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Melodie Moench Charles and the Humanist Worldview

Reviewed by Ross David Baron

The title of Melodie Charles's article is actually misleading. It gives the impression that a "theological interpretation of the person and work of Christ,"¹ as explicated in the Book of Mormon, will take place. This does not occur. What in fact eventuates is a recitation of isolated scriptures² to support what is evidently her preconceived notion about the Book of Mormon, namely, that it was not translated by the gift and power of God, but was the work of Joseph Smith.

This conclusion is never stated overtly but is implied throughout. Her stated thesis is that Book of Mormon christological concepts "or doctrines concerning Christ differ from the christology of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints since at least

Robert Warrick, L. Ara Norwood, and Kevin P. Kirkland offered invaluable help with this paper.

¹ Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1986), s.v. "Christology."

² For example, she cites 2 Nephi 31:10-16 only once. The citation, however, is in a footnote under the heading "Jesus as giver of the law," 84 n. 1. These are verses, however, that deserve her exegesis as the Father and the Son are clearly seen as distinct beings. Also, 1 Nephi 11:11 is never mentioned; this verse distinctly shows a separate being as the Holy Ghost.

the 1840s" (p. 82).³ This assertion is based on her exegesis of the text with the intent to show that the Book of Mormon reflects the notions Joseph Smith had about the Godhead at the time of its translation. This shows, according to Charles, that the Book of Mormon was not translated from ancient plates, but is a modern work of fiction. She says, furthermore, that "some people—including committed RLDS and LDS Mormons [*sic*], and scholars without a bias for or against Mormonism—have suggested . . . that the Book of Mormon was not a record written by Near Eastern emigrants . . . but rather was authored by Joseph Smith" (p. 94). However, we never find out who these "committed" and "unbiased" RLDS and LDS people are.

Her footnotes are described by John A. Tvedtnes as "impressive,"⁴ and are truly that. The problem is that many are inaccurate. As an example, in footnote 2 on page 84 she cites Mosiah 3:35; however, Mosiah chapter 3 has only 27 verses. Also, in footnote 26 (p. 99) under the heading "Christ as God of Book of Mormon people," she cites 4 Nephi 3:21; however, 4 Nephi only has one chapter. There are many more inaccuracies.

One more item as a preface to the heart of her arguments: She opens by quoting Mosiah 15:1–4, saying that she sees no way to "reconcile Abinadi's words with the current Mormon belief that God and his son Jesus Christ are separate and distinct beings" (p. 81). Her understanding therefore of these verses is that they are an interpretation by Abinadi of the unity of the Father and the Son; this is her interpretation. Robert L. Millet states, "This statement by Abinadi has very little to do with the Godhead—specifically with Elohim and Jehovah. It has very much to do with the person and powers of Christ. It is a statement of how his divinity is melded with his humanity to make redemption of the human

³ This is not a new accusation; in fact it appears fashionable to make this claim. One recent example is James R. White, in *Letters to a Mormon Elder* (Southridge, MA: Crowne, 1990), 173; reviewed by L. Ara Norwood in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 5 (1993): 317–54. Also, in 1988 Robert L. Millet addressed this generally in "Another Testament of Jesus Christ," in *The Book of Mormon: First Nephi, The Doctrinal Foundation*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr. (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 1988), 168–69.

⁴ John A. Tvedtnes, review of Melodie Moench Charles, "Book of Mormon Christology," in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6/1 (1994): 16.

family available.”⁵ This is not just the privately held view of Robert L. Millet. He is reflecting to one degree or another the understanding of these verses by other scholars and apostles. Appendix B is a comparison of the interpretations of these verses by Richard D. Draper, Bruce R. McConkie, Monte S. Nyman, Robert L. Millet, and *the Book of Mormon (Religion 121–122) Student Manual*.⁶ All of these authors disagree with the way in which Charles has interpreted the Mosiah 15:1–4 text.

Her study is broken down into four areas. These supply her four basic arguments. Each of the following numbers corresponds to the four parts of her article. Her reasoning is as follows:

1. The Book of Mormon contains detailed before-the-fact prophecies about Jesus Christ that are unparalleled in scripture. Also, the abundance of details about his life before he came is nonessential.

2. The expectations of the New Testament people concerning the Messiah were extremely different from those in the Book of Mormon.

3. The doctrine of the Godhead in the Book of Mormon closely resembles Sabellianism. The current teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints regarding the Godhead are not Sabellianistic. The difference is attributed to Joseph Smith’s idea about the Godhead at the time of his translation.⁷

4. The Mormon doctrine about Jehovah being Jesus Christ and thus the God of the Old Testament is not supported in the Bible.

It must be remembered that the arguments outlined herein reflect her worldview.⁸ A person’s worldview drastically affects

⁵ Robert L. Millet, “By What (Whose) Standards Shall We Judge the Text? A Closer Look at Jesus Christ in the Book of Mormon,” *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6/1 (1994): 187–99.

⁶ See also Rodney Turner, “Two Prophets: Abinadi and Alma,” in *Studies in Scripture*, ed. Kent P. Jackson, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 7:244–46; see also Joseph F. McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), 2:225–30.

⁷ Charles does not address what she says she will address. I have stated here what she in fact does argue.

⁸ Other words used to describe “worldview” are *metaethic*, *cosmology*, *metaphysics*, *paradigm*, or *mental model*.

beliefs about God, the afterlife, our purpose in life, ethics, and the way supernatural events are explained. Charles did not openly reveal her cosmology; however, there are clues in her paper. For example, regarding the New Testament, she states, "After the fact, believers tried to find Old Testament scripture to relate to unexpected aspects of Jesus' life" (p. 92). That is one way to look at it. An alternative worldview would be that believers, inspired by the Holy Ghost, were enlightened in their understanding of the Old Testament and found prophecy fulfilled in the life of Jesus. She specifically notes that the apostle Paul made declarations about Christ and did not cite scripture in support of his statements (p. 92). This gives us insight into what she believes about prophets and revelation both ancient and modern. Her worldview precludes anyone from having knowledge of the future or enlightenment on the past if it is derived from God.⁹ Her exegesis of 1 Corinthians 10:1-4 on page 109 is a classic example of her worldview; namely, Paul "[added] details to the Old Testament story" (p. 109). Her perception is that Paul had to be adding his understanding to the Old Testament account; the possibility that he was inspired is not addressed. (Her analysis of 1 Corinthians 10:1-4 will be discussed in detail in part IV of this paper.) The lens through which we perceive the world colors the way we look at Christianity and Mormonism; her lens, however, is tinted with secularism and humanism. This must be kept in mind throughout.¹⁰

⁹ Louis Midgley makes much the same point about Dale Morgan and Fawn Brodie regarding their naturalistic explanations for Mormon history. "Their naturalistic perspective rested upon the assumption that there is no God, hence claims to divine revelation must be explained as instances of conscious fraud, perhaps eventually mixed with elements of delusion or illusion." Louis Midgley, "The Challenge of Historical Consciousness: Mormon History and the Encounter with Secular Modernity," in *By Study and Also by Faith*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 2:528 n. 6.

