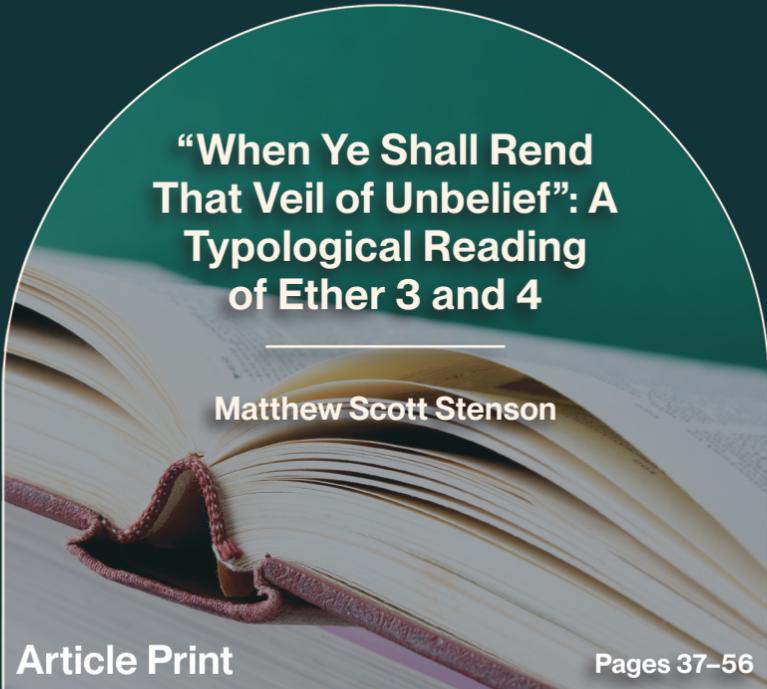


# Interpreter

**A Journal of Latter-day Saint  
Faith and Scholarship**



**“When Ye Shall Rend  
That Veil of Unbelief”: A  
Typological Reading  
of Ether 3 and 4**

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**Article Print**

**Pages 37–56**

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ISSN 2372-1227 (print)  
ISSN 2372-126X (online)

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# “When Ye Shall Rend That Veil of Unbelief”: A Typological Reading of Ether 3 and 4

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Matthew Scott Stenson

**Abstract:** *In the book of Ether, the prophet Moroni “Christianizes” the Jaredite story, inserting extensive Christian elements into an original text that predates the house of Israel, the Nephite nation, and the Christian era. In this paper, a typological and intertextual method is used to show how Moroni uses the words of Christ in Ether 3 and 4 to exhort his Gentile readers to embrace the Nephite record when it is manifest to them that they might receive even greater things (divine truths). Specifically, Moroni uses the brief account of the brother of Jared atop Mount Shelem to illustrate how Gentiles may “rend the veil of unbelief” and gain perfect knowledge of all things ever revealed. As the Lord revealed his finger to the brother of Jared, so also the Book of Mormon, itself a portion of the word of the Lord, will come forth to try their faith. Those Gentiles who believe and come to know with perfectness of its truthfulness are positioned to lay hold of even greater things than these through Christ. The value of this reading is to clarify Moroni’s effort to adapt the early Jaredite history to a later event—the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and its implications.*

**M**ost Latter-day Saints are familiar with the account of the brother of Jared in the book of Ether. At the time of the Tower of Babel and the confusion of the languages, the Jaredites were led by the Lord through a wilderness across the raging deep and into a western land of promise. In order to light the vessels in which they would travel over (and under) these seas, the brother of Jared “molten out of a rock sixteen small stones” (Ether 3:1). With these stones, he approaches

the Lord in prayer and obtains an unparalleled theophany of Jehovah. The brother of Jared, the spiritual leader of this pre-Israelite remnant, enters into the veil and is taught about all things pertaining to Earth and its inhabitants. This event speaks to the character of this man. The brother of Jared is an example of profound humility and mighty faith. His story is taught to our children and elsewhere rehearsed in our Sunday School classrooms. Many laymen and scholars view the account as a temple text. What may be less well understood is how Moroni creatively may use this story of one man's efforts to obtain the help of the Lord, in order to make a significant point about the sacred record that he and his father have spent their lives preparing. Moroni uses the words of the Lord Jesus Christ in the brother of Jared's story in Ether 3 and 4 to exhort the Gentiles (and all those who would have the record) to receive the Book of Mormon in faith that they might also come to a knowledge of the Lord and even greater divine truths than those contained in the part or portion of the word of the Lord synonymous with the Nephite record. In Moroni's conception, the finger of the Lord, which was made manifest to the brother of Jared, may be seen as a type of the Nephite record manifest to the Gentiles.

Many persons who study and teach about the brother of Jared's journey to the promised land like to consider his unusual faith and his mountaintop encounter with the pre-mortal Christ. Elder Jeffery R. Holland has notably written about these matters.<sup>1</sup> Others have taken a more symbolic and devotional approach to the general story, including the mountaintop theophany.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, scholars such

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1. Jeffery R. Holland, "Rending the Veil of Unbelief," in *Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 13–29.

