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Scripture Study: Tools and Suggestions

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Studying the Scriptures

The medieval alchemist's motto was *lege, lege, lege, labore, ora, et relege*, "read, read, read, work (or experiment), pray, and reread." We would do well to adopt a similar motto for our scripture study. Though it did not help the alchemists turn lead into gold, it may help us turn leaden scripture study into gold. Consider each element of this motto, saving "work" for last.

Read, Read, Read

Reading is obviously where our scripture study must begin. We cannot study and come to understand what we are not already familiar with. We cannot study 1 Nephi thoroughly without knowing the rest of the Book of Mormon. The prophets have admonished us to go beyond reading to study, and though reading is different from careful study, it is an essential part of scripture study. It is not something that can be done once and then forgotten; it must be done over and over again. Thus the repetition of the advice: "Read, read, read."

There are three ways to read scripture: read one of the standard works from beginning to end; read topically, trying to understand what the scriptures say about particular ideas and issues; and read one book or passage of scripture closely to see what it may say to us. Each is important to scripture study; each has its own benefits.

Chronological Study

Consider setting time apart each year to read at least one standard work from beginning to end in chronological order, perhaps at the beginning of each year when we begin to study a new standard work in Sunday School. This kind of scripture study helps us keep the whole gospel picture before our eyes. It gives our other studies a context and gives us a sense of the history and tradition that make scripture what it is.

Topical Study

Using the Topical Guide, we can regularly investigate what the scriptures have to say about problems that we face, topics of current relevance, or topics we have heard discussed in a talk or lesson. This kind of study is particularly appropriate for those preparing a lesson or talk on an assigned topic.

Close Reading

The last of the three kinds of scripture study—choosing a particular book or passage of scripture and reading it closely—is that done least frequently by Latter-day Saints, that with which we are least familiar. Nevertheless, it pays great dividends. In scripture study, speed is never important. In fact, it often impedes understanding and can seriously hinder this kind of study. Close reading requires time and patience, but it rewards us with insights we would otherwise never have, for it allows the scriptures to teach us what they have to say to us, whatever our interests and problems may be. It allows us to go beyond the kind of learning that begins with our interests to a learning that allows the Lord to speak to us, sometimes about things we would never have otherwise imagined.

My experience with this kind of scripture study came as a surprise to me, but its effect was profound. When I was a graduate student in philosophy at Pennsylvania State University, one of my professors, Stephen Goldman, was a devout Jew who was also a lay leader in a nearby small Jewish congregation. Though his specialty in philosophy was the philosophy of science, knowing his background, I asked if he would allow me to study part of the Old

Testament with him. He agreed and asked me to propose a course of study for the next quarter. "Well, since I don't want to go too fast, why don't we just read the book of Genesis?" I said. He was amazed. Though I thought studying one book of scripture in eight weeks was a snail's pace, he thought it impossible to do that much reading in so short a time. He suggested that we read only chapter 1. Since that was equally amazing to me, we compromised on "as much as we can get through." He warned me that we might not get very far, and we didn't. We barely made it through chapter 3, and he obviously felt pushed.

The first day we met, I had read all of chapter 1 and at his request brought several questions with me. One of them was, How do you reconcile the account of creation in this chapter with what is taught in science class? He refused to discuss that question. He did not think it interesting; it was not worth the time. There were, he said, much more important things to discuss, things pertinent to our lives and salvation. Professor Goldman allowed me to ask my other questions, and he had no trouble answering them. In fact, he answered each so completely that at the end of the hour I still had questions that needed to be answered.

At our next meeting, he finished answering my list of questions and asked if I had more. "No," I said, "I'm ready to move to chapter 2." "Before we do so," he asked, "do you mind if I ask a few questions?" That was a trick question, for he began talking about and asking questions about the details of the scriptures, questions that, by focusing on those details, went on and on. He asked about words and patterns of words, pointing out things I had never seen or had thought inconsequential. In almost every case I had no answers for him or felt that the answers I had were shallow and inadequate. But he was patient with me. As I fumbled for answers, he began to explain what he thought some answers to his questions might be and how the things he noticed were important.

As he discussed the first verses of the first chapter of Genesis with me, I realized that I was visiting with a man who understood many aspects of the gospel that I thought only Latter-day Saints knew, things I had learned from latter-day prophets and the temple but had never seen in Genesis. Most of what he taught me was sound doctrine, and he could always back up his teaching with the words of the scriptures.

I am embarrassed to say that I was surprised. This man was teaching me things that, in my naive arrogance, I thought I would have to teach him. For his part, he was surprised that there were non-Jews who knew these things too, and he was even more surprised to learn that we claim to know them because a living prophet told them to us. That he could not believe, but he was continually amazed that Latter-day Saints know the truth, just as I was continually amazed that he did.

For me, that was a turning point in my scripture study. Though I thought I knew the importance of the scriptures, and though I had found them comforting and delightful and enlightening before, I had never experienced them like this. In Doctrine and Covenants 18:34-36, the Lord says, "These words are not of men nor of man, but of me; wherefore, you shall testify they are of me and not of man; For it is my voice which speaketh them unto you; for they are given by my Spirit unto you, and by my power you can read them one to another; and save it were by my power you could not have them; Wherefore, you can testify that you have heard my voice, and know my words." For the first time, I felt that I really knew what this scripture meant. I had experienced the voice of the Lord in the scriptures. Though I knew intellectually that the scriptures reveal all things, especially when coupled with direction from a living prophet, I had never before known this truth in my heart. With Professor Goldman's help, I learned that a careful reading of scripture shows that the gospel was revealed from the beginning. This man had less knowledge of the restoration than I, yet he expounded a great deal of the restored gospel from only three chapters of Genesis. In fact, I had learned things about the restored gospel from him. I began to understand that if a person were to study the scriptures as thoroughly as did my professor, but with the truth of the restoration as

background and the gift of the Holy Ghost as a guide, he or she would find that the scriptures teach the same truths repeatedly. The scriptures teach the same gospel from beginning to end, and even though they teach the same thing again and again, it is taught in a new way every time—a way that makes it always fresh, interesting, and applicable. (Perhaps that is one way in which the gospel is new and everlasting.) I began to see that the understanding of the gospel realized from such a study would be much deeper than my previous understanding.

Before studying with Professor Goldman, I memorized doctrines and scanned scriptures for evidence that would support the doctrines I believed. After studying with him I realized that although that kind of scripture study is essential, our learning is vastly improved if it is done against the background of close reading I learned from Professor Goldman. The irony is that I learned this from someone outside the church, even though the prophets and the scriptures had already told me that it was possible.

Most of the tools and methods described in this book are tools and methods for close reading, though they can also be used for topical study. The heart of these tools and techniques is asking questions—asking questions of the scriptures and letting them answer, asking questions about details rather than about abstractions and generalities. What does *dominion* mean? Why does Adam say what he does in the way that he does? What does the form of his answer to God suggest? Why is the story told in this order rather than another? Often Professor Goldman's questions had no single, correct answer. Even when he had a plausible answer to one of his questions, he never assumed that he knew everything he needed to know. He might ask the same questions today that he asked a year ago and criticize his previous answers. He focused on questioning in a productive way rather than on merely answering, but asking those questions naturally led us to ideas, often to ideas I had never considered. It surprised me how often such questions about details led to insights into my life.

As I imitated Professor Goldman, I began to wonder if my understanding of the gospel was adequate. That too became a source for questions. To see whether the scriptures would refine my understanding, I began to ask questions like, I have always heard that such and such is true and I have always believed that this passage of scripture teaches that doctrine. Does it? Such questioning often showed me that my knowledge of the scriptures was shallow, that the verses I had used as supports for doctrines I believed not only supported those doctrines but also had a great deal to teach me.

Since my experience with Professor Goldman almost thirty years ago, I have seen similar transformations repeated in others' lives. I have seen missionaries at the Missionary Training Center grow from closely reading passages, and I have seen students at Brigham Young University strengthen their testimonies. Just as I did, they discover that scripture study, especially close reading, creates a circular movement in our lives. Prayerful attention to the scriptures changes the ways we live, and living in new ways raises questions that return us to the scriptures.

Pray

Prayer is essential at every step of our scripture study. We should begin our private study with personal prayer. We should have a prayer in our hearts as we study, a prayer of thanksgiving that we have been given the scriptures and the prophets, that we will be open to what scripture has to teach us, that we will learn from the scriptures, that the Holy Spirit will guide us toward understanding. We should pray for help in knowing the questions we should ask. We should pray that the scriptures we read will question us and demand our thoughtful answers. We should pray that our consciences will be pricked by what we learn in study so that our lives might be changed and so that the Lord's kingdom may come. We should pray to know how to liken the scriptures to ourselves.

Unless we study with a mind and heart open to inspiration, we cannot profit from scripture study as the Lord would have us do. We must not rush through what we are studying to get in a certain number of pages each day. Perhaps as important, we must expect to find—in fact, look—for what we do not already know. We should pray to be surprised. Asking to find what we do not already know will help open the possibility of being inspired to new things.

Reread

After studying topically for some time, it is important to reread the standard works as a whole. Similarly, when we have devoted our study time to close reading, it is important to reread the scriptural context of the book, chapters, or verses that we have studied. Good scripture study teaches us doctrines and concentrates our attention on details, but it is also important to put those doctrines and details into the perspective given by the whole. For example, when I finish a detailed study of Romans 8, I should go back and reread at least the chapter and probably the whole book of Romans. Similarly, after carefully studying Alma 32–34, I should reread those chapters together and also in the context of the book of Alma. Rereading and recontextualizing helps me keep a gospel perspective on my studies.

Work or Experiment

Work is as important to scripture study as any other aspect of scripture study, but it is perhaps the most neglected aspect of scripture study. In the Old and the New Testaments, the word *study* means “mental endeavor.” Noah Webster’s 1828 *American Dictionary of the English Language* gives the same definition, “to apply the mind to,” as well as the more narrow “to read or examine for the purpose of learning and understanding.”¹ “Mental endeavor” was, however, the primary meaning in Joseph Smith’s day. Thus when Doctrine and Covenants 26:1 admonishes us to study the scriptures, it means that we must do more than just read them.

Study is itself work. As we study, we must ask questions of the things we read: To whom was the prophet speaking or writing? Why did he say what he did? What does this word mean? How is this passage of scripture organized? Perhaps more important than these are questions such as, What do I not understand about these verses? How does this differ from what I have assumed to be correct and how do I account for that difference? We should be willing to try out various understandings to see which one is most helpful, revealing, or in conformity with the revealed gospel. We must experiment in private before we are ready to discuss what we have learned in public.

This book focuses on the work involved in scripture study. We will learn a few of many techniques for focusing on what the scriptures can teach us and for helping us ask questions of the scriptures and be questioned by them. Scripture study is like any other labor. It requires time, concentration, the right tools, and the right attitude. It is work, joyful work.

A worker must have tools, and workers at scripture study are no exception. Obviously we must have the scriptures to study them, preferably the 1981 edition published by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Also necessary are a writing utensil and a notebook for making notes. Some of these notes will be temporary, such as references to look up, sketches of ideas, outlines, and reminders of items for further study. Others will be more permanent. I often have ideas I want to remember for future study or use in talks and lessons.

For me, the discipline required to write an essay about scripture has been very useful. I learn a lot more when I explain things to someone else, but I don’t always have the chance to do so in a talk or lesson. An essay gives me

that chance. I include such essays in a notebook with my more permanent material.

A Method for Scripture Study

During the last thirty years, the philosophy of science has shown that we are far from clear about what the scientific method is, but there is general agreement that science proceeds methodically. In other words, science proceeds by applying a standard procedure to problems, a procedure that helps scientists work effectively and accurately. As good as the scientific method is, however, it is not good for studying everything. Science works as effectively as it does by defining in advance an area of study and the objects it will consider, as well as the kinds of methods by which it will conduct its investigations. Because these factors define the limits of science, the scientific method cannot be used to study things that are not within the field of objects of study that are marked out in advance by the definition of the particular science or not amenable to its procedures. For example, it cannot be used to study things that are not measurable, such as ideas and books. Accordingly, there is no scientific method for scripture study, and some of the worst methods we can use are those that try to force scripture study into the mold of a scientific or similar inquiry. However, it does not follow that scripture study is a haphazard or subjective matter. Science and subjectivity are not the only options.

Following is one method for scripture study:

- A. Remember that in addition to being continuing revelation, the words and sentences of the scriptures are the source of divine truth. That is why we call them the standard works. A manual, such as the manual for a computer or a car, is a description of the machine with directions for using it. However, a manual does not contain the truths of computing or cars. It merely describes what the user must do to make the mechanism in question work. In contrast, the scriptures are not just *about* the truths of God. They are not simply descriptions of those truths or directions for using them. With continuing revelation, they are the very source of those truths, and they are the standard by which we judge personal revelation. The scriptures are more accurately compared to the data the scientist analyzes rather than to the article, book, or manual that the scientist writes about the data. We must not read the scriptures as if they were manuals.
- B. Assume that the scriptures mean exactly what they say and, more important, assume that we do not already know what they say. If we assume that we already know what the scriptures say, then they cannot continue to teach us. If we assume that they mean something other than what they say, then we run the risk of substituting our own thoughts for what we read rather than learning what they have to teach us.
- C. As a rule, focus scripture study on questions rather than on particular doctrines. Of course, sometimes it is important to study a particular doctrine. However, when we start our study with doctrinal questions, we often have difficulty getting beyond what we think we already know—difficulty learning from the scriptures. What we have already learned can sometimes become the standard for what we will learn in the future, making it more difficult to learn something new. To better understand the scriptures themselves rather than a particular doctrine or set of doctrines, we can think in terms of the questions we can ask about the scriptures we are reading and, especially, *the questions they ask us*. Consider the following suggestions for focusing on questions:
 1. Before addressing major doctrinal ideas, ask questions about the details of the passage. Often the big issues take care of themselves after the little ones are resolved. Most of the suggestions in this book are suggestions for thinking about the details of scripture.

2. Pay at least as much attention to the differences between scriptural passages as to the similarities. We can ask specific questions about those differences and their meanings. Looking at similarities tempts us to think in the same old ways, while looking at differences helps us focus on particular things that individual scriptures teach.

3. To avoid remaining locked in preconceived notions about the scriptures and their interpretation, assume that each aspect of whatever passage we are looking at is significant and ask about that significance. To assume that some things are significant and others are not is to assume, from the beginning, that we already know what scripture means. Some things may turn out to be irrelevant, but we cannot know that until we are done.

4. Think of alternative understandings of a passage of scripture, then test those alternatives against the scriptures as a whole to see how helpful they are.

Obviously, each of these suggestions presumes that we have the Holy Ghost when we study. Without it we are unlikely to learn what we need to learn; in fact, we are unlikely even to know what we should be studying.

Tools for Scripture Study

The chapters in this book are designed as aids for using various tools that will help us enhance our method of scripture study. Consider the following tools for achieving more meaningful scripture study:

A. Before we do anything else, we should think about what we do and do not understand about the passage we wish to study. One way I do this is by writing a coherent, accurate, and complete paraphrase of the passage. If I cannot put it lucidly in my own words, then I know there is probably more I can learn about the passage. I ask myself, what about it do I not understand? Is it the words? The concepts? The background? When writing the paraphrase, I try to explain the passage rather than state what I have always assumed that it means.

B. Make sure to know the context of the passage. What comes immediately before and after it in the scriptures? To whom was the passage addressed? Do we need to know something about customs or historical facts to understand the passage?

C. Ask what the words mean. How did prophets who lived before the passage we are reading was recorded use the word? For the Old and New Testaments, respectively, what did the Hebrew or Greek words mean when those books were written? For the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price, what did the words mean in the early to middle nineteenth century? What dictionaries will best help us find those meanings?

D. Understand the grammar of the passage. Start by looking at the verbs. What are the main verbs of the passage? What do they tell us about the passage? Who or what is the subject of each sentence? Look at the pronouns. To whom or what do they refer? Think about the punctuation. What does it tell us about the meaning of the passage? How is each part of the sentence connected to the other parts?

E. Watch for patterns within sentences and between them (such a study is known as rhetoric). What do the patterns emphasize? How do they connect words, phrases, and verses to each other? What do those connections tell us?

F. Use the aids provided in the LDS edition of the scriptures. What are the various kinds of footnotes and what do they tell us? How can we make better use of the Topical Guide, Bible Dictionary, and gazetteer?

G. If possible, learn something about the culture and history of the people who wrote the passages. Where is such information found? How do we decide what sources are reliable?

H. Find out how prophets who lived after a passage was written understood it. Their understandings can reveal a variety of ways to understand a particular passage.

I. Finally, look at commentaries by reliable writers and, for the Old and New Testaments, at well-made alternate translations. We must use commentaries with caution, however, because it is tempting to let others think for us or allow the commentaries to replace the scriptures as our text. But if we use commentaries judiciously, as guides of which we can and should be critical, they can show us new ways to think about a passage and provide information about language or history that we might not otherwise learn.

Likening the Scriptures to Ourselves

Scripture study requires us to use these and any other techniques that we learn. It requires us to work by taking notes, writing down our ideas and thinking about them critically, looking up other sources, and discussing our ideas with others and taking their criticism. Our work, however, must go beyond teasing from scripture interesting or even revelatory ideas. Academic tools can be a great help, but scripture study must be more than an academic pursuit or a hobby.

If scripture study is to be more than mental exercise, we must also liken the scriptures to ourselves (see 1 Nephi 19:23). We must make the lessons they teach part of our everyday lives. Usually that application comes naturally as we spend time in prayerful study. As we regularly discover what the scriptures teach us, as scripture study becomes a daily habit and the scriptures become part of our understanding, our way of seeing the world changes. As that view changes, we change our lives: “The preaching of the word had a great tendency to lead the people to do that which was just—yea, it had had more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else, which had happened unto them—therefore Alma thought it was expedient that they should try the virtue of the word of God” (Alma 31:5). Although this passage refers to preaching, the same is true of scripture study. We sometimes need to think specifically about how the scriptures apply to our situations and questions, but careful, regular scripture study can, by itself, change our hearts and minds. It would be unusual to spend regular amounts of time in scripture study and not to find our lives changed, not to find ourselves thinking in new ways.

Note

1. *American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828), s.v. “study.”

Outlining

Obviously, the first point of scripture study is to understand what the scriptures say, and one of the best tools for doing that is outlining. Outlines help us see how the parts of a passage fit together, how ideas and doctrines relate to each other, and what the passage emphasizes. Sometimes we might outline the material that we are studying to get an overview of the whole passage. Other times we might outline it to see how it fits into its scriptural context. The 1981 edition of the scriptures already contains outlines of each chapter in the chapter headings. I often find it useful to make my own outlines as well.

Outlines can range from a brief synopsis of several chapters to a detailed outline of one chapter. For example, in the first edition of the Book of Mormon, Alma 30–35 are one chapter (chapter 16), a division that seems to have been present on the golden plates and not merely an artifact of translation or an editorial change made in later editions. This might suggest that those chapters be outlined together. Even if we did not know about the original grouping of these chapters, because they collectively form a story, we might be curious about how they fit together. They might, for example, be briefly outlined like this (for a more detailed outline of four of these chapters, see pages 20–22):

Korihor (30) Zoramites (31–34) the poor in spirit (32a) faith and the atonement (32b–34) Separation of the Ammonites from Jershon (35)

An outline often generates scripture study questions. How does Alma’s discussion of faith and knowledge fit into the story as a whole? To whom and why did Alma deliver the sermon? How might the answers to those questions indicate ways to better understand the second half of Alma 32?

As part of my study, I might decide to make a more detailed outline of parts of a story. For example, if I were studying Mosiah 3, I might make an outline such as this:

A. The Lord has a message of joy for King Benjamin and his people: Jesus Christ is coming (3–5)

1. He will heal the sick, raise the dead, and cast out devils (5–6)
2. He will live and suffer in the flesh (6–7)
3. He will bring salvation (8–9)
4. He will rise from the dead (10)
5. He will do these things so that a righteous judgment of the children of men can be made (10)
6. He will atone for the sins of those who sin ignorantly (11)

B. The Lord has sent the prophets to preach woe to those who rebel, because the only way to be saved is through Jesus Christ (12–18; King Benjamin repeats the latter fact, which seems central to his message, several times)

C. The natural man is an enemy to God and always will be unless he does the following:

1. Yields to the Holy Spirit
2. Puts off the natural man
3. Becomes a saint through the atonement
4. Becomes like a child: submissive, meek, humble, patient, and full of love (19)

D. The knowledge of the Savior will spread throughout the world, and when it does, only little children will be held blameless (20–21)

E. King Benjamin's people are not blameless (22)

Outlines such as this can help us ask questions about other parts of King Benjamin's sermon. We might, for example, wonder about the contrast between what the angel says in verse 22 and King Benjamin's remark in Mosiah 1:11 that his people have been diligent in keeping the commandments. We might also ponder how the angel's comments relate to the people's fear recorded in Mosiah 4:1–2. If Benjamin's people are diligent in keeping the commandments, why are they not blameless?