¹⁰ Her type of view is well summarized by Hugh Nibley: "[She] cannot conceive how anyone could possibly acquire knowledge by any method other than [hers]. [She] cannot believe that any man has experienced anything which [she] has not experienced. . . . 'I have never seen a vision,' says the scholar, 'therefore, Joseph Smith never had one. I have seen dreams, therefore, I will allow him that.'" Hugh Nibley, *The World and the Prophets*, 3rd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1987), 31.

I

One of the thinly veiled premises of her first argument is that there really cannot be detailed before-the-fact prophecy. According to Charles's thinking, prophets are prophets of their time; they discuss issues that are familiar to them and their cultural surroundings. Before-the-fact prophecies do not fit into her worldview; therefore, they were made up by Joseph Smith and retrojected into supposedly earlier times. Her cosmology is similar to that of Rudolph Bultmann, who demythologized the events of the New Testament and the miracles of Jesus, including his atonement and resurrection.¹¹ Nevertheless, her contention that the prophecies in the Book of Mormon are unparalleled is not true, even though certain Bible critics feel the same as she does. Norman K. Gottwald, for instance, said the following:

So far as we can determine, when [the prophecies are] studied in their contexts apart from dogmatic preconception, no prophet leaped across the centuries and foresaw the specific person Jesus of Nazareth. It is a plain violation of historical context to think that they did so and in practice those who interpret the prophets as predictors of Jesus obscure the settings in which the prophets functioned.¹²

People like Charles also advance the case, for example, that there is a First Isaiah and a Deutero-Isaiah. Why? One of the main reasons is because of Isaiah's detailed before-the-fact prophecies. Victor L. Ludlow, an expert on Isaiah, rejects the Deutero-Isaiah theory. In relation to the later chapters of Isaiah he says they "mention specific events and people (for example, King Cyrus of Persia [Isaiah 44–45]) that did not exist *until centuries after Isaiah*. Since the historical critics [like Charles] hold that no individual can foretell the future, they believe that these chapters must have been written by someone contemporary with or later than the

¹¹ Rudolph Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (New York: Scribner, 1958).

¹² Norman K. Gottwald, *A Light to the Nations: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), 275.

person and events described.”¹³ A figure in the Book of Mormon confronted believers with much the same argument. He spoke “against the prophecies which had been spoken by the prophets, concerning the coming of Christ” (Alma 30:6). He further stated that the believers were “bound down” by this belief, which he termed a “foolish and a vain hope” (Alma 30:13). Also, “For no man can know of anything which is to come. Behold, these things which ye call prophecies, which ye say are handed down by holy prophets, behold, they are foolish traditions of your fathers” (Alma 30:13–14).

Nevertheless, as mentioned above, Isaiah 44–45 contains clear, detailed, before-the-fact prophecies that were fulfilled hundreds of years later. Zechariah also, approximately 500 years before the fact, prophesied that “thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass” (Zechariah 9:9). This prediction is specific and detailed with complete fulfillment in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ as recorded in Matthew 21:6–11, Mark 11:7–11, Luke 19:35–38, and John 12:12–18. Micah, approximately 700 years before the event, said, “But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah . . . out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel” (Micah 5:2). This is a clear announcement, more than half a millennium before the fact, of the location of the birthplace of the Lord. Even the chief priests and scribes knew that this specific and detailed before-the-fact scripture dealt with the Lord, for they quoted it to Herod (Matthew 2:4–6). The Savior himself quoted Isaiah 61:1–2 and said, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears” (Luke 4:21; cf. 4:16–21). This is not a case of believers “after the fact” applying prophecy to the life of Jesus. This is Jesus applying a prophecy that was precise and particular, and uttered seven hundred plus years before. Therefore, suffice it to

¹³ Victor L. Ludlow, *Isaiah: Prophet, Seer, and Poet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982), 542, emphasis added. Ellis Rasmussen says, “The ‘higher critics’ of the Bible commonly reject this as a prophecy by Isaiah [Isaiah 44:28–45:4] because he lived centuries before Cyrus, who is called by name here”; Ellis T. Rasmussen, *A Latter-Day Saint Commentary on the Old Testament* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993), 526.

say that her avowal that the prophecies in the Book of Mormon are unparalleled is unfounded.¹⁴

She discusses revelations in the Book of Mormon relative to the name of the Lord. "They received revelation that his name would be Jesus, Christ, or Jesus Christ" (pp. 85–86). Then in footnote 6 (p. 86) she states, "but 'Christ' was not Jesus' *name*" (emphasis in original). The Hebrew word for name is "shem" which also means the Name (as a designation of God) and fame and glory.¹⁵ This is precisely the way it was used in Isaiah 7:14, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his *name* Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14, emphasis added). Jesus was not known by the *name* Immanuel during his life but this reflected the translation of the word *name* to mean "the Name as the designation of God." In like manner Isaiah uses the same Hebrew word in chapter 9 verse 6: "and his *name* shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (emphasis added). Does she object to this prophecy as well because his *name* was not Wonderful and he was not known by the other prophetic appellations during his life? Of course these names indicated his fame, glory, and status as God. This is what the angel revealed to Jacob in 2 Nephi 10:3 when he said, "for in the last night the angel spake unto me that this [Christ] should be his name."

Charles makes many declarations about what Book of Mormon people believed.¹⁶ For example, she posits that Book of Mormon people did not really believe that Jesus "actually *was* mortal during his ministry on earth" (p. 84, emphasis in original). She then quotes *part* of 1 Nephi 11:28 about how this "supramortal" Jesus would minister in "power and great glory." However, she fails to cite the rest of the scripture; there it states that Book of Mormon people understood that "they cast him

¹⁴ Appendix A lists many Old Testament prophecies concerning his lineage and birth, mortal ministry, atonement and death, resurrection and divinity.

¹⁵ *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Nelson, 1980), 117.

¹⁶ At one point she says that Book of Mormon people "living long before Jesus was born . . . knew that . . . [a] new star would appear when Jesus was born" (p. 85). "Long before" is here implicitly defined by Charles as six years. The only record of their knowing of a star was the prophecy of Samuel the Lamanite in Helaman 14:5.

[Jesus] out from among them" (1 Nephi 11:28). That does not sound like a "supramortal." She then states that "Book of Mormon people never *encountered* him as finite in any way" (p. 85, emphasis in original). But in Mosiah 3:7 Book of Mormon people *encounter* Jesus as having pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue. These are very mortal and finite descriptions. Book of Mormon people also knew that he would be a helpless child, that he would be "taken by the people," "judged of the world," and "lifted up upon the cross and slain" (1 Nephi 11:20, 32–33). Only mortals can die. Contrary to her statements, the faithful in the Book of Mormon believed, encountered, and knew that Jesus would come to the earth as God but that he was mortal during his life.