2. BreckEngland, "Come, Follow Me for Sunday School: 'Rend That Veil of Unbelief,' Ether 1–5," *Meridian Magazine*, 5 November 2020, [latterdaysaintmag.com/come-follow-me-for-sunday-school-rend-that-veil-of-unbelief-ether-1-5/](https://latterdaysaintmag.com/come-follow-me-for-sunday-school-rend-that-veil-of-unbelief-ether-1-5/). Also see Tyler J. Griffin, "The Jaredite Journey: A Symbolic Reflection of Our Own Journey along the Covenant Path," in *Illuminating the Jaredite Records*, ed. Daniel L. Belnap (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University [BYU], 2020), 273–93, [rsc.byu.edu/illuminating-jaredite-records/jaredite-journey-symbolic-reflection-our-own-journey-along-covenant-path](https://rsc.byu.edu/illuminating-jaredite-records/jaredite-journey-symbolic-reflection-our-own-journey-along-covenant-path).

as Joseph M. Spencer,<sup>3</sup> Charles Swift,<sup>4</sup> Frank Judd,<sup>5</sup> and Rosalynde Frandsen Welch<sup>6</sup> have also discussed, from their various academic perspectives, the special mountaintop encounter and the account of the brother of Jared in Ether. It is not surprising that some of these commentators find it fascinating that this nameless man of unusual faith received such an unparalleled revelation of the Lord, one apparently greater than any before him (see Ether 3:9, 15). What this bold claim accompanying the narrative may mean is yet unclear given that Adam, Enoch, and likely Noah all walked and talked with God face-to-face. One wonders how the brother of Jared's experience could rival or even surpass theirs. Of those astute readers who have examined the story's theological implications and the book of Ether more comprehensively, Welch's work intersects most directly with this current project.

In 2020, as part of a larger set of theological works sponsored by the Neal A. Maxwell Institute, Welch published a brief but thoughtful book on the writings of Ether as abridged by the prophet Moroni. In it she makes a number of observations in her elegant prose style. Following Grant Hardy's earlier conclusions, she demonstrates that Moroni "overwrites" or transforms Ether's record.<sup>7</sup> That is, without much regard for the Jaredite history per se, Welch asserts that Moroni employs the Jaredite writings to his later Christian purpose. According to her, Moroni's purpose is to Christianize those former Jaredite writings in his effort to invite a later Gentile audience to faith in Christ. Welch explores the ethics of scriptural appropriation and authority and other related theological concerns in her larger argument. In the end, she advocates for a "*reader-centered theology of scripture*."<sup>8</sup> Where her

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3. Joseph M. Spencer, "Christ and Krishna: The Visions of Arjuna and the Brother of Jared," in *The Anatomy of Book of Mormon Theology*, vol. 1 (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2021), 269–90.

4. Charles Swift, "Upon Mount Shelem: The Liminal Experience of the Brother of Jared," in *Illuminating the Jaredite Records*, ed. Daniel L. Belnap (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, BYU, 2020), 85–128, [rsc.byu.edu/illuminating-jaredite-records/upon-mount-shelem-liminal-experience-brother-jared](https://rsc.byu.edu/illuminating-jaredite-records/upon-mount-shelem-liminal-experience-brother-jared).

5. Frank F. Judd Jr., "Moroni's Six Commentaries in the Book of Ether," in *Illuminating the Jaredite Records*, ed. Daniel L. Belnap (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, BYU, 2020), 157–82, [rsc.byu.edu/illuminating-jaredite-records/moronis-six-commentaries-book-ether](https://rsc.byu.edu/illuminating-jaredite-records/moronis-six-commentaries-book-ether).

6. Rosalynde Frandsen Welch, *Ether: A Brief Theological Introduction* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, BYU, 2020).

7. Welch, *Ether*, 14, 19–20.

8. Welch, *Ether*, 76, emphasis in original.

project overlaps with my own is atop Shelem. Welch reads the story of the brother of Jared metaphorically, much as I do. She describes the sixteen stones presented to the Lord to represent the weakness and luminosity of the Book of Mormon itself. There is some warrant for this reading in the general Nephite record (see Ether 12:27; Mormon 8:16). However, her claims seem to break down as she discusses the suggestive nature of the finger of the Lord in the repurposed Jaredite account.

In chapter 4 of her work on Ether, Welch develops her reading of the sixteen stones and finger of the Lord, laying emphasis on the readers' role in ultimately receiving the Book of Mormon in the spirit of faith and charity. She attempts to reframe how we see the brother of Jared's encounter with the Lord by wishing to compare it (and its narrative elements) to the "sufficiency of scripture."<sup>9</sup> It is in this context that Welch compares stones to scripture. The small stones, she explains, are suggestive of Moroni's weak offering of his writing that can and will be made strong by receptive readers (see Ether 12:27). Even though this, in theory, is justified by the text as she notes, the stones in this case seem to me not to convey what she supposes. My greater concern, since stones and scripture can be and are associated in the larger Nephite record (see Jacob 4:15–18; Alma 37:23; Mormon 8:16), has to do with Welch's reading of the veil-encounter atop Mount Shelem as it pertains to the divine finger of the Lord. Welch extends her original stone-book metaphor to include the finger of the Lord and its equivalency with the Nephite record itself. She posits that the divine finger of the Lord may also be suggestive of weakness, although this does not appear to be borne out by the text. Welch's reading of the physical elements in the account—stones and finger—is interesting but ultimately seems to be somewhat off target.