Each degree of outlining serves different purposes, so it may be helpful to create both general and detailed outlines of the study material. As I study, I refer back to the outlines I have made to help me better understand the particular verses I am studying or to help me remember the context of the passage.

Following is one possible detailed outline of Alma 31–34. I made this when I wondered what the phrase *these things* in Alma 34:8 refers to. Does it refer to something named before verse 8? How am I to understand it if it refers to something named after verse 8? Considering the various possibilities helped me decide what I thought it referred to and, perhaps more important, it prompted me to think about how the teachings of Alma and Amulek are related to each other and what they mean.

A. Alma 31: Alma begins his mission to the Zoramites

1. The Nephites fear that the Zoramites will join forces with their Lamanite enemies (3–4)
2. Alma believes that preaching the gospel is the most effective way of getting people to do good (5–6)
3. The Zoramites are apostate Nephites (1–2, 8)
 - a) They do not keep the law of Moses (9)
 - b) They do not pray according to the church's teachings (10)
 - c) They stand on the Rameumptom and offer a set prayer that reflects their apostate beliefs (12–23)
 - (1) They are elect—they and no one else will be saved (16–18)
 - (2) There is no Christ (anointed one) (16–17)

(3) They are grateful they have not been deceived to believe in Christ and the foolish traditions of the Nephites (17)

4. Alma prays for strength and success among the Zoramites (24–35)

5. Alma, Ammon, Aaron, Omner, Amulek, Zeezrom, Shiblon, and Corianton separate to do missionary work (36–38)

B. Alma 32: The missionaries have success among the poor Zoramites (2)

1. The poor Zoramites have been cast out of the synagogue and ask Alma what they should do about having no place to worship (3–6)

2. Alma teaches them about humility (7–16)

a) It is good to be humbled (12–13)

b) It is better to be humble without being compelled (13–16)

3. Alma discusses sign seeking (17–20)

4. Alma discusses faith (21–43)

C. Alma 33: The poor Zoramites ask how to obtain faith

1. Alma quotes the prophet Zenos

a) The people can worship anywhere (2–11)

b) God answers prayers and is merciful (4–11)

2. Zenock and Moses testified of the same teachings as Zenos (15–19)

a) Alma compares the Zoramites to the people of Moses who would not look to the serpent and live (20–21)

b) Alma exhorts the people to believe in Christ (22–23)

D. Alma 34: Amulek adds his testimony

1. The poor Zoramites already know the things that Alma has taught them (2)

2. They wanted to know what to do about their suffering, and Alma taught them to exercise patience and faith (3)

a) They must try the experiment of belief on Christ (4)

b) Alma has proven that Christ is the way to salvation (5–7)

3. Amulek testifies that “these things” are true (8)
 - a) Christ will come (8)
 - b) An atonement must be made (9–16)
 - (1) It will be infinite (10)
 - (2) It will end Mosaic sacrifice, which points to the infinite sacrifice (11–14)
 - (3) It will make repentance and mercy possible (15–16)
4. The Zoramites should have faith, repent, and ask God for mercy (17)
5. They must pray always and everywhere (18–27)
6. They must take care of the sick and the afflicted or their prayer is useless (28–29)
7. Amulek exhorts the Zoramites to repent and abide by certain teachings (31–41)
 - a) Cease denying the coming of Christ (37)
 - b) Receive the Holy Ghost (38)
 - c) Take the name of Christ (38)
 - d) Be humble (38)
 - e) Worship God wherever they are (38)
 - f) Worship “in spirit and in truth” (38)
 - g) Live in thanksgiving for God’s mercy (38)
 - h) Pray continually to avoid temptation (39)
 - i) Do not revile against persecutors but bear suffering with patience and hope (40–41)

First, notice how this outline places Alma’s discussion of faith into a new light. His teachings on faith are part of the call to repentance that Alma issues to the Zoramites, and they are closely connected to his lesson that they must be humble. When Amulek adds his testimony to Alma’s, he does not focus on the nature of faith but on the necessity of humility and repentance. Considering Alma’s discussion of faith in that context may change how we think about it. Also notice that in these chapters the chapter breaks mark natural divisions in the outline, but that is not always the case. Most chapter and verse divisions were added to the scriptures long after they were written. Such divisions are helpful for finding references in the scriptures, but they do not always reflect the structure of the scriptures. Be careful not to be misled by the chapter and verse divisions; do not rely on them to decide meaning. Outlines such as the samples can help us learn more about the scriptures. They can lead us to

connections and questions we have not previously considered, and the new insights we gain can deepen our appreciation of the word of God.

Asking Questions

Asking questions is an important part of scripture study. What does this word mean? Why did the writer say this rather than that? Why did he put things in this particular order? We should concentrate on asking fruitful questions, and it is important to remember that many questions have more than one answer. We sometimes do not know whether a question is fruitful until after we have asked it and thought about it. We often cannot tell in advance.

Though information is important, especially when we are young in the gospel, the point of these questions is not so much to provide us with information as it is to help us think about the scriptures, to focus on the connections made in the scriptures and the types or patterns we see. It is to open us to the possibility of revelation. We are not studying the scriptures just to have more information, though we will have more information when we are done. We study the scriptures because they speak to us about our lives and our relation to God. One way to understand this is that we ask questions of the scriptures to help us see what questions they have to ask of us. Our responses to their questions can change our lives; our questions prepare us to hear the questions that the Lord asks us through the scriptures.¹

There are many excellent examples of such questions from the Lord. For example, when the Lord asks Adam in the Garden of Eden, “Adam, where art thou?” (Genesis 3:9) he is not merely asking for Adam’s physical location. It seems that he wants Adam to consider thoughtfully where he is in his relationship with the Lord. Prophets and scripture can ask similar questions. For example, consider 2 Samuel 12:1–7, the story of the prophet Nathan’s rebuke of King David:

And the Lord sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man’s lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. And David’s anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man.

Nathan’s story provokes David to anger, but it was intended to make him ask himself, “Who has done such a thing? Is it I?” The stories, poems, sermons, letters, and histories of the scriptures ought to be as probing for us as Nathan’s story was for David; they should help us ask questions about ourselves and our lives. The questions we will learn to ask about words, grammar, rhetorical patterns, and so on, are useful only insofar as they help us hear the questions that the Lord puts to each of us through the scriptures and his prophets. We will first concentrate on learning to ask questions about details in the scriptures, but we will do so to help us learn to hear other, more important, questions.

Following is an example of the kinds of questions I might ask as part of an initial study of Genesis 22, the story of Abraham's trial. As I studied further, I would add to and delete from the list below, making notes of significant insights as I went along.

Notice that the questions are mostly about specific details in the verses. It is best not to ask about larger, more abstract questions until after I have a good understanding of the verses themselves. These kinds of questions are to help me gain that understanding and avoid the temptation of moving immediately to the broad "philosophical" questions. Those broader questions can be important, but the danger of moving too quickly to them is that because I may not yet really understand the scriptures, my response to those broad questions will be what I already know or what others say in response to those questions most of the time. That approach risks mingling the philosophies of men (what most people take to be true most of the time, otherwise known as common sense) with scripture rather than learning from the scriptures.

Verse 1. "After these things." After what things? The things in the immediately preceding chapter? Some other set of things? Why does the story begin by closely connecting this chapter to a previous chapter(s)? Is the author of this test the Father or the Son? What does the word *tempt* mean? Why would the Lord need to try Abraham? Is there any significance to Abraham's answer, "Behold, here I am"? Does the phrase occur in other scriptures? In what circumstances?

Verse 2. Why is Isaac said to be Abraham's only son? What about Ishmael? Similarly, why is the Savior said to be the Father's only Son (see D&C 20:21)? Are we not also children of our Father in Heaven? Does considering this question as it applies to Abraham help us understand the question as it applies to Heavenly Father? Why does the Lord refer to what Abraham must do as a burnt offering? Is it significant that the word *sacrifice* is not used in this chapter? Why does the Lord not tell Abraham which mountain he is to go to? Why wait to tell him?

Verse 3. Why does the writer tell us that Abraham rose "early in the morning"? Though this verse explains that he has at least two servants and earlier scriptures suggest that he has many servants, Abraham saddles the ass himself. Why? Does that tell us anything about Abraham? Is that an important part of the story of the sacrifice? Why does Abraham take two servants with him?

Verse 4. In this story, Abraham makes only three gestures, here and in verses 10 and 13. Why does this verse say that Abraham "lifted up his eyes"? He was looking at a mountain, but it was a long way off and, if the tradition is correct about it being the temple mount, it was not much more than a large hill. Thus it was not the physical geography that made him lift up his eyes. What is the writer telling us? Is there any significance to the fact that the trip takes three days? If so, what is it? If not, why did the writer include that information? Why are no details given about those three days? Are there any parallels to this that might be instructive? Does this information tell us anything about Abraham or about the sacrifice itself?

Verse 5. Why does Abraham leave the servants behind? Abraham may have unwittingly prophesied what is to come: "I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." In effect, he tells them, "We will come again to you." What is the point of this possible prophecy? In other words, what does it tell us as readers? What does the word worship mean?

Verse 6. The writer gives details in verse 3, no details in verses 4 and 5, and details again in this verse. Why give details only sometimes? What purposes do the details serve? There seems to be a parallel between Christ carrying his own cross and Isaac carrying the wood for the sacrifice of his own life. Why might such a parallel be important to Moses, the writer? Why does the writer emphasize that Abraham and Isaac were together?

Verse 7. Why does the writer repeat the word *father* and then contrast it with the word *son*? What effect does this have on the reader? What does it teach us? Abraham answers his son in the same way he answered the Lord in verse 1. What might that show? What is Isaac's reaction to the situation? When did Isaac understand what was to happen? Why do I think what I think? How old was Isaac? (How could I find out?)

Verse 8. "God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering." What does this mean? This verse, like verse 6, ends with "they went both of them together." Verse 6 lists the implements of the sacrifice then ends with this phrase. This verse takes up the question of the victim of the sacrifice, then ends with the phrase. The parallel seems so deliberate—what is going on here?

Verse 9. The writer has previously given absolutely no details of the journey. Why does he give so many details here?

Verse 10. This verse describes Abraham's second gesture: "Abraham stretched forth his hand." What does this gesture show us? Does it say something about Abraham's attitude? Notice that this verse and verse 9 use very short phrases: "came to the place which God had told him of," "laid the wood in order," "bound Isaac his son," "laid him on the altar," "stretched forth his hand," "took the knife to slay his son." What is the effect of this staccato pattern? What is the point of that effect?

Verse 11. In verse 1 God himself commanded Abraham to make the sacrifice, but in this verse the commandment not to sacrifice Isaac is delivered by an angel. What might Abraham's reaction to this have been? What does this show us? Why does the angel call Abraham's name twice? What might that show? How many times did God call Abraham's name in verse 1? Why the difference? Why is the angel specifically said to be an angel of the Lord? To whom does the word *Lord* refer?

Verse 12. Why does the angel repeat the injunction not to hurt Isaac? What does it mean to fear God? Does this story help us understand what fearing God means through Abraham's example? What does *fear* mean in this story? How has Abraham not withheld his son from the Lord?

Verse 13. Here Abraham makes a third gesture, the same one he made in verse 4: "Abraham lifted up his eyes." What does lifting up his eyes indicate? Does the parallel to verse 4 help us understand either one of these better?

Verse 14. The footnote points out that *Jehovah-jireh* means "the Lord will see" or "the Lord will provide." What has the Lord seen? What has he provided?

Verse 15. Why does the angel divide his message into two parts? Does the division emphasize a particular aspect of each part? How are the messages different?

Verse 16. Why does the angel emphasize that Abraham has not withheld his *only* son? What does Abraham show by not withholding his son?

Verses 17–18. What might the Lord mean by "In blessing I will bless thee"? The blessing in these verses has already been given to Abraham (see Genesis 12:2–3; 13:14–16). Yet here it is said to be given "because thou hast done this thing." If it has already been given, how can it be the result of this test? Why is this blessing so desirable? Why is it a blessing to have innumerable posterity? What does it mean that Abraham's seed will "possess the gate of his enemies"? Who are the enemies? What is their gate? What does it mean that all the nations of the earth will be

blessed in Abraham's seed? Does the end of verse 18 perhaps explain what the Lord meant by "this thing" in verse 16?

Verse 19. Why is Isaac not mentioned in this verse? Abraham and the two servants are the only ones said to have returned. Why? Genesis 21:34 notes that Abraham lived in the land of the Philistines, and this verse says that he dwelt in Beer-sheba. Did Abraham move? Could the sacrifice have caused Abraham to move to a new location? If so, why?

Verse 20–24. Why is this genealogy inserted between the story of the sacrifice and the recounting of Sarah's death? Since much of the chapter is about Isaac, the birth of Rebekah, his wife to be, may be the point of the genealogy. How is that relevant to what we have just seen?

Mosiah 4

Following are similar questions for Mosiah 4:

Verse 1. In this verse and at the beginning of chapter 3, King Benjamin explains that the words of his speech were given to him by an angel. Why is this so important? What in King Benjamin's speech caused the fear of the Lord to come over the people?

Verse 2. What kind of people were King Benjamin's people? (see Mosiah 1:11: "they have been a diligent people in keeping the commandments of the Lord"). To what are King Benjamin's people responding when they cry out? In scripture, the phrase *carnal state* appears only in the Book of Mormon (see Mosiah 4:2; Alma 22:13; 41:11). Is this significant? Noah Webster's 1828 *American Dictionary of the English Language* says that *carnal* means "pertaining to flesh," "being in the natural state; unregenerative" and "lustful."² How does each definition fit the scriptural context? Which of these three definitions seems most likely in this case? What has happened to King Benjamin's people? What do they want?

Verse 3. How is what the people say in verse 2 related to what happens to them in this verse? What does "peace of conscience" mean? In what do we see the people's "exceeding faith"?

Verses 4–5. What does King Benjamin believe his people have learned?

Verse 6. What does King Benjamin say that his people have learned? Why does he say essentially the same things he said in verse 5? What does he add this time?

Verse 7. To whom does "this is the man" refer? What do verse 6 and 7 together tell us? Why does King Benjamin tell his people these things?

Verses 8–10. How are the requirements that King Benjamin mentions in verses 9 and 10 (believe in God, believe that he is, that he created everything, that he has all wisdom and power, and that he understands things that we do not) related to the requirements he lists in verses 5, 6, and 7?

Verse 11. What does King Benjamin say in this verse that he has said before? Why does he repeat it?

Verse 12. What does King Benjamin promise to those who follow the counsel he gave in verse 11?

Verse 13. To what does the first word of this verse (*and*) connect the verse?

Verse 14. This verse continues the promise begun in verse 12. Where does that promise end? Is it significant that this is called a promise rather than a commandment?

Verses 15–16. Why does King Benjamin’s sermon turn to the question of how we deal with beggars? What groups of people does King Benjamin seem concerned with in the last part of this chapter? What might that tell us?

Verses 17–18. What does the word *substance* mean? What does it mean to have an interest in the Kingdom of God? In other words, how is the word *interest* being used here?

Verses 19–23. Why does King Benjamin repeat, in an expanded version, what he has already said in verses 15 and 16?

Verses 24–25. What does King Benjamin mean when he says that the poor who are unwilling to give covet what they have not received? What does it mean to covet something? How is the word covet used in other scriptures? How does the covetousness that King Benjamin describes here justify the condemnation of those who covet?

Verse 26. King Benjamin mentioned retaining a remission of sins in verse 12. How are the requirements for retaining a remission of sins listed in verse 26 related to what is said in verse 12?

Verse 27. What does King Benjamin say we must do in this verse? How are those actions related to each other?

Verse 28. Why does King Benjamin turn, at the end of this powerful sermon, to the apparently mundane topic of returning borrowed items to a neighbor? Why end such an elevated sermon so prosaically?

Verses 29–30. Why does King Benjamin give warnings in verses 29 and 30? How do these warnings reflect the situation of the people of King Benjamin and what King Benjamin has preached to them?

The kinds of questions listed for Genesis 22 and Mosiah 4 focus more on details than on broader questions, but I often find that as I think about such details, I learn a great deal about more general topics, often issues I had not thought to ask about. Some questions may turn out to be useless; in other words, they may not help me gain any insights as I read *this* time. But I can never know which questions will help me learn.

Asking questions about scripture is a way to give it attention. It is also a way to open our minds to the influence of the Holy Ghost and prepare ourselves to hear new and sometimes surprising things. For example, noticing that the promise begun in Mosiah 4:12 is continued in verses 13 and 14 gave me a new understanding of the rest of the chapter. It helped me understand that to really keep the commandments given in the rest of the chapter, I must first receive a remission of sin, remember God’s greatness and my nothingness, pray, and remain steadfast in my faith in the atonement. Though I am commanded to teach my children, aid the poor, and live in harmony with my neighbors, my ability to keep those commandments is predicated on my repentance. That insight changed the way I understood the commandments. I think it also changed the way I live them.

Notes

1. For a marvelous example of how you can allow yourself to be questioned by the scriptures, see Dennis Rasmussen, *The Lord’s Question: Thoughts on the Life of Response* (Provo, Utah: Keter Foundation, 1985), The first

chapter (“Where Art Thou?”) has an especially helpful discussion of questions and being questioned.

2. American Dictionary of the English Language (1828), s.v. “carnal.”

The LDS Edition of the Scriptures

The best place to begin our study is with the resources at hand in the 1981 edition of the Latter-day Saint scriptures. This edition includes various kinds of footnotes, a topical guide, a Bible dictionary, excerpts from the Joseph Smith Translation, a gazetteer, and maps of the locations in which Old and New Testament events occurred. The 1981 LDS scriptures contain enough information and reference material that much excellent scripture study can be done with no more than these books, a pencil, and a notepad.

Footnotes

The editors of the LDS scriptures have provided many footnotes. It is important to use these aids as they were intended—as aids to study, not as scripture. The editors who created these footnotes were called and perhaps set apart to create an edition of the scriptures for the Saints. They likely worked under inspiration, but they were people like us, fulfilling their callings as best they could (see 1 Corinthians 1:26–28). The references and tools they have provided are helpful, but they do not substitute for relying on our own thought, intelligence, and inspiration, and they are not revealed doctrine like the scriptures.

The LDS edition of the scriptures contains at least four kinds of footnotes: cross-references, explanations of the Hebrew or Greek words, references to the Joseph Smith Translation, and references to the Topical Guide.

Cross-References

In Job 1:7 just before the phrase *to and fro* is a superscript and italicized lowercase *a*. At the bottom of the page is this note: “7^a D&C 10:27.” The superscript letter *a* in verse 7 means that at the bottom of the page is information that may be helpful or interesting. The notes for a verse might include more than one entry (see verse 6) or they may include only one entry (see verse 7). The entry in verse 7 is a cross-reference. The editors felt that a reference to a different passage that also speaks of Satan going to and fro among the people of the earth might be helpful. Footnotes that give a scriptural reference are called cross-references.

Explanations of Greek or Hebrew Words

The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. Some footnotes in the Bible give alternate translations for these Greek and Hebrew words. Job 2:3 has four footnotes. The *a* is in front of the word *perfect*, and the corresponding note at the bottom of the page reads, “3^a HEB blameless.” This tells us that the English word *perfect* is a translation of a Hebrew word that can also be translated “blameless.” The footnote for the *b* in front of the word *escheweth* reads, “^b HEB turns from.” The note explains that the word *escheweth* is a translation of a Hebrew word that can also be translated “turns from.”

The New Testament contains similar notes, but they use the abbreviation GR, for *Greek*. In Luke 15:32 there is a superscript *a* before the word *meet*. The note at the bottom reads, “32^a GR necessary,” telling us that the Greek word translated “meet” could also be translated “necessary.”

Alternate translations of words help us understand the nuances of the words and alert us that the word in the verse does not necessarily reflect the full meaning of the original Greek or Hebrew word. The first note in Job 2:3,

for example, explains that the writer of Job is speaking of moral perfection, not other kinds of perfection. Job could be perfect because he has repented of all his sins.

References to the Joseph Smith Translation

The editors of the LDS scriptures excerpted parts of the Joseph Smith Translation (JST) and placed them near the end of the LDS Bible. Some footnotes mark references to the JST excerpts. For example, Acts 22:29 has an *a* before the word *then*, the first word in the verse. The footnote refers to the JST for Acts 22:29–30, noting that those verses are found in the appendix. In the appendix under Acts 22 are the changes that Joseph Smith made to these verses. If the difference between the JST and the King James Version of the Bible (KJV) text is not extensive, it is included in the footnotes rather than in the appendix.