She caps off this section of her article by saying that the abundance of particulars in these prophecies for the Book of Mormon people are "nonessential details" and "have nothing to do with the redemption of humankind" (p. 89). Furthermore, these details, for Book of Mormon people, "would be only trivia" (p. 90). The details she is speaking of refer to the specifics of his birth and to the fact that the Savior would be accused of being possessed by the devil. These "nonessential details" are also recorded in the gospels. Her point is that the people of the Book of Mormon had them in advance in specifics that the New Testament inhabitants did not have.¹⁷ She argues that people in the Book of Mormon did not need them because they did not need to recognize the Savior when he came as a mortal. This argument, however, is beside the point. In fact, these prophecies and their details were there directly to increase the faith of the people of the Book of Mormon. They would not be given the opportunity of having the mortal Savior among them. The prophecies would allow them to see the mortal side of his life; he had a mother, he would be born in a specific location at a specific time, and he would be falsely accused—far from nonessential and trivial. It

¹⁷ The prophecies the New Testament people had are close to the prophecies of the Book of Mormon. For example, they knew the Savior would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14), they knew he would be born at Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), and they knew he would have a mortal mother (Isaiah 9:6). They also knew things that Book of Mormon prophets did not record. For example, the Savior would be taken to Egypt as a child (Hosea 11:1).

emphasized to them that Jesus the Christ was not a metaphor, myth, or fable.¹⁸

She then points out that these prophecies were known to Joseph Smith as he had them in the Bible and, therefore, "they are useless as evidence for the Book of Mormon's historicity" (p. 90). Is someone claiming that they are evidence for the Book of Mormon's historicity? By this same logic, do the details of Mary's beauty then act as evidence for the Book of Mormon's historicity since they are in the Book of Mormon but not in the New Testament? She is saying that if the Book of Mormon contains a similar prophecy to the New Testament then the Book of Mormon is false because anyone could have plagiarized it. But on the other hand, if the Book of Mormon has a prophecy or detail not found in the New Testament, such as the prophecy about Mary (1 Nephi 11:13), then this is evidence that the Book of Mormon is false because such a thing is not mentioned in the New Testament. In other words, Charles's reasoning is one eternal round! The prophecies are, in fact, confirmations of the truthfulness of the Bible and they fulfill the intent of the Book of Mormon as a second witness for Jesus Christ. The title page of the Book of Mormon says that one of its purposes is for the "convincing of the Jew and Gentile that JESUS is the CHRIST" (Title Page). Also, Mormon said, "For behold, this [the Book of Mormon] is written for the intent that you may believe that [the Bible]" (Mormon 7:9). The before-the-fact prophecies are shown to have abundant parallels. Moreover, the details of the prophecies were just as essential to the faith of the ancient inhabitants of America as they are to the millions of believers in the New Testament.

¹⁸ Robert Warrick says, "In a similar vein, too many details would have hurt the Jews because then little or no faith would have been required to accept him. A twenty-volume set all about Christ would not have hurt the Nephites at all because they did not have to accept the kid down the street as their Savior. When Christ came to *them*, it was not as a baby but as a resurrected being, miraculously descending from the heavens." Personal correspondence to Ross David Baron, 20 January 1995, 12.

II

The core to her second argument is that the New Testament expectations of the Messiah were drastically different from the expectations held by the people of the Book of Mormon. The implication is, of course, that the Book of Mormon was not an account of historical persons receiving revelation about Jesus Christ, but rather a work of fiction by Joseph Smith. The logic is that the Book of Mormon contains information about Jesus that is only found in the New Testament or in the writings of theologians after A.D. 33; writers in the Book of Mormon possessed knowledge about Jesus that antedates the New Testament and the theologians, therefore, the things known by pre-Christians in the Book of Mormon "are anachronisms that mar the book's credibility as an ancient document" (p. 94). The structure of her argument is valid; nevertheless, it is fallacious. It is a classic example of a circular argument. A circular argument "surreptitiously assumes the conclusion that it is trying to prove."¹⁹ The a priori assumption is that the Book of Mormon is not an ancient document and her conclusion is that the Book of Mormon is not an ancient document. For example, she cites Mark Thomas, who posits that the concept of an infinite atonement had "its origin" with a twelfth-century writer (p. 94).²⁰ Therefore Amulek, in approximately 74 B.C., could not have discussed this principle (see Alma 34) "because logically Amulek should not have been exposed to [it]" (p. 94). She anticipates the fallacy of this argument by citing Stephen D. Ricks, who said that arguments similar to this "refuse [the Book of Mormon] any primary evidentiary value" (p. 95).²¹

¹⁹ K. Codell Carter, *A Contemporary Introduction to Logic* (Beverly Hills, CA: Glencoe, 1977), 146.

²⁰ Citing Mark D. Thomas, "The Meaning of Revival Language in the Book of Mormon," *Sunstone* 8 (May-June 1983): 22. Tvedtnes, in his review, 16, completely disagrees even with the premise that the notion of "infinite atonement" originated with Anselm. He says, "the concept is biblical, at least in the New Testament. See Hebrews 7:22-28, especially verse 27, where Christ makes a single offering for the sins of the people (see also Hebrews 9:11-16, 23-28)."

²¹ Citing Stephen D. Ricks, review of Hugh W. Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert; The World of the Jaredites; and There Were Jaredites*, in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 2 (1990): 139.

Thus her argument that the Book of Mormon is fiction because it is different from expectations of New Testament writers is without foundation.

She then contrasts the comprehension that people in the Book of Mormon had about Christ with those of the New Testament. For example, she says, "Even those who were closest to him [in the New Testament] did not understand his identity" (pp. 90–91). *Understand*, however, is a loaded word. In one way she is absolutely correct, but the statement is too final; it ignores scriptures that depict understanding on the part of his associates. For example, Peter, one of those "who [was] closest to him," said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16; see also John 6:66–69). Does that constitute "understanding"? Simeon, upon seeing the baby Jesus, said, "Lord, now lettest thy servant depart in peace. . . . For mine eyes have seen thy salvation . . . A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel" (Luke 2:29–30, 32). Did Simeon understand? John the Baptist, a cousin and surely someone "close" to Jesus, "looking upon Jesus as he walked, . . . saith, Behold the Lamb of God" (John 1:36). Also, the wise men (Matthew 2:1–12), Anna (Luke 2:36–39), and Elisabeth (Luke 1:41–45) all testified of his identity. He was also continually worshipped throughout his ministry by people who knew his singularity.²² No doubt many did not understand who he was and the significance of his life, and the same can be said for the Book of Mormon; some truly understood his identity and others did not. That, however, does not render the Book of Mormon fiction.