In the present study, a slightly different approach will be taken to the story of the brother of Jared. Instead of taking a devotional/symbolic or a metaphorical/theological approach to the important Jaredite story, the account will be read intertextually and typologically. The primary distinction between the devotional approach and this approach is that the first is an example of eisegesis (importing *into* the text a personal application or meaning) while the second is an example of exegesis (an attempt to extrapolate *from* the text the author's intended meaning). And the primary distinction between the metaphorical or

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9. Welch, *Ether*, 78.

theological approach and this approach is that this reading is not only comparative or contingent but time bound. I will take no interest in the sixteen small stones mentioned in the account, but will provide a new reading of the divine finger of the Lord that seems borne out by the story itself, by Moroni's editorial commentary, and other scriptures from elsewhere in the Nephite record that bear on it. In contrast to Welch's thoughtful reading, I will attempt to demonstrate that the finger of the Lord, rather than being suggestive of divine weakness (i.e. incarnation), and the Nephite record may be seen as a divine part or portion of a larger promised fulness of scripture and sacred experience.

To proceed with this endeavor, I will primarily depend on the words of Jesus Christ as recorded by Moroni in Ether 3 and 4. Using an intertextual and typological approach, the hope is to suggest that Moroni includes this specific history of the brother of Jared to enable him, in part, to make a larger point about the reception of the Book of Mormon and the reception of still much greater things. Moroni apparently undertakes this project to repurpose the Jaredite account at the behest of the Lord who has commanded him to do so. Accordingly, the brother of Jared's personal encounter with Jehovah is presented in a creative way to assign it general implications for the receipt of the Nephite record by the Gentiles. In brief, Welch and I have a similar understanding of why the mountaintop encounter was included, but understand the narrative detail of the divine finger of the Lord distinctly and, thus to a degree, the story's purpose differently.

### **Intertextuality and Typology as Exegetical Methods**

Before proceeding, it may be helpful to clarify my choice of diction before defining intertextuality and typology. In this study, I will deliberately refer to lesser and greater *things*, not to be vague, but because the words *thing* or *things* are, as Welch points out, consistently deployed in the Nephite record when referring to their sacred writings.<sup>10</sup> That said, both intertextuality and typology rely on sequence, unlike metaphor, which does not depend on sequence. Intertextuality represents the interplay that exists between two or more texts, whether of the same general time period or across dissimilar time periods. When an earlier text seems to influence either a later one or one contemporary with it, their interplay is said to be intertextual. However, intertextuality may not require the influence of only one text upon another. It could be

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10. Welch, *Ether*, 72–77.

that a more remote or obscure third text may influence both, or one or both may be shaped apart from each other by translation or redaction to be similar by intent or even without intent. In the most straightforward interactive exchange, the associations of the former text are by implication transferred and recast in the light of the new text. When intertextuality occurs within a single work, then technically the relation may be characterized as intratextual. I will not make a distinction here between intertextual and intratextual, however, to keep the substance of this study accessible. An example of an intertextual relationship that may be familiar to the reader is when Nephi directly or indirectly alludes to, comments upon, and even overwrites or repurposes Isaiah's writings. In short, and simply put, intertextuality describes "the relationship between texts."<sup>11</sup>

Like intertextuality when concerned with the question of sequence and influence, typology is time-bound, but it works differently. That is, broadly speaking, typology describes how one person, place, or thing foreshadows another person, place, or thing. The original person, place, or thing is called the *type*. The later person, place, or thing that the type anticipates is the *antitype*. To read typologically is then to consider how one person, place, or thing is suggestive of another earlier or later in time. For instance, the law of Moses foreshadowed the redemption of Jesus Christ. The law of Moses in this case was the type and the Redeemer's sacrifice for us was the antitype. Usually, the antitype is understood to be greater in value than the type.<sup>12</sup> As this last example demonstrates, a type in biblical text "foreshadow[s] the substance of Christian realities."<sup>13</sup> Typology usually culminates in Christ, a figure greater in value than those types and shadows that only suggest his redemptive work. However, as indicated, a broader sort of type may be a "person or thing symbolizing or exemplifying the defining characteristics of something."<sup>14</sup> It is this broader and less specific definition of typology (devoid of the question of relative value

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11. Judy Pearsall, ed., *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, 10th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 741.

12. Here is an alternative definition of typology: "Typology . . . relates the past to the present in terms of historical correspondence and escalation in which the divinely ordered prefigurement finds a complement in the subsequent and greater event." Daniel J. Treier, "Typology," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 823.

13. Treier, "Typology," 824n11.

14. Pearsall, *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, 1551.

and messianism) that will be of most use going forward. I do not wish to complicate Moroni's repurposing of Ether's writings any more than is necessary.