References to the Topical Guide

Some footnotes contain the abbreviation TG. For example, the letter *b* appears just before the word *sinned* in Luke 15:18. Footnote b reads, “*b* TG Confession.” This tells us that a collection of scriptures that relate to confession is in the Topical Guide, located near the end of the Bible (for more about the Topical Guide, see the next section).

The footnote references to the Topical Guide do not give a definition or an alternate translation of the relevant word or phrase. Also, the scriptures included in the Topical Guide under “confession” are not the only ones about confession. Those who created the Topical Guide may have overlooked some scriptures on the topic, and scriptures can have different meanings for us at different times in our lives and in different circumstances.¹

Be careful not to be misled by the Topical Guide. Sometimes it is not clear why the Topical Guide includes a particular reference; occasionally it is wrong. Consider, for example, note *a* in Romans 1:32. It refers to “capital punishment” in the Topical Guide, but the context of verse 32 indicates that the death spoken of must be spiritual. Otherwise Paul would be arguing that those who are proud deserve the death penalty. The Topical Guide is an excellent and useful tool, not a substitute for our own thoughtfulness and prayer.

Topical Guide

The Topical Guide is exactly what its name suggests, a scriptural guide or index for a variety of topics. It lists numerous topics and relevant scriptures. Concordances (word indexes) have the disadvantage of listing only the same or similar words in other scriptures. For example, if a writer uses a synonym I do not happen to think of, then a word index will be of no help. In contrast, the Topical Guide lists related topics before giving the scriptural references, as well as listing specific references to that topic, whether they contain the word or not.

For example, suppose I want to find scriptures on welfare because the bishop asked me to give a talk on that subject. Using a concordance, I can find 27 references to the word *welfare* in the scriptures, but few are much help in preparing a talk on the welfare program or on helping those in need. I might find some scriptures by looking up related words, such as *need* (327 references). Once again, however, most of the references are not related to welfare. If I look in the Topical Guide, however, I will find a long list of scriptures on the topic of welfare, some of which may not contain the word *welfare* but are about that subject. I will also find a lengthy list of related topics. Such lists of scriptures are valuable, especially for preparing talks or lessons or for personal study.

I also keep a notebook in which I make my own topical index. As I study the scriptures, I often find some verses that help me understand a topic but are not included in the Topical Guide. My personal topical index is a supplement to

that valuable work and helps me find those passages later.

The only disadvantage of the Topical Guide is the disadvantage of any study tool: when we use it we depend on the understanding of the editors. They may have inadvertently omitted some potentially important verses (hence the need for a personal index) or included others that are not helpful (I gently mark these out—gently because I may change my mind). Though it is not perfect, the Topical Guide is still an indispensable tool.

Bible Dictionary

The Bible Dictionary is more like a small encyclopedia than a standard dictionary. It gives the meanings of words found in the Bible; explains concepts; gives historical background on people, places, and events mentioned in the Bible or related to the Bible; provides brief explanations of doctrines; and provides other useful information for Bible study. There are many Bible dictionaries, but the one in the LDS scriptures is edited for an LDS audience. It is always a good place to begin studying. Look through it to see the kinds of information it contains. Note the list of quotations from the Old Testament that are found in the New Testament (under the heading “quotations”). Another helpful entry is “Gospels, harmony of.” The wealth of information in the LDS Bible Dictionary is amazing.

Gazetteer and Maps

A gazetteer is an index for a map or set of maps. The gazetteer is the place to look for the location of a place referred to in the Bible. For example, Joshua 11:1 refers to a place called Hazor. In the gazetteer is the entry “Hazor **D3:** 2; **D2:** 3, 9; **C3:** 5, 6, 7, 8.” This means that the city of Hazor is located in the area designated by the coordinates D3 on map 2, in D2 on maps 3 and 9, and in C3 on maps 5, 6, 7, and 8.

Note

1. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Scripture Reading and Revelation,” *Ensign*, January 1995, 6–9.

English Historical Dictionaries

When we do not know what a word means, we look up its definition in a dictionary. That is the most common use to which we put dictionaries. But they serve other purposes too. Sometimes we know one definition of a word, but the other meanings of the word can help us understand its nuances better. The etymology of a word—what word or words it comes from historically—can do the same thing. When we are reading a book that uses noncontemporary language, such as the scriptures, dictionaries are especially helpful. In ancient works like the scriptures, some words that were once common are now unfamiliar to us, or the meanings of some words may have changed over time. For example, when the KJV was made in 1611, the word *conversation* sometimes meant “behavior.”¹ That may change the way we read 1 Timothy 4:12. *Betimes* (see D&C 121:43) may mean something different than we expect.

A variety of dictionaries is available, but for scripture study, the standard desk dictionary is not as helpful as some historical dictionaries. Two are especially helpful: Noah Webster’s 1828 *American Dictionary of the English Language* and the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*. Webster’s dictionary is available in a reprint edition from many bookstores, though it may have to be special ordered. The *OED* is large and expensive. It is available in a compact edition that most people need a magnifying glass to read (it comes with one). Even the compact edition, however, usually costs several hundred dollars. Most libraries have a copy of the *OED*, so buying one is not necessary.

Webster’s 1828 Dictionary

Noah Webster’s 1828 *American Dictionary of the English Language* is a reasonably accurate reflection of American English usage in 1828. It has limitations, however. Noah Webster’s gathering technique was not particularly scientific, and his dictionary generally represents educated usage and may thus overlook a good deal of common American usage, such as the usage that might appear in the Book of Mormon or Doctrine and Covenants. Nevertheless, Webster’s dictionary is a helpful tool for finding out what a word meant to Americans in the early nineteenth century. It is also a good tool for finding out the meaning of words that appear in the Book of Mormon, the Pearl of Great Price, and most of the Doctrine and Covenants.

Webster’s 1828 dictionary can be used just like an ordinary desk dictionary.

Oxford English Dictionary

The *OED* is not a standard desk dictionary. The fact that it comes in numerous volumes is the first clue. The *OED* is a historical dictionary. It gives not only the current meanings, but an etymology of the word and historical examples of each of its uses.

There are a number of reasons to use a historical dictionary. For example, the history of a word often reflects the nuances of meaning associated with it. Sometimes the history of a word also gives insight into new meanings or linguistic connections. German philosopher Martin Heidegger shares such an insight, noting that the English words *think* and *thank* share the same root and using that fact to make a point about what it means to think.² Of course, what to make of such connections is another question. Seeing them is the beginning of study, not the end. Finding such potential connections is one of many reasons to use a historical dictionary.

In scripture study, probably the most important aspect of the *OED* is that, because it is a historical dictionary, it explains what words meant when the scriptures we are studying were written or translated. The examples in each entry show whether a particular meaning was used during the time period from which a text comes. Thus the *OED* is especially useful for the King James Version of the Bible, though we should not overlook its potential to help us better understand words from other scriptures.

When using the *OED* to investigate words from latter-day scripture such as the Doctrine and Covenants, remember that a significant number of the examples are from British, rather than American, usage. Early-nineteenth-century American usage often reflects older British usage, so when looking up words in the Book of Mormon and other latter-day scriptures, we should look at examples from both the early nineteenth century and the mid to late eighteenth century.

There is a potential complication when using the *OED* to investigate words from the King James Version of the Bible. Because the KJV was published in 1611, it seems that we would want to look at seventeenth-century usage in the *OED*. However, despite the claim to the contrary in its dedication, the KJV was not really a completely new translation. The scholars who worked on it relied heavily on previous translations, including the Tyndale Bible (1526, 1530), the Coverdale Bible (circa 1535), the Geneva Bible (1557, 1560), and the so-called Bishop's Bible (1568). They made alterations where they felt it necessary, but for the most part they made the translation by incorporating the best of these previous Bibles, especially the Tyndale Bible, which is responsible for as much as 80 percent of the KJV New Testament and has had considerable influence on the KJV Old Testament.³ Thus when looking up words from the KJV, we must look at usage from both the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Notes

1. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd. ed., s.v. "conversation."
2. See Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 168–147.
3. See David Noel Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), s.v. "versions, English (pre-1960)."

Cross-Referencing

One important part of scripture study is seeing how the passage or passages we are studying relate to other passages of scripture. Marking these connections is known as cross-referencing, a technique familiar to many students of the scriptures. For some people, cross-referencing is a primary scripture study tool. Methods vary from the most simple, such as penciled notes in the margins, to elaborate, color-coded schemes. However we do it, we cross-reference to see how what we read in one place is related to teachings elsewhere in the scriptures.

Cross-references can be excellent study aids. Sometimes the writings of one prophet clarify a doctrine or teaching we may not understand in a passage written by another prophet. Sometimes a cross-reference adds depth to our understanding by supplying additional information. Cross-references often show that the prophets have taught the same gospel from the beginning. If we are preparing a talk, writing a paper, or trying to understand a particular doctrine or topic, cross-referencing can often help clarify an important concept.

Like any tool, however, cross-references can cause problems if they are not properly used. Because cross-references often connect scriptures differently than did the authors of the scriptures, relying too heavily on cross-references can tempt us to see the scriptures as disjointed pieces of information rather than as whole sermons, stories, and hymns. Allowing the scriptures to keep their integrity is important. We must be careful not to fragment them into isolated bits of information or mere aphorisms to put on the bathroom mirror or refrigerator. The prophets wrote sermons, poems, histories, and doctrinal dissertations. Each of these mediums employs language differently. If, in our cross-referencing, we overlook the unity and integrity of the scriptures, we may also overlook many precious teachings.

Speaking of scripture interpretation, the Prophet Joseph Smith said, “I have a key by which I understand the scriptures. I enquire, what was the question which drew out the answer, or caused Jesus to utter the parable?”¹ Brigham Young said, “Do you read the Scriptures, my brethren and sisters, as though you were writing them a thousand, two thousand, or five thousand years ago? Do you read them as though you stood in the place of the men who wrote them? If you do not feel thus, it is your privilege to do so, that you may be as familiar with the spirit and meaning of the written word of God as you are with your daily walk and conversation, or as you are with your workmen or with your households.”² This suggests to me that we can learn more from a scripture if we understand it in the context in which it was given. Cross-referencing can—but need not—distort our understanding of the scriptures. The scriptures are not a poorly written handbook that we make clear with our cross-referencing.

The better we understand the scripture we are studying, the better we can make cross-references. Cross-references do not usually help us understand particular passages of scripture; rather, understanding a passage of scripture helps us see how it may be connected to another passage or how ideas and doctrines may be connected. Thus I think that making simple cross-references is valuable and even necessary, but I also think that cross-referencing should be one of the last steps in scripture study rather than the first. There is, however, an exception to that rule.

Glancing Back

When the prophets and others write and speak about the gospel, they do so from their familiarity with the scriptures, and they often presume the same familiarity in their audiences. To make their points, they frequently use words and phrases from the scriptures as a kind of shorthand. A writer can refer to an entire doctrinal

discussion by mentioning one word or phrase from the scriptures. Prophets can allude to a related and important passage of scripture by using a few snippets from it.

Though today we also connect what we say to the scriptures by allusion or by using one or two key words, this practice was more common among ancient writers. We use footnotes, parenthetical references, and other systems to tell audiences that we are referring to the scriptures, but anciently there were no such systems. When ancient scripture writers wanted to introduce a quotation from scripture, they would often do so using a phrase similar to *it is written*. They did not usually give a more extensive reference than that. Presumably they thought that their audience would know the scriptures well enough to recall the passage they were quoting. In Romans 3, for example, Paul says:

What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes. (Romans 3:9–18)

In these verses, Paul quotes from scriptures familiar to his audience: from Psalms 5:9; 10:7; 14:1–3; 53:1–3; 140:3; Ecclesiastes 7:20; and Isaiah 59:7–8. Paul does not quote these scriptures in chronological order, nor does he quote from the version of the Old Testament from which the KJV was made. Thus the wording differs somewhat, but it is apparent that he is quoting them.

Sometimes writers of scripture use words or phrases that a thoughtful audience familiar with the scriptures can connect to other scriptures. We do much the same thing when we use “Word of Wisdom” as a title for section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Suppose I were to use this sentence in a sacrament meeting talk: “The Word of Wisdom is not only a health law, it is also a spiritual law.” Most Latter-day Saints would understand me immediately, but those unfamiliar with LDS scriptures would not. Those familiar with the scriptures may not only recognize this as the title of section 89, they may also recognize that this phrase is not unique to Doctrine and Covenants 89. It occurs in 1 Corinthians, Moroni 10, and Doctrine and Covenants 46. The Prophet was familiar with all these scriptures when he received the revelation in Doctrine and Covenants 89.

For to one is given by the Spirit the *word of wisdom*; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. (1 Corinthians 12:8–11)

For behold, to one is given by the Spirit of God, that he may teach the *word of wisdom*; And to another, that he may teach the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; And to another, exceedingly great faith; and to another, the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; And again, to another, that he may work mighty miracles; And again, to another, that he may prophesy concerning all things; And again, to another, the beholding of angels and ministering spirits; And again, to another, all kinds of tongues; And again, to another, the interpretation of languages and of divers kinds of tongues. And all these gifts come by the Spirit of Christ; and they come unto every man severally, according as he will. (Moroni 10:9–17)

And again, verily I say unto you, to some is given, by the Spirit of God, the *word of wisdom*. To another is given the word of knowledge, that all may be taught to be wise and to have knowledge. And again, to some it is given to have faith to be healed; And to others it is given to have faith to heal. And again, to some is given the working of miracles; And to others it is given to prophesy; And to others the discerning of spirits. And again, it is given to some to speak with tongues; And to another is given the interpretation of tongues. And all these gifts come from God, for the benefit of the children of God. (D&C 46:17–26)

Each of the previous scriptures was part of the background of the Prophet Joseph Smith when he received the revelation that became Doctrine and Covenants 89. Though none of them uses the phrase *word of wisdom* to talk about health, each mentions it as a gift of the Spirit. Moroni and 1 Corinthians and section 46 do not refer to Doctrine and Covenants 89, but the phrase *word of wisdom* may connect section 89 to those three scriptures. The more familiar we are with the scriptures, the more likely it is that we will recognize such connections.

Noticing the phrase *word of wisdom* in those scriptures and thinking about the gifts of the spirit and their connection to health laws may give added insight into section 89. It may be helpful to look more closely at the closing verses (18–21) of that section.

The Prophet himself may not have noticed the connections between the earlier scriptures and Doctrine and Covenants 89; he may not have been consciously aware of them as he received and recorded the revelation. However, because we believe that what we have in section 89 is revelation, we must assume that the use of the phrase *word of wisdom* is not accidental. Those familiar with the scriptures may use words and phrases from other scriptures unconsciously but meaningfully. As we study, it is helpful to take conscious account of as many of these connections as possible. We do that by what I call glancing back, or looking in the scriptures that were available to the prophet who wrote the verses we are reading to see what kinds of resonances and overtones are in the language he uses.

As we glance back for the phrase *word of wisdom* in the closing verses of section 89, we may also notice that they include other phrases from previous scriptures, such as *keep and do these sayings*. A variation of this phrase occurs in Deuteronomy 5:1; 7:12; and 26:16, and these references may shed light on section 89. Similarly, variations of the phrase *walking in obedience* appear in 1 Kings 3:3; Isaiah 57:2; Luke 1:6; Acts 9:31; 2 John 1:4; Mosiah 23:14; and 26:38. The phrase *health in their navel and marrow to their bones* appears in Proverbs 3:8. Variations of the latter part of this phrase occur in Job 21:24; Psalm 63:5; and Isaiah 25:6. The phrase *shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint* appears in only one previous place: Isaiah 40:31. There it describes those who serve the Lord:

Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they *shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint*. (Isaiah 40:28–31)

By glancing back, we can see that the scriptural language of section 89 suggests that the Word of Wisdom is not only a health law, but also a commandment, a matter of the gifts of the Spirit, and part of our service to the Lord. Such insights could provide ideas to meditate on and possible topics for sacrament meeting talks and lessons in Sunday School, Relief Society, priesthood, and family home evening.

Glancing back, then, is the process of finding out where important words and phrases in the scripture we are studying occurred in the scriptural works that were available to the person who wrote the passage. This may help us see what connections to other scriptures and scriptural ideas the writer might have made. Glancing back can help us better understand the background of the passage we are reading, and it may help us discover insights we would otherwise have overlooked. Sometimes it can help us understand the meaning of particular words and phrases. Other times it may help us see doctrinal connections or add depth to our understanding.

Glancing back requires some knowledge of the history of the scriptures, but it does not have to be extensive. For example, when reading King Benjamin’s address in Mosiah, it is helpful to know that besides whatever other scriptures were available, King Benjamin was familiar with the Old Testament through at least Isaiah and perhaps Jeremiah, and also with the Book of Mormon through Omni. Similarly, when reading the New Testament, we must remember that all the Old Testament was available to New Testament writers, but the Book of Mormon was not. It may also be helpful to look in the Bible Dictionary for the chronology of the books and letters of the New Testament, an effort that may reveal where various ideas and phrases originate. It would probably also be helpful to make a comparative chronology to see, for example, how the books of the Bible and the Book of Mormon line up on a time line that includes both.

Though most of the scriptures are arranged in roughly chronological order, the New Testament is not. Following is my guess at the chronological order of the books of the New Testament. Because it is only a guess based on rather informal research, it should be used only as a guide.

Possible Dates of the Books of the New Testament

New Testament Book	Date I Think Likely	Other Dates Suggested by Scholars
Matthew	55–60	70–80, 80–85
Mark	60–65	65–70
Luke/Acts	55–60	80–85, 85–90
John	70–80	90–100, 100–110
Romans	56–60	
1 Corinthians	54	
2 Corinthians	56	
Galatians	56	
Ephesians	after 70	90–100
Philippians	62	
Colossians	60–65	
1 Thessalonians	50	
2 Thessalonians	51	
1, 2 Timothy	65	90–140
Titus	55–65	50–60, 70–100, 100–130
Philemon	61–62	
Hebrews	69	95
James	before 60–62	80–100
1 Peter	64–65	95, 112

2 Peter	100–110	150
1–3 John	80–90	100–110
Jude	85–95	125
Revelation	90–95	95

Put in chronological order according to my guesses, the list of New Testament books (with approximate dates) would look something like this:

1, 2 Thessalonians (50–51) 1, 2 Corinthians (54–56) Matthew (55–60) and Luke/Acts (55–60) Titus (55–65) Galatians (56) Romans (56–60) James (before 60–62) Mark (60–65) and Colossians (60–65) Philemon (61–62) Philippians (62) 1 Peter (64–65) 1, 2 Timothy (65) Hebrews (69) Ephesians (after 70) John (70–80) 1–3 John (80–90) Jude (85–95) Revelation (90–95) 2 Peter (100–110)

Note that contrary to my estimations, most non-LDS scholars believe that the book of Mark was the first Gospel written, though not the first New Testament document.

Glancing Back for Doctrine and Covenants 4

This section gives an example of what I call glancing back, in other words, finding out how prophets before Joseph Smith used the words and phrases of Doctrine and Covenants 4. To show how to glance back, I have written out the scriptures I read when glancing back for Doctrine and Covenants 4. This list includes every previous combination I could find of *heart*, *might*, *mind*, and *strength* and *faith*, *virtue*, *knowledge*, *temperance*, etc., words from verses 4 and 6, respectively. I have also created lists of previous scriptures for various combinations of some of these key words. To make these lists, I used the electronic program WordCruncher™, a commercial version of the electronic scripture search available from the church. A person could use any electronic index to the scriptures to make similar lists. Many are available, and some are quite sophisticated.

On the basis of my glancing back, I have offered a definition of the phrase *heart, might, mind and strength*. That definition encapsulates what I learned by doing this work, but the definition is not nearly as important to my scripture study as was the work itself. Looking at the scriptures that used the same language and thinking about their relation to Doctrine and Covenants 4 gave me insights that the provisional definition I offer cannot capture.

Though I do not go through the whole process of glancing back for *desires*, *faith* and *hope*, *charity* and *love*, and *faith*, *virtue*, *knowledge*, etc., and then come to a conclusion about what these terms mean, I do provide the references that could be used to do so. The example of glancing back to understand the phrase *heart, might, mind and strength* is sufficient to show what can be learned by glancing back.