Charles maintains that "Only after his resurrection did most of [his associates] begin to realize how extraordinary [Jesus] was and how the events of his life fit into the salvation of humankind" (p. 91). That statement simply ignores current scholarship on the issue.²³ Margaret Barker, while researching her book *The Great*

²² Worship of Christ: Matthew 2:2; 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 20:20; 28:9, 17; Luke 24:52; John 9:38. In every single instance the word used in the Greek for worship is *proskuneo*, denoting homage rendered to God.

²³ Besides Barker's book that is quoted herein, see also Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God* (San Francisco: Harper, 1990); Larry W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988); A. F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven* (Leiden:

Angel, said, "Like so many recent contributions to New Testament study, this one assumed that the idea of Jesus's divinity was brought relatively late to Christianity, invented by Greek converts who had not really left their paganism behind."²⁴ She goes on to say that "versions of these ideas have been popular with New Testament scholars for most of the twentieth century, their hidden agenda being to emphasize the humanness of Jesus and to show that his 'divinity' was a later development and an unfortunate one at that."²⁵ This parallels Charles's statement that his contemporaries viewed "Jesus as a mortal: a teacher of righteousness, . . . a critic of the religious status quo, and a worker of miracles" (p. 90). This view makes no allusion to his divinity. She also says "During his lifetime his followers knew of no god other than the God of Israel, the god who sent Jesus into the world" (p. 91). This also is a declaration rejected by a number of current scholars; for instance, Barker states,

What has become clear to me time and time again is that even over so wide an area, the evidence points consistently in one direction and indicates that pre-Christian Judaism was not monotheistic in the sense that we use the word. The roots of Christian trinitarian theology lie in pre-Christian Palestinian beliefs about the angels. There were many in first-century Palestine who still retained a world-view derived from the more ancient religion of Israel in which there was a High God and several Sons of God, one of whom was Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel. Yahweh, the Lord, could be manifested on earth in human form, as an angel or in the Davidic king. *It was as a manifestation of Yahweh, the Son of God, that Jesus was acknowledged as Son of God, Messiah and Lord.*²⁶

Brill, 1978); Peter Hayman, "Monotheism: A Misused Word in Jewish Studies," *Journal of Jewish Studies* (Spring 1991): 1-15.

²⁴ Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God* (Westminster: John Knox, 1992), xiii.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 3, emphasis in original.

Based on this research you could say that Joseph Smith must have had prophetic insight (he was ahead of the scholars!) since the pronouncements of the prophets in the Book of Mormon about Jesus in a pre-Christian era declare his divinity as the Son of God, Messiah, and Lord.²⁷

In this section of her essay Charles also says that "The New Testament has no record of Jesus describing himself as the Israelites' god" (p. 91). Why does she not mention John 8:58? Therein Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). The footnote in the King James Bible published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints states, "The term I AM used here in the Greek is identical with the Septuagint usage in Ex. 3:14 which identifies Jehovah. (Cp. also John 4:26.)"²⁸ That the Jews understood exactly what he meant is demonstrated by the fact that after this statement they "took . . . up stones to cast at him" (John 8:59); the capital crime here worthy of stoning was blasphemy. He, Jesus, said that he was Jehovah, the God of the Israelites! J. R. Dummelow interprets this verse by saying, " '[Literally] before Abraham was born, I AM' Christ seems here to declare Himself to be Jehovah, or I AM of the OT., the eternal self-existent Creator."²⁹

In this vein Charles also says that Paul "said that there was no other god but one (1 Cor. 8:4) and this god was the Father" (p. 91). She is making an assertion about this scripture that the scripture itself does not make. The correct verse to cite in this instance would have been 1 Corinthians 8:6, which states with clarity, "But to us there is but one God, the Father." This was the understanding of the Prophet Joseph in April 1830, as he stated,

²⁷ Son of God: 1 Nephi 10:17; 11:7, 18, 24; 2 Nephi 25:16, 19; Mosiah 3:8; 4:2; 15:2; Alma 5:50; 6:8; 7:9-10, 13; 9:26; 11:32, 35; 13:16; 16:19-20; 21:7; 33:14, 17-18, 22; 34:2, 5, 7, 14; 36:17-18; Helaman 3:28; 5:12; 8:14-15, 20; 14:2, 8, 12; 3 Nephi 1:17; 5:13, 26.

Messiah: 1 Nephi 1:19; 10:4-5, 7, 9-11, 14, 17; 12:18; 15:13; 2 Nephi 1:10; 2:6, 8, 26; 3:5; 6:13-14; 25:14, 16, 18-19; 26:3; Jarom 1:11; Mosiah 13:33; Helaman 8:13.

Lord: Over 1,000 times before the advent of the Savior.

²⁸ *The Holy Bible* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979), 1342 n. 58b.

²⁹ J. R. Dummelow, ed., *The One Volume Bible Commentary* (New York: Macmillan, 1936), 790.

"And we know that all men must repent and believe on the name of Jesus Christ, and worship the Father in his name" (D&C 20:29). This is exactly the meaning that Paul has; that there are many lords and gods is inconsequential to us, for "to us there is but one God, the Father." The matter, however, is still not so clear; for example, Paul refers to the gospel as the "gospel of God" about his son Jesus Christ (see Romans 1:1-4). However, on at least eleven other occasions Paul says "the gospel of Christ" or the "gospel of Jesus Christ." Mark opens his testimony referring to it as the "gospel of Jesus Christ" (Mark 1:1).³⁰ Therefore, according to Paul, the gospel of God is the same as the gospel of Jesus Christ because Paul knew that Jesus was also God. In addition, Paul quoted Psalm 45:6 and said that the Father says to the Son, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever" (Hebrews 1:8), the Father acknowledging the Godhood of the Son, Jesus Christ. John also leaves no ambiguity: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . 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" (John 1:1, 14). Thus, the New Testament in fact does testify that the Word, Jesus Christ, "was God."

Finally, Charles avers that "the New Testament never refers to Jesus as Father" (p. 91). That brushes over the more complex issue of Jesus' statements such as his declaration to the Jews, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30),³¹ or his claim that "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). It ignores his plea, as he was praying for his disciples, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee" (John 17:21). Furthermore, Matthew cites Isaiah 7:14 in Matthew 1:23, demonstrating that Jesus fulfilled this scripture. Isaiah says that the child born to the virgin would be "Immanuel," or "God with us" (Isaiah 7:14). The last part of the word "Immanuel" is "el," which is the

³⁰ Gospel of God: Romans 1:1; 15:16; 2 Corinthians 11:7; 1 Thessalonians 2:2, 8-9; 1 Peter 4:17.

Gospel of Christ: Romans 1:16; 15:19, 29; 1 Corinthians 9:12, 18; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 9:13; 10:14; Galatians 1:7; Philippians 1:27; 1 Thessalonians 3:2.