One might wonder what the usefulness of these standard methods of reading literature/scripture would be in understanding the Jaredite record and the editorial commentary of Moroni. First of all, Grant Hardy has shown that Moroni has a strong propensity to borrow from earlier prophets when he develops his own message.<sup>15</sup> His authorial habit is often to invoke directly or indirectly the words and teachings of those who came before. Sometimes Moroni explicitly signals the integration of another's words/voice. When reading Moroni, the student of the scriptures must be alert to his tendency to allude to or echo his prophetic predecessors. As for the presence of typology in the Book of Mormon, and especially in Moroni's writings, there is ample evidence that the Nephites were aware of this kind of written representation. Nephi (2 Nephi 11:4), Abinadi (Mosiah 13:10), and Alma (Alma 37:45) all understand salvation history and scriptural typologically, as does Moroni. For instance, in Ether 13, Moroni enters into a typological comparison:

For *as* Joseph brought his father down into the land of Egypt, even so he died there; wherefore, the Lord brought a remnant of the seed of Joseph out of the land of Jerusalem, that he might be merciful unto the seed of Joseph that they should perish not, *even as* he was merciful unto the father of Joseph that he should perish not. (Ether 13:6–7)

In this comparison, Moroni paraphrases Ether's prophecies. He associates Joseph's bringing Jacob into Egypt so he would not perish (the type) to the "seed of Joseph" being brought out of Jerusalem so that they would not perish (the antitype). The typological relationship is established by Moroni when he employs parallel ideas (i.e. "Joseph brought his father *down*" = "the Lord brought a remnant of the seed of Joseph *out*"). These parallel words and ideas are signaled in this case when Moroni uses words and phrases such as *as* and *even as*, hence they are in italic above. (Since we have no way of knowing otherwise, I assume that these ultimately unnecessary words — a type need not be signaled by the use of such words — are Moroni's words and not his translator's words). This one example (there are others) suggests

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15. Grant Hardy, "Allusion," in *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader's Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 248–67.

that reading history and scriptural accounts of that history typologically came naturally enough to Moroni, as it did to others centuries before him.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, it is reasonable to suppose that he may also in his own writings and editorial shaping of *Ether* develop an intertextually sophisticated and typologically interesting account of the brother of Jared in *Ether* 3 and 4.

### The Words of Jesus Christ in *Ether* 3

*Ether* 3 begins with the brother of Jared fashioning “white and clear” stones which he did transport by hand “upon the top of the mount” (*Ether* 3:1). Once at the summit of Shelem, the brother of Jared, with the stones presumably before him, offers a humble but bold intercessory prayer. In the prayer, he acknowledges the great distance between heaven and earth and between his people and God, and yet he confidently requests that the Lord collapse that distance and touch the stones he prepared. The brother of Jared says, “I know that thou canst do whatsoever thou wilt for the benefit of man; therefore touch these stones, O Lord, with thy finger, and prepare them that they may shine forth in darkness” (*Ether* 3:4). He follows this request with another statement affirming his strong confidence in the Lord’s capacity: “Behold, O Lord, thou canst do this. We know that thou art able to show forth great power, which looks small unto the understanding of men” (v. 5).

It is here, when the brother of Jared speaks these words in faith,<sup>17</sup> that the “Lord stretches forth his hand and touches the stones one by one with his finger” (v. 6). In order for this man to behold the finger of the Lord, “the veil was taken from off [his] eyes” (v. 6). What follows in Moroni’s account is a dialogue between this man and his Maker. Ultimately, the brother of Jared learns through this encounter (and other subsequent encounters) of greater things than he ever had.

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16. I acknowledge that the typology employed by figures such as Nephi, Abinadi, and Alma may not suggest a full-blown system of understanding. The New Testament writers used the typological method, but its circulation and application before them is uncertain. Perhaps the Book of Mormon’s use of the term *type* may be seen from one point of view as anachronistic, but in light of the Hebrew word *oth* that is translated in the KJV as *sign*, *token*, *miracle*, *ensign*, and *mark*, the concept of a type in the Nephite record is not likely to be anachronistic. What cannot be disputed is that the Nephites used the method in some sense in their teachings and writings *before* the first century.

17. Faith is exercised through words. Hence, the Lord in the beginning spoke, “Let there be light: and there was light” (Genesis 1:3; see also Hebrews 11:3).

His soul is redeemed, and he sees the Lord and the inhabitants of the earth. Thus, he receives by stages a revelation of all things. These visions are recorded and will yet come forth (see 2 Nephi 27:7–8, 10–11, 21–22).<sup>18</sup>

In Ether 3, the brother of Jared does not only receive a special personal blessing but, crucially to Moroni's project, he learns from Christ that the Lord has a work to do for the benefit of future generations. Christ announces to this man, "Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ. . . . In me shall all mankind have life, and that eternally, *even as many as shall believe on my name; and they shall become my sons and my daughters*" (3:14; see also Moroni 7:19, 26, 48). Following his instruction to the brother of Jared, the Lord therefore commands him to "treasure up the things which ye have seen and heard, and show it [the record] to no man" (3:21). The Lord promises this man that he "will cause in [his] own due time that these stones shall magnify to the eyes of men these things which ye shall write" (v. 24). The Lord emphatically exhorts the brother of Jared to "Write these things and seal them up; and I will show them in my own due time unto the children of men" (v. 27).<sup>19</sup> Here, it seems clear that the record that Moroni abridges for his audience (Ether's writings) suggests to Moroni's mind a type of his own mission to add to and conclude his father's record.

Accordingly, Moroni gives his readers just enough of the Lord's words to the brother of Jared to perceive his (Moroni's) own story. As the brother of Jared prayed for his people (vv. 2–3), he was visited by the Lord and learned that he should "seal . . . up" that record which would come forth in a later generation, including its interpreters (vv. 22–23, 27). Due to the details of chapter 3, it would be hard to imagine that Moroni would not perceive a connection to his predecessor, since Moroni's commission was to also seal up a record with its interpreters. Hence, it seems reasonable to suggest that Moroni uses the parallel to teach his readers about the role of the Book of Mormon as a harbinger of greater things to come.