HEART AND MIGHT

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine *heart*, and with all thy soul, and with all thy *might*.
(Deuteronomy 6:5)

And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his *heart*, and with all his soul, and with all his *might*, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him. (2

HEART AND MIND

And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling *heart*, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of *mind*. (Deuteronomy 28:65)

And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine *heart* and in my *mind*: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever. (1 Samuel 2:35)

And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect *heart* and with a willing *mind*: for the Lord searcheth all *hearts*, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever. (1 Chronicles 28:9)

But when his *heart* was lifted up, and his *mind* hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him. (Daniel 5:20)

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy *heart*, and with all thy soul, and with all thy *mind*. (Matthew 22:37)

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy *heart*, and with all thy soul, and with all thy *mind*, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. (Mark 12:30)

And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy *heart*, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy *mind*; and thy neighbour as thyself. (Luke 10:27)

And now that my soul might have joy in you, and that my *heart* might leave this world with gladness because of you, that I might not be brought down with grief and sorrow to the grave, arise from the dust, my sons, and be men, and be determined in one *mind* and in one *heart*, united in all things, that ye may not come down into captivity. (2 Nephi 1:21)

But if ye will turn to the Lord with full purpose of *heart*, and put your trust in him, and serve him with all diligence of *mind*, if ye do this, he will, according to his own will and pleasure, deliver you out of bondage. (Mosiah 7:33)

Behold, when ye shall rend that 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—yea, when ye shall call upon the Father in my name, with a broken *heart* and a contrite spirit, then shall ye know that the Father hath remembered the covenant which he made unto your fathers, O house of Israel. (Ether 4:15)

HEART AND STRENGTH

He is wise in *heart*, and mighty in *strength*: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered? (Job 9:4)

My *heart* panteth, my *strength* faileth me: as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me. (Psalm 38:10)

My flesh and my *heart* faileth: but God is the *strength* of my *heart*, and my portion for ever. (Psalm 73:26)

Blessed is the man whose *strength* is in thee; in whose *heart* are the ways of them. (Psalm 84:5)

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy *heart*, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy *strength*: this is the first commandment. (Mark 12:30)

And to love him with all the *heart*, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the *strength*, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. (Mark 12:33)

And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy *heart*, and with all thy soul, and with all thy *strength*, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. (Luke 10:27)

DEFINITION: HEART, MIGHT, MIND AND STRENGTH

In many cases the words *heart*, *might*, *mind*, and *strength* are used in parallel constructions, and it thus seems that they are often synonyms. (In fact, the phrase seems to contain parallels: *heart* to *mind* and, the most obvious, *might* to *strength*.) I assume that they are synonyms in Doctrine and Covenants 4. The revelation appears to use these four words for emphasis.

The phrase *heart, might, mind and strength* reminds me of Deuteronomy 6:5, 2 Kings 23:25, Matthew 22:37 (and Mark 12:30, which is identical), and Luke 10:27. It is most similar to Luke 10:27: "With all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." The difference is that Luke uses *soul* where the Doctrine and Covenants uses *might*, and the Doctrine and Covenants transposes the words *mind* and *strength* from their order in Luke. Perhaps these changes are to create the parallelism discussed above. For *heart, might, mind, and strength* to be synonyms, they must refer to something like the person as a whole.

DESIRES

Psalms 37:4; 140:8; Ephesians 2:3; 1 Nephi 2:16; 13:8; Enos 1:12; Mosiah 11:2; 16:12; 18:28; 21:6, 13; 29:38; Alma 7:18; 9:20; 18:35; 20:24; 21:22; 22:34; 23:3; 27:3; 29:4, 5; 30:27, 28; 35:5; 41:3, 5; 43:9; 44:6; 46:32; 47:20; 49:15; 55:12, 20, 26; 60:9, 27; 62:28; Ether 3:2; 7:22

FAITH AND HOPE

Romans 5:2; 1 Corinthians 13:13; 2 Corinthians 10:15; Galatians 5:5; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 Peter 1:21; Jacob 4:6; Alma 7:24; 13:29; 22:16; 25:16; 32:21; 58:11; Ether 12:4, 9, 28; Moroni 7:1, 40-42

CHARITY AND LOVE

Behold, the Lord hath forbidden this thing; wherefore, the Lord God hath given a commandment that all men should have *charity*, which *charity* is *love*. And except they should have *charity* they were nothing. Wherefore, if they should have *charity* they would not suffer the laborer in Zion to perish. (2 Nephi 26:30)

And now I know that this *love* which thou hast had for the children of men is *charity*; wherefore, except men shall have *charity* they cannot inherit that place which thou hast prepared in the mansions of thy Father. (Ether 12:34)

But *charity* is the pure *love* of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him. (Moroni 7:47)

And I am filled with *charity*, which is everlasting *love*; wherefore, all children are alike unto me; wherefore, I *love* little children with a perfect *love*; and they are all alike and partakers of salvation. (Moroni 8:17)

FAITH, VIRTUE, KNOWLEDGE, TEMPERANCE

Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the *knowledge* of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the *knowledge* of him that hath called us to glory and *virtue*: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your *faith virtue*; and to *virtue knowledge*; and to *knowledge temperance*; and to *temperance* patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the *knowledge* of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:2–11)

Glancing Back for John 1:1–5, 10–12, 14, and 16

While reading a Bible commentary, I discovered that some scholars think that John 1:1–5, 10–12, 14, and 16 may have been part of an early Christian hymn. That made me think I would like to study this hymn more closely.

Following is a compilation of some of what I learned by glancing back for these verses. Others thinking about the same verses will probably come to very different conclusions, which is good. The following notes are not a definitive account of what these verses mean but a synthesis of what I learned from them. Other people are likely to learn things I did not, and when I return to these verses, I am likely to learn something different.

I have written out the results of my work to show what I did in my study. However, except for something like this book, I would probably never write out my glancing-back work in so much detail. This merely shows what I did; it is not necessary to create such lengthy documents.

I have grouped the verses into what I consider to be probable stanzas, assuming that this is an early hymn.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. (1–2)

All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. (3–5)

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: (10-12)

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (14)

And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. (16)

Following are discussions of several key words in these verses, namely, *beginning*, *word*, *light*, *world*, *his own*, *glory* and *grace*. In the definitions that follow, I have marked those that seem to me to be likely with an exclamation point (!) and those that seem still possible but somewhat less likely with a question mark .

BEGINNING

! The beginning of a particular set of events

So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the *beginning* of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that were in their hands. (Judges 7:19)

Now ye Philippians know also, that in the *beginning* of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. (Philippians 4:15)

! The beginning of the world

In the *beginning* God created the heaven and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)

And, Thou, Lord, in the *beginning* hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands. (Hebrews 1:10)

Both meanings seem appropriate, but the second, "the beginning of the world," seems most relevant to the discussion, given the context and the later discussion of the creation (see verse 3).

WORD

! Command

And the children of Israel did according to the *word* of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment. (Exodus 12:35)

Because he hath despised the *word* of the Lord, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him. (Numbers 15:31)

And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the *word* of God, and do it. (Luke 8:21)

? Prophecy

For when David was up in the morning, the *word* of the Lord came unto the prophet Gad, David's seer. (2 Samuel 24:11)

Then came the *word* of the Lord to Isaiah. (Isaiah 38:4)

For I am the Lord: I will speak, and the *word* that I shall speak shall come to pass; it shall be no more prolonged: for in your days, O rebellious house, will I say the *word*, and will perform it, saith the Lord God. (Ezekiel 12:25)

! The act of creation

By the *word* of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. (Psalm 33:6)

For the *word* of the Lord is right; and all his works are done in truth. (Psalm 33:4)

! The gospel

But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the *word*, and anon with joy receiveth it. (Matthew 13:20)

To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the *word* of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:19)

? The church

And the *word* of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. (Acts 6:7)

But the *word* of God grew and multiplied. (Acts 12:24)

The most obvious meaning of "the Word" seems to be Christ, but that meaning probably comes mostly from this verse. Thus the question is, what other meanings does it have here? Because the reference to the creation is clear in both verses 1 and 3, that meaning seems inescapable. Because Christ is the origin of the commands, the reference to command also seems important. And because he is the good news, the gospel, that reference also seems intended. Perhaps the reference to revelation and prophecy is important because Christ is the Revealer as well as that to which all revelation points. I doubt that the reference to the church is important here.

LIGHT

? Physical light

And God said, Let there be *light*: and there was *light*. (Genesis 1:3)

And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them *light*; to go by day and night. (Exodus 13:21)

! The good life

The Jews had *light*, and gladness, and joy, and honour. (Esther 8:16)

Wherefore is *light* given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul. (Job 3:20)

! The commandments

They are of those that rebel against the *light*; they know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof. (Job 24:13)

! God's saving power

The Lord is my *light* and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? (Psalm 27:1)

The use of the word *light* in Job 24:13 made me consider whether the word *light* in John 1:4–5 might be associated with a command or commandment, as *word* is in John 1:1. In turn, that made me think that there might be a connection between *light* and the other two possible meanings of *word*, namely, “creation” and “gospel.” Light was the first thing created (see Genesis 1:3) and figures prominently in the rest of the creation story, and the scriptures regularly associate light with the gospel (see 2 Corinthians 4:4; 2 Timothy 1:10; D&C 10:62; 45:28; 138:30). We are reborn, or recreated, when we are saved, and light may thus refer to saving power; Christ is the saving power of the world. The gospel is the good news regarding Christ, so that too seems intended.

WORLD

! The physical world

And the channels of the sea appeared, the foundations of the *world* were discovered, at the rebuking of the Lord, at the blast of the breath of his nostrils. (2 Samuel 22:16)

! The people who live on the earth

Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the *world* stand in awe of him. (Psalm 33:8)

Before the Lord: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the *world* with righteousness, and the people with his truth. (Psalm 96:13)

? A particular time period, a reign (time on this earth, time in the next kingdom)

And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this *world*, neither in the *world* to come. (Matthew 12:32)

And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the *world* to come. (Hebrews 6:5)

? Evil

And the *world* passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. (1 John 2:17)

Though *world* can mean a variety of things, the first two of the previous four meanings seem most likely in these verses. The first (the physical world) is likely because these verses speak of Christ as the Creator, and the second (the inhabitants of the world) is likely because the verses speak of him as a Savior.

HIS OWN

! What belongs to someone (emphatic)

Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me: and eat ye every one of his vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drink ye every one the waters of *his own* cistern. (Isaiah 36:16)

This seems to me to be the only possible meaning.

GLORY

! Something that can be seen, usually light; it indicates power and high station

And in the morning, then ye shall see the *glory* of the Lord; for that he heareth your murmurings against the Lord: and what are we, that ye murmur against us? (Exodus 16:7)

And the sight of the *glory* of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel. (Exodus 24:17)

And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his *glory* was not arrayed like one of these. (Matthew 6:29)

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the *glory* of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. (Luke 2:9)

Again, this seems to me to be the only possible meaning. I was surprised that *glory* is almost always conceived quite physically; it is something one can see. I had thought of it more abstractly. This means I may have to rethink the definition of *light*. Physical light may also be an important part of the meaning of *glory* in these verses.

GRACE

! Almost always used in the phrase *grace in the sight of* ——— or *grace in the eyes of* ———. It most often means “mercy.”

But Noah found *grace* in the eyes of the Lord. (Genesis 6:8)

Behold now, thy servant hath found *grace* in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die.

(Genesis 19:19)

Grace is another word that I had generally thought about as an abstraction. It surprised—and helped—me to see that it can mean “mercy.”

Though the examples of glancing back for Doctrine and Covenants 4 and John 1 may seem tedious, it is important to remember that they represent only a written version of what would usually happen in my head as I studied. However, they also show the depth to which it is possible to go just by considering the words of a passage of scripture. These examples should make it clear that glancing back is a useful tool. It can help us think more carefully about scripture by helping us study the scriptural context in which the passage was written and the nuances of meaning that the words of the passage acquire from that context.

Glancing Forward

Glancing forward is a helpful and often overlooked way of cross-referencing. As the name suggests, glancing forward means finding out how later prophets used the words or phrases of the passage you are studying. This knowledge can help us learn how they understood the scriptures we are reading.

Concordances

The most important tool for glancing in either direction, as well as for other methods of cross-referencing, is a concordance. A concordance is an alphabetical index of the words used in a book or set of books. There is a variety of concordances, each with its own use. Electronic concordances are especially useful for looking up phrases, because we cannot easily look up phrases with a printed concordance. However, electronic concordances do not yet replace printed ones. Not everyone has a computer, and some who do find them difficult to use. In addition, not all the resources of printed concordances are presently available for use on the computer. For example, the KJV translators often translated the same Hebrew or Greek word in more than one way. That is common in any good translation, but it makes some connections more obscure than they were to the original writers and readers. A few electronic concordances allow you to see the different ways that the same words were translated, but most do not.

Any Greek concordance shows that the word translated “judgment” in Romans 2:2 is also translated “damnation” (e.g., Romans 3:13), “condemnation” (e.g., 1 Corinthians 11:39), and “avenged” (Revelation 18:20).³ A concordance allows us to see that this word and the one translated “damnation” in Romans 3:8 are the same. Some computer programs can do more complex searches, but they are expensive.

Though some electronic concordances allow a person to find all the ways that a Hebrew or a Greek word has been translated into English, most people use printed Hebrew and Greek concordances to do this seemingly daunting work. Few Latter-day Saints are proficient in Hebrew or Greek, but, luckily, we can search Hebrew and Greek concordances even if we do not read a letter of either language. Learning the Greek and Hebrew alphabets is relatively easy and quite useful. However, the chapter titled “Doing Bible Research without Knowing Hebrew or Greek” explains how to work in these concordances without learning the alphabets.

Notes

1. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980), 5:261.
2. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:333.
3. One good concordance is George V. Wigram, *The New Englishman's Greek Concordance and Lexicon*, ed. Jay P. Green (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1982), s.v. "**κρίμα**" (Strong's number 2917).

Doing Bible Research without Knowing Hebrew or Greek

[Exact characters for Greek and Hebrew letters used in this chapter cannot be replicated here. See the published version.]

The Old Testament manuscripts on which the King James Version of the Bible is based were written in Hebrew, while the New Testament manuscripts were written in Greek. Those who know these languages are at an advantage when they study the Bible because they can see how the translation affects the meaning, something the rest of us do not usually notice. Obviously, we can learn a great deal from the Bible without knowing either Greek or Hebrew. The KJV is a good translation, and we have the guidance of modern scripture, modern prophets, and the Holy Ghost to help us understand scripture. Nevertheless, knowing the original languages of the Bible can be an advantage.

Some connections between words or verses of scripture may have been lost in translation. For example, knowing that *boasting* in Romans 3:27 and *rejoicing* in 2 Corinthians 1:12 are translated from the same Greek word may help us compare those two verses in new ways. Those who know Greek or Hebrew can speculate about the meaning the translators may have intended when it is ambiguous in English. Genesis 39:6, for example, tells us that Joseph was goodly. The Hebrew word for *goodly* can also be translated “fair” or “handsome.” Knowing the meanings of some Hebrew and Greek words can sometimes give us deeper insight into what the KJV means. For example, knowing that the Hebrew word for *covenant* is from a word that can also mean “to select” as well as “to feed” may help us think more deeply about the meaning of the sacrament.

Most of us do not have the time to learn these two difficult languages. It is important that some people learn them, but not everyone can. If we want or need to know more about the Hebrew or Greek words from which the Bible was translated, we usually must rely on those who have already learned these languages. Fortunately, however, we can do quite a bit of research ourselves, even if we do not read one Greek or Hebrew letter. (Learning the Hebrew and Greek alphabets, however, can be useful and is not difficult. An hour or so for each will suffice. For those who wish to learn these alphabets, charts and a brief introduction are provided on pages 81–86.) There are many study aids to help us learn about the original Greek and Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible, even if we decide not to learn the Greek and Hebrew alphabets.

Strong’s Concordance

The key to researching Hebrew and Greek words is Strong’s *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*.¹ In 1890 James Strong, a Protestant minister, published a Bible concordance that was important because each English word in the concordance was keyed to the Hebrew or Greek word from which it was translated. Strong made a Hebrew dictionary of all the words that appear in the Old Testament and a Greek dictionary of all the words that appear in the New Testament. He then numbered each word in each dictionary, from 1 to 8,674 for the Old Testament and from 1 to 5,624 for the New Testament. He placed the corresponding number from the dictionaries next to each English word in the concordance. To find out the Hebrew or Greek word from which an English word was translated, simply look at the number next to the word and then find that same number in the appropriate dictionary. Using Strong’s concordance, we can discover the definition of the Hebrew or Greek word from which the English word was translated, even without knowing any Hebrew or Greek.

Suppose we have just read Genesis 15:18: “In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.” Because

understanding covenants is part of understanding the story of Abraham and our own relation to Heavenly Father, we may want to know more about what the word *covenant* means. We can learn a great deal by studying the various scriptures that discuss covenants, reading general conference addresses on covenants, and even looking up the word *covenant* in English dictionaries. But to further deepen our understanding, we may also want to know more about the meaning of the Hebrew word used in this verse.

We can look up the word *covenant* in an edition of Strong's concordance that has the Hebrew and Greek lexicons, or dictionaries, in the back. Because anyone can publish Strong's concordance, there are many versions of it. Any will do if it has both the numbers and the lexicons.

Following is the entry for the word *covenant* in Strong's concordance:

Ge 15:18 the Lord made a **c.** with Abram 1285

Strong gives the book title first: *Ge* stands for Genesis. Then comes the chapter and verse reference followed by a quotation of the phrase in which the word appears. The first letter of the word is substituted for the word. Last is Strong's number. That number means that the 1,285th word in Strong's Hebrew lexicon is translated "covenant" in Genesis 15:18. Following is the entry for word number 1285 in Strong's Hebrew lexicon:

1285. **b^eriyth**, *ber-eeth'*; from 1262 (in the sense of *cutting* [like 1254]); a *compact* (because made by passing between *pieces* of flesh): —confederacy, [con-] feder[-ate], covenant, league.

First is the number of the word, then the word written in Hebrew, followed by a transliteration. The word and its transliteration are in boldface type. The English pronunciation is given in italics. Strong then explains that *b^eriyth* is derived from word 1262, *bârâh*, meaning "select" or "feed." In parentheses Strong notes that number 1262, like word 1254, *br*, meaning "to create" or "to cut down," can have the sense of cutting, and *b^eriyth* comes from that sense of cutting. Finally, Strong defines word number 1285. In just over two lines Strong gives us a great deal of information about the Hebrew word translated "covenant," information that can be food for thought.

Strong's numbering system was so useful that other people developed additional study aids using it. For example, various Hebrew and Greek lexicons give more extensive definitions than Strong but are coded using Strong's numbers. We can use these lexicons without knowing any Greek or Hebrew. There are also Greek and Hebrew concordances that use Strong's numbers. One such concordance tells us that word 1285, *b^eriyth*, was sometimes translated "league" by the KJV translators, as in Joshua 9:6, and was once translated "confederacy" (see Obadiah 1:7).²

Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament

The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*³ is much like a dictionary, but it gives fuller discussions of the words it contains. For example, unlike Strong's Hebrew lexicon, which has a short paragraph that defines *covenant*, the *Theological Wordbook* has a more detailed definition and about one and one-half pages of discussion of what the word *covenant* means in the Old Testament. It also includes a bibliography about three-quarters of a page long for further reading. Because the *Theological Wordbook* is interpretive, we must be cautious in using it. It was written by conservative Protestants, with whom we share many understandings of the Bible, but because we understand

certain biblical teachings differently than they do, we must not simply accept their interpretations without thinking. Nevertheless, the *Theological Wordbook* is generally reliable.

Like Strong's concordance, the *Theological Wordbook* numbers the words in the Bible. However, because it arranges the words differently, the numbers in the *Theological Wordbook* are different from the numbers of the same words in Strong's concordance. Some editions of the *Theological Wordbook* have a cross-referencing index at the end of the second volume that correlates Strong's numbers to the *Theological Wordbook* numbers. It is best to use an edition that has this index.

To find a word in the *Theological Wordbook* using Strong's numbers, look up Strong's number in the index at the end of the second volume of the *Theological Wordbook*. Next to Strong's number is the number of the word in the *Theological Wordbook*. Use that number to look up the word.

For example, the word *covenant* is number 1285 in Strong's concordance. The index of the *Theological Wordbook* shows that its number for the word is 282a. Using that number to look up the word, we find the following entry:

282 (*brh*) **II. Assumed root of the following.**

282a (*b^erit*) **covenant** (ASV and RSV) between nations: a treaty, alliance of friendship; between individuals: a pledge or agreement; with obligation between a monarch and subjects: a constitution . . . The etymology of the word is uncertain. It may be related to the Akkadian word *burru* . . .