³¹ Again, Dummelow, *The One Volume Bible Commentary*, 792, says, "The Greek indicates that the Father and the Son are two Persons but one God."

Hebrew word for *God*; this ties to Isaiah 9:6 where this child is also described as the "Mighty God" (Hebrew *Gibbor El*) and this same God as the "everlasting Father" (Isaiah 9:6). The child is Jesus; thus, Jesus is the Mighty God and the everlasting Father. Hence it is fatuous to say that the New Testament never refers to Jesus as Father.

The view that the New Testament expectations of Jesus were so different from those of the Book of Mormon, in light of new findings, is not apparent. Moreover, that he was Israel's God, that he was known to his associates and followers as God, and that he openly declared his unique relationship of oneness with the Father can all be shown from the New Testament. The Book of Mormon attests to these verities as well.

III

I believe that the arguments presented in this portion of the essay constitute the main purpose Charles had in mind when writing the paper. For the most part it comes down to one issue: Charles contends that the Book of Mormon basically teaches Sabellianism with regard to the Godhead; that doctrine, she claims, was a manifestation of the beliefs of Joseph Smith at the time of the translation. She argues that, as his understanding changed, so changed the doctrine of the Godhead.

Sabellianism is often known as Modalism and Monarchianism. These philosophies about the Godhead originated about the third century and were branded as heresy by the "orthodox." Modalists believed "in one identical Godhead Which could be designated indifferently Father or Son; the terms did not stand for real distinctions, but were mere names applicable at different times."³² The doctrine of course implies that "it was the Father Himself Who entered the Virgin's womb, so becoming, as it were, His own Son, and Who suffered, died and rose again."³³ Sabellius "regarded the Godhead as a monad . . . which expressed itself in three operations."³⁴

³² J. N. D. Kelley, *Early Christian Doctrines*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1978), 120.

³³ Ibid., 121. This is considered a more primitive form of Modalism.

³⁴ Ibid., 122.

Thus for those who believed in Sabellianism, "the Godhead was but a single *prosopon*, i.e., individual or person."³⁵ Her formal charge is that "like the Book of Mormon, Mormonism before 1835 was largely modalistic, making no explicit distinction between the identities of the Father and the Son. . . . This means the christology of the Book of Mormon differs significantly from the christology of the Mormon church after the 1840s" (p. 103).

At the outset of a discussion on the christology of the Book of Mormon the following statement needs to be made: The Book of Mormon is not a doctrinal exposition on the Godhead; that is not its intended purpose. B. H. Roberts said it plainly, "The Book of Mormon is not a formal treatise on the subject of theology."³⁶ Ezra Taft Benson said, "The Book of Mormon brings men to Christ through two basic means. First, it tells in a plain manner of Christ [not the nature of the Godhead] and His gospel. It testifies of His divinity and of the necessity for a Redeemer and the need of our putting trust in Him. . . . Second, the Book of Mormon exposes the enemies of Christ."³⁷ Thus, the teachings of the Book of Mormon focus on Christ, not the details of his oneness with the Father. The nature of the Godhead is only touched on and in this sense the Bible is no different. Stephen E. Robinson states, "The scriptures themselves do not offer any explanation of how the threeness and the oneness are related. The biblical writers were singularly uninterested in that problem or in questions dealing with God's essence, his substance, or the philosophical definition of his matter."³⁸ Also, "There is no formal doctrine of the trinity in the New Testament."³⁹ William J. Hill also said, "the New Testament itself is far from any doctrine of the trinity or of a triune God."⁴⁰ Nevertheless, if one believed in trinitarianism, then one looking through that lens would find trinitarianism in the

³⁵ Ibid., 123.

³⁶ B. H. Roberts, *Mormon Doctrine of Deity* (1903; reprint Bountiful, UT: Horizon, 1975), 213.

³⁷ Ezra Taft Benson, "The Book of Mormon Is the Word of God," Regional Representatives Seminar, Salt Lake City, 4 April 1986.

³⁸ Robinson, *Are Mormons Christian?* 72.

³⁹ Ibid., 74, citing Edmund J. Fortman, *The Triune God: A Historical Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 32, 35.

⁴⁰ William J. Hill, *The Three Person God: The Trinity as a Mystery of Salvation* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1982), 27.

Bible and the Book of Mormon. By the same token, if one believed in modalism, one could find justification by citing certain scriptures for a form of modalism in the Bible and the Book of Mormon. Nevertheless, Mormonism teaches that "The scriptures do not always specify which member of the Godhead is being referred to in a given passage. Since the Father and the Son are one in all things, [some] scripture references . . . that speak of God are applied to the Father, though many may also apply to the Son. The perfections and attributes of one are also the perfections and attributes of the other."⁴¹ Charles herself footnotes Clyde Forsberg's master's thesis that "suggests that Book of Mormon christology is neither continuous nor consistent" (p. 98 n. 25). The same statement can be made for the Bible; the inspired writers were "singularly uninterested in the problem." The only scripture where there is a clear, specific definitional statement on the Godhead is in the Doctrine and Covenants. And this statement does not delve into the philosophical wrangling of the early Christian debates; however, it states plainly, "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of spirit" (D&C 130:22). Why, then, the need to classify Mormon doctrine in terms of early Christian philosophy? For example, Blake Ostler states, "Mormonism is a modern-day Pelagianism of sorts."⁴² Charles states that Forsberg sees Arianism, Trinitarianism, Sabellianism, and inverted Sabellianism in the Book of Mormon. As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland recently said, responding to similar views, "Is that really said with a straight face?"⁴³

Charles makes the statement that "The Book of Mormon often makes no distinction between Christ and God the Father" (p. 98). True. The Old Testament also often makes no distinc-

⁴¹ *Doctrines of the Gospel: Student Manual*, Religion 231-232 (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1986), 6.

⁴² Blake T. Ostler, "The Mormon Concept of God," *Dialogue* 17/2 (Summer 1984): 70 n. 13.

⁴³ Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, "A Standard unto My People," delivered at a symposium 9 August 1994 at Brigham Young University prepared by the Church Education System and published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 5.

tion,⁴⁴ and the New Testament often makes no distinction.⁴⁵ However, the scriptures, including the Book of Mormon, often do make the distinction.