Moroni's commentary on the Lord's words to the brother of Jared atop Shelem is instructive, edifying, and typologically rich. He establishes at least two important points. First, Moroni apparently sees a

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18. It is not uncommon to see the encounter at the veil as progressive or, to use Swift's word, "liminal." Swift, "Upon Mount Shelem," 85–128.

19. We know that these writings were revealed at the time of Jesus's appearance to the Lehites and that in a day of faith they will be revealed yet again.

typological relationship between the brother of Jared's significant personal experience and his own people's collective experience as recounted in 3 Nephi. The Lord, Moroni explains, "ministered unto [this man,] *even as he ministered unto the Nephites*" (vv. 17–18). The Lord did this and also showed "many great works" unto him that he might know that "he [Christ] was God" (v. 18). Second, Moroni appears to frame his larger discussion about the brother of Jared's encounter with the Lord using concepts similar to those found in the writings of Alma, the son of Alma (see Alma 32:21).

Moroni explores in the account the relationship between the word of knowledge (the word of promise), faith, and "perfect knowledge." These same terms are of interest to Alma. For him, faith is exercised in the word and then, if nourished, the word can become perfect knowledge of all things. Moroni's words have two similarities with Alma's account: 1) both speak of the dormancy of faith, a rather unusual concept (Alma 32:34; Ether 19); and 2) both speak of the relationship between faith and "perfect knowledge." The phrase *perfect knowledge* is mostly unique to the Book of Mormon (though it is used in a different sense in Acts 24:24, speaking of the "more perfect knowledge"). The phrase *perfect knowledge* appears twelve times in that record, but faith and perfect knowledge only appear in proximity to each other in the writings of Alma and Moroni (Alma 32:21, 26, 29; Ether 3:20; and Moroni 7:15–17). Jacob's earliest uses of the phrase *perfect knowledge* do not appear in the same epistemological context. That is, only Alma and Moroni demonstrate how faith in truth/promises leads to the acquisition of perfect understanding.

In Ether 3, Moroni, as mentioned, extracts a typological lesson for his Gentile readers to be gleaned from the man's encounter with the pre-mortal Jehovah. Moroni's framing language is as follows:

And because of the *knowledge* of this man he could not be kept from beholding within the veil; and he saw the finger of Jesus, which, when he saw, he fell with fear; for he knew [with perfectness] that it was the finger of the Lord; and he had faith no longer, for he knew, nothing doubting,<sup>20</sup>

Wherefore, having this perfect knowledge of God, he

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20. Moroni used this rare phrase, *nothing doubting* (or a variant of it), earlier in Mormon when he first attempted an ending to the overall Nephite record (Mormon 9:21, 25, 27). Grant Hardy has observed that the Book of Mormon has three endings and this phrase ("nothing doubting") from Moroni pertains to the first of them. Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 248–67.

could not be kept from within the veil<sup>21</sup>; therefore he saw Jesus; and he did minister unto him. . . .

*For he had said unto him [brother of Jared] in times before, that if he would believe in him [or on his words] that he could show unto him all things—it [all things] should be shown unto him; therefore the Lord could not withhold anything from him, for he knew that the Lord could show him all things. (3:19–20, 26)<sup>22</sup>*

In Moroni's commentary, which is placed between the Lord's speeches in Ether 3, he focuses his Gentile reader on the question of epistemology: how the brother of Jared went from having little—a word of promise—to receiving an abundance of actual revelation and knowledge. Moroni suggests that faith (or belief) is based on knowledge of the promises of God (which are also obtained through faith). Once the brother of Jared beheld the "finger of the Lord," his knowledge of that thing (the Lord's basic reality) became "perfect," which enabled the brother of Jared ultimately to behold Jesus Christ and receive instruction from him in "all things" (Ether 3:25–26). Thus, whereas Jesus pointed the brother of Jared to his (Jesus's) redemptive work and his (the brother of Jared's) recordkeeping, Moroni similarly seeks to describe how redemption can come by means of one nation's revelation,<sup>23</sup> particularly if that portion of revelation is according to earlier promises. The "finger of the Lord" in Moroni's typological formulation may represent the Book of Mormon, a revealed portion of the Lord's word. That which follows will lay out why that may be.

In that connection, it may be helpful to say something about the associations between the Holy of Holies and its covering veil as well as the word of God. As indicated, many laymen and scholars have seen a relationship between the brother of Jared's encounter and

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21. Or this might be rendered: he could not be kept from passing through the veil into the Lord's presence.

22. Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote that knowledge precedes faith. What he meant by this is that faith (or belief) is exercised in the testimony of those who know the truth of God. So, knowledge does not precede faith in the same person, but faith in God is exercised in the words of one who is authorized and bears witness of him and his truths. In the scriptures, faith leads to knowledge. For instance, Peter says to the members of the church in his day, "Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge" (2 Peter 1:5). Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 166–70.