The *Theological Wordbook* lists words according to their root words rather than in alphabetical order. That is why its numbering differs from Strong's. The entry for word 282 tells us that linguists believe that several words share a common root (*brh* when transliterated). *Brh* is not, however, a word in use in the Bible. It may have been an older word that disappeared from usage, and the words derived from it remained. The *a* after the number indicates that this is the first word considered under the assumed root. The number for each word that comes from the same root has a different letter attached to the number of the root; thus the second word considered in this section would be 282b.

The entries are arranged like Strong's concordance. First the Hebrew word is given, then an English transliteration, then the English word used in the KJV (called ASV in the *Theological Wordbook*) and the Revised Standard Version (RSV), followed by a more detailed definition than is found in Strong's concordance. After the definition is an essay on the meaning and use of the word in the Old Testament.

Notice the typographer's dagger (cross-shaped mark) that appears before the Hebrew word. The dagger means that the word is discussed in an essay. Words without such daggers are defined, but they are not discussed in an essay.

Hebrew and Greek Concordances

As mentioned, some of the most useful study aids that use Strong's numbers are concordances for Hebrew (the Old Testament) and Greek (the New Testament). Often these are called Englishman's concordances. A variety of such concordances has been published, but all are used in the same way. These concordances can help us find verses in which the same Hebrew or Greek word is translated several different ways in the Bible. For example, in 1 Peter 1:15–16 the word *holy* appears. Strong's number for that word is 40. One New Testament concordance that uses Strong's numbers indicates that word number 40, *hagiōs* (ἅγιος), is also translated "saint," as in 1 Corinthians

1:2.⁴ It might be profitable to compare these two verses with that correlation in mind. In this way a Greek concordance can provide cross-references that do not show up in an English concordance.

Other Study Aids

Many study aids use Strong's numbers to help those who do not read Hebrew and Greek. For example, there are many detailed lexicons that use Strong's numbers. Most of the other study aids are relatively simple to use with Strong's concordance. For example, Hendrickson Publishing produces concordances and lexicons for both Hebrew and Greek.

Alternate Bible Translations

The LDS Church uses the King James Version of the Bible. One reason for this may be that the KJV is more literal than most more recent translations. Literal translations have their drawbacks, and translators produce nonliteral translations for good reasons. For example, the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English in the KJV is much older than contemporary English, and sometimes people have a bit of difficulty reading the KJV because it is so literal. Also, a literal translation may obscure an author's writing style. The book of Mark, for example, is written in quite plain Greek. The language of the KJV and the fact that it is a literal translation make Mark seem more formal than it really is. On the other hand, literal translations have the advantage of retaining some linguistic connections that may be lost in less literal translations. For example, parallels between Old Testament and New Testament usage are more common in literal translations than in less literal translations.

It can be argued that something is gained and lost with any translation. Why keep the linguistic connections in the KJV but lose the "flavor" of the various books? Were it not for Latter-day revelation, there would be no answer to this question. However, Latter-day Saints prefer the KJV to other translations possibly because the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price use KJV-like language, thus linguistically connecting themselves to the Bible. For example, they often use phrasing from the Bible without noting that connection. One familiar with the scriptures may notice that connection, subconsciously or consciously, and it may influence his or her understanding of the scriptures. Doctrine and Covenants 89 is a good example of this. It contains the phrases *word of wisdom, keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience, health in their navel and marrow to their bones, and shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint*, all of which appear in various places in the KJV. Through such allusions to the KJV, section 89 strengthens its message. We may miss that depth of meaning if we use a different Bible translation (or if we "translate" Latter-day scriptures into contemporary English). Such linguistic connections are one of the ways that the scriptures testify of and support each other. I believe that preserving the unity of scripture and the depth of meaning created by their interconnectedness depends on our continuing to use the KJV.

Nevertheless, we should not be afraid to consult other translations of the Bible. Because the language of the KJV is often difficult to understand, other translations can clarify many passages that we may not otherwise understand. Modern translations of the books of Romans or Isaiah, for example, can be very helpful.

We can use other translations as guides and as aids for understanding the meanings of verses we find difficult, but we must be careful not to let those other translations replace the KJV. We may miss much of what the Book of Mormon and other Latter-day scriptures have to say.

Following are charts showing how to read and pronounce the Greek and Hebrew alphabets. Though learning Greek or Hebrew is more than most are able to do, it is not difficult to learn how to read words written in these alphabets. That ability will allow us to consult lexicons and dictionaries with more scholarly information than is found in the resources that rely on Strong's numbers. For example, if we can read Greek words, we can use the extensive discussions found in Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*⁵ and Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*.⁶ The ability to read Hebrew words gives us access to such resources as Brown, Driver, and Briggs's *Hebrew and English Lexicon*.⁷

The Greek Alphabet

Letter	Name	Transliteration	Pronunciation
A α	alpha	a	f <u>a</u> ther
B β	beta	b	<u>b</u> ed
Γ γ	gamma	g, ng	go; k <u>ing</u> when double or before κ
Δ δ	delta	d	<u>d</u> og
E ε	epsilon	e	<u>b</u> ed
Z ζ	zeta	z	da <u>z</u> e or <u>t</u> s
H η	eta	ē	da <u>y</u>
Θ θ	theta	th	<u>th</u> in
I ι	iota	i	me <u>t</u> eor; poli <u>c</u> e
K κ	kappa	k	<u>k</u> ing
Λ λ	lambda	l	<u>l</u> ion
M μ	mu	m	<u>m</u> any
N ν	nu	n	<u>n</u> ew
Ξ ξ	xi or ksay	x	la <u>x</u>
O ο	omicron	o	<u>o</u> der
Π π	pi	p	<u>p</u> ie
P ρ	rho	r	<u>r</u> ow
Σ σ, ς	sigma	s	<u>s</u> ign
T τ	tau	t	<u>t</u> ell
Υ υ	upsilon	y, u	French: <u>t</u> y
Φ φ	phi	ph	<u>f</u> lat
Χ χ	chi	ch	Scottish: lo <u>ch</u>
Ψ ψ	psi	ps	gyp <u>s</u> y
Ω ω	omega	ō	<u>b</u> oat

In Greek there are two kinds of marks over vowels. They are called diacritical marks. At the beginning of words that begin with a vowel is either a rough breathing or a smooth breathing. For example, the work **ικετηρία**

(*hiketéria*, “olive branch held by suppliants”) begins with a rough breathing that is indicated above the initial vowel by what looks like a single left-hand quotation mark: ‘. To pronounce this mark, add an *h* sounds to the beginning of the word. In a smooth breathing, as in *ιατρός* (*iatros*, “doctor”), the vowel does not have a rough breathing attached to it. It is marked above the initial vowel with what looks like a single right-hand quotation mark: ’. In Greek there are three accent marks—*acute*, *grave*, and *circumflex*—that mark the accented syllable. For our purposes there is no difference between them. We can also ignore the subscript iota, a small iota that sometimes appears below vowels: *alpha*.

The Hebrew Alphabet⁸

Letter	Name	Transliteration	Pronunciation
א	aleph	‘	silent or glottal stop
ב	bet	b, v or bh	<u>b</u> oy, <u>v</u> ine
ג	gimel	g	girl
ד	dalet	d	<u>d</u> og
ה	hey	h	<u>h</u> orse
ו	vav	v or w	<u>v</u> ine
ז	zayin	z	<u>z</u> oo
ח	het	ch or h	Scottish: <u>loch</u>
ט	tet	t	<u>t</u> oy
י	yod	y	<u>y</u> es
כ	kaph	k, kh	<u>k</u> ing, Scottish: <u>loch</u>
ל	lamed	l	<u>l</u> ook
מ	mem	m	<u>m</u> other
נ	nun	n	<u>n</u> ew
ס	samech	s	<u>s</u> un
ע	ayin	‘	silent or glottal stop
פ	pey	p, f or ph	<u>p</u> rice, <u>f</u> ool
צ	tsade	ts or tz or ş	<u>n</u> u <u>t</u> s
ק	qoph	q	<u>k</u> ing
ר	resh	r	<u>r</u> ose
ש	shin	sh or š	<u>s</u> hip
ש	sin	s	<u>s</u> ilk
ת	tav	t	<u>t</u> oy

Hebrew is read from right to left. In Hebrew, vowel sounds are expressed by placing small marks known as points in and around the letters:

Point	Pronunciation
א	<u>f</u> ather
א	h <u>a</u> d

א	l <u>i</u> d
א	b <u>ee</u>
א	s <u>a</u> y.
א	s <u>a</u> y.
א	s <u>a</u> id
א	l <u>o</u> w
א	l <u>o</u> w
א	z <u>oo</u>
א	z <u>oo</u>
א	silent or schwa

In a Hebrew lexicon, verb entries are divided into sections such as Qal, Niphal, Piel, Pual, Hiphil, Hophal, and Hithpael. These are the names of conjugations and may be roughly illustrated by the forms of the verb *to kill*:

Conjugation	Meaning
Qal	to kill
Niphal	to be killed
Piel	to murder
Pual	to be murdered
Hiphil	to cause to kill
Hophal	to be caused to kill
Hithpael	to kill oneself

For our purposes, these differences between conjugations rarely matter. The meaning or potential meanings are most important. Note that verb conjugations in Indo-European languages (such as Greek, which, like Hebrew, has a complex conjugation system) express temporal relationships between the subject and the verb (past, past perfect, etc.). In contrast, in Hebrew, verb conjugations express other kinds of relationships, such as intention. See “Hebrew versus Greek Thinking” in the appendix (pages 135–53) for more information about these differences and their implications.

Notes

1. James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980).
2. George V. Wigram, *The New Englishman’s Hebrew Concordance Coded to Strong’s Concordance Numbering System*, ed. Jay P. Green (Peabody Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984), s.v. “ברית.” (Strong’s number 1285).
3. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980).

4. George V. Wigram, *The New Englishman's Greek Concordance and Lexicon*, ed. Jay P. Green (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1982), s.v. "ἅγιος" (Strong's number 40).
5. Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1964–77).
6. Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957).
7. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959).
8. The following tables and explanations were compiled using several Hebrew grammars: Thomas O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971); Menahem Mansoor, *Contemporary Hebrew-1: An Introductory Course in the Hebrew Language*, ed. Priscilla Fishman (West Orange, N.J.: Behrman House, 1977); C. L. Seow, *A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995); J. Weingreen, *A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959).

Finding Connections through Parsing

[Consult the original publication for formatting of examples given in this chapter.]

We often think we understand a passage of scripture, but our understanding may sometimes be only an intuitive response to the words on the page. While an intuitive response can often be helpful, further study can help us understand the scripture even better. Problems of vocabulary can be alleviated by attention to dictionaries and wordbooks, but problems of grammar are a little more difficult to solve. One way to overcome grammatical problems is to parse—in other words, diagram—the passages so that you can see how the parts of the sentences relate to each other. Translators often use parsing to help them understand how the sentences they are translating work. That allows them, as much as possible, to duplicate the work done by the original sentence. Parsing is also useful to those of us who are not translating scripture, because after all, we need the same depth of understanding as the translator needs in order to best understand the passages we read.

The idea of parsing sentences frightens many. It calls up visions of defining gerunds and participial phrases. It makes us worry that we will not know whether the line we are supposed to draw when we diagram the sentence goes down to the right or down to the left. It causes us to fear a bad grade.

The truth of the matter is that parsing need not be particularly difficult. It does not require knowing the names of the parts of a sentence. The point of parsing, after all, is not to show our mastery of the technical vocabulary of grammar but to show how the parts of the sentences we are interested in relate to each other. Since we already speak English with at least a modicum of facility, that should not be a problem. It may also be important to remember that we are not graded for this kind of study. No one is going to check our parsing to see if we got it right. We got it right if it helps us understand the verses we are studying.

Parsing helps us find two basic elements of concern to us: subordination and parallelism. Subordinate words and phrases are literally those whose meaning or function is controlled by the meaning or function of another word or phrase. For grammarians, they are lexical units that function as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs. Parallel words and phrases function in the same way as each other. (This discussion of grammatical technicalities is easily understood through example.)

A sentence diagram shows the basic units of a sentence or passage by putting each significant part of the sentence on its own line and arranging the various lines to display the relations between the parts. We could parse a sentence to show the relation of every word in the sentence to every other word, or we could relate larger pieces of the sentence. There is no such thing as the right level of parsing. If we are parsing a longer passage, we may want to parse at the sentence level, showing by our diagram how the sentences of the passage are related to each other. We could also parse at larger levels; an outline is a kind of parsing (see the section called “Outlining”). Usually I prefer to parse at the phrase or clause level. Though I do not know that it would be useful to parse at the word level, it may be helpful for some. A traditional diagram of a sentence parses at the word level.

Following are some guidelines for producing a parsed sentence, but that is all they are—guidelines. If I see a relation in a sentence that I think is important, I use my diagram to show that relation, even if these rules do not provide a way to do so.

1. Before parsing the sentence, be sure to know the subject and verb of the sentence. That is not always as easy as it sounds, but identifying them will help us see much more clearly what the sentence is about.

2. Begin the parsing of any new sentence at the left margin of the page, unless the sentence is tightly bound to some network of subordination or parallelism in previous sentences and beginning at the left will cause that network to be overlooked.

3. Think about each verb or verbal clause in the sentence. They will usually suggest good places to make a break. In general, let each verb have its own line. For example, in Mosiah 4:11 we see this clause: "if ye have known of his goodness and have tasted of his love, and have received a remission of your sins." I might break it into these pieces:

if ye have known of his goodness and have tasted of his love, and have received a remission of your sins

4. Position the phrase containing the verb beneath the previous element of the sentence to show a particular relation:

if ye have known of his goodness and have tasted of his love, and have received a remission of your
sins

This is how I indicate that the three phrases are parallel.

5. Use devices such as lines or square brackets to show connections that we might otherwise overlook. For example, suppose we have parsed part of Mosiah 4:11 in this way:

as ye have come to the knowledge of the glory of God, or if ye have known of his goodness and have
tasted of his love, and have received a remission of your sins, which causeth such
exceed- ingly great joy in your souls, even so I would that ye should remember

Such a diagram shows much of the structure, but we may notice even more by adding some lines to clarify how these elements are related:

as ye have come to the knowledge of the glory of God, or if ye have known of his goodness and
have tasted of his love, and have received a remission of your sins, which
causeth such exceed- ingly great joy in your souls, even
so I would that ye should remember . . .

The vertical lines indicate that the first two lines are parallel to each other and to the last line. The second line shows the connection of the three verbs in the clause that begins "if ye have known."

6. Most of all, do not get too nervous about this. Remember why we are doing it: to help us understand the passage we are looking at. It may be a little difficult at first, but with practice it becomes easier.

Following is a parsing of Mosiah 4:11 as a whole. Notice that I have not only used lines to draw connections between things that we might otherwise overlook, I have also put the phrases I take to be parenthetical in square brackets and the verbs I want to focus on in boldface. Some people add color to mark features to which they want to draw attention. However it is done, parsing helps us better understand the scriptures.

Mosiah 4:11

And again I **say** unto you [as I have said before], that as ye **have come** to the knowledge of the glory of God, or if ye **have known** of his goodness and **have tasted** of his love, and **have received** a remission of your sins, [which causeth such exceedingly great joy in your souls], even so I would that ye should **remember**, [and always retain in remembrance], the greatness of God, and your own nothingness, and his goodness and long-suffering towards you, [unworthy creatures], and **humble** yourselves [even in the depths of humility], calling on the name of the Lord daily, and **standing** steadfastly in the faith of that which is to come, which was spoken by the mouth of the angel.

Context

It is not unusual for someone to use a scripture to back up a point but still leave another person doubting whether the scripture really deals with the topic. For example, someone encouraging us to be educated might quote Doctrine and Covenants 88:118: “Seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith.” In context, however, the Lord does not seem to be encouraging secular education. We ought to be educated in many things, from accounting to philosophy to auto mechanics, but this verse in the Doctrine and Covenants does not seem to tell us that.

We need not get too worked up about such uses of scripture. They are usually at least harmless, and they are often interesting and lead to good conclusions. Even scriptural authors quote other scriptures out of context. Among others, Paul frequently cites Old Testament scriptures (particularly Psalms), often with less regard for their original context than a purist might like.

Nevertheless, if, as we study, we want to better understand the scriptures, we should be sure we understand them in context. That can be a tall order. Deciding what the word *context* means is not easy. Sometimes a verse is part of a story within one book of scripture, and, of course, it is always part of that book as a whole. Each book also has a context within the scriptures. On top of that, we can always consider the historical and cultural context of a passage or book and the context of our study. Why are we interested in this question? What problems may we be dealing with? As some contemporary philosophers have pointed out, we can choose a context only from within another context that makes such a choice desirable or necessary. The conclusion: there is no such thing as *the* context of a passage of scripture.

Still, we need not worry too much about the complexity of context. If we ask ourselves which contexts are relevant to our study, we will usually be able to improve our understanding of the scriptures. This book includes several suggestions for thinking about context (see, for example, “Doing Bible Research without Knowing Hebrew or Greek,” “Cross-Referencing,” and “Outlining”) but includes little about cultural and historical context.

The LDS Bible Dictionary is a good place to start looking for answers to questions about biblical historical and cultural background. There are also a number of larger Bible dictionaries, such as the one-volume *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*¹ and the multivolume *Anchor Bible Dictionary*.² Many public libraries have sections of material on biblical background that include a variety of helpful materials, such as *Bible Manners and Customs*.³

Given the provenance of the Book of Mormon, having the same kind of material available about its history, culture, or geography is impossible. Much of what has been done is highly speculative. However, the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) has a great deal of responsible material from which to draw. Information about early LDS history—background for the Doctrine and Covenants—is available from a variety of sources.

Notes

1. Madeline S. Miller and J. Lane Miller, *Harper’s Bible Dictionary* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973).

2. See David Noel Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992).

3. Reverend G. M. Mackie, *Bible Manners and Customs* (New York: Revell Company, 1898).

Sample Study Notes for Moroni 4

[Consult the original publication for formatting of examples given in this chapter.]

This example illustrates each of the study tools discussed, bringing them together in a complete set of notes on Moroni 4. As with the examples of glancing back, the following notes are to show the kind of work we can do with a passage of scripture. Rarely would someone produce notes such as these for personal scripture study, though presumably it would not be unusual for someone to do the work that these notes represent. In the following notes, I first discuss each of the words and phrases in Moroni 4 that I thought to be important. In doing so, I use both dictionaries and glancing back to help me think about the words and phrases I am interested in. After studying the words, I look at the rhetoric of the passage and then parse it. Finally, I address the question of context.

Because the notes that follow primarily represent the details I would look at as I studied Moroni 4, I have not written a conclusion, though obviously the point of looking at these details would be to understand the ordinance of the sacrament better. These notes are intended to show how one might use the tools of this book to study a passage of scripture. Often the observations that the notes reflect would raise questions that would result in further study.

Words and Phrases

Administer (4:1)

The word *administer* does not occur in the KJV Old Testament, but it is used frequently in the Book of Mormon and occurs in the books of Moses and Abraham. Noah Webster's 1828 dictionary gives the following meanings:¹

1. "To act as minister or chief agent, in managing public affairs"
2. "To dispense"

According to my research, these usages appear in the Book of Mormon and the Pearl of Great Price with the following particulars:

1. To administer justice or the law (2 Nephi 9:46; Alma 10:14; 3 Nephi 6:29; perhaps Ether 9:23)
2. To lead in the church (Alma 17:18; Ether 9:23)
3. To give aid to the poor or others in need (Jacob 2:19; Mosiah 4:16, 26; Alma 15:18; 35:9; 60:30)
4. To give priesthood blessings (Alma 19:33; Abraham 1:2)
5. To teach (Alma 22:3, 25)
6. To conduct, though in these examples it is always used negatively (3 Nephi 6:28; 4 Nephi 1:27; Ether 8:15–17; 10:33; Moses 5:49)
7. To provide food or drink (Alma 47:18; 55:30, 32)
8. To kill (Alma 57:19; Moses 6:15)

Definitions 7 and 8 are different from the previous six in that the word *administer* can only have those meanings when coupled with other words, such as *food* and *death*.

Why does the word *administer* appear so frequently in Alma? Why do the only other references have to do with administering rites that are negative, like initiation into the Gadianton robbers? Which of the Book of Mormon and

Pearl of Great Price references have the most in common with the meaning of the word as used in Moroni 4:1?

Webster's first meaning ("to act as a minister or chief agent") and the second meaning I found in my research ("to lead in the church") are the most obvious relevant meanings for Moroni 4. However, the third through fifth of the meanings I found in my research are also helpful in thinking about the sacrament: the administration of the sacrament gives aid to those who are poor in spirit, to receive it is to receive a priesthood blessing, and to take part in the sacrament is to be taught.

