Religious Educator: Perspectives on the Restored Gospel

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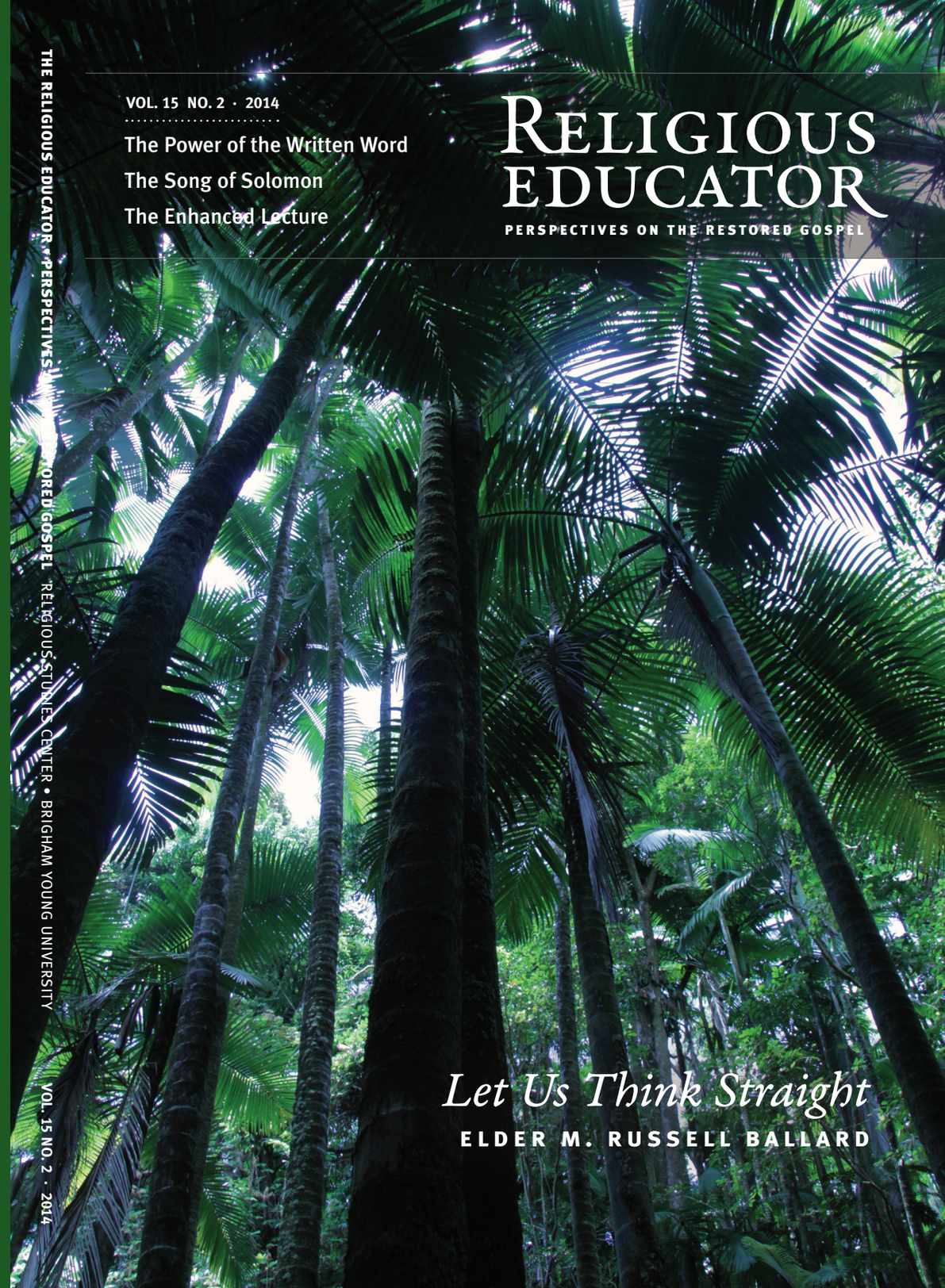
The Power of the Written Word
The Song of Solomon
The Enhanced Lecture

RELIGIOUS EDUCATOR

PERSPECTIVES ON THE RESTORED GOSPEL



Let Us Think Straight

ELDER M. RUSSELL BALLARD

Religious Educator

PERSPECTIVES ON THE RESTORED GOSPEL

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On the cover:
The beautiful Hawaii Tropical Botanical Gardens
in Papaikou, Hawaii, April 2013

PHOTO BY BRENT R. NORDGREN

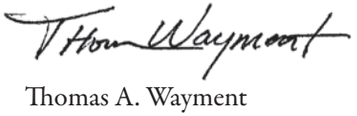
EDITOR'S NOTE

Communication and Understanding

In this edition of the *Religious Educator*, we are introducing a new section that will appear from time to time near the end of selected issues. That section, entitled "Notes," will include short notes on historical, doctrinal, and pedagogical matters where the idea is too short for a full-length treatment but where the idea still warrants mentioning in print. We hope that these notes prove helpful to our readership.

This issue of the journal offers two timely articles on the challenges of communicating belief and intent in our day and age. The first, written by Elder Ballard, touches upon the timely subject of the eternal concept of gender while balancing that discussion with the tricky concept of gender equality. Elder Holland then touches upon the concept of writing and communicating clearly our innermost thoughts and intents. In discussing gender and equality in the public forum of ideas, there has been a great deal of acrimony and accusation, and Elder Holland reminds us of how difficult it can be to communicate clearly our beliefs and ideas in print and otherwise. He encourages us to write and rewrite and rewrite again until the quality of our prose matches the intensity of our belief. These two articles together offer a timely reminder that the discussion of gender and other topics would benefit if we all took the time to carefully present our ideas in thoughtful ways and to avoid hasty characterizations. Good writing takes work, and understanding takes additional work.

Finally, this issue offers several insightful articles on matters of doctrine and scripture. In this issue readers will benefit from contemplating one of the few articles by a Latter-day Saint author on the Song of Solomon and what that book might contain that would be of benefit to readers and teachers. Additionally, Joseph Spencer wrestles with the issue of grace versus works and how the original context of Nephi's teaching, "for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do" (2 Nephi 25:23), shapes the way we understand this verse. This issue of the journal presents many valuable insights, and the reader will benefit from reading carefully each article.



Thomas A. Wayment
Editor

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Elder M. Russell Ballard

Let Us Think Straight

ELDER M. RUSSELL BALLARD

Elder M. Russell Ballard is a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

From a devotional address given on August 20, 2013, during Campus Education Week.

Campus Education Week is a great opportunity to learn more about the plan of happiness our Heavenly Father has given to us. There is so much information that I always feel we need to be cautious and wise to ever keep uppermost in our minds the simple doctrine and gospel of Christ. Simply stated, it is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance of sin, baptism by immersion for the remission of sin, receiving the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end.

Sister Ballard and I returned a few days ago from England, where we had the privilege, along with several of the Brethren and their wives, to watch the first-ever presentation of the British Pageant. Some two hundred cast members and several hundred other volunteer members told the story in song, dance, and the spoken word about the arrival of Elders Heber C. Kimball, Orson Hyde, Willard Richards, Joseph Fielding, and a few others who came to establish The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in England.

As I watched that story unfold, it brought great memories flooding back to my mind of my experience sixty-five years ago arriving in England to serve a full-time mission as a young man. And as the story progressed, I was deeply touched by the overwhelming contribution converts in the British Isles, and, of course, some from Scandinavia, made in building up and strengthening The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1837 and even on through to today. These fearless early missionaries, bearers of the priesthood and the message of the Restoration, touched hundreds and later thousands of lives through their testimonies, priesthood blessings, and love for the people of Great Britain. They reaped a great harvest of wonderful converts.

As I watched the pageant, I thought to myself, "How did they do this?" The early Saints did not have any proselytizing systems. They did not have *Preach My Gospel*. They did not have a Missionary Training Center. They did not have easy ways of transportation. But what they did have was an abiding, deep testimony that Joseph Smith knelt in the presence of the Father and the Son as They appeared to him in 1820 and opened the way of the Restoration of the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Father and the Son gave him the principles of the doctrine of Christ that I have previously mentioned.