23. A nation's revelation may be composed of parts of the whole of revelation to the world. See 2 Nephi 29:7–10; Doctrine and Covenants 10:46, 52.

the Latter-day Saint temple experience. For instance, M. Catherine Thomas has connected the name of the mountain called Shelem to temple ritual and fellowship with God. She has also compared the sixteen stones to the Urim and Thummim and speculated that two of them were instrumental in bringing forth additional “spiritual light” as the Jaredite interpreters.<sup>24</sup>

It may be instructive to consider the Hebrew word *debir*. This word has associations with terms such as *oracle*, *shrine*, and the “innermost part of the sanctuary,” places from which divine words originate.<sup>25</sup> Further, *dabar*, closely related to *debir*, has associations with terms such as *speech*, *discourse*, *sayings*, *commandments*, *prophecy*, *utterance*, *sentence*, *discourse*, *event*, *way*, *manner*, *cause*, *act*, *book*, *communication*, *message*, *oracle*, *part*, *portion*, *power*, *promise*, *sign*, *spoken*, *talk*, *tidings*, or *work*.<sup>26</sup> In the New Testament, we also learn that Christ, John’s “Word . . . made flesh” (see 1:14), is likened to the temple veil itself (see Hebrews 10:20). These connections suggest that Moroni may have conceived of the finger of the Lord reaching from the Holy Place (on Shelem) through the veil as not distinct from the coming forth of the word of God to his audience and their subsequent ability to “rend [the] veil of unbelief” (Ether 4:15).

Additionally, it appears that Moroni — a careful student of 2 Nephi 3 as Grant Hardy has demonstrated<sup>27</sup> — would have linked the phrase “by the finger of mine own hand” (v. 17) to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. This is plausible because in 2 Nephi 3, a typological comparison is fashioned by Joseph of Egypt between the record that Moses was to bring forth from Sinai to his displaced people and the Nephite record that would yet come forth as a “spokesman” unto showing forth the power of God unto future generations. It turns out that not only *power*, but *judgment* and *spokesman* are yet other associations with the Hebrew term *dabar* (see 2 Nephi 3:17–18). Accordingly, Ether 12 (a chapter that also interacts with the account of the brother of Jared) treats the word of God — the forthcoming Nephite record — and the privilege, after receiving that “trial of . . . faith,” of entering into his full divine presence within the veil (Ether 12:6).

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24. M. Catherine Thomas, “The Brother of Jared at the Veil,” in *Temples of the Ancient World*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: FARMS 1994), 390–93.

25. James Strong, ed., *New Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 1995), pg. 30, numbers: 1687–88.

26. Strong, *New Strong’s Concordance*, pg. 30, numbers: 1696–97.

27. Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 249–54.

In summary, then, Moroni finds many parallels between past events and texts with his own project. The suggestiveness of his project can be complexly understood, as demonstrated, but primarily he appears to see himself as preparing a record that anticipates the reception of greater things, including divine truths and sacred experiences.

### **The Words of Jesus Christ in Ether 4**

These seemingly disparate threads of thought—the Lord’s focus on the brother of Jared and his forthcoming record, and Moroni’s focus on the Gentiles and his forthcoming record—come together in Ether 4, where we receive yet more of the words of Jesus Christ. About five verses into Ether 4, Moroni recounts the likely source of his typological conception. The “greater things” of the brother of Jared’s record once held in reserve from the world, “until after Christ should show himself unto his people,” were, after their “dwindle[ing] in unbelief,” to be withheld from the Gentiles. This withholding would be “until the day that they shall repent of their iniquity, and become clean before the Lord” (Ether 4:3). Here are the words of Jesus Christ as recorded by Moroni:

They [writings of the brother of Jared] shall not go forth unto the Gentiles until the day that they shall repent of their iniquity and become clean before the Lord.

And in that day that they shall exercise faith in me, saith the Lord, *even* as the brother of Jared did, that they may become sanctified in me, then will I manifest unto them the things which the brother of Jared saw, even to the unfolding unto them, all my revelations, saith, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of the heavens and earth, and all things that in them are. (Ether 4:6–7)

At this point, the Lord transitions from speaking of the coming forth of the writings of the brother of Jared and concentrates on the lesser portion of the word that would come in and through the Nephites. In other words, if the Lord has just said that the greater things will come forth when the Gentiles develop faith like unto the brother of Jared, he now describes the instrument to try their faith before that greater revelation opens. Here are the Lord’s words:

And he that will contend against the word of the Lord, let him be accursed; and he that shall deny these things [Nephite

record], let him be accursed; for unto them will I show no greater things, saith Jesus Christ; for I am he who speaketh.

And at my command the heavens are opened and are shut; and at my word the earth shall shake; and at my command the inhabitants thereof shall pass away, even so as by fire.

And he that believeth not my words believeth not my disciples; and if it so be that I do not speak [in and through this record], judge ye; for ye shall know that it is I that speaketh, at the last day. (Ether 4:8–10)

This final verse returns us to Ether 3:19, a verse that focuses Moroni's readers on the process of going from faith in the Lord's promises to perfect knowledge of a portion of the Lord's body (his finger) and a full and complete revelation of himself or his body. It is here where we see Moroni typologically equating the finger of the Lord with the Nephite record.

And because of the knowledge of this man he could not be kept from beholding within the veil; and he saw the finger of Jesus, which, when he saw, he fell with fear; for he knew that it was the finger of the Lord; and he had faith no longer for he knew, nothing doubting.