Third Nephi and its depiction of Christ's visit to the people of the Book of Mormon is the perfect example of a separate and distinct being of Jesus Christ from the Father. Charles admits that the person Jesus is operating apart and separate from the Father and that the Father is simultaneously functioning as God. Notwithstanding this fact, she says, "However, they are not right to imply that this is evidence that Book of Mormon people had a concept of God and Jesus being separate and distinct individuals. . . . These descriptions must be assessed in connection with the frequent statements (again particularly in 3 Nephi) that Jesus and his Father are one" (pp. 99–100). The logic here is that the statements that the Father and the Son are one in 3 Nephi denote that the people participating in the events did not conceive of the Father and the Son as separate and distinct. This in the face of the absolute fact that (1) the people witness the Son physically before them; (2) they watch him kneel and pray to the Father; (3) they hear him testify that he did "the will of the Father in all things from the beginning" (3 Nephi 11:11); (4) he commands the believers to pray to the Father; (5) they hear him explain that in certain things he was constrained by the Father (see for example, 3 Nephi 15:14–16); (6) he commands them to commemorate their belief by partaking of the sacrament and this as a "testimony unto the Father" (3 Nephi 18:7); (7) he explains that he had to "go unto the Father" (3 Nephi 18:35); and (8) he tells them that he had to do specific actions with them because "the Father commanded that I should give unto you" (3 Nephi 26:2). By this same logic the statements in the New Testament about the oneness of the Father and the Son also show that the people of the New Testament were really modalists! (See, for example, John 10:30; 17:11.) She then makes a statement that is difficult to comprehend in light of the evidence of 3 Nephi; she says, "To say that 'oneness' in these passages refers only to oneness of will, purpose,

⁴⁴ See Exodus 3:14; Psalm 110:1; and Isaiah 43:11–12 for just a sampling.

⁴⁵ See note 31 of my review where Paul makes no distinction between the "gospel of God" and the "gospel of Christ."

power, and glory but not oneness of personality, person, essence, or number is imposing an interpretation on the text rather than letting the text speak" (p. 100). That statement needs some investigation.

There are only six times in 3 Nephi where Jesus talks about oneness.⁴⁶ The "oneness" spoken of is *not* a oneness of "person, essence, or number" as stated by Charles. This is shown by a reference to oneness in the prayer of the resurrected Jesus in 3 Nephi 19:23, when he said, "And now Father, I pray unto thee for them, and also for all those who shall believe on their words, that they may believe in me, that I may be in them as thou, Father, art in me, that *we may be one*." Does Charles suppose that we are to be one in "person, essence, and number" with the Father? Isn't that, according to her exegesis, letting the text speak for itself? However, even Protestants interpret the parallel verse of John 17:21 by saying "Christians are 'one,' because they are *spiritually* united to the Father and the Son" through faith.⁴⁷ The important point is that this is how the people of the Book of Mormon understood it also. As a demonstration of this belief, Moroni, *after* this occurrence, exhorts us to "seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have written, that the grace of God the Father, *and also* the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of them, may be and abide in you forever" (Ether 12:41). Moroni clearly separates the Father and the Son even though he well knew of the "oneness" statements in 3 Nephi.

Charles's explanation of the divine investiture of authority as explicated in the "Doctrinal Exposition" of 1916 is that it was a "modern explanation for the phenomenon in the Book of Mormon . . . of the Supreme God being identified as either Jesus Christ or God the Father" (p. 106). The doctrine of divine investiture of authority is really just another way of declaring the ancient law of agency. A. E. Harvey explains, "For the purpose of the transaction for which the agent was authorized, it was as if the principal agent himself were present. . . . Indeed the same principle finds expression in the notion of the envoy 'representing' the sovereign. If you knelt before him, you were kneeling, not to him,

⁴⁶ Oneness: 3 Nephi 11:27, 36; 19:23, 29; 20:35; 28:10.

⁴⁷ Dummelow, *The One Volume Bible Commentary*, 804, emphasis added.

but to the absent king.”⁴⁸ Thus, Jesus says, “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (John 6:38; see also 7:16; 8:26, 28–29, 38). The “Doctrinal Exposition” came about as a response to questions about the Godhead. The Lord responded to the requests of his followers and, in the form of an official explanation by the First Presidency, gave added insight into truths already revealed. The explanation is perhaps modern, but the doctrine is eternal. As God, Jesus can and does speak as if he were the Father; when the Holy Ghost reveals truth to a prophet he too can speak the words of the Father or the Son. Peter said, “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21). Therefore, as *one* of many examples, Isaiah says “Therefore saith the Lord, the Lord of Hosts, the mighty One of Israel” (Isaiah 1:24). Here Isaiah, a holy man of God, is moved upon by the Holy Ghost to speak as if he were the Lord. Isaiah acted as an agent and had a divine investiture, as it were, to speak for God. Moses received a similar investiture as is recorded in Exodus when the Lord delineated the relationship between Moses and Aaron, “and thou shalt be to him instead of God” (Exodus 4:16). Thus, it is not at all strange that the Lord Jesus would also have divine investiture to speak and act in the name of his Father. Larry W. Hurtado terms divine investiture “divine agency.” He asks, “Was there anything in the religious heritage of the first Jewish Christians that furnished them with the resources for accommodating the exalted position of the risen Jesus, in heaven and in their devotion?”⁴⁹ His answer is that the understanding by the Jewish Christians of the concept of “divine agency” enabled them to walk the fine line of venerating Jesus and at the same time worshipping one God. Peter Hayman states it in another way when he says that “most varieties of Judaism are marked by a dualistic pattern in which two divine entities are pre-supposed; the supreme creator God, the other his vizier or prime minister, or some other *spiritual agency*, who really ‘runs the

⁴⁸ A. E. Harvey, *Jesus and the Constraints of History* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1982), 161–62.

⁴⁹ Larry W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1988), 14, 17.

show.’”⁵⁰ Hence, the First Presidency’s use of the words “divine investiture” to explain the actions of the Son when speaking for the Father is the same as saying “ancient law of agency,” “divine agency,” or “spiritual agency.”

Ether 3:14 is a verse cited to show, according to Charles, that Christ is not distinguishable from the Father in the Book of Mormon. However, the full verse is not analyzed. On page 101 she only quotes a portion. It is perhaps among the clearest explanations by the Lord himself of one of the ways in which he is the Father. “Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people.” This sentence alone presupposes a subordination to another. “Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son.” This is where Charles stops; however, what does Jesus say to explain that declaration? “In me shall all mankind have life.” A father gives life! Jesus is the life of the world (see John 11:25 and 14:6).⁵¹ The definition of father is “a man who has begotten a child.”⁵² The verse continues, “In me shall all mankind have life, and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name; *and they shall become my sons and my daughters*” (emphasis added). Jesus is not his own Father as Charles would lead us to understand from this verse, but the Father of the faithful; we are “born again” (John 3:7) and become his “sons and his daughters” (Mosiah 5:7).

Another more subtle accusation is the consistent use of the argument that if a doctrinal truth develops, or more specifically, if a doctrinal truth develops in the mind of Joseph Smith, then it must be a fabrication. This is the idea that the prophet cannot learn new truths, receive insight on revealed truth, or put more emphasis on one truth in one period to the exclusion of another in another period. In a bout of faulty logic she says, “Mormons teach that righteous people at all times are inspired by God with correct religious knowledge: therefore Abinadi’s religious knowledge must match our own regardless of what his words say” (p. 82). This is a fallacious argument called “equivocation.” “In

⁵⁰ Hayman, “Monotheism,” 2, emphasis added.