As I pondered the miracle of the mission to Great Britain, it seemed to me that the simple gospel truths, powerfully explained by those great Apostles of yesteryear, just penetrated the hearts of the people. I was also deeply impressed—in fact, so much so that I changed what I had in mind to share with you today because of the impressions that came to me about the power and the importance of the faith and testimony of the dear women and even the children who joined the Church during that formative era. As I watched and remembered, it was overwhelming. They withstood the challenges of the journey to Zion because of their faith, their own study and knowledge of the Book of Mormon, and their unwavering acceptance of Joseph Smith as the prophet of this dispensation. The women of the British Isles who made their way here—many arriving without their companion and some of their children whom they buried along the way—were in many ways the heart of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in those early days.

The same is true now. In so many ways, women are the heart of the Church. So today, with the help of the Lord, I would like to pay tribute to the faithful women and young women of the Church. To you dear sisters, wherever you live in the world, please know of the great affection and trust that the First Presidency and the Twelve have in you.

In 1948, when I arrived in England, it was after World War II, and many of the little branches that grew into wards and stakes were really held together by the faith—the simple faith—and trust in our Heavenly Father and His plan of those sisters who remained behind while their husbands and sons went off to fight in World War II. Had it not been for the sisters and their faith and their strength during those difficult days, we would have had to start our work from scratch in several of the branches where I served.

Thinking Straight about the Plan of Happiness

Brothers and sisters, I pray that the Lord will bless me that I may follow the counsel of a small plaque in my office that reads, "Above all else, brethren, let us think straight." These were the last words spoken in mortality by my grandfather, Elder Melvin J. Ballard, who was in the hospital suffering end-stage leukemia in 1939.

My father, who was sitting at Grandfather's bedside, told me that Grandfather pushed himself up in bed, looked around his hospital room as though he were addressing a congregation or a group, and said clearly, "And above all else, brethren, let us think straight." I don't go into my office any day of the week that I don't see those words.

"Thinking straight" for all of us has always been important, but never more so than today.

From the beginning of time, there have been articulate men and women who have had unusual powers of persuasion. Those with gifts of communication have always had great influence, but the influence of persuasive communicators has never been greater than it is today. Because of the Internet, and particularly the popularity and proliferation of social media—Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and heaven only knows what else has become popular that I'm not aware of yet—anyone can talk to anyone about anything. Today anyone who is clever, articulate, and glib can find an audience and develop a following. Unfortunately, not everyone who has cultivated the ability to communicate uses his or her powers of expression to spread or teach truth. And not everyone has the help of the Holy Ghost to think straight.

In what I write, please keep in mind and think straight about the basic doctrines of Christ that include the love our Father in Heaven has for His daughters who are precious and essential to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I encourage you brethren to listen carefully as well as the sisters because I believe there are some truths that both women and men need

to understand about the essential role women have in strengthening and building up the kingdom of God on the earth.

We are beloved spirit sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father. We lived with Him in the premortal realms. In order to fulfill the mission of bringing "to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39), Heavenly Father created a plan designed to help His children achieve their ultimate potential. Our Father's plan called for man to fall and to be separated from Him for a time by being born into mortality, gaining a body, and entering a period of testing and probation. His plan provided for a Savior to redeem mankind from the Fall. The Atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ provides the way through gospel ordinances and sacred covenants to return to the presence of God. Because we would live in a mortal environment filled with danger and distractions, Heavenly Father and His Son knew we would need access to power greater than our own. They knew we would need access to Their power. The gospel and doctrine of Christ give all who will accept it power to achieve eternal life and power to find joy in the journey.

There are those who question the place of women in God's plan and in the Church. I've been interviewed enough by national and international media to tell you that most journalists with whom I have dealt have had preconceived notions about this topic. Through the years many have asked questions implying that women are second-class citizens in the Church. Brothers and sisters, nothing could be further from the truth.

Let me suggest five key points for you to ponder and think straight about regarding this important topic.

Gender Is Eternal

I repeat: Our Heavenly Father created both women and men, who are His spirit daughters and sons. This means that gender is eternal. He has a plan designed to help all who choose to follow Him and His Son Jesus Christ achieve their destiny as heirs of eternal life.

Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ are perfect. They are omniscient and understand all things. Further, Their hopes for us are perfect. Their work and Their glory is to see Their children exalted—to bring about the immortality and eternal life of mankind.

Surely if our eventual exaltation is Their essential goal and purpose, and if They are omniscient and perfect as we know They are, then They understand best how to prepare, teach, and lead us so that we have the greatest chance to

qualify for exaltation. There was an old-time television program called *Father Knows Best*, in which the father in the family was depicted as having all the answers. Well, we all know that no father on this earth is infallible. But there is one father, our Father in Heaven, who knows all, foresees all, and understands all. His comprehension, His wisdom, and His love for us are perfect. Surely we must agree that our Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ know best which opportunities the sons and daughters of God need to best prepare the human family for eternal life.

Most everyone has family or friends who have been caught up in various troubling contemporary social issues. Arguing about the issues generally does not bring any resolution and, in fact, can create contention. There are some questions about the Church's position on sensitive issues that are hard to answer to anyone's satisfaction. However, when we seek the Lord in prayer about how to feel and what to do in these situations, the impression comes: "Do you believe in Jesus Christ and do you follow Him and the Father?" I believe most everyone in the Church at one time or another will wonder if they can do all they are asked to do. But if we really believe in the Lord, the reassurance comes: "I believe Jesus Christ, and I'm willing to do whatever He needs me to do." So we move forward. How powerful are the words "I believe Jesus Christ"!

When all is said and done, each of us has the privilege of choosing whether or not we will believe that God is our Father, that Jesus is the Christ, and that They have a plan designed to help us return home to Them. This, of course, requires faith, which is why faith is the first principle of the gospel. Our testimonies and our peace of mind and our well-being begin with the willingness to believe that our Father in Heaven does indeed know best.

Priesthood Emanates from God

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Lord's Church, and His Church is governed by and through priesthood authority and priesthood keys. "Priesthood keys are the authority God has given to priesthood leaders to direct, control, and govern the use of His priesthood on earth. The exercise of priesthood authority is governed by those who hold its keys (see D&C 65:2; 81:2; 124:123). Those who hold priesthood keys have the right to preside over and direct the Church within a jurisdiction."[1]

Those who have priesthood keys—whether that be a deacon who has keys for his quorum or a bishop who has keys for his ward or a stake president who

has keys for his stake or the President of the Church who holds all priesthood keys—literally make it possible for all who serve or labor faithfully under their direction to exercise priesthood authority and have access to priesthood power.

All men and all women serve under the direction of those who have keys. This is how the Lord governs His Church. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, "The Priesthood is an everlasting principle, and existed with God from eternity, and will to eternity, without beginning of days or end of years."[2]

President David O. McKay further explained: "Priesthood is inherent in the Godhead. It is authority and power which has its source only in the Eternal Father and his Son Jesus Christ. . . . In seeking the source of the priesthood, . . . we can conceive of no condition beyond God himself. In him it centers. From him it must emanate. Priesthood, being thus inherent in the Father, it follows that he alone can give it to another."[3]

Let me repeat something I stated in the April 2013 general conference: "In our Heavenly Father's great priesthood-endowed plan, men have the unique responsibility to administer the priesthood, but they are not the priesthood. Men and women have different but equally valued roles. Just as a woman cannot conceive a child without a man, so a man cannot fully exercise the power of the priesthood to establish an eternal family without a woman. . . . In the eternal perspective, both the procreative power and the priesthood power are shared by husband and wife."[4]

Why are men ordained to priesthood offices and not women? President Gordon B. Hinckley explained that it was the Lord, not man, "who designated that men in His Church should hold the priesthood" and that it was also the Lord who endowed women with "capabilities to round out this great and marvelous organization, which is the Church and kingdom of God."[5] When all is said and done, the Lord has not revealed why He has organized His Church as He has.