Flesh and Blood (4:1)

Webster's 1828 dictionary does not have a listing for the phrase *flesh and blood*; however, it does list relevant meanings for each component. In addition to the obvious reference to soft animal tissue, Webster gives these relevant meanings for *flesh*:²

1. "The body, as distinguished from the soul"
2. "Animal nature; animals of all kinds"
3. "Men in general; mankind"
4. "Human nature"
5. "Carnality; corporeal appetites"
6. "A carnal state"
7. "The corruptible body of man, or corrupt nature" [Webster's cites 1 Corinthians 15, which uses the phrase *flesh and blood* (verse 50)]
8. "The present life; the state of existence in this world"
9. "Legal righteousness" [as one might see in the ritualistic fulfillment of obligation]
10. "Kindred"

Meanings 5 through 9 seem to depend almost exclusively on Noah Webster's personal interpretation of the New Testament. Webster cites no other references. Although we must use these definitions with some caution, Webster—even though giving what are essentially Protestant, sectarian interpretations—probably reports reasonably accurately the kinds of meanings common in early-nineteenth-century America (Joseph Smith's time) among Protestants and those of other faiths.

Moroni 4 suggests strongly to me that the primary meaning of *flesh* as used in these verses is "soft animal tissue," in other words, the body of Jesus Christ. Meanings 3 and 9 also may be relevant.

Webster gives the following meanings for *blood*:³

1. "The fluid which circulates through the arteries and veins"
2. "Kindred"
3. "Royal lineage"
4. "Honorable birth"
5. "Life"
6. "Slaughter; murder, or bloodshedding"
7. "Guilt, and punishment"
8. "Fleshly nature; the carnal part of man; as opposed to spiritual nature"
9. "Man, or human wisdom, or reason"
10. "Sacramental symbol of the *blood* of Christ"
11. "The death and sufferings of Christ"

Meanings 10 and 11 may be most important to this scripture, and they are important because of meaning 1. The other meanings are also quite interesting as well, particularly 2 through 4. It is also interesting that one meaning of *blood* is "kindred," as is also true of *flesh*.

The phrase *flesh and blood* appears in the Old Testament only once, in Deuteronomy 12:27. In the Book of Mormon it has only two meanings: the body, specifically the body of Christ (see Mosiah 7:27; Ether 3:6, 8, 9), and the ordinance of the sacrament (see 3 Nephi 18:28–30; Moroni 4:1). As far as I can tell, in all scripture the phrase *flesh and blood* occurs only fourteen times total, with the following meanings:

Body	Hebrews 2:14 Mosiah 7:27 Ether 3:6, 8, 9
Humanity	Matthew 16:17 Galatians 1:16 Ephesians 6:12
Corruption	1 Corinthians 15:50
Sacrament	3 Nephi 18:25–30 Moroni 4:1 Doctrine and Covenants 20:40

Note that the use of *flesh and blood* to mean “corruption” may overlap with other uses, such as the uses in Hebrews 2:14 (“the body”) and Galatians 1:16 (“humanity”). Note also that each instance of the phrase in the New Testament, except perhaps Hebrews 2:14, carries a negative connotation. This observation is an example of what can raise the question “Why?” and lead me to further study.

Commandments of Christ (4:1)

The phrase *commandments of Christ* does not appear in the Old Testament, though synonymous phrases do. Even in the New Testament and the Doctrine and Covenants it is uncommon. The Book of Mormon uses phrases referring to the commandments of Christ frequently, though it does not use the exact wording regularly (see, for example, 2 Nephi 33:11; 3 Nephi 30:1; Mormon 7:10; Ether 4:2; 12:22).

Eternal Father (4:3)

Eternal Father is also a phrase not found in the Old Testament, though it does appear in the Book of Mormon (see 1 Nephi 11:21; 13:40; Mosiah 15:4; 16:15; Alma 11:38–39; Mormon 6:22). Notice that Doctrine and Covenants 19 suggests that we can possibly think of *Eternal* as a name of God rather than simply a descriptor of him. In Moroni 4:3, however, it seems also to be a descriptor: the eternal rather than temporal Father.

Name of Thy Son, Jesus Christ (4:3)

Though the exact phrase *name of thy Son, Jesus Christ* does not occur often, phrases referring to the name of the Lord are used frequently, especially in the Old Testament. Two uses of the Lord’s name in scripture seem to be especially common: (1) taking Jesus’ name as an indication of membership in a holy community (see Deuteronomy 28:10; Mosiah 25:23; Alma 1:19; 46:15, 18; 3 Nephi 27:5–6; Mormon 8:38); and (2) as a sign of conversion or promised salvation (see 2 Nephi 31:13; Mosiah 5:8, 10; 6:2; Alma 34:38). Obviously, the latter use overlaps with the former. For example, Exodus 3:13–15 makes it quite clear that the name of the Lord is holy and is directly connected to the identity of the children of Israel, but the Old Testament has few references that specifically affirm that the people of Israel are those who have taken the Lord’s name on themselves.

The name of the Lord is perhaps most commonly found in scriptures that prohibit taking that name in vain (see Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 5:11; Psalm 139:20; Proverbs 30:9; 2 Nephi 26:32; Mosiah 13:15). References such as Leviticus 19:12 and Alma 46:21, as well as Jesus’ proscription in Matthew 5:33, suggest that the name of the

Lord may have been used to certify oaths between Israelites and that the command not to take the name of the Lord in vain may have had its beginnings in the context of such oaths. This commandment not to take the Lord's name in vain may also be associated with the two uses of the Lord's name mentioned above: an indication of membership in the holy community and the sign of conversion and promised salvation. The prohibition against taking the Lord's name in vain thus includes not joining the church for a vain or useless reason and not taking it as a sign of one's conversion if no such conversion has occurred.

Sanctify (4:3)

Webster's 1828 dictionary gives these meanings for *sanctify*:⁴

1. "In a general sense, to cleanse, purify or make holy"
2. "To separate, set apart or appoint to a holy, sacred or religious use"
3. "To purify; to prepare for divine service"
4. "To make the means of holiness"
5. "To make free from guilt"
6. "To secure from violation"
7. "To sanctify God, to praise and celebrate him"

We are fairly accustomed to using the word *sanctify* to mean "to make holy," and sanctification is a major theme in the Old Testament and Book of Mormon. Most contemporary readers probably focus on meanings 1 and 2. In meaning 1, sanctification is a cleansing, either ritually through ordinance (see Exodus 19:10) or through forgiveness of sin (see Alma 13:11). Obviously, these two means of cleansing are not mutually exclusive. Meaning 2, "to set apart" (see Genesis 2:3; Exodus 13:2; 19:23; Leviticus 27:16), also seems important to the word's use in Moroni 4. "To separate" may be the root meaning of the Hebrew word translated *sanctify* in the KJV Old Testament.⁵ Given what 3 Nephi 18:29 says about those who take the sacrament unworthily, meaning 6 may also be relevant.

Partake (4:3)

Webster notes that *partake* means "to take a part, portion or share in common with others; to have a share or part; to participate."⁶ That definition fits each of the scriptural uses of the word.

Prior to looking it up in Webster's 1828 dictionary, I had understood *partake* in the context of Moroni 4:3 simply to be a fancy word for *eat*, but *partake* is much more complex than that. To partake of the bread and water of the sacrament is not just to eat them, but to have a share in what that ordinance represents. The ordinance of the sacrament originated at the last supper and was immediately followed by Gethsemane and the crucifixion (see Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 3 Nephi 20:8; D&C 27:2). Given the temporal conjunction of the last supper and Christ's suffering, as well as the fact that the sacrament is an explicit memorial of Christ's sacrifice, to partake of the bread and water may be to recall such scriptures as Matthew 10:38: "And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me" (see Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; 10:21; Luke 9:23; 3 Nephi 12:30; D&C 23:6, 56:2; 112:14).

Witness (4:3)

Witness is an important Old Testament and Book of Mormon word. Webster's 1828 dictionary recognizes it as both transitive and intransitive. Used intransitively it means "to bear testimony" or "to give evidence." Used transitively, as it is in Moroni 4, *witness* means:⁷

1. "To see or know by personal presence"

2. “To attest, to give testimony to”

3. “To subscribe [an instrument] for the purpose of establishing its authenticity; as, to *witness* a bond or deed”

The third meaning seems most relevant to the sacrament prayers. By partaking of the bread and water, we act as witnesses of the authenticity of our covenant.

It seems to me that the Book of Mormon has the following meanings for *witness*:

1. To testify that something is true; to give evidence, often as part of pledging oneself (2 Nephi 27:12, 14, 22; 29:8; Jacob 4:6, 13; Mosiah 2:14; 7:21; 13:23; 18:10; 21:35; 26:9; Alma 10:12, 13; 14:11; 19:9; 30:45; 34:30, 33; 47:33; Helaman 7:21; 8:24; 9:23; 3 Nephi 7:25; 24:5; Mormon 3:16, 21; Ether 5:4; 12:6)
2. To testify that a person can be trusted (2 Nephi 31:18)
3. To see (Jacob 7:21; Words of Mormon 1:1–2; Alma 14:9, 10; 3 Nephi 7:20; 11:16)

The second meaning seems closest to what is meant in Moroni 4:3, and it is closely allied to the third meaning in the list from Webster’s dictionary.

Take upon Them (4:3)

The only clear previous reference that uses the phrase *take upon them* is Alma 46:21, where the Nephites covenant to be faithful to God at Moroni’s behest. The references cited under the heading “Name of Thy Son, Jesus Christ” are not direct uses of this phrase but are relevant.

Keep . . . Commandments (4:3)

The scriptures speak in numerous places of keeping the commandments. The *OED* suggests various meanings for *keep*,⁸ and perhaps we should remember that *keep* can mean “preserve” when we think about what it means to keep the commandments. It might be interesting to think about what it means to preserve or protect the commandments.

Rhetoric

Moroni 4:1–3 is anacoluthonic. An anacoluthon is the technical term for a passage that does not form a complete sentence. Though verse three is a complete sentence, it is part of the longer fragment that is composed of all three verses. That fragment is not a complete sentence. Polyptoton (the repetition of root words) is evidenced by *remembrance* and *remember* in verse 3. The phrase *thy Son* is an example of epistrophe: “In remembrance of the body of *thy Son*, and witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they are willing to take upon them the name of *thy Son*.” Epistrophe is the same phrase or word repeated at the end of successive phrases or clauses. The anacoluthon seems unimportant to the meaning of these verses, but the polyptoton and the epistrophe focus verse three on the remembrance of the Son.

Parsing

Below is how I parsed Moroni 4 (see page 117). The diagram marks parenthetical phrases with brackets and places them under the noun with which they are associated. All other breaks show how a phrase or clause with a major verb relates to the other phrases and clauses.

The only structural ambiguity of these verses seems to be in the last clause. I diagrammed it as one of the blessings for which the priests pray: that those who eat will remember the body of the Son, that they will witness, and that they will be willing to have the Spirit. Alternatively, the last clause may indicate the consequence of keeping the commandments. In that case it would be indented below the line “and keep his commandments which he hath given them” because it would modify that phrase.

Context

Thinking he was done with his abridgment, Moroni appended what at this point in the Book of Mormon are more or less odds and ends, material he felt would be useful to those who would receive the book. The subject matter—the gift of the Holy Ghost, the sacrament, and baptism—leads Moroni to a discussion of baptism. This in turn reminds him of some of his father’s discourses on faith, charity, baptism, and the atonement. These relatively haphazard beginnings lead him into some of the most profound discourses of scripture.

Reflecting on the various kinds of information gleaned in this study would provide me with insights into the sacrament prayer for the bread as well as questions for further study. It would also provide me with materials for essays or talks. For example, using the word study for the phrase *flesh and blood*, I might write about the sacrament as a blessing to those who are poor in spirit. Alternatively, I might use my research and thinking about *partake* to consider how the covenant of baptism, renewed at the sacrament table, commits me to suffer with those who suffer, connecting the ordinance of the sacrament to Mosiah 18:8–10:

Now, as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light; Yea and *are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort*, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life—Now I say unto you, if this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you?

After thinking about what it means to keep the commandments and how the word *keep* can also mean “preserve,” rather than writing about the sacrament, I might write about obedience. Reflecting on the phrase *name of Christ*, I might focus a baptismal talk on what it means to become a member of a holy community. Many of these ideas and topics overlap, so material appropriate for one talk or essay would be relevant to another.

Sometimes I study scripture to answer a particular question or to prepare to speak on or write about an assigned topic. More often, however, scripture study supplies me with the questions, topics, and ideas that I write about. It provides an abundance of material for me to think about and reflect on. Using the tools of this book will help our scripture study produce the kinds of information that will generate fruitful questions and insights.

Moroni 4

The manner of their elders and priests administering the flesh and blood of Christ unto the church; and they administered it according to the commandments of Christ; wherefore we know the manner to be true; and the elder or priest did minister it—

And they did kneel down with the church, and pray to the Father in the name of Christ, saying:

O God, [the Eternal Father] we ask thee in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this bread to the souls of all those who partake of it; that they may eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son, and witness unto thee, [O God, the Eternal Father] that they are willing to take upon them the name of thy Son, and always remember him, and keep his commandments which he hath given them, that they may always have his Spirit to be with them.

Notes

1. *American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828), s.v. “administer.”
2. *Ibid.*, s.v. “flesh.”
3. *Ibid.*, s.v. “blood.”
4. *Ibid.*, s.v. “sanctify.”
5. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), s.v. “קדש” (word number 1990).
6. *American Dictionary*, s.v. “partake.”
7. *Ibid.*, s.v. “witness.”
8. See *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd. ed., s.v. “keep.”

Writing a Talk from Scripture

There are many ways to write a talk. This section suggests just one way to write a talk based on the scriptures. There are as many other ways to write talks as there are people writing them, but these suggestions are a good starting point. As I gained confidence in my ability to prepare scriptural talks, I found that I developed my own way of doing so.

The first step is to choose a passage of scripture to discuss. If a passage was assigned, this part of the task is easy. If a passage was not assigned, a topic may have been suggested. In that case, the Topical Guide is a good source for finding a passage of scripture to use as the basis for a talk. Be careful not to choose a passage that is too long, or there may be too much material for the time allotted for the talk. A few verses are usually enough.

After deciding on a scripture, use the tools in this book to study that passage. Remember to focus on questions. What questions does this passage raise? What insights arose from thinking about and studying the passage in light of those questions? These insights are likely to help us decide what to discuss with the congregation. While studying the passage, focus on the verbs. They indicate what the passage is about and can give ideas of what to include in the talk.

While studying, be sure to focus on what is often called the plain sense of the passage. I look up each key word to be sure I understand what it means (I do not assume that I know; sometimes I am surprised). Look at how important words and phrases in the passage have been used in other scriptures. Be sure to know to what each pronoun refers.

If the passage uses metaphors, try various ways of understanding them to see which makes the most sense. Broadly defined, a metaphor is a way of using the language to say that something is or is like another thing, such as “he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter” (Isaiah 53:7) or “they are walking in darkness at noonday” (D&C 95:6). Ask questions. Why does the writer use that particular metaphor? What does it tell us that we might not see otherwise? How far can we extend the meaning of the metaphor? What limitations should we put on our understanding of the metaphor?

Practice reading the passage aloud several times. Try emphasizing different words and phrases to see how doing so conveys different possible meanings. Decide which reading is most interesting and helpful and focus the talk on conveying the message of that reading. As I read aloud, I think about what the passage means and try to read it so that others will understand that meaning as I read.

Remember what Joseph Smith said about understanding scripture: “I have a key by which I understand the scriptures. I enquire, what was the question which drew out the answer, or caused Jesus to utter the parable?”¹ We should ask ourselves to whom the prophet was speaking or writing and why he was doing so.

Finally, ask what the main point of the passage is. We must be careful not to decide the answer to this question until we have finished our study. If we focus on this question too early, we may just repeat what we have always heard about the passage rather than what we have learned from our own study. As I try to decide the main point of the passage, I ask myself the following questions. Can I explain to someone else what makes me think that this is the main point? I do this by pointing to specific details in the passage (words, sentences, metaphors, etc.) that show this point. Can I explain the importance of the point? Do other scriptures relate to it and reinforce it? Do other

scriptures explain the same idea in another way? What have General Authorities said about this point? What are my ideas about the point?

Before writing the talk, write a paraphrase of the passage of scripture. This can help us be sure that we understand what it says. Include as much of the meaning of the passage as possible, but remember that short paraphrases are usually more effective.

Now we are ready to begin writing. Following is a format that may be helpful for giving a talk on scripture:

1. Read the passage aloud; if it is too long, read a paraphrase of it
2. While reading, comment briefly on the meanings of any words that the audience might not understand a. It is usually best to comment after complete phrases, such as after commas, semicolons, or periods b. Keep comments short so that the audience does not lose sight of the passage as a whole
3. Explain the main point a. Explain any insights, referring occasionally to the details of the passage that sparked those insights b. Use one or two quotations from General Authorities, especially living ones, to make the point
4. Conclude by summarizing the talk a. Reread (or paraphrase) the passage of scripture b. Briefly summarize the talk c. Bear testimony (1) Be sure it is a testimony about the topic of the talk (2) Bear testimony of the gospel, Jesus Christ, the church, etc.

Though this format is brief, it can provide the basis for both short and longer talks. Most who use it after learning to use the methods described in the rest of this book find it difficult to confine their talks to five or ten minutes. The easiest place to expand a talk is in part 3 of the outline, which recommends discussing the insights gained from the passage in question. Thoughtfully expanding on insights and tying them both to the scripture on which the talk focuses and to other scriptures and words of Latter-day Saint prophets can provide a good deal of material for teaching in talks.

It is not difficult to use part 1 of this format as the format for a Sunday School, Relief Society, priesthood, or other lesson on scripture. The main difference is that in a lesson, the teacher allows the members of the class to read portions of the passage, stopping them at appropriate points and asking them to reflect on what they have read. The teacher can provide additional insights from his or her own study and careful preparation and ask the students to respond to those insights.

Note

1. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980), 5:261.

Appendix 1:

Scripture and History

The prophet Jacob tells us that “all things which have been given of God from the beginning of the world, unto man, are the typifying of [Christ]” (2 Nephi 11:4). What does he mean and how might that help us understand scriptural history? Particularly, how can we understand the scriptures well enough to see that all things do indeed typify the Savior? By better understanding what the ancients thought about the world and its history.

Ancient writers did not see the world the way we see it today. For example, we define an individual as an independent, metaphysically autonomous entity who gains knowledge of the world through power, usually in the form of skills. In contrast, ancient and western medieval writers, including writers of scripture, defined an individual in terms of how he fit into the whole, and his knowledge depended on how well he had learned to live in harmony with that whole. Thus to us Plato’s claim that knowledge is virtue seems nonsensical, but to the ancients—Greek or otherwise¹—it was perfectly reasonable, for they thought that people gained virtue by living in harmony with what is ultimate. What was ultimate varied within cultures as well as from culture to culture and time to time. For example, for Plato the ultimate was “the Good.” For Aristotle it was *ho theos* [Greek characters]. Though the best translation of that word is probably “god,” it was not the God of Judaism and Christianity; rather, it was an immaterial principle toward which all action tended. For medieval Christianity, the ultimate was God. These people and cultures disagreed about the nature of what is ultimate, but they agreed that virtue consists of living in harmony with what is ultimate.

This older view of what is ultimate thoroughly informed ancient and medieval civilization, but it disappeared rather quickly with the coming of modernism in about the early seventeenth century, a relatively recent event in world history. One way to understand the beginnings of the modern world is to see the modern world as, among other things, a result of the inability to understand the god that the apostasy placed at the center of the medieval world view. Unable to understand this god, moderns turned toward the study of this world. Instead of viewing conformity or harmony with God’s world as the test of reality, they viewed conformity with reason as reality’s test. This fundamental change made modern science and the Reformation possible. It brought technology and much of the foundation for modern democracy, but it also pushed Western culture toward making God an inessential element of human understanding. Thus the coming of modernism was a mixed blessing.

Because most of our ideas are products of modernist assumptions about the world² and because the scriptures are mostly written according to assumptions that originated before modernism, the understanding of the world that we take to be obvious (a result of the ideas of modernism) is often incongruent with that of ancient histories, particularly one of the most important histories—the scriptures. To understand ancient histories, we must have some idea of the frame of reference from within which they were written. If we try to understand them from a point of view their writers did not share, we may well misread them.

Ancient historians told the literal truth, but given their view of reality, the literal truth was not what we might think it was. By the word *literal*, they did not mean what we mean. To them, *literally* meant “by the letter.”³ For ancient and medieval writers and readers, the literal truth was not a simple chronological record of the events that occurred. It was not a set of facts that an individual could marshal for whatever purposes. They defined the literal truth as the truth revealed by the scriptural writings. Literal truth showed the order and harmony of the world, how everything fits together: the individual and the cosmos; the past, present, and future; the nations and peoples of the world;

the failings and successes of the forefathers. In sum, for the ancients, the literal truth of history was the story of what history means.