⁵¹ Some New Testament citations on Christ as the source of eternal life: John 1:4; 3:15–16; 4:14; 5:24, 40; 6:33, 35, 48; 10:10; 11:25; 14:6; 20:31; Acts 3:15.

⁵² Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, s.v. “father.”

general, an equivocation is an argument that is strong only if some word or phrase is used consistently throughout the argument, but where the constituent statements of the argument are true only if that word or phrase is used inconsistently."⁵³ "Correct religious knowledge" and "religious knowledge" that must "match our own" are equivocations; they do not mean the same thing in the premise as they do in the conclusion. Thus, Abinadi could have had a different understanding than Joseph Smith, or any other prophet for that matter, on a particular doctrine and the doctrine would still be true. Different does not mean false or mistaken.

She says that "Documents from early Mormonism reflect that Smith went from belief in one god to belief in two and later three gods forming one godhead" (p. 104). The "documents," however, are not cited, although she does reference three articles. These include one by James B. Allen,⁵⁴ where he says absolutely nothing like the above quote; one by Thomas G. Alexander, where he in fact argues the opposite of her entire premise when he says, "the doctrine of God preached and believed before 1835 was essentially trinitarian, with God the Father seen as an absolute personage of spirit, Jesus Christ as a personage of tabernacle, and the Holy Ghost as an impersonal spiritual member of the Godhead,"⁵⁵ and one from Dan Vogel who also does not make this case.⁵⁶ She further references the unpublished 1832 account of the First Vision wherein the Prophet states that he saw "the Lord" and uses this as added proof of Joseph Smith's understanding in this 1830-1835 period. Milton Backman has rightly stated that "The thrust of the 1832 history was not who appeared but the Lord's message to him."⁵⁷ However, Charles fails to mention the 1835 account of the First Vision where two separate and distinct

⁵³ Carter, *A Contemporary Introduction to Logic*, 148.

⁵⁴ James B. Allen, "Line upon Line," *Ensign* 19 (July 1979): 32-39.

⁵⁵ Thomas G. Alexander, "The Reconstruction of Mormon Doctrine: From Joseph Smith to Progressive Theology," *Sunstone* 5 (July-August 1980): 25.

⁵⁶ Dan Vogel, ed., *The Word of God: Essays on Mormon Scripture* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 17-33.

⁵⁷ Milton V. Backman, Jr., "Joseph Smith's First Vision: Cornerstone of Latter-day Faith," in *To be Learned Is Good, If . . .*, ed. Robert L. Millet (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987), 28.

personages are clearly identified⁵⁸ and goes to the 1838 account to prove her point. As early as 1831, however, John Whitmer, one of the eight witnesses of the Book of Mormon, related an occasion when the heavens opened to Joseph Smith and he saw "the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the Father making intercession for his brethren."⁵⁹

The best place to see the understanding of the Godhead in the 1830–1835 period of the Church is to analyze the official statements located in the Doctrine and Covenants. All of the sections in the pre-1835 period clearly distinguish at least two separate beings. The revelations are primarily from the Lord Jesus Christ through Joseph Smith. In these revelations Jesus speaks of the mansions or "the kingdom of *my* Father"; he is referred to as the "advocate with the Father," he "pleads before the Father," he accomplished "the will of the Father," he sits "on the right hand of the Father," and is "the only begotten of the Father."⁶⁰

As early as June 1829, Joseph Smith referred to three distinct members of the Godhead. For example, "And it shall come to pass, that if you shall ask the Father in my name . . . you shall receive the Holy Ghost" (D&C 14:8). All three members of the Godhead are mentioned. Also, section 76, a revelation given in February 1832, gives a striking insight. Speaking for himself and the other participant who saw the vision, Joseph said, "For we saw him [Jesus Christ], even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father" (D&C 76:23). In this same section, Joseph described the glories of the various postmortal kingdoms. When describing the terrestrial kingdom, he said that it had "the presence of the Son,

⁵⁸ See Milton V. Backman, Jr., *Joseph Smith's First Vision*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), appendix B, 158–59.

⁵⁹ F. Mark McKiernan and Roger D. Launius, eds., *An Early Latter Day Saint History: The Book of John Whitmer* (Independence, MO: Herald Publishing House, 1980), 67, punctuation corrected.

⁶⁰ Kingdoms or mansions of "my Father": D&C 15:6; 16:6; 18:15–16, 25, 44, 46; 59:2; 72:4; 81:6; 84:74; 101:65; 106:8.

Advocate with the Father: D&C 29:5; 32:3; 45:3.

Pleads before the Father: D&C 38:4; 45:3–4.

Accomplished will of the Father: D&C 19:2, 24; 50:27.

Sits on the right hand of the Father: D&C 20:24; 76:20.

Only begotten of the Father: D&C 76:23, 25; 93:11.

but not of the fullness of the Father" (D&C 76:77) and differentiated it from the celestial kingdom by the all-important fact that the celestial kingdom is "where God, even the Father, reigns upon his throne" (D&C 76:92). It must be emphasized that all these revelations are pre-1835. These sections demonstrate the concept that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are distinct and separate. Does this show that Joseph Smith had complete understanding of the Godhead? I would answer that it does not. His knowledge of God came "line upon line," which is the way the Lord typically dispenses knowledge to his prophets (see Matthew 13:10–11; Isaiah 28:9–10; Hebrews 5:12–14; 1 Corinthians 3:1–2.) In fact, many of the sections in the Doctrine and Covenants came as a result of his study of the scriptures and his desire to fully understand them.⁶¹ That pattern of learning from the Lord is consistent with all the prophets.

IV

This portion of Charles's article really comes down to the fact that she does not believe that Jesus and Jehovah are the same being and sees no biblical proof texts that convince her otherwise. She refers to this doctrine as if it were strictly "Mormon theology." In fact, she states rather vehemently (the emphasis is hers), "The use of the divine names Jehovah and Elohim in the Old Testament *never* supports the twentieth-century Mormon doctrine that Elohim is the father of Jehovah, that Jehovah, not Elohim, is the God of the Old Testament, or that Jehovah is Jesus Christ" (p. 109). However, a number of non-Mormon scholars disagree. For example,

All the texts in the Hebrew Bible distinguish clearly between the divine sons of Elohim/Elyon and those human beings who are called sons of Yahweh. This must be significant. It must mean that the terms originated at a time when Yahweh was distinguished from whatever was meant by El/Elohim/Elyon. A large number of texts continued to distinguish between El Elyon

⁶¹ For example, D&C 7, 76–77, 86, 130. Section 138 came through President Joseph F. Smith much the same way.