When thinking about those things we do not fully understand, I am reminded of these words by my deceased friend and Apostle, Elder Neal A. Maxwell, who said, "What we already know about God teaches us to trust him for what we do not know fully."[6]

And Elder Jeffrey R. Holland stated in this last April general conference, "In this Church, what we know will always trump what we do not know."[7]

Brothers and sisters, this matter, like many others, comes down to our faith. Do we believe that this is the Lord's Church? Do we believe that He has organized it according to His purposes and wisdom? Do we believe that His wisdom far exceeds ours? Do we believe that He has organized His Church in a manner that would be the greatest possible blessing to *all* of His children, both His sons and His daughters?

I know these things are true and testify that they are true. I testify that this is the Lord's Church. Women are integral to the governance and work of the Church through service as leaders in Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary; through their service as teachers, full-time missionaries, and temple ordinance workers; and in the home, where the most important teaching in the Church occurs.

Let us not forget that approximately one-half of all of the teaching that takes place in the Church is done by sisters. Much of the leadership provided is from our sisters. Many service opportunities and activities are planned and directed by women. The counsel and other participation of women in ward and stake councils and in general councils at Church headquarters provide needed insight, wisdom, and balance.

Elder Quentin L. Cook told about a life-changing role a stake Relief Society president had in Tonga. During a stake conference held while Elder Cook was there, the names of sixty-three prospective elders were sustained for ordination to the Melchizedek Priesthood. When Elder Cook asked how this "miracle" had been accomplished, the stake president told him that in a stake council meeting, the stake Relief Society president spoke of many men in their late twenties and early thirties who had not served missions and who were in various stages of activity. She suggested that the council focus on priesthood ordinations and temple ordinances for them as well as for their wives—some of whom were less active or not members.

"As she spoke, the Spirit confirmed to the [stake] president that what she was suggesting was true," Elder Cook related. "It was decided that the men of the priesthood and the women of the Relief Society would reach out to rescue these men and their wives. . . . Those involved in the rescue focused primarily on preparing them for the priesthood, eternal marriage, and the saving ordinances of the temple. During the next two years, almost all of the sixty-three men who had been sustained to the Melchizedek Priesthood at the conference I attended were endowed in the temple and had their spouses sealed to them. This account is but one example of how critical our sisters are in the work of salvation."[8]

For more than twenty years I have been teaching the importance of councils, including the vital participation of sister leaders, and the work of councils is emphasized in the current Church handbooks. As I write these things, however, I acknowledge that there are some men, including some priesthood leaders, who have not yet seen the light and who still do not include our sister leaders in full partnership in ward and stake councils. I also acknowledge that there are some men who oppress women and in some rare circumstances are guilty of abusing women. This is abhorrent in the eyes of God. I feel certain that men who in any way demean women will answer to God for their actions. And let me add that any priesthood leader who does not involve his sister leaders with full respect and inclusion is not honoring and magnifying the keys he has been given. His power and influence will be diminished until he learns the ways of the Lord.

Now, sisters, in speaking this frankly with men, may I also exercise a moment of candor with you. While your input is significant and welcomed in effective councils, you need to be careful not to assume a role that is not yours. Ward and stake councils that are the most successful are those in which priesthood leaders trust their sister leaders and encourage them to contribute to the discussions and in which sister leaders fully respect and sustain the decisions of the council made under the direction of priesthood leaders who hold keys. Families are helped and individuals are activated through council meetings in which this partnership exists and in which the focus is on people. Units in the Church are strengthened by members who love and desire to help one another as they serve the Lord.

The proclamation on the family teaches foundational truths about the separate roles of men and women, particularly as they relate to their positions as husbands and wives: "By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners."[9]

It takes a man and a woman to create a new life. And it takes both men who respect women and the distinctive spiritual gifts they have and women who respect the priesthood keys held by men to invite the full blessings of heaven in any endeavor in the Church.

Equal Does Not Mean the Same

Men and women are equal in God's eyes and in the eyes of the Church, but equal does not mean, brothers and sisters, that they are the same. The responsibilities and divine gifts of men and women differ in their nature but not in their importance or influence. Our Church doctrine places women equal to and yet different from men. God does not regard either gender as better or more important than the other. President Gordon B. Hinckley declared to you women that "our Eternal Father . . . never intended that you should be less than the crowning glory of His creations."[10]

I mention this simply because there are those at times who become confused and fail to think straight when comparing the assignments of men to those of women and the assignments of women to those of men.

I have been surrounded by women my entire life. I have three sisters. I was the only boy. I have five daughters, twenty-four granddaughters, and nineteen great-granddaughters. And, of course, I have been blessed through sixty-two years of marriage to my wife, Barbara. I learned long ago to listen to her. I learned that when she said she'd been thinking about something or had strong feelings about a matter pertaining to the family, I had better pay attention, because in nearly every case she had been inspired. I know firsthand how young adult sisters and young mothers sometimes feel and sometimes question their self-worth and their ability to contribute. But I am a witness that when one's thoughts turn toward the Savior, a strength and conviction that Heavenly Father and the Lord understand will bless them.

Women come to earth with unique spiritual gifts and propensities. This is particularly true when it comes to children and families and also to the well-being and nurturing of others in the Church as well as in the family.

Men and women have different gifts, different strengths, and different points of view and inclinations. That is one of the fundamental reasons why we need each other. It takes a man and a woman to create a family, and it takes men and women to carry out the work of the Lord in the Church. A husband and wife righteously working together complete each other. Let us be careful that we do not attempt to tamper with our Heavenly Father's plan and purposes in our lives.

Priesthood Blessings Are Available to All

When men and women go to the temple, they are both endowed with the same power, which by definition is priesthood power. While the authority of

the priesthood is directed through priesthood keys, and priesthood keys are held only by worthy men, access to the power and the blessings of the priesthood is available to all of God's children.

As President Joseph Fielding Smith explained: "The blessings of the priesthood are not confined to men alone. These blessings are also poured out upon . . . all the faithful women of the Church. . . . The Lord offers to his daughters every spiritual gift and blessing that can be obtained by his sons."[11]

Those who have entered the waters of baptism and subsequently received their endowment in the house of the Lord are eligible for rich and wonderful blessings. The endowment is literally a gift of power. All who enter the house of the Lord officiate in the ordinances of the priesthood. This applies to men and women alike.

Our Father in Heaven is generous with His power. All men and all women have access to this power for help in our own lives. All who have made sacred covenants with the Lord and who honor those covenants are eligible to receive personal revelation, to be blessed by the ministering of angels, to commune with God, to receive the fulness of the gospel, and, ultimately, to become heirs alongside Jesus Christ of all our Father has.

Elder John A. Widtsoe explained that "the Priesthood is for the benefit of all members of the Church. Men have no greater claim than women upon the blessings that issue from the Priesthood and accompany its possession. Woman does not hold the Priesthood, but she is a partaker of the blessings of the Priesthood."[12]

And Elder James E. Talmage taught:

> It is not given to woman to exercise the authority of the Priesthood independently; nevertheless, . . . woman shares with man the blessings of the Priesthood. . . . In the glorified state of the blessed hereafter, husband and wife will administer in their respective stations, seeing and understanding alike, and co-operating to the full in the government of their family kingdom. . . . Then shall woman reign by Divine right, a queen in the resplendent realm of her glorified state, even as exalted man shall stand, priest and king unto the Most High God. Mortal eye cannot see nor mind comprehend the beauty, glory, and majesty of a righteous woman made perfect in the celestial kingdom of God.[13]

We Must Stand Together

We need now for you women of the Church to know the doctrine of Christ and to bear testimony of the Restoration in every way that you can. Never has there been a more complex time in the history of the earth. Satan and his minions have been perfecting the weapons in their arsenal for millennia, and they are experienced at destroying faith and trust in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ among the human family.

All of us—men, women, young adults, youth, and boys and girls—have the Lord and His Church to defend, to protect, and to spread throughout the earth. We need more of the distinctive, influential voices and faith of women. We need you to learn the doctrine and to understand what we believe so that you can bear your testimonies about the truth of all things—whether those testimonies be given around a campfire at girls' camp, in a testimony meeting, in a blog, or on Facebook. Only you can show the world what women of God who have made covenants look like and believe.