This literal view of history meant that it was not enough just to see the events of the world. One had to understand these events properly, and that understanding required what the ancients called illumination. We might interpret illumination as spiritual insight, but that interpretation runs the risk of being too narrow, for illumination included reason and study as well as the inspiration of the Spirit. Sometimes, especially during the late medieval period, the need to use reason and study to obtain illumination was perverted to mean that only the educated could read scripture. This perversion was one cause of the Protestant Reformation, and it led to an emphasis on the ability of each person to have the Spirit (and to what some Latter-day Saints believe to be an overemphasis among Protestants on the Spirit). However, when we see the problems of the perversion of illumination, it is important that we not throw the proverbial baby out with the bath water. Illumination is the need to combine study, prayer, reason, faith, and the promptings of the Spirit when studying scripture.

For the ancients and medievals, it was impossible to understand history except through illumination. In other words, the meaning of history was not added to history by interpretation; the meaning of history *was* history. From the point of view of ancient and medieval thinkers, there is no way to separate history and the interpretation of history. Although today we distinguish between the literal meaning of history (the bare events) and its figurative meaning (fitting those events into the purposes and plans of God), ancient writers of scripture did not. In fact, they could not make this distinction because in the ancient and medieval understanding of reality, there were no bare events. In the ancient understanding, events are what they are by the way they fit in with the divine. Any attempt to understand them apart from that is a distortion of reality; it omits an essential element.⁴

When we read the scriptures from a mind-set that distinguishes between literal and figurative meanings, we are already in interpretive trouble, whatever our conclusions may be. We are headed in the wrong direction and opening ourselves to misunderstanding. For example, we find it difficult to read scripture without wondering, Is that really the order in which those events occurred? How does this story fit into the other things we know about the events and places of the time? What about those events, places, and people the writer does not mention? Where do they fit in? Our understanding of the world generates these kinds of questions and interests, but because ancient writers did not write according to our understanding, we cannot expect them to answer those questions. In fact, if an ancient scriptural writer were available for a discussion, he may not even understand the questions. At least some of our puzzlement and occasional dissatisfaction with the scriptures comes from this difference between our way of understanding the world and that of the ancients. Our worry about how to harmonize the accounts of the four Gospels may be an example of this puzzlement and dissatisfaction, a result of asking questions generated by an understanding of the world that the writers of the Gospels did not share.

For an ancient writer, what does not reveal the hand of God is, in a very real sense, nonexistent. After all, transitory existence is not much of an existence. Given the ancient worldview, a history that does not reveal divine purpose is not a real history. In addition to the questions we can ask about what we can learn about the Lord and his plans in human history, we can ask questions about the scriptures and the reality that stands behind them, a reality independent of the Lord's plans. Then, having asked those two different kinds of questions, we can compare the answers. Put another way, we believe that we can ask two sorts of questions: questions about the text and questions about the events to which the texts refer. Ancient writers, however, did not ask those two types of questions. They believed that the divine text was a person's only access to the real events because it was their only access to the event at all, including its relation to God. For them, there was nothing to know beyond knowing the way the world and the Lord fit together as revealed in scripture. There was no other version of reality besides the

scriptural version; there was only the reality of scripture. Ancient writers understood only one reality: God's reality, including his understanding and intentions. Therefore, true histories of the world had to tell the full reality, not some part of it. The ancients would think that what we call the literal truth today is only part of the truth and thus insufficient and distorted as an account of reality. They ultimately related the questions that they could reasonably ask about history to the harmony of the human world and the divine world: How is that harmony achieved? How do we see it or its absence in our everyday lives? How do we see it or see its absence in the lives of others? How and what does the past teach us about the present, not just as an exemplum but as a case of exactly the same thing, such as the types and shadows of Christ? Because scriptural writings (the letters and words of scripture) answered those questions, they were considered the literal histories of the world.

With an understanding of this difference between ancient and modern views of history, we can see that while we might believe that ancient writers of scripture were not writing true history, they would have said they were. It just is not history in our sense of the word. (They would almost certainly have felt that our sense of history is anemic.) For them, history was an account of the Divine and the world. Because the world is created by the Divine, its existence and events cannot be separated from divine purposes and plans.⁵ In other words, when understood fully and properly, all events typify or structurally reveal God, particularly the Creator, Jesus Christ. To ancient Christian writers, an accurate history was one that showed that the world typifies Christ.

What are the implications of these differing views of reality for reading and understanding scripture? Until the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, readers of scripture read from the same point of view as the ancient writers of scripture. They read the scriptures as an account of the order of the world, of how history repeats that order in individual lives and events, and of how they can expect to fit into the order of the world. In other words, they viewed the scriptures as an account of how the world typifies its Creator. However, with the loss of the ancient understanding that began in the sixteenth century and was completed before the end of the seventeenth, that understanding of scripture also began to disappear. Seeing the scriptures as divine truth was no longer a natural way of seeing things; it required a shift to an unnatural perspective.⁶

Two responses to this change in worldview began to predominate. First, there was rational biblical criticism, a response that itself had two manifestations. Some people believed that the Bible (and other scripture) told the historical truth about the history of the world (though *historical* no longer meant what it had before); others were less confident that the Bible was historically accurate. They insisted that modern methods for understanding historical documents applied equally to the Bible. In spite of their disagreements, however, these two groups agreed that history is the unbiased written account of an event—we might describe it as what a movie camera would record if it were on the scene. The two groups disagreed only about the accuracy of biblical history. The second response to the change in the understanding of history that occurred with modernism was symbolic interpretation. This approach did not value historical meaning (often claiming that whether the stories are historically true is irrelevant). This response to the scriptures was less common than the first, though not uncommon.

These two ways of understanding scripture (or three, including the division in the first group) remain the most common ways of thinking about scripture among Christians today, including Latter-day Saints. But neither of these approaches is in harmony with the scriptures. Both responses—taking the scriptures literally (or condemning them because they do not fit our view of literal, scientific history) and taking them figuratively—are reactions to an impoverished understanding of the world and the scriptures. Though both responses are often portrayed as intellectual achievements, both are the result of intellectual failure.⁷

At some point, most Christians have had to enter the imbroglio over the historical accuracy of the Bible. Latter-day Saints have also questioned of the historical accuracy of the Book of Mormon and the books of Moses and Abraham, some as critics, others as advocates. Ironically, however, such questions were foreign to the writers of those books and to readers until the last two hundred years—foreign to the point of being unintelligible. If we are to understand the scriptures, we must move beyond the division of literal and figurative. We must learn to think about the world more as the ancients did. In Book of Mormon language, we must learn to see scriptural history in terms of types instead of literal versus figurative.

Finding our way out of modernism and into a more ancient view of history and reality is not easy. Our entire language and culture militate against our doing that, and we cannot simply ignore what time has wrought. But to the extent that we can thus change our frame of reference, we will find the scriptures to be a greater source of comfort, joy, instruction, and doctrine than before. A renaissance of scripture reading and understanding can occur among members of the church, people who, by virtue of the restoration and their commitment to the reality of the scriptures and the divine world found in them, are already perhaps more prepared to make such a change than any other people in the world.

We do not find our way back into the scriptures by reading about ancient history or trying to force ourselves to think about the world differently. We are unlikely to change our mind-set by ourselves. The best way to understand the world from which the scriptures came and within which they make the most sense is to read scripture as it was written to be read. In other words, the best way to get a scriptural understanding of the world and its history is to let the scriptures teach us how to understand the world and its history. The prophets wrote by inspiration, and it seems safe to assume that reading their writings will teach us how to read and understand our world and ourselves better, as long as we do not try to interpret them according to *our* view of the world. This is more difficult to avoid than we might imagine. We cannot decide ahead of time what the scriptures can teach us or what is important in them. Neither can we decide ahead of time that they are sometimes to be taken figuratively or metaphorically and sometimes literally. We need to see how they go beyond that distinction, how—if we insist on using the distinction—they are always both literal and figurative.

Notes

1. Because our intellectual heritage primarily descends from Greek thinking, it is helpful for us to look at this idea in the context of Greek thought, but the idea is also common in ancient near eastern cultures.
2. One writer has described modernism's assumption this way: "A constellation of positions (e.g., a rational demand for unity, certainty, universality, and ultimacy) and beliefs (e.g., the belief that words, ideas, and things are distinct entities; the belief that the world represents a fixed object of analysis separate from forms of human discourse and cognitive representation; the belief that culture is subsequent to nature and that society is subsequent to the individual)" (Steven Daniel, "Paramodern Strategies of Philosophical Historiography," *Epoché: A Journal for the History of Philosophy* 1/1 [1993]: 42–43). There is far too little room here to discuss the point extensively, but suffice it to say that first, few, if any, of these assumptions have remained standing in the twentieth century, and second, the failure of these assumptions does not necessarily imply the failure of their claims to truth or knowledge, as is often argued, sometimes by adherents to the current attack on modernism and sometimes by critics of that attack. For an excellent discussion of postmodernism and its relation to religion, see John Caputo, "The Good News about Alterity: Derrida and Theology," *Faith and Philosophy* 10/4 (October 1993): 453–70.

3. For more about this difference between modern and premodern understandings of history and scripture, see James E. Faulconer, "A New Way of Looking at Scripture," *Sunstone*, August–September 1995, 78–84.

4. For a fuller account of the ancient view and its change to the modern view, see James E. Faulconer and Richard N. Williams, "Reconsidering Psychology," in *Reconsidering Psychology*, ed. James E. Faulconer and Richard N. Williams (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1980) 9–60. For an account of the results of this change in the interpretation of scripture, see Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 1–85.

5. That Nephi seems to distinguish between sacred and secular writings in 1 Nephi 9:2–4 may suggest that the view I describe is wrong. However, Nephi does not speak of the two kinds of writings as sacred on the one hand and secular on the other. He says that one account is an account of "the ministry of my people" (verse 3) and the other is "an account of the reign of kings," etc. (verse 4). The view of history I am ascribing to ancient writers does not preclude these two kinds of accounts.

6. Because frontier America was slower to catch on to changes in such things, people there, including the family of Joseph Smith, still retained much of this older view of the world into the nineteenth century. As a result, I think this older view is also essential to understanding the prophecies of the restoration.

In the church today there is still something of this older view (though it is usually disguised as a form of scriptural literalism—in the modern sense of the word *literal*—one of the two alternatives created with the loss of the older worldview). But we are schizophrenic, still holding to this older view while at the same time adopting the methods and attitudes prevalent in our (apostate) culture. We may adopt those methods and attitudes positively—as a standard—or, more commonly, we may adopt them negatively—as an antistandard—but in either case they will govern our understanding of scripture.

7. Of course, this failure is not the failure of history itself. I am not saying that modern history is a failure, and we should not understand the discipline of history as the product of conceptual failure. Rather, the failure comes when we try to read and understand the scriptures as if they were modern histories. It marks a conceptual failure in most of those on both sides of the debate over whether to understand the scriptures literally (in our sense of the term, in other words, as if they were modern histories) or figuratively (from this perspective they are often treated as primitive and, therefore, failed modern histories, and they are generally valued only for their ethical content).

Appendix 2: Hebrew versus Greek Thinking

A study of the history of philosophy quickly shows that the Greeks, the creators of Western philosophy, were concerned with what does not change.¹ They believed that change is a defect, that whatever is ultimate must be static and immobile. What changes, including the world that we experience, is of a lesser order than what does not change. In Greek terms, what changes is less real.

The orthodox, traditional Christian concept of God falls within this philosophical tradition that the fixed is superior. In other words, traditional Christian ideas about God are based on Greek models of what it means to be. This is true not only of Christian theology; our culture has also modeled its vision of reality on Greek ideas, probably because Greek and the languages of Western philosophy are all Indo-European languages. In other words, the Western understanding of reality and the Western understanding of God are manifestations of the same thing: the Greek belief that whatever is ultimate must be absolutely unchanging. From this unchangeableness follow all the attributes of the traditional God (that he is static, unembodied, and atemporal) and all the attributes of whatever we take to be ultimate, whether God or not (law, for example, or reason).

Nevertheless, there are other ways to understand the world and its reality. For Christians and Jews, foremost among those other ways is the Hebrew way, which is expressed in a Semitic rather than an Indo-European language. Though Indo-European (hereafter referred to as Greek) languages focus on the static when concerned with what ultimately is, Semitic (hereafter referred to as Hebrew) languages focus on the temporal (but they mean something different by time) and dynamic.

I believe that this difference between the Hebrew way of thinking about the world and our own has had profound consequences for religious traditions in European cultures, and ours is a predominately European culture. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, a contemporary French thinker, has suggested that the God of Israel may have always escaped capture by Greek and Roman models of what it means to be.² He has also suggested that the Greek and Roman models have often proven quite disastrous, resulting, for example, in the holocaust of World War II. I take his suggestion that God is not found in Greek and Roman models of thought quite seriously. I am less sure of the truth of his suggestion that the Greek and Roman models are the basis for the holocaust, though I think his case is provocative and though another French thinker, Emmanuel Lévinas, has persuasively argued a similar case.³ In any case, I think Lacoue-Labarthe's suggestion that the Greek and Roman models of thought cannot do justice to the true and living God is not merely a possibility, it is a probability. I believe that most of what passes for talk about God, whether positive or negative, is talk about a god who is not the God of Israel.

To see briefly some of what the difference between Hebrew and Greek thought implies, consider the following ideas.

Form and Matter

In Western thought, form and matter (or an analogous distinction, genus and species) are separate. We use both concepts to describe an object, and form (genus) is more important because it is less changeable. In contrast, Hebrews do not make this distinction. If we were to make it for them, we would have to say that for Hebrews the material, not the form, is most important. In Hebrew, to change the material is to change the object. In other

words, the form/matter distinction is Greek (Indo-European) rather than Hebrew (Semitic). Unlike Greek, Hebrew does not conceive of anything immaterial or unembodied, even in thought. That concept is required, however, to make the form/matter distinction, and perhaps it is required to believe that ultimate reality is absolutely static.

Perhaps an example will clarify this difference. Suppose someone says, “All the Lord’s ways are grace and truth.” If the person is Greek, he or she assumes a genus, or form (ways), under which exist various species. The species, or matter, are the particular kinds of ways. To use Aristotelian language, they are the particular enactments of the form. For example, we assume that one species, one materialization of ways is a group of ways called the Lord’s ways and is either identical to or a subset of another species of ways, namely, the ways of grace and truth. A traditional logical diagram illustrates these relations:

[Diagram could not be included here. See the original version.]

In our language and its logic, sentences establish relationships between things. Things—material entities or analogues of material entities—are the basic units of what there is, and the sentences tell us the relations between those things. On the basis of that logic and language, we can conclude from the clause *all the Lord’s ways are grace and truth* that each category is more refined or narrow than the previous one. The sentence describes the relations among these categories, thus describing the way the various groups of things in the world are related to one another.

This kind of thinking has been and continues to be very useful. Without it, we would probably not have the scientific and technological achievements we have had. Nevertheless, it is not the only way to think about the world. For example, the Hebrew approach does not focus on things as primary, nor does it use the same method of division and hierarchy of genus and species. As a result, Hebrew sentences do not fit into this kind of diagram. The feeling that we should be able to draw a diagram, that visualization is a primary means of understanding, is another significant difference between the Greek and Hebrew ways of thinking (see the discussion of picture thinking that follows).

Because Hebrew focuses on verbs, on activities of things rather than on these things apart from their activities, Hebrew thinks of the Lord’s ways as inseparable from the characteristics of those ways. Perhaps *all the Lord’s gracious-and-true-ways* illustrates the Hebrew way of understanding this sentence. The point is that while Greek thinking is in terms of divisions between categories (each category being a different materialization of the immaterial principle that rules in the matters in question), divisions that we can apply to particular things, Hebrew thinking is in terms of the activity—the coming together and acting together—of things.

In sum, unlike the noun in English or Greek, “the action of the Hebrew noun is active, dynamic, visible, and palpable.”⁴ Because nouns represent things (whether material things or emotional or conceptual ones, such as feelings), this is also true of the difference between how Hebrews and Greeks perceive things. In Hebrew thinking, things are always visible and palpable. For us, perhaps the most important category of things are the abstract things—such as ideas and concepts—that we use to manipulate the particular entities we deal with every day. But such things are not only not active, they are also neither visible nor palpable. For us the world is the enactment of something static, pregiven, and abstract (whether a Platonic realm or the formulae of physicists), but for the Hebrew mind the world is itself physical activity. Activity in a physical body is the most fundamental category of Hebrew thought.

The Hebrew verb translated “to be” is quite different from our “to be” verb. Because of the influence of Greek thought on our own and because our language is within the same language family as Greek, for us, being is objective rather than personal, and it is ultimately static, “a datum at rest in itself.”⁵ For Hebrews, “the ‘being’ of things and of the world as the totality of things was . . . something living, active, effective. . . . In the full Old Testament sense ‘being’ is preeminently *personal being*.”⁶ As latter-day Greeks, we think of the being of persons on analogy with the being of static, inanimate objects. However, in Hebrew thinking, the being of objects is in analogy to the being of living, animate persons. Because of this different sense of what it means to be, Hebrew and Greek thinking differ on the relative importance and ontological status of changing and remaining the same. We usually think of stasis as ordinary and movement as a change from that ordinary state. In Hebrew thinking, however, remaining the same—stasis—is a particular kind of movement. For example, *to rise up* and *to stand* are the same verb, standing being a particular instance (the completed event) of rising up. “Motionless and fixed being [the being that Greek thinking always presumes is most important] is for the Hebrews a nonentity; it does not exist for them. Only ‘being’ which stands in inner relation with something active and moving is a reality to them.”⁷

The Hebrew concept of being means that to be a person is to do what persons do. The person is because he or she is alive, and life—an activity, not a state—is, for Hebrew thought, the essence of what it means to be. Thus the way something is defines what it is.

In contrast, Greek thought separates the way of being from the being. In the Greek way of thinking, I am a human being because I have the essence of being human as part of what I am, and how I live my life is irrelevant to whether I am human. In Hebrew thought, however, how something is and what it is are inseparable: “The *hayah* [being] of God is to act as God, to deal as God, and to carry into effect as God.”⁸ Though God has a particular form, for Hebrew, to be God is not necessarily to have that particular form. To be God is not to fit under a particular logical, biological, or ontological category but to live and act in a particular way, namely, the godly way. Exodus 3:14 illustrates this: “And God said unto Moses, I am that I am.”

The Word

In Hebrew, what can be said, or the word, is the truth. This word is the spoken word, the command, and includes, inseparably, the deed (thus the creative voice of God in Genesis 1). In Hebrew thinking, language is doing, an activity. The word is what is brought about in speaking; it is not what stands behind the spoken word as an abstract concept. In contrast, in Greek thinking, what can be conceived and spoken is the antecedent truth. Truth is sometimes said to be the word, but *word* in Greek means something quite different from what it means in Hebrew. The Greek word *logos* is from *legein*, “to gather.” For Greeks, the word is the gathered, ordered, reasonable content of speaking, not what is brought about in the speaking.

In short, though *word* describes the truth in both Greek and Hebrew cultures, the two languages do not mean the same by that term. An overview of the etymologies refutes the apparent sameness of the two uses of *word*. We can think of the etymologies of the Greek and Hebrew words that we can translate as “word” as each having four stages. The chart below illustrates those stages, showing how the words begin with different meanings—“to drive forward” for Hebrew and “to gather or arrange” for Greek—and end with different meanings, “deed” and “reason,” respectively. During part of the histories of these words, they seem to have had the same meanings and can thus sometimes be translated as the same word. However, the trajectory of their etymologies suggests that the similarity is misleading.⁹

Hebrew	Greek
to drive forward	to gather, arrange
to speak	to speak, reckon, think
word	word
deed	reason

The overlap of the two words at the second and third stages of these etymologies is a matter of equivocation, and this equivocation says much about what each culture thinks it means to speak. (It is interesting to consider to what degree these concepts of *word* come together in John 1:1.)

Picture Thinking and Nonpicture Thinking

As heirs of the Greeks, we believe that we think of objects by picturing them to ourselves. (Whether we do so is irrelevant. Most authorities on the question now believe that we do not, but our language, our common sense, and much everyday philosophy and psychology is built around the idea that we do.) However, as noted previously, Hebrews concentrate not on the appearance, the picturing of the thing, but on its “how.” Thinking of something, therefore, demands an understanding of how it is, not of what it looks like.