and Yahweh, Father and Son, and to express this distinction in similar ways with the symbolism of the temple and the royal cult.⁶²

Also, "Yahweh was one of the sons of El Elyon; and Jesus in the gospels was described as a Son of El Elyon, God Most High. . . . Jesus is not called the son of Yahweh nor the son of the Lord, but he is called Lord."⁶³

Charles then says that 1 Corinthians 10:1-4 is not understood properly by Latter-day Saints and cannot be used to sustain the belief that Jesus was the God of the Old Testament. She accuses Paul of adding the "rock" part to the story because the Old Testament does not describe "any rock which followed the Israelites around" (p. 109). That the term "rock" did not mean a literal rock following them around is blatantly obvious. "Who is a rock, save our God?" (2 Samuel 22:32; Psalm 18:31), and "Truly my soul waiteth upon God. . . . He only is my rock" (Psalm 62:1-2; see also Isaiah 28:16 in connection with 1 Corinthians 3:11). *Rock* was a metaphor for God. Prominent non-Mormons agree; Adam Clark said, "It does appear that the apostle does not speak about the *rock* itself, but of *him* whom it represented; namely, Christ: this was the Rock that followed them, and ministered to them."⁶⁴ Also, "We see St. Paul's recognition of Christ's pre-existence; the divine power which sustained the Israelites was the power of Christ working on earth before his incarnation."⁶⁵ Charles's emphatic assertions about Elohim, Jehovah, and Jesus Christ are without firm foundation in current scholarship and in exegesis of the Hebrew and Greek texts of the Bible.

Conclusion

Charles has shown a propensity to look the other way when scriptures, scholars, history, and official pronouncements of the Church disagree with her notions about the Book of Mormon and

⁶² Barker, *The Great Angel*, 10, emphasis in original.

⁶³ Ibid., 4-5.

⁶⁴ Adam Clark, *The Holy Bible: A Commentary and Critical Notes*, 6 vols. (New York: Abingdon Cokesbury, n.d.), 2:244.

⁶⁵ Dummelow, *The One Volume Bible Commentary*, 907; see also Frederic W. Farrar, *The Life of Christ* (Portland, OR: Fountain, 1964), 372 n. 3.

the teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. As has been shown, neither the Church nor the Book of Mormon teaches Sabellianism. As she quotes in her paper, the Prophet Joseph Smith said, "I have always declared God to be a distinct personage, Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father, and the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and a Spirit: and these three constitute three distinct personages and three Gods."⁶⁶ Thus The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints declares, and has always done so, that "the Almighty God gave his Only Begotten Son. . . . He suffered temptations but gave no heed to them. He was crucified, died, and rose again the third day; And ascended into heaven, to sit down on the right hand of the Father, to reign with almighty power according to the will of the Father" (D&C 20:21–24, given April 1830).

⁶⁶ *TPJS*, 370.

Appendix A

Old Testament Prophecies of Jesus Christ

Lineage/birth	Genesis 49:9–10; Psalm 2:7; 89:27; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6,7; 11:1, 10; 60:2–3; Jeremiah 23:5–6; 33:15; Hosea 11:1; Micah 5:2–3.
Mortal life	Psalm 35:11; 41:9; 45:1–17; 56:1–6; 69:9; 72:1–20; 78:2; 110:1–4; 118:22–23; Isaiah 6:9–10; 8:14; 11:1–3; 28:16; 40:3, 9–11; 42:1–5; 49:7; 50:4–9; 52:13–15; 53:1–13; Zechariah 9:9; 11:12–13.
Atonement/Death	Exodus 12:1–4, 46; Leviticus 16:7–22; Numbers 21:6–9; Psalm 22:1–19; 31:4–5; 34:20; 35:11; 41:9; 69:9, 21; 109:21–26; 118:22–23; Hosea 13:4, 14; Jonah 1:17; Zechariah 11:12–13; 12:10; 13:6–7.
Resurrection/ Divinity	Job 19:25; Psalm 2:6–8; 16:10–11; 17:15; 45:17; 56:13; 68:18; 72:17; 110:1–3, 4–7; 118:17–19; Isaiah 9:6–7; 11:2–5; 45:23; 53:10; 61:1–3; Daniel 7:13–14; Hosea 13:14; Malachi 4:1–2.

Appendix B

Analysis of Mosiah 15:1-4

Verses	Richard D. Draper	Monte S. Nyman
1	God = Redeemer	Jesus = God Shows Godhood in premortal life
2	"because it was from Elohim that he received his physical endowments of life."	"Refers to Jesus' mortal ministry. . . . On earth he would carry out the will of the Father and through divine investiture of authority would represent the Father."
3	"Because he had God (Elohim) for his Father, the power to give eternal life became inherent within the mortal Lord. Because the kind of life he gives is eternal, he became the Eternal Father."	"Because he was conceived by an immortal being. . . . Jesus has immortality as a part of his own nature. . . . Because he was born of a mortal woman, he was also part mortal; . . . through his dual nature he was the Father and the Son."
3-5	"The terms Father and Son define the nature of the mortal Christ. . . . [He] always placed his sonship, that is, his physical wants and needs, under the strict control of his fatherhood, that is, his spirit."	"The one God referred to is Jesus Christ. The plural 'they' refers to the dual roles in his ministry and to his dual nature as the Father and the Son."
	"The Mortal Ministry of the Savior as Understood by the Book of Mormon Prophets," <i>Journal of Book of Mormon Studies</i> 2/1 (Spring 1993): 80-92.	"Abinadi's Commentary on Isaiah," in <i>The Book of Mormon: Mosiah, Salvation Only through Christ</i> (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 1991), 161-86.

Robert L. Millet	Bruce R. McConkie	Institute Manual
God = Jehovah = Jesus Christ	God = Christ "He is like unto the Father."	NA
"Like every other **Son and **daughter of God he will be known as the Son of God. . . . In short, Jesus will do what the Father would have him do."	"Son because he is born into mortality . . . Father because he inherits from his Father all the might of omnipotence."	NA
"Because he will be conceived by the power of God and will thus have within him the powers of the spirit, he will be known as the Father. . . . He will be called the Father because he inherited all of the divine endowments, particularly immortality, from his exalted sire. . . . He will be called the Son because of his mortal inheritance from his mother."	NA	"Jesus inherited from his divine Father the Father's power and characteristics. In this sense . . . he (Christ) was a full manifestation of the Father in the flesh. . . . It is only fitting and proper . . . to speak of him as 'one God' for Christ even as the Father and Son, is only one being."
"Therefore Christ will be both flesh and spirit, both man and God, both Son and Father. And they . . . are to be blended wonderfully in one being, Jesus Christ, 'The very Eternal Father of heaven and earth.' "	NA	NA
<i>The Power of the Word</i> (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 113–29.	<i>The Promised Messiah</i> (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 372–73.	