None of us can afford to stand by and watch the purposes of God be diminished and pushed aside. I invite all throughout the Church to seek the guidance of heaven in knowing what you can do to let your voice of faith and testimony be heard. The Brethren of the General Authorities and the sisters who are general officers cannot do it alone. The full-time missionaries cannot do it alone. Priesthood leaders and auxiliary leaders cannot do it alone. We must all defend our Father in Heaven and His plan. We must all defend our Savior and testify that He is the Christ, that His Church has been restored to the earth, and that there is such a thing as right and wrong.

If we are to have the courage to speak out and defend the Church, we must first prepare ourselves through study of the truths of the gospel. We need to solidify our own testimonies through diligent, daily study of the scriptures and by invoking Moroni's promise, which is that we can "know the truth of all things" (Moroni 10:5) if we seek it through humble prayer and study. Do not spend time trying to overhaul or adjust God's plan. We do not have time for such. It is a pointless exercise to try and determine how to organize the Lord's Church differently. The Lord is at the head of this Church, and we all follow His direction. Both men and women need increased faith and testimony of the life and the Atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ and increased knowledge of His teachings and doctrine. We need clear minds so that the Holy Ghost can teach us what to do and what to say. We need to think straight in this world of confusion and disregard for the things of God.

Sisters, your sphere of influence is a unique sphere—one that cannot be duplicated by men. No one can defend our Savior with any more persuasion or power than you, the daughters of God, can—you who have such inner

strength and conviction. The power of a converted woman's voice is immeasurable, and the Church needs your voices now more than ever.

"Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid . . . : for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (Deuteronomy 31:6). Take comfort in this counsel from Moses to Joshua as you let your voices be heard, for, as President Hinckley said, "You cannot simply take for granted this cause, which is the cause of Christ. You cannot simply stand on the sidelines and watch the play between the forces of good and evil. . . .You can be a leader. You must be a leader, as a member of this Church, in those causes for which this Church stands."[14]

Let us never forget that we are the sons and daughters of God, equal in His sight with differing responsibilities and capabilities assigned by Him and given access to His priesthood power as we make and keep sacred covenants and counsel together. Be careful that you continually strive to live and sustain the great plan of happiness that is our Father's revealed plan of salvation for His sons and His daughters. Surely we will be able to think straight if we stay focused on God's eternal plan and doctrine and use our strength in reaching out and helping others to do the same as we share our testimonies and our knowledge of the basic and simple message of the Restoration of the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The restoration of the priesthood power of God is the authority to do His work in helping to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of His children. Brothers and sisters, let us stand together, bound by our testimonies, and do our work just as did the Saints of Kirtland, Nauvoo, Winter Quarters, and Preston, England, in the 1830s and the 1840s.

I leave you my witness and my testimony that we are in a day and a time when we must stand in unity. We must stand together—men and women, young men and young women, boys and girls. We must stand for the plan of our Heavenly Father. We must defend Him. He is being pushed aside. We cannot stand idly by as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and allow that to continue to happen without being courageous enough to let our voices be heard.

May God bless you to have the courage to study and to know the simple truths of the gospel and then to share them every chance you get.

I leave you my witness, my testimony, that Jesus is the Christ. He is the Son of God. He does live. This is His Church we have been talking about, and I have been testifying to you of His great plan of happiness that He has given to us. RE

Notes

1. "Priesthood Keys," *Handbook 2: Administering the Church* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2010), 8.
2. Joseph Smith, quoted in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2007), 104.
3. David O. McKay, quoted in *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: David O. McKay* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2003), 115.
4. M. Russell Ballard, "This Is My Work and Glory," *Ensign*, May 2013, 19.
5. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Women of the Church," *Ensign*, November 1996, 70.
6. Neal. A. Maxwell, *Deposition of a Disciple* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 56.
7. Jeffrey R. Holland, "Lord, I Believe," *Ensign*, May 2013, 94.
8. Quentin L. Cook, "LDS Women Are Incredible!" *Ensign*, May 2011, 20–21.
9. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, November 1995, 102.
10. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Stand Strong against the Wiles of the World," *Ensign*, November 1995, 98.
11. Joseph Fielding Smith, "Magnifying Our Callings in the Priesthood," *Improvement Era*, June 1970, 66.
12. John A. Widtsoe, *Priesthood and Church Government* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1939), 83.
13. James E. Talmage, "The Eternity of Sex," *Young Woman's Journal*, October 1914, 602–3.
14. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Stand Up for Truth," BYU devotional address, September 17, 1996.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

The Power of the Written Word

ELDER JEFFREY R. HOLLAND

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland is a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Address at Symposium for Writers and Editors of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, October 15, 2013.

It would be fun simply to talk about writing and language and literature in the abstract, but in light of the demands in your life and mine, I am afraid we don't really have time for that. Virtually everything I have felt to say to you has something to do with gospel writing or writing for Church purposes—the kind of writing that brings you together for this conference. Maybe another day with greater leisure we could talk about the world's great literature and how grateful we are for those women and men who wrote it. Today let me be a little more focused and talk about you and the Church in the twenty-first century.

Ever since my youth I have been impressed with Paul's call to all of us to be clothed with the "armour of God." He said:

> Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.
>
> Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

> For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*.
>
> Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.
>
> Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;
>
> And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;
>
> Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.
>
> And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (Ephesians 6:10–17)

My point in noting this familiar call to arms is that it doesn't say very much about, well, arms. It says a lot about armor—about breastplates and helmets and shields of protection—but not much by way of weapons. In fact if I read it correctly, there is only one element of offense mentioned in a metaphor otherwise devoted entirely to defense. The one actual weapon we are given is "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17). Indeed Paul goes on to plead that "utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak" (Ephesians 6:19–20).

In this war in which we are engaged, this fight over good and evil that began in heaven and continues on earth, we do not have a lot of weapons, certainly not the weapons traditionally granted to armies or navies or corporations or governments. To accomplish our purposes we don't, at least in the ecclesiastical realm, hire people or fire people. We don't yell at them or harangue them (at least we're not supposed to), and we don't force them to do anything. In a purely gospel sense, we not only can't force anyone to do anything, we shouldn't. Irony of ironies is that this issue is what part of that premortal fight was about. So how do we motivate, inspire, stimulate, and move others? We are left with one principal asset—words. Energized by the Spirit and expressed with love, words are the only real sword we have in this divine battle.

I have always loved this excerpt from lecture 7 of the *Lectures on Faith*. The Prophet Joseph and the early brethren taught:

> When a man works by faith he works by mental exertion instead of physical force. It is by words, instead of exerting his physical powers, with which every being works when he works by faith. God said, "Let there be light: and there was light." Joshua

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In this war in which we are engaged, this fight over good and evil, we do not have a lot of weapons, certainly not the weapons traditionally granted to armies or navies or corporations or governments.

> spake, and the great lights which God had created stood still. Elijah commanded, and the heavens were stayed for the space of three years and six months, so that it did not rain: he again commanded and the heavens gave forth rain. All this was done by faith. And the Saviour says, "If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, say to this mountain, 'Remove,' and it will remove; or say to that sycamine tree, 'Be ye plucked up, and planted in the midst of the sea,' and it shall obey you." Faith, then, works by words; and with these its mightiest works have been, and will be, performed.[1]

We see that linkage between faith and words throughout the scriptures. Alma 32 is traditionally known as a great lecture on faith and it is. But you know that the seed Alma plants in that little parable, the seed that grows into the tree of life, is the word. Alma says, "God is merciful unto all who believe on his name; therefore he desireth, in the first place, that ye should believe, yea, even on his word" (Alma 32:22). And a little later: "Behold, if ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith, yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words. Now, we will compare the word unto a seed" (Alma 32:27–28).