Wherefore having this perfect knowledge, he could not be kept from within the veil; therefore he saw Jesus; and he did minister unto him. (Ether 3:19–20)

The Lord's words in Ether 4:6–12 suggest that Moroni equates the Nephite record, the initial and smaller part of the "word of the Lord" that would bring his people to "repent of their iniquity, and become clean before [him]," with the finger of the Lord. Whereas he appears to equate their sanctification and their receiving his vision of all things with the more full and complete record of the brother of Jared (see also Moroni 10:32–33; Doctrine and Covenants 10:52).

For the Lord said unto me [Moroni]: They [greater things] shall not go forth unto the Gentiles until the day that they shall repent of their iniquity, and become clean before the Lord.

And in that day that they shall exercise faith in me, saith the Lord, even as the brother of Jared did, that they may become sanctified in me, *then will I manifest unto them the things which the brother of Jared saw, even to the unfolding*

*unto them all my revelations, saith Jesus Christ, the Son of God. . . .*

And he that will contend against the word of the Lord, let him be accursed; and he that shall deny these [lesser] things, let him be accursed; *for unto them will I show no greater things, saith Jesus Christ, for I am he who speaketh.* (Ether 4:6–8)

It is significant that those who receive that lesser part of the whole—the scriptural equivalent of the finger of Jesus and a witness of it (Ether 4:11)—are promised in the above passage a more complete and perfect knowledge: “then will I manifest unto them the things which the brother of Jared saw, even to the unfolding unto them all my revelations” (Ether 4:7).

Similarly, the finger of the Lord in the account recorded in Ether was seen as a result of faith in earlier promises and it, once seen, emboldened the man, standing at the veil, to ask for a greater measure of light and truth. It is as if the finger was the fulfillment of promises and the harbinger of the opening of the temple veil. The lesser portion prepared the brother of Jared for the greater fulness. It will be remembered that the brother of Jared first boldly asked for the Lord to condescend to touch the stones and then upon his doing so with his finger he courageously asked the Lord to show himself in full measure. He received that which had been promised (part) and only then dared to ask for more (whole), according to the further promises of the Lord.

With this particular reading of the brother of Jared’s encounter at the veil, there are at least two additional items to keep in mind. First, it is Mormon, Moroni’s father and mentor, who said that Jesus commanded him to write only the “lesser part” of the Nephite history in his account to “try [the] faith” of his latter-day audience (3 Nephi 26:8–11). He says in 3 Nephi 26 that “according to the words of . . . Jesus” that when “these things” would come forth among the Gentiles they would, in effect, act for them as a trial of faith. But, he says, if they believe these things then the “greater things [would] be made manifest unto them”:

And these things have I [Mormon] written, which are a *lesser part* of the things which he taught the people; and I have written them to the intent that they may be brought again unto this people, from the Gentiles, according to the words which Jesus has spoken.

And when they shall receive this [Nephite record], which

is expedient that they should have first, *to try their faith*, and if it shall so be that they shall believe *these things* then shall the *greater things* be made manifest unto them.

And if it so be that they will not believe *these things*, then shall the *greater things* be withheld from them, unto their condemnation.

Behold, I was about to write them all which were engraven upon the plates of Nephi, but the Lord forbade it, saying: *I will try the faith of my people.* (3 Nephi 26:8–11)

It is seemingly with this in mind and Jesus's other instructions to Mormon that Moroni ingeniously conceives of using the history of the brother of Jared to teach the concept that lesser part leads to greater whole. The brother of Jared saw the finger of the Lord. When he did, he was then asked, "Believest thou the words *which I shall speak*?" (Ether 3:11). He responded in the affirmative and, as mentioned, was shown all things. This appears to be a type for us. If we receive the Book of Mormon in faith, though it represents a "lesser portion of the word," and believe in Christ as revealed through it, we will become emboldened to ask for and receive additional light and knowledge as we figuratively stand before the veil (see Alma 12:9–11).<sup>28</sup> With this book before us that is figuratively "flesh and blood" (Ether 3:6–9), or physical evidence of the work of the Lord in our day, we will learn to be purified and sanctified. In other words, we will obtain power to "rend that veil of unbelief" as did the brother of Jared (Ether 4:15).

Finally, this reading of Ether 3 and 4 seems acceptable for one other reason. When Moroni first invokes the faith-unto-perfect-knowledge framework that we associate with Alma 32 to help us understand how we may lay hold of more, he uses the phrase, "nothing doubting" (Ether 3:19). The phrase represents the perfect knowledge obtained by the brother of Jared suggesting that the Lord had tangibly kept his former promises and therefore would yet fulfill all his words to him (3:20). The phrase *nothing doubting* is rare in scripture and appears,

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28. Elder Bruce R. McConkie has written that the Book of Mormon is an initial "portion of the [Lord's] word." He explained, "Those who believe the witness it bears and obey the doctrines it teaches will be led to that further light and knowledge revealed in this day, and to the mysteries of the kingdom that the saints alone can receive." He continues, "The portion we have received is to try our faith and prepare us for that which is to come." McConkie, *New Witness*, 413–18.

in the context of the Book of Mormon, to be unique to Moroni.<sup>29</sup> The inverse of the phrase, *doubting nothing* is also rarely used in scripture (Ether 3:19; Acts 11:12). However, it *is* used twice within the space of a few chapters by Moroni when discussing how one may come to know that the Nephite record is true (Mormon 9:21, 25, 27). Upon seeing the "finger of Jesus," Moroni tells us, the brother of Jared "knew, nothing doubting." Moroni uses the inverse phrase, *doubting nothing*, a few pages earlier when he admonishes his Gentile reader to "ask the Father in the name of Christ" if these things are not true (Mormon 9:21; see Moroni 10:3–5). Turns out that this promise in Mormon 9:21 is Moroni's adaptation of Jesus's earlier words to his Nephite disciples: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. . . . And whosoever shall believe in my name, doubting nothing, unto him will I confirm all my words, even unto the ends of the earth" (Mormon 9:22, 25; see also Mark 16:15).