For example, the scriptures tell us how Aaron’s garments are made (see Exodus 28:1–42), not how they appear to the eye. Likewise, they describe Solomon’s temple in terms of its workmanship (see 1 Kings 6:1–30), not in terms of a picture. In each of the examples, note the emphasis on the frequent use of verbs of making rather than verbs of seeing or appearance. For example, 1 Kings 6 speaks consistently of what Solomon did. It tells us that Solomon “built” (verses 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 36), “finished” (14, 22), “covered” (15), “prepared” (19), “overlaid” (20, 21, 22, 28, 30, 32), “made” (23, 31, 33), “set” (27), and “carved” (29, 32, 35). Compare that way of thinking about objects with, for example, Homer’s description of Achilles’s armor in *The Iliad*,¹⁰ where the emphasis is clearly on visual description. Thus Boman says, “The edifice is thus not a restful harmonious unity in the beauty of whose lines the eyes find joy [as it would be for a Greek], but it is something dynamic and living, a human accomplishment.”¹¹ Similarly, “the Greeks (and we) think in the concept *face* of the person who is seen: **πρόσωπον**—face, what is looked at; but Hebrews by using *panîm* [the side turned toward one] think of the acting subject: I turn toward someone.”¹² In Hebrew, the face is not what I see but what another person turns toward me. It is what sees and speaks to me. The face belongs to a person; it is not merely an object to be seen.

The Song of Solomon gives an excellent example of how Hebrew does not think in terms of pictures and of the consequent oddities that result from this difference in thinking. Many images in the Song of Solomon seem odd. Speaking of his lover, a young man says, “Your neck is like a tower of David, built for a fortress” (4:4). He compares the lover’s neck with a fortress tower covered with shields, a thought that is hardly complimentary when understood in the Greek way (visually). It seems comparable to a serious English poem in which a young man says to a young woman he loves, “Your neck is like an oak tree.” In contrast, if the simile is conveying what the lover’s neck represents rather than its appearance, then it denotes strength of character or perhaps pride and inaccessibility. In the Hebrew understanding, the tower is dynamic—it rises, it towers, it protects. The tower is a tower because it towers, just as any object is what it is by doing what it does. Thus the tower in Hebrew poetry can designate something that does the same thing that it does, such as a young girl’s neck, even if the visual similarity is vague or incongruous. Hebrew poetry is commonly based on what an object does, not what it looks like.

This difference in the way Greeks and Hebrews understand thinking, along with the difference in the Greek and Hebrew concepts of *word*, may account for the Greek focus on seeing as the epitome of knowing and the Hebrew focus on hearing as knowing. Hebrews hear how the thing is made; they hear the voice of the living speaker. What is most important to a Hebrew is not seeing God or his works, but hearing his voice. Hearing thus becomes synonymous with obeying: “And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them” (Deuteronomy 5:1; see 6:4; 9:1; 20:3; Mark 12:29).

Space and Things

In Hebrew thought, space is different than it is in Greek thought. For Greeks and their European intellectual descendants, space is geometric. It is the open, abstract field in which boundaries occur. For Greeks, objects have boundaries just as nations have boundaries. These boundaries are the infinitely small divisions between one thing and another; in other words, a boundary is a split that severs one thing from another. A boundary, therefore, defines the thing but is not really part of it. Boundaries are *between* things, not part of them.

In contrast, Hebrew boundaries are always physical, such as mountain ranges and stone fences, and are all set by human beings. In Hebrew, boundaries are never mathematical. They do not occur between regions but within a region. The boundaries of a region are part of the region; they do not divide one region from another without being part of the region. For example, “All the borders of Egypt” means “the whole land of Egypt.”¹³ *Border* and *boundary* do not carry the same meaning in Hebrew and Greek, and this leads me to believe that space and objects are also conceived differently.

This difference in the notion of boundaries and space affects how these cultures define an object. The most common way for Greek philosophy to define a thing is in terms of its form, in other words, in terms of its outline or boundary. Thus if Hebrews do not conceive of boundaries as do Greeks, then they cannot conceive of things in the same way either. The Hebrew boundary is real and dynamic rather than an unseen limit between two things. That is why, rather than a visible shape, for the Hebrews the thing is a material entity that does something (see the discussion of the Hebrew understanding of the relations of form and matter, pages 137–39).

In addition, as modern Greeks we tend to think that the space a thing occupies is irrelevant to both the nature of space and the nature of the thing. Space and the essence of the things in space are independent of one another. My pen is the same pen no matter where it is, and it does not change space. According to Hebrew thinking, however, the place and the thing are conjoined. The place is identified with the things in it. For Hebrews, space is not an empty container waiting to be filled, as it is for Greeks. Space is identified by what it contains. For example, the space of a home is defined by the things that make a home, not empty space that contains a home. Similarly, the things in the home are at least partly defined by their location, by being within the space of the home. Likewise, the temple and its location are mutually defining.

This idea that space and objects are not independent of each other says a good deal about the significance of the promised land in Hebrew thought. In the Greek thought pattern, we think of the promised land as a land given to the Lord’s people for their possession. For the Hebrews, however, the promised land is so called because of who the people are in that land; the land is promised because of their presence. The promised land is a space that is both defined by its contents and defines its contents. The people belong in the land and must therefore live in it to be the people they are, but their belonging in the land also makes it promised.

Time and History

One result of this difference in the Greek and Hebrew concepts of space is a difference in their concepts of time. For Greeks, space is fundamental to time; in fact, in an Indo-European model of what it means to be, time is traditionally modeled on space, namely, as a series of points that follow one another in a line. For Hebrews, however, time is fundamental, not space. In Indo-European languages, time is a straight line. We can stand on it gazing forward at the future, with the past behind us.¹⁴ These points and that gaze define the tenses of our verbs, as does our attitude toward time, summed up in Aristotle's phrase, "time destroys."¹⁵ In contrast, we might well sum the Hebrew attitude up in the phrase "time gives birth."

As part of their thinking about time, Indo-European (Greek) languages have three tenses describing the three relations possible to points on the time line. In other words, these tenses reflect what we, standing in the present, can see: this moment, before this moment, and after this moment. On the other hand, Hebrew has essentially two tenses, corresponding to the completeness or incompleteness of the events that make up time, not to past, present, and future. Hebrew tenses refer to events: that which has been concluded and that which has not been concluded, or roughly the equivalent of the perfect and the imperfect tenses. Interestingly, when Hebrew does correlate seeing to time, it speaks of the past as before and the future behind.¹⁶

The two tenses in Hebrew exist because, for Hebrew, the time line is not paramount, nor can it be conceived as a circle, as is sometimes done to portray other non-Indo-European concepts of time.¹⁷ Instead, rhythm, ongoing related events rather than something seen, is the model for thinking about time. The rhythms of the seasons are one example, along with the rhythms of life and death and the rhythms of dance.

This difference between the Greek and Hebrew ways of thinking about time is illustrated by the different approaches to the New Year. For us it is the death of the old and the beginning of the new. However, for Hebrews it is the return of the beginning in a promise of what is coming. If we conceive time as a rhythm rather than a line, any one moment contains all previous moments and any coming moments, in much the same way that a rhythm consists of what has come before any point in the rhythm and what comes after it. We can conceive of spatial and, therefore, Indo-European temporal moments as discrete and independent. The existence of one particular moment of time can be considered apart from any other moment, just as any one point on a line can be separated from every other point on it. The moments of rhythm, however, are not discrete and remain part of the rhythm. They require (in fact, already include) the past and future in order to exist.

To illustrate, one beat of a drum is not part of a rhythm; a drum beat is part of a rhythm only in its relation to other beats. Moments in a rhythm are meaningful only in relation to what has come before and what will come after. Consequently, while for us space is what contains us, our lives, and everything about us, for Hebrews the "container" is time. For us, things and their qualities are metaphysically paramount; for Hebrews, events and their meanings are paramount.¹⁸

When considering the past, this difference between Greek and Hebrew ways of thinking is telling. As latter-day Greeks, we think of the past as gone forever, and as we see in Augustine's *Confessions*, the passing of time becomes a difficult problem for Western thinkers.¹⁹ The problem is especially acute for Christians, for if the past is gone once and for all, redemption and atonement are incomprehensible. The Greek Christian may think, "I have sinned. Nothing can change that, and any recompense, whether by me or by God himself, is a poor substitute for what

should have happened in the first place.” In the Western mind, history is a series of nows that disappear forever, and, once gone, they cannot be changed or redone. The form of events is fixed forever by the passing of time.

In contrast, if we conceive time rhythmically, as the Hebrews do, then the past can change. The previous moment of the rhythm still occurred, but the past exists and has its meaning only in relation to the continuation of the rhythm, only in relation to the present and future of the rhythm. As I noted earlier, the relation of one drum beat to the previous and subsequent beats determine the rhythmic meaning of any beat of a drum. Thus a present beat determines the rhythmic meaning of a past beat as much as the beats that came before determine the rhythmic meaning of a present beat. In rhythm, causation runs backward as well as forward. Similarly, a rhythmic concept of time means that something that happens now can affect the being of something that occurred previously.

The biblical concept of time is rhythmic and is shared by the writers of the Book of Mormon. In fact, the Book of Mormon writers seem to even more clearly conceive of time as rhythmic. The Book of Mormon speaks of types and shadows and rhythms of time that repeat themselves in new ways but also remain the same. Our understanding of dispensations is another example of this rhythm.

This difference between the Greek and Hebrew understandings of time may also explain the visual/aural difference between Greek and Hebrew thinking, or perhaps the visual/aural difference explains the time one. Seeing occurs in space and immediately. Whatever I see, I see all at once, as a whole. Thus it is not surprising that Indo-European languages, which understand the world and its contents in terms of abstract space, understand time in terms of abstract points, the smallest unit of abstract space. It thus follows that this thinking understands what is ultimate as static. In contrast, hearing is essentially temporal. It is an event and is necessarily sequential. Consequently, Semitic languages, in which the continuing event is essential to time, understand space and things in terms of events rather than in visual terms.

Given these differences, it is reasonable to conclude that Hebrew thought does not make the universal/particular distinction as Greek thought does. For example, in Hebrew, *Adam* is both the individual person and humanity, *ish* is both man and men, *rekhebh* is both one chariot and many chariots. The individual is neither an isolated particular excerpted from the class nor an instance of the general form of the class. Though it is contrary to how we normally think, for Hebrew, the individual is the class as a whole. (This idea has some reflection in the various “-ites” in the Book of Mormon.)

Because we make the distinction between universal and particular, we cannot see how Adam can be both one person and all people. We resort to the distinction between the literal and the figurative as one way to account for such uses, but that distinction is merely something we apply to the text to help us make sense of it. What is really at work in Hebrew texts is a different way of seeing things, one that we cannot conform to our own, one that challenges the ways of understanding the world that we take to be perfectly obvious. In Hebrew, Adam, the individual, is adam, all of humanity. He is a type of all, just as each person is a type of Adam (as well as Eve; see Genesis 5:2). According to such a way of thinking, the division between universal and particular or genus and species or form and matter is not necessary or useful. In fact, it is not only useless, it also gets in the way of other understandings, preventing us from making connections and understanding things we could otherwise understand.

Conclusion

When Greek thinking is untempered, when confident (or perhaps overconfident) of its own approach and insistent that it is the only approach, Greek thinking confuses Hebrew thought, making it mysterious at best and irrational

at worst. That overconfidence locks us out of an experience of the world that is quite different from that which we take to be ordinary, but an experience that is at least as rich. When it comes to thinking about divine things, I think it not too much to say that, by itself, Greek thinking locks us out of an understanding of God as a living and acting being, handing us over to the theology of a static and immutable, in other words, dead, god.

To the extent that we continue to recognize the prophets and latter-day revelation and to the extent that we are taught by scripture rather than merely by the thinking inherent in our language and culture, we can escape the fate of Greek thought. But we must be on guard, for our language will often deliver us over to that fate unawares. I believe that we most often mingle the philosophies of men with scripture when we try to understand scripture from the understanding of the world given to us in what we call common sense. Common sense is much more dangerous than any specific philosophical doctrine because it combines philosophical positions that have become commonplace and taken for granted with the effects of language, such as the effect that Indo-European languages, which focus on nouns, have on Indo-European thinking, which takes the material thing to be metaphysically fundamental.²⁰ Common sense is more dangerous because it seems natural, as if there were no alternative. We seldom think about what common sense tells us is true or how it determines the way we think about the world. Prophets and revelation provide us with a considerable safeguard against common sense and the concepts built into our language. Careful attention to scripture and the way that those who wrote scripture thought provides another safeguard.

Notes

1. The discussion that follows depends heavily on Thorlief Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961). I do not agree with Boman on every point. In particular, I think he is wrong to believe that Greek thought is equally as helpful as Hebrew for understanding biblical ideas. In fact, as will be apparent, I think Greek thinking misleads us seriously. Nevertheless, I find much of what Boman says insightful and, so, follow his thinking on many points.

2. See Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art and Politics*, trans. Chris Turner (Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 37, 100.

3. See Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Boston: Nijhoff Publishers, 1979); *Otherwise than Being; Or, Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Boston: Nijhoff Publishers, 1981).

4. Boman, *Hebrew Thought*, 72.

5. *Ibid.*, 45.

6. *Ibid.*, 45–46.

7. *Ibid.*, 31.

8. *Ibid.*, 47.

9. See *ibid.*, 68.

10. Homer, *The Iliad* 19.369–86.

11. Boman, *Hebrew Thought*, 76.

12. *Ibid.*, 107.

13. *Ibid.*, 157.

14. See *ibid.*, 145.

15. Aristotle, *The Physics* 221a.30.

16. This may explain the odd wording of Alma 13:1: "I would cite your minds forward to the time when the Lord God gave these commandments unto his children."

17. Mircea Eliade, for example, uses the analogy of the circle (*The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask [New York: Harper and Row, 1961], 70) to discuss other conceptions of time, as does Joseph Campbell (*The Hero with a Thousand Faces* [New York: Pantheon, 1949], 30ff.).

18. Some contemporary philosophers, for example, Martin Heidegger, have argued that to make space and objects paramount is the essence of metaphysics. This would seem to mean that Hebrew thought is nonmetaphysical. Other contemporary philosophers, for example, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, have argued that metaphysics is inescapable. For now, we will ignore that problem.

19. See Augustine, *Confessions* 10.

20. Commonplace philosophical positions and the understanding of things given in our language are intertwined, each strengthening the effects of the other.

Rhetoric

In ordinary usage, the word *rhetoric* often has negative connotations. For example, we speak of empty rhetoric and mere rhetoric, and we insult someone if we speak of what they say as rhetoric. It is no compliment to say that a politician uses rhetoric. However, in spite of such connotations, the word has a positive meaning as well. Rhetoric is indispensable; it relates words and ideas to each other and helps us create more ideas. We are all familiar with logic and grammar, two other ways of relating words and ideas to each other. Grammar relates words to each other to form meaningful phrases and sentences. Logic connects the ideas of sentences to each other to form arguments and to allow us to evaluate how various ideas relate to each other. In addition to the grammatical and logical relations of words, sentences, and ideas, there are rhetorical relations. These rhetorical relations are various patterns of words and ideas that we use to create a variety of effects. For example, repeating the same word at the beginning and end of a sentence is using the rhetorical pattern called anadiplosis.

Since the first work of John W. Welch on chiasmus in the Book of Mormon,¹ many Latter-day Saints have learned about rhetoric, particularly the rhetorical form (or figure) called chiasmus. Chiasmus is only one of many rhetorical forms that inform language, including scriptural language. Those familiar with chiasmus know that it can call our attention to a part of scripture that we might otherwise overlook. Sometimes, for example, a chiastic pattern can help us see the focal point of a chiastically structured passage of scripture. Other rhetorical patterns create other sorts of emphases.

We speak grammatically without instruction, but a grammar class can help us better understand how grammar affects meaning. Almost everyone thinks, speaks, and writes logically most of the time, but logic classes help us evaluate our thinking better. Similarly, we use rhetoric all the time, but explicit instruction about rhetoric can help us understand more about what we hear and read.

A number of handbooks discuss rhetoric, and many are explicitly for those interested in scripture reading. In my opinion, one of the best—it is reasonably complete, carefully written, and oriented to an LDS audience—was written by Camille Williams. It is called *Rhetoric Workbook*.² The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) has also published a Book of Mormon with a variety of rhetorical figures noted and formatted by Donald W. Parry.³

The rhetorical patterns in a scripture can often indicate what the writer is doing. For example, in Romans 1:5 Paul speaks of receiving “grace and apostleship” from Jesus Christ. That may be what is called a pleonastic pair, which is two nouns connected by *and* to express one idea. Genesis 1:2, for example, says that earth was “without form, and void.” Rather than saying the earth was “not only without form, it was also void,” this phrase may say something like this: “without form; in other words, void.”

Sometimes a pleonastic pair indicates a modifying relationship between two words. For example, Genesis 3:16 includes the phrase “thy sorrow and thy conception.” This seems to be a pleonastic pair and could also be translated “the sorrow of thy conception.” Thus we can ask ourselves whether the pair of words “grace and apostleship” is a pleonastic pair. If so, Paul may be identifying God’s grace with his own call to the apostleship, or he may be saying “the grace of apostleship.” Remember, however, that our interest in whether Paul is using a pleonastic pair in Romans 1:5 is really an interest in understanding what he says.

There are many rhetorical figures, and each has several possible effects. It is not possible to include a detailed discussion of all the rhetorical figures here, but Williams's book as well as Parry's can help us begin to see how to approach rhetoric in the scriptures. Following are a few commonly mentioned rhetorical figures and a scriptural example of each:⁴

Chiasmus. The repetition of ideas in inverted order (a-b-b-a):

A He *trusted* on the Lord B that he would *deliver* him: B let him *deliver* him, A seeing he *delighted* in him.
(Psalm 22:8)

The ideas are similar, though the language may not be similar.

Antimetabole. The repetition of words in the order a-b-b-a. It is a form of readily identifiable chiasmus, as in the repetition of *eateth* and *eateth not* in Romans 14:3:

A Let not him that *eateth* B despise him that *eateth not*; B and let not him which *eateth not* A judge him that *eateth*.

Parallelism. The repetition of similar ideas in different though semantically parallel phrasing. Usually found on the clause level. Note the following parallelism from Doctrine and Covenants 4:7:

Ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

Polyptoton. The use of two or more words that have the same root but different affixes or slight variations. Romans 9:21 (*honour* and *dishonour*) is an example of polyptoton:

Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto *honour*, and another unto *dishonour*?

Epanalepsis. Unpatterned repetition of a word, phrase, or clause. The repetition of *see* and *hear* in Ezekiel 12:2 are examples:

Which have eyes to *see*, and *see not*; they have ears to *hear*, and *hear not*.

Anaphora. The repetition of a word or words at the beginning of successive phrases, clauses, sentences, or verses. The repetition of *not in* in Romans 13:13 is anaphora:

Let us walk honestly, as in the day; *not in* rioting and drunkenness, *not in* chambering and wantonness, *not in* strife and envying.

Epistrophe. The repetition of a word or words at the end of successive phrases, clauses, sentences, or verses. The last two uses of *unclean* in Romans 14:14 is epistrophe:

I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him that esteemeth any thing to be *unclean*, to him it is *unclean*.

Anadiplosis. The final word or phrase of a clause repeated at the beginning of the next clause, as in Romans 6:10:

For in that *he died, he died* unto sin once: but in that *he liveth, he liveth* unto God.

Climax. A series of phrases or clauses (frequently in parallel syntax) joined by anadiplosis or near anadiplosis, as in Romans 5:3–5:

And not only so, but we glory in *tribulations* also: knowing that *tribulation* worketh *patience*; And *patience, experience*; and *experience, hope*: And *hope* maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Epanadiplosis. A word or words repeated at the beginning and end of a phrase, clause, sentence, or verse—as in Romans 13:7:

Render therefore to all their dues: *tribute* to whom *tribute* is due; *custom* to whom *custom*; *fear* to whom *fear*; *honour* to whom *honour*.

Antithesis. The conjoining of two pairs of contrasting elements in parallel syntax or near parallel syntax, as in Romans 9:13, for example:

Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

Interrogation. A series of questions, either to oneself or someone else, as in Job 6:12–13:

Is my strength the strength of stones? or is my flesh of brass? Is not my help in me? and is wisdom driven quite from me?

Notes

1. See John W. Welch, “Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies* 10 (autumn 1969): 69–84.
2. Camille Williams’s *Rhetoric Workbook* is unpublished. Copies can be obtained by contacting Camille Williams c/o James E. Faulconer, Philosophy Department, 3196 Jesse Knight Humanities Building, BYU, Provo, Utah 84602.
3. See Donald W. Parry, *The Book of Mormon Text Reformatted according to Parallelistic Patterns* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1992).
4. See Williams, *Rhetoric Workbook*.