Later as the Book of Mormon moves toward its completion Mormon bears this testimony:

> Yea, we see that whosoever will may lay hold upon the word of God, which is quick and powerful, which shall divide asunder all the cunning and the snares and the wiles of the devil, and lead the man of Christ in a strait and narrow course across that everlasting gulf of misery which is prepared to engulf the wicked—
>
> And land their souls, yea, their immortal souls, at the right hand of God in the kingdom of heaven. (Helaman 3:29–30)

If you will allow me to crisscross the Book of Mormon chronologically, one of the most pleading testimonies of all comes in the first few pages of the book. Laman and Lemuel ask Nephi:

> What meaneth the rod of iron which our father saw, that led to the tree?
>
> And I said unto them that it was the word of God; and whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction.
>
> Wherefore, I, Nephi, did exhort them to give heed unto the word of the Lord; yea, I did exhort them with all the energies of my soul, and with all the faculty which I possessed, that they would give heed to the word of God and remember to keep his commandments always in all things. (1 Nephi 15:23–25)

Now, I suppose it would be presumptuous for any of us to say that what we write is the "word of God" as described in these passages, but I think it is okay for us to say we are at least writing "words of God," thoughts God wants us to have, expressions He has put into our minds in order that we might put them into the minds of others. For that reason, I don't want anyone in this room ever to underestimate the task that he or she has been given. We are in the business of building faith, and when a man or a woman works by faith, he or she works by words. Yes, there is power in the written word: "And now, as 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).

So what if we—or others—didn't write? It is not lost on any of us that it was imperative for Lehi to send his sons back to Jerusalem to obtain the brass plates. You know that story and the anguish involved in doing it, but the record was crucially important—so much so that the painful prospect of one man perishing physically had to be measured against an entire nation dwindling in unbelief. Underscoring this important decision is the reminder that when Mosiah sent his people back to find the people of Zarahemla, the latter were in spiritual and cultural darkness because they did not have the written word. Their language and their faith had become corrupted, it says, because "they had brought no records with them" (Omni 1:17).

Unlike you, I preach more than I write these days. But we both use words. My task—and in spirit yours as well—gets some emphasis from this little dialectical argument by the Apostle Paul:

> For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.
>
> How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? . . .
>
> So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.
>
> But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. (Romans 10:13–14, 17–18)

Well, my dear friends, that's kind of the business we are in here as writers, teachers, and preachers of the word. We are trying to take this message "unto the ends of the world," and I am grateful to you for doing that so ably. Let me say just a few things about your work, and then we will conclude. First, writing is, at least for me, extremely hard work, and it never seems to get easier. I

suppose it is a cliché to say (but we must remember that clichés are true even though they are clichéd) that a blank page is still the most terrifying thing in the world for a writer. Getting started, getting something down on the page is the most difficult step we take, but we have to make ourselves begin. The key is not worrying that what first stares back at you is absolutely horrible—unreadable. My marvelous high school English teacher, Juanita Brooks, she of Mountain Meadows Massacre fame, told me a dozen times in those formative years of my education: "Jeff, you better learn right now that there is no such thing as good writing. There is only good rewriting. So do it over." Maybe some of you can get it right the first time, but I can't and I don't know of very many other people who can. So don't get hung up about how to begin. Just start. It won't be good, whatever you write. Just plan on that. Write, rewrite, and rewrite.

But that is okay. It is part of the deal. It was the magnificent Samuel Johnson who once said that "what is written without effort is in general read without pleasure."[2] So if we expect a serious response from the reader, I suppose it is only fair that it will require a serious effort by the author. In calling for good old hard work and asking for your willingness to go through a couple of dozen drafts, I remind you that, for the most part, the bulk of the world's literature has been nudged forward not by show horses that pranced through the paragraphs, but by broad-shouldered oxen that just keep grunting and pulling. When King Ptolemy asked for an easier way of learning mathematics, Euclid is said to have replied that there is "no royal road to geometry."[3] By the same token, I am quite sure there is no royal road to good writing. But the writer who is willing to sweat for hours on end and to stomp and shout and start over again is finally going to get it right. I take heart that effort is finally rewarded and that over time we can actually learn how to do this. Alexander Pope said, "True ease in writing comes from art, not chance, as those move easiest who have learned to dance."[4] I do think we can learn to dance with words, and when a prose tango here or a poetic foxtrot there really clicks, it is worth all that effort and more.

My second piece of counsel about tackling a blank page comes from Frank Smith in his "Myths of Writing." He said encouragingly: "Thoughts are created in the act of writing. [It is a myth that] you must have something to say in order to write. Reality: You often need to write in order to have anything to say. Thought comes with writing, and writing may never come if it is postponed until we are satisfied that we have something to say. . . . The assertion of write first, see what you had to say later applies to all manifestations of written language, to letters . . . as well as to diaries and journals."[5]

So, again take heart. Begin and learn as you go. You will have ideas and phrases come late that could not have come early. Elder Bruce R. McConkie said he learned the gospel by teaching it. Maybe we find what it is we want to say by writing and writing until finally it appears.

Lastly, even though we all ought to be modest in assessing the importance of what we write, we should never underestimate the significance of a powerful idea or a prescient expression however plain the writer. On June 20, 1942, Anne Frank wrote: "I haven't written for a few days, because I wanted first of all to think about my diary. It's an odd idea for someone like me to keep a diary; not only because I have never done so before, but because it seems to me that neither I—nor for that matter anyone else—will be interested in the unbosomings of a thirteen-year-old schoolgirl. Still, what does that matter? I want to write, but more than that, I want to bring out all kinds of things that lie buried deep in my heart."[6]

I think we have all been grateful that a thirteen-year-old nobody whose scribblings would surely never be read by more than a half-dozen people in her own family (as she thought!) nevertheless felt to write anyway. Consider, too, the myriads of testimonies we have heard from our own heroes and heroines who had the will to write. One of my favorites has been this from Elizabeth Horrocks Jackson, who wrote of their crossing of the North Platte in the Martin handcart company of 1856:

> Some of the men carried some of the women on their back or in their arms, but others of the women tied up their skirts and waded through, like the heroines that they were. . . . My husband (Aaron Jackson) attempted to ford the stream. He had only gone a short distance when he reached a sand bar in the river on which he sank down through weakness and exhaustion. My sister, Mary Horrocks Leavitt, waded through the water to his assistance. She raised him up to his feet. Shortly afterward, a man came along on horseback and conveyed him to the other side. . . . My sister then helped me to pull my cart with my three children and other matters on it. We had scarcely crossed the river when we were visited with a tremendous storm of snow, hail, sand, and fierce winds. . . .
>
> About nine o'clock I retired. Bedding had become very scarce, so I did not disrobe. I slept until, as it appeared to me, about midnight. I was extremely cold. The weather was bitter. I listened to hear if my husband breathed—he lay so still. I could not hear him. I became alarmed. I put my hand on his body, when to my horror I discovered that my worst fears were confirmed. My husband was dead. . . . I called for help to the other inmates of the tent. They could render me no aid; and there was no alternative but to remain alone by the side of the corpse till morning. . . .

> Oh, how those dreary hours drew their tedious length along. When daylight came, some of the male part of the company prepared the body for burial. And oh, such a burial and funeral service. They did not remove his clothing—he had but little. They wrapped him in a blanket and placed him in a pile with thirteen others who had died, and then covered him up in the snow. The ground was frozen so hard that they could not dig a grave. He was left there to sleep in peace until the trump of the Lord shall sound, and the dead in Christ shall awake and come forth in the morning of the first resurrection. We shall then again unite our hearts and lives, and eternity will furnish us with life forever more.
>
> I will not attempt to describe my feelings at finding myself thus left a widow with three children, under such excruciating circumstances. I cannot do it. But I believe the Recording Angel has inscribed in the archives above, and that my suffering for the Gospel's sake will be sanctified unto me for my good.[7]

I don't know who taught young Elizabeth Horrocks to write, or whether anyone taught her to write, but there is an elegance and beauty in her prose that makes us feel the chill of the Wyoming wind as we read it. My faith is bolstered because she wrote of such difficult days.