### **Conclusion: Jesus's Final Invitation Focuses on the Name of Christ**

This brings us full circle since Jesus's words in Ether 3 went well beyond blessing the brother of Jared personally. Similar to how they are recorded, Jesus had in mind much more when he visited the brother of Jared atop Shelem than bestowing a blessing on one man. After blessing him he said, "Behold, I am Jesus Christ. . . . In me shall *all men* have life, and that eternally, *even they who shall believe on my name*; and they shall become my sons and daughters" (Ether 3:14). Jesus points out in Ether 4 that in our Gentile context to believe on his name is to receive him through the Book of Mormon. Hence his final invitation to all those who would receive the Nephite record:

At my command the heavens are opened and are shut. . . . He that will not believe my words [Nephite record] will not believe me — that I am; and he that will not believe me will not believe my Father who sent me. For behold, I am the Father, I am the light, and the life, and truth of the world. (Ether 4:9, 12)

Then the Lord makes this passionate invitation to all people:

Come unto me [through this record first], O ye Gentiles, and

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29. The phrase only appears one other time in scripture. It appears in Acts as does its inverse phrase.

I will [then] show unto you the greater things, the knowledge which is hid up because of unbelief.

Come O ye house of Israel [through this record] and it shall [then] be made manifest unto you how great things the Father hath laid up for you, from the foundation of the world; and it hath not come unto you because of unbelief.

*Behold when ye shall rend the veil of unbelief* which doth cause you to remain in your awful state of wickedness, and hardness of heart, and blindness of mind, then shall the great and marvelous things which have been hid up from the foundation of the world from you [be manifested] — yea when ye shall call upon the Father in my name, with a broken heart and contrite spirit, then shall ye know that the Father hath remembered the covenant which he made unto your fathers, O house of Israel.<sup>30</sup>

[W]hen ye see these things, ye shall know that the time is at hand when they shall be manifest in very deed.

Therefore, when ye receive this record ye may know that the work of the Father has commenced upon all the face of the land. (Ether 4:13–17)

According to Moroni's account, Jesus ends his words of invitation in Ether 4 — teaching his gospel (repentance, faith, and baptism) as contained throughout the prophesied record — “unto all [the] ends of the earth” (vv. 18–19). The Lord in these final authoritative remarks returns to his earlier declaration where he announced that “who[soever] shall believe in my *name* . . . shall become my sons and daughters” (Ether 3:14). Again, in Ether 4:17–18, the Lord's focus is on believing in and being faithful unto his *name* and receiving his gospel covenant that the believer might “be lifted up to dwell in the kingdom prepared for him from the foundation of the world” (4:18–19). The Lord's powerful teachings end with this authoritative seal: “And behold it is I that hath spoken it. Amen” (4:19).

The Lord's words in Ether 3 and 4 may be intertextually and typologically understood. The type appears to have originated with the Lord himself. It also has some support in the writings of Alma and Mormon. However, it is the story of the brother of Jared that makes it clear that as the Lord blessed him first with the sight of his finger (a

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30. This is an early iteration of the promise we find in Moroni 10:3–5.

part or portion of his body)<sup>31</sup> and later with the sight of his whole body and of all things, even so the Lord has commenced his work in the last days. He has done so by revealing a smaller portion of his word first that the ends of the earth might, through increased faith and because of the revealed record, be encouraged to seek for even greater things than these.<sup>32</sup> And significantly, that initial smaller portion of the word of the Lord that has come forth, as in the brother of Jared's account, is according to the previous promises of the Lord.

The Book of Mormon both came by faith and also constitutes evidence that the Lord has "set his hand again a second time to recover his people" (2 Nephi 21:11). It is a sign that all the covenants, promises, and prophecies that have not yet come to pass are soon to be fulfilled (3 Nephi 15:6–8; 29:1–3). If the Book of Mormon and its central figure, Jesus Christ, are received and believed in, the day will come when the Holy Spirit confirms to the heart of the believer that the record (antitype) is true (Ether 4:11). Through the Holy Spirit this perfect knowledge will tend to increase our faith in the remaining promises, and we will have power with God to "rend the veil" that the day of salvation will be fully ushered in and Satan will be bound (2 Nephi 30:18). This anticipated day of more perfect knowledge will come in stages and only as we, as did the brother of Jared, exercise strong faith and seek for greater blessings. In that day, "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Lord as the waters cover the sea" (2 Nephi 30:15–18). The commencement of this flood of perfect knowledge is the sudden appearance of the Book of Mormon as a divine, material reality to this dispensation to try each individual's faith.



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31. Doctrine and Covenants 10 teaches that the prophets and disciples prayed that "this part of [the] gospel [would come forth] to the knowledge of my people" (10:46–52).

32. As indicated earlier, Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught that the Book of Mormon was the first part of many things the Lord intended to reveal in our day. It is but an introduction to the gospel; it is a first step.

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