One other very personal piece I have loved over the years is this letter from Joseph F. Smith, writing on the death of his firstborn child, Mercy Josephine Smith, June 6, 1870, two months shy of the child's third birthday:

> I scarcely dare to trust myself to write, even now my heart aches, and my mind is all chaos; if I should murmur, may God forgive me, my soul has been and is tried with poignant grief, my heart is bruised and wrenched almost asunder. I am desolate, my home seems desolate and almost dreary . . . my own sweet Dodo is gone! I can scarcely believe it and my heart asks, can it be? I look in vain, I listen, no sound, I wander through the rooms, all are vacant, lonely, desolate, deserted. I look down the garden walk, peer around the house, look here and there for a glimpse of a little golden, sunny head and rosy cheeks, but no, alas, no pattering little footsteps. No beaming little black eyes sparkling with love for papa; no sweet little enquiring voice asking a thousand questions, and telling pretty little things, prattling merrily, no soft little dimpled hands clasping me around the neck, no sweet rosy lips returning in childish innocence my fond embrace and kisses, but a vacant little chair. Her little toys are concealed, her clothes put by, and only the one desolate thought forcing its crushing leaden weight upon my heart—she is not here, she is gone! But will she not come back? She cannot leave me long, where is she? I am almost wild, and O God only knows how much I loved my girl, and she the light and joy of my heart.[8]

No comment on that view into a father's heart is necessary or appropriate.

When he wrote his magnificent dictionary, which became the early gold standard for dictionaries in the English language, Samuel Johnson wrote, "The chief glory of every people arises from its authors."[9] I think it's fair to say

that part of our "chief glory" in this Church is those of you who write so well and repeatedly demonstrate the power of the written word.

May I close with two of my favorite New England writers? Henry David Thoreau said: "A written word is the choicest of relics. It is something at once more intimate with us and more universal than any other work of art. It is the work of art nearest to life itself. It may be translated into every language, and not only be read but actually breathed from all human lips;—not be represented on canvas or in marble only, but be carved out of the breath of life itself."[10]

And Emily Dickinson, the belle of Amherst, wrote:

> A word is dead
> When it is said,
> Some say.
> I say it just
> Begins to live
> That day.[11]

God bless you to unleash the power of the written word in promulgating the gospel of Jesus Christ, the greatest cause a writer could ever have in this world, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. RE

Notes

1. *Lectures on Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 72–73, 7:3.
2. Samuel Johnson, *Johnsonian Miscellanies*, Volume 2, ed. George Birkbeck Hill (London: Oxford, 1897), 309.
3. Stanley Gudder, *A Mathematical Journey* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994), xv.
4. Alexander Pope, "Sound and Sense," in *Poetry X*, http://poetry.poetryx.com/poems/1917.
5. Frank Smith, "Myths of Writing," *Language Arts* 58, no. 7 (1981): 793, 795, as quoted in Brad Wilcox, "Why Write It?" *Ensign*, September 1999, 57.
6. Anne Frank, *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* (1952), 2, as quoted in Wilcox, "Why Write It?," 57.
7. Elizabeth Horrocks Jackson, autobiographical sketch, 3–4, n.d., Church History Library, Salt Lake City.
8. Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *The Life of Joseph F. Smith: Sixth President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1938), 455–56.
9. Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, vol. 1 (London: n.p., 1755), preface.
10. Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1910), 86.
11. Emily Dickinson, *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1960).

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

What Can We Do? Reflections on 2 Nephi 25:23

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Half a century has now passed since Latter-day Saint scholars began to give systematic attention to what the Book of Mormon has to say about the role played by grace in salvation. Although the earliest efforts in this direction were, according to one early (and unappreciative) observer, limited to "Mormon academic circles,"[1] subsequent developments have drastically expanded the impact of such study. Thanks especially to the immensely popular writings of Stephen E. Robinson and Robert L. Millet beginning in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and more recently to the similarly popular writings of Brad Wilcox, English-speaking Latter-day Saints have generally become better aware of the unmistakable fact that salvation by grace is among the principal teachings of the Book of Mormon.[2] As all of these authors emphasize, however, at least one Book of Mormon text seems to warn against giving too much prominence to grace: Nephi's famous statement that grace saves us only "after all we can do" (2 Nephi 25:23). This one passage—more than any other—has been used to justify a certain understanding of the Atonement, that grace is the reward for righteous works rather than the enabling gift that makes all works possible in the first place. As Robinson, Millet, and Wilcox all state, it is necessary to

determine the meaning of this passage to clarify what the Book of Mormon teaches about the Atonement.

In this paper, I build on the work of these and other scholars.[3] I do so, however, by offering a theological interpretation of 2 Nephi 25:23 that is distinct from any other in the relevant literature. My intention is to provide a three-pronged approach to interpreting the passage. In a first section, I highlight a number of ambiguities in Nephi's words that have not been sufficiently noted. Paying attention to these details helps to make clear that Nephi's saying is far more complex than it might at first appear, so further work must be done if Nephi's words are to be understood as he meant them to be. In a second section, I turn my attention to potential scriptural sources on which Nephi might have drawn in outlining his understanding of grace. Only one source is identified—the only absolutely sure source related to Nephi's words—and it proves to be immensely helpful in attempting to clarify Nephi's meaning. In a third section, I look at the context into which Nephi inserted the doctrine of grace. The setting in which Nephi decided to say something about grace helps both to clarify his meaning and to suggest a way in which the doctrine of divine grace applies to concrete situations. In the end, I hope to show that Nephi's words, read carefully, highlight and enrich—rather than simply fail to contradict—the Book of Mormon's clear emphasis on grace.

A word about methodology is likely necessary, since I offer in what follows a theological reading of scripture.[4] Contrary to certain popular associations with the word *theology*, to interpret scripture theologically is neither to systematize doctrines nor to square prophetic passages with academically fashionable secular perspectives. Rather, it is simply a matter of asking how scripture might inform theological reflection, that is, how it might shape responsible thinking about questions pertaining to the life of religious commitment. Consequently, in what follows, I undertake neither a strictly historical investigation (where the aim would be to determine what Nephi's words meant in their original historical context) nor a strictly doctrinal study (where the aim would be to determine how Nephi's words coalesce with official or authoritative teachings). I draw on what I take to be the best of such work, but my aim is principally to ask how Nephi's words might help to shape charitable reflection on the struggles of the average Latter-day Saint to be right with God.[5] Questions of charity have unmistakably motivated the reinterpretations offered by Robinson, Millet, and Wilcox. I hope they motivate my own, more emphatically theological investigation of 2 Nephi 25:23 as well.

Ambiguities in 2 Nephi 25:23

Nephi's words are as familiar as any in the Book of Mormon: "For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do" (2 Nephi 25:23). But just as familiar as the words themselves, unfortunately, is a certain problematic interpretation of this passage. In his well-known book *Believing Christ*, Stephen Robinson identifies the problem: "At first glance at this scripture, we might think that grace is offered to us only chronologically *after* we have completed doing all we can do, but this is demonstrably false."[6] It is demonstrably false that grace is given only *after* we have done all that lies in our power because—as Robinson goes on to explain—everything we do is through the life that God in loving grace has already extended to us. As King Benjamin reminded his people, God "has created you from the beginning, and is preserving you from day to day, by lending you breath, that you may live and move and do according to your own will, and even supporting you from one moment to another" (Mosiah 2:21). It is in this sense that, as Bruce C. Hafen has put it, "the Savior's gift of grace to us is not necessarily limited in time to 'after' all we can do. We may receive his grace before, during, and after the time when we expend our own efforts."[7]

It is, then, false that grace comes to us only after and in response to our first doing all we could possibly do to obtain salvation. But it is also entirely unclear that Nephi's words are meant to suggest anything like what readers tend to see in his words at first glance. The supposedly obvious reading is, in other words, not obvious.[8] This is because, Nephi's penchant for plainness notwithstanding, 2 Nephi 25:23 is a difficult text, and one that deserves close reading. To understand just how unclear Nephi's words are, a few interpretive questions, none of which has any obvious answer, might be asked:

1. How important to the interpretation of 2 Nephi 25:23 is the use of the word *we*? The word appears four times in the passage, and the first two instances of the word have a limited rather than a general meaning. When Nephi says that "we write" and "for we know," he seems straightforwardly to be using the word *we* to refer to those who write scripture for the benefit of later Nephites ("our children") and Lamanites ("our brethren"). Does the referent of *we* change in the last bit of the passage, when Nephi says that "we are saved" and refers to "all we can do"? If so, why? And if not, how does the meaning of the text change?

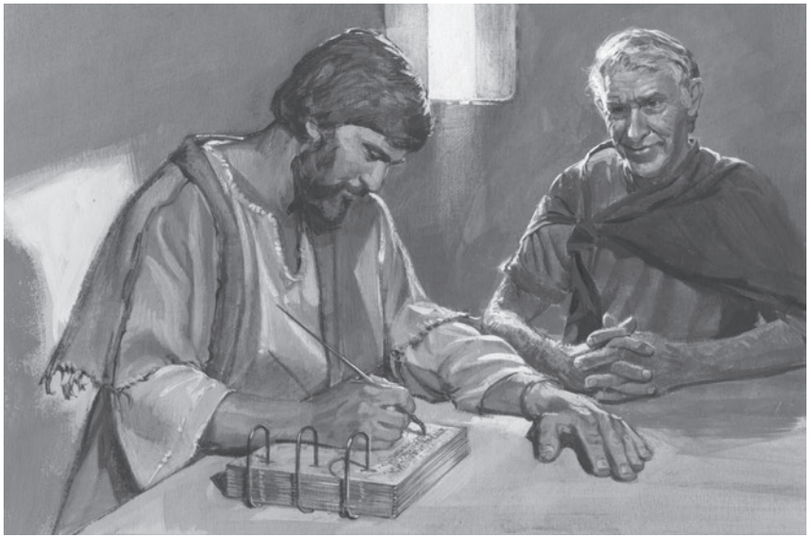
2. In the first part of 2 Nephi 25:23, Nephi claims that his aim is to persuade his readers "to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God." How are these two things—believing in Christ and being reconciled to God—different, and how significant is the difference between them? Is it important that the first is active (one *believes* in Christ), but the second is passive (one is *reconciled* to God)? Is it important that the first is connected only to the Son (one believes in *Christ*), but the second seems to be connected to the Father (one is reconciled to *God*)? Most importantly, which of these—or is it both of them—does Nephi understand as being linked to salvation by grace?
3. Whatever Nephi ultimately means to suggest when he qualifies salvation by grace (that is, by adding "after all we can do"), it has to be recognized that he ties salvation exclusively to grace. Indeed, even if one interprets him as affirming the claim that grace comes only after and in response to human efforts, it has to be confessed that the only source for salvation he identifies is grace (grace does the actual saving, even if it is mobilized by human efforts). However it should be qualified, Nephi's statement that "it is by grace that we are saved" could not on its own terms be much clearer. How should this incontrovertible fact shape interpretation of Nephi's words?
4. Is it at all clear what Nephi means by the word *after*? Stephen Robinson has suggested that the word in this passage serves as "a preposition of separation," with the result that Nephi's message, paraphrased, amounts to the following: "We are still saved by grace, after all is said and done."[9] And there are other meanings of *after* with which to experiment. Noah Webster's original *American Dictionary of the English Language*—published in 1828 and therefore a helpful source for understanding the meaning of English words at the time Joseph Smith dictated Nephi's writings to his scribe—reminds us that *after* sometimes means "in imitation of" or "according to the direction and influence of" (as in "to walk *after* the flesh").[10] How might alternative (but plausible) interpretations of the word *after* change the way we interpret the passage?
5. Had Nephi meant to say that grace comes to us only chronologically after and in direct response to our best efforts, should he have said not "it is by grace we are saved, after all we can do" but "it is by grace we are saved, after we have done all we can do"? Strictly speaking, the claim that grace saves "after all we can do" does not say or imply anything whatsoever about human efforts actually being made—or even attempted, for that matter. Is there something heavy-handed about assuming that Nephi meant to say "after we have done all we can do" when his words read otherwise? If so, how should a reference to what *can be* done, without any actual mention of what *has been* done, be understood?

As these questions evince, what has for far too long passed as the obvious reading of 2 Nephi 25:23 is anything but obvious. The pronoun Nephi uses is ambiguous; he draws distinctions we as readers tend to ignore; he qualifies salvation by grace only after affirming it straightforwardly; he formulates his qualification with a preposition whose meaning is uncertain; and he mentions only what can be done—not what has been done. Moreover, I suspect that further close scrutiny of the text would allow other complicated (and complicating) questions to be raised. But if there is no straightforward or obvious meaning of Nephi's words concerning grace, how is the text to be interpreted? Are there no answers at all to any of the questions raised here? I think there are answers, but they are not to be secured through an appeal to the supposedly obvious meaning of the text. Rather, they are to be learned through an investigation of Nephi's scriptural sources.

Sources for 2 Nephi 25:23

It might seem a bit bold to suggest that Nephi drew his understanding of salvation by grace from an identifiable human source. At worst, such a suggestion might be regarded as a secular gesture, a refusal to consider the possibility that Nephi came to know the nature of salvation directly from God, or at least through the Spirit. These are real and justifiable worries, and yet it seems undeniable—as I believe will become clear—that Nephi more borrowed than revealed his doctrine of salvation by grace. The source for his understanding seems rather straightforwardly to have been his brother Jacob.

Close reading of Nephi's writings suggests that he was right to borrow his understanding of salvation from Jacob. While Nephi says very little about Christ's Atonement—primarily, it seems, because he was much more interested in the history of Israel, which was the focus of his most important prophetic vision (recorded in 1 Nephi 11–14)—Jacob is presented in Nephi's record as the primary audience of Lehi's remarkable sermon on the Atonement in 2 Nephi 2, and the sole preacher of the other great sermon on



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Jacob and Nephi wrote and taught things that would help people believe in Jesus Christ.

the Atonement in Nephi's writings, 2 Nephi 9. Moreover, it was Jacob who, after Nephi's death, would ask of his readers the rhetorical question, "Why not speak of the atonement of Christ, and attain to a perfect knowledge of him?" (Jacob 4:12). While Jacob cut his teeth on Atonement theology and continued to reflect on it to the end of his prophetic career, Nephi gave his time first and foremost to understanding the Abrahamic covenant, the chief subject of the writings of Isaiah.[11] In light of these details, it makes perfect sense that Nephi's few words on grace are deeply rooted in—indeed, more or less borrowed from—his brother's teachings.[12]

Making of his brother Jacob one of the three "sentinels at the gate of the [Book of Mormon]" positioned to "admit us into the scriptural presence of the Lord," Nephi includes in 2 Nephi a lengthy two-day-long sermon that Jacob delivered to the Nephites.[13] At its heart, of course, is one of the Book of Mormon's most remarkable sermons on salvation, mentioned just above (2 Nephi 9). At the conclusion of Jacob's words on the second day of the sermon, however, the following passage appears: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, reconcile yourselves to the will of God, and not to the will of the devil and the flesh; and remember, after ye are reconciled unto God, that it is only in and through the grace of God that ye are saved" (2 Nephi 10:24). It is, I think, unmistakably from these words that Nephi draws (or at least to these words

that Nephi alludes) in his own teaching concerning salvation by grace some fifteen chapters later. Indeed, not only are there clear parallels in language that link the two passages, but there is also a structural indication that the two passages are connected. Each of the two passages is immediately followed by a discussion of what it means to interpret scripture spiritually, and Nephi places the one discussion (2 Nephi 10:23–11:8) immediately before and the other (2 Nephi 25:1–30) immediately after the scriptural text he hopes his readers will regard through a spiritual lens (the so-called Isaiah chapters of 2 Nephi 12–24). Jacob's and Nephi's respective statements about grace, are together, along with the discussions in which they find their immediate context, thus clearly meant to frame Nephi's lengthy quotation of Isaiah.[14]

However, the close relation between the words of the two passages is essential in the structural details. At least three major elements are common to the two texts. First, just as Nephi states that one of his purposes is to persuade his readers "to be reconciled to God," Jacob pleads with his hearers to "reconcile yourselves to the will of God." Second, just as Nephi straightforwardly states that "it is by grace that we are saved," Jacob claims that "it is only in and through the grace of God that ye are saved." Finally, just as Nephi concludes his teaching concerning grace with a prepositional phrase beginning with the word *after* ("after all we can do"), Jacob qualifies his claim by a prepositional phrase beginning with the word *after* ("after ye are reconciled unto God"). These three parallels suggest a tight connection between the two passages. It seems best to assume that Nephi drew his understanding of the role played by grace in salvation directly from the teachings of his brother—teachings he carefully decided to include in his record.

Placing Jacob's and Nephi's words side by side helps in a number of ways to clarify the meaning of Nephi's teaching. First, it seems that Nephi's claim that "it is by grace that we are saved" should be read in light of Jacob's still-plainer statement: "it is *only* in and through the grace of God that ye are saved." Jacob leaves no room for the idea that something of our own efforts plays a role in saving us, even if Nephi's more ambiguous formulation seems to do so.[15] Second, the parallel between Nephi's and Jacob's prepositional phrases, each beginning with the word *after* ("after all we can do" and "after ye are reconciled unto God"), suggests the likelihood that "*all* we can do," as in Nephi's formulation, is "be reconciled to God." This, moreover, accords nicely with the use of the phrase "all we can do" elsewhere in the Book of Mormon.[16] More importantly, these first two points of clarification help to provide answers to two of the questions

raised in the preceding section of this paper. In light of Jacob's unmistakable insistence that salvation comes *only* in and through divine grace, the question of how much weight should be granted to Nephi's having attached salvation only to grace is answered. Further, the clarification that "all we can do" is "be reconciled to God" helps to clarify what it is from the first half of 2 Nephi 25:23 that Nephi means to link directly to salvation. A third point of clarification—the most difficult but also the most instructive—provides answers to the other three questions raised in the preceding section.

A third point of clarification, then, is that the structure of Jacob's words in 2 Nephi 10:24 makes clear that the qualifying prepositional phrase (beginning with the word *after*) is meant there to specify the time when the injunction to remember becomes relevant, rather than the time when grace becomes operative. In other words, by having "after ye are reconciled unto God" interrupt the injunction to "remember . . . that it is only in and through the grace of God that ye are saved," Jacob suggests that what comes after reconciliation with God is not the divine granting of grace but the human remembering of grace—the recognition on the part of the reconciled that salvation was, is, and will always be God's work. This application of the prepositional phrase beginning with *after* might be productively transferred to Nephi's teaching. In other words, it seems that the phrase "after all we can do" is meant to specify the time when "we know that . . . we are saved," rather than the time when "we are saved." Nephi's words, in fact, could be rearranged to mirror the structure of Jacob's, making them slightly clearer: "for we know, after all we can do, that it is by grace that we are saved."

This third point of clarification makes it unnecessary to speculate about unconventional meanings of the word *after*, theologically fascinating though the implications of such experiments might be. The word *after* seems, in the end, just to mean "chronologically after," though it specifies the time when something is to be remembered or recognized ("we know") rather than the time when something is to be effected or brought to pass ("we are saved"). At the same time, this third point makes clear why Nephi refers to what can be done without making mention of anything actually having been done. Regardless of what actually has been done, grace is what saves—and that remains true even after all that can be done. Even if the most remote theoretical possibilities are realized, it is still grace that saves.[17] Finally, this third point of clarification seems to answer the question concerning Nephi's ambiguous use of the word *we*. While in the usual interpretation of 2 Nephi 25:23, it is assumed that the

referent of the word changes (from *we* the writers of scripture to *we* human beings), the parallel with Jacob's teaching makes clear that the referent of the word remains constant through the whole passage. Nephi intends to teach his readers what he has come to realize, after all he can do: that it is by grace—and grace alone—that he is saved.[18]

Jacob's words in 2 Nephi 10:24 are the (extremely) likely source for Nephi's words concerning grace in 2 Nephi 25:23, and the connection between the two passages clarifies the meaning of Nephi's teaching in a remarkable way. Far from claiming that grace comes only after and in response to our own best efforts (which, again, is demonstrably false), Nephi says that grace is what characterizes the whole divine work of salvation, and that what comes after—or at least should come after—salvation is a full recognition of the unique role played in salvation by grace. All that Nephi and Jacob ask their readers and hearers to do is to be reconciled to God, and reconciliation is what happens only when we stop holding out against God's purposes, when we "yield" and therefore cease, at last, to be "an enemy to God," as the angel put it to King Benjamin (Mosiah 3:19). To speculate a bit, perhaps Nephi and Jacob jointly modeled their teachings on Exodus 31:13, where the Lord announces that it is only when human beings stop working for themselves (by giving themselves to Sabbath observance) that they "may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you."[19]

Applications of 2 Nephi 25:23

The basic sense of Nephi's words concerning the role played by grace in salvation has been clarified. It remains to be asked what Nephi understood to be the relevance of the doctrine. Why is it in 2 Nephi 25 that he makes this most famous of his statements regarding the Atonement, since those statements are few and far between? If Nephi assumes a generalizable understanding of grace, what is to be learned from the context into which he inserts that understanding? In order to feel the real force of Nephi's (borrowed) conception of grace, and not just to understand its intelligible meaning, it is necessary to consider the context of 2 Nephi 25:23.

Unfortunately, little work has been done on the context of Nephi's words concerning grace. Those who have contributed substantially through their writings to the development of a Latter-day Saint awareness of grace, have generally focused on broad themes as they are reflected in isolated passages.[20] And commentaries on the Book of Mormon tend to say relatively little about the nuances of textual context.[21] This is unfortunate because Nephi's

statement about salvation by grace is integral with the text that surrounds it. In 2 Nephi 25, read as a coherent whole, one can find a kind of guide for understanding the implications and relevance of the doctrine of salvation by grace. To comprehend that larger context, however, requires some work, since it cannot be understood without careful attention to Nephi's general purposes in producing his small plates record.

At a very broad level, it should be noted that 2 Nephi 25:23 appears in the stretch of Nephi's record—from 2 Nephi 6 to 2 Nephi 30—to which Nephi himself gave the title of "the more sacred things" (1 Nephi 19:5), the part of his record he was directly commanded to produce for his children. That privileged stretch of text is almost exclusively focused on the writings of Isaiah, not only due to the presence, at its heart, of thirteen chapters drawn more or less without alteration from the brass plates (2 Nephi 12–24), but due also to the focus both Jacob and Nephi have on Isaiah in their respective contributions to the text (2 Nephi 6–10 and 2 Nephi 25–30).[22] But as interesting and deserving of attention as most of 2 Nephi 6–30 is, it is obviously what Nephi does in his narrower contribution (2 Nephi 25–30) that is most immediately relevant here.

The first chapter of Nephi's contribution, within which his statement regarding grace is to be found, is clearly meant to set up the chapters that follow. The chapter naturally divides into three parts: (1) 2 Nephi 25:1–8 contains a kind of apology for the inclusion, without clarifying commentary, of so many chapters of Isaiah's writings; (2) 2 Nephi 25:9–19 shifts the focus from Isaiah's prophecies to what Nephi calls "[his] own prophecy" (2 Nephi 25:7), a plainer vision of things that is intended to clarify what in Isaiah's texts is most important; and (3) 2 Nephi 25:20–30 contains an aside about Nephi's general purposes in creating his record. Nephi's reference to grace (in 2 Nephi 25:23) falls within the third of these three parts of the chapter, but it can only be understood in light of the two that precede it.

For present purposes, little needs to be said about Nephi's apology for including Isaiah among "the more sacred things" (part 1 of 2 Nephi 25). What is essential is that he believed that his own prophecy could be used to clarify Isaiah's writings (part 2). The chapters immediately following 2 Nephi 25 are given to a remarkable weaving of Isaiah's writings (in particular, Isaiah 29) into Nephi's own prophetic understanding (in particular, his vision recorded in 1 Nephi 11–14).[23] What Nephi thus presents in the first two parts of 2 Nephi 25 is an introduction to—and a foretaste of—what he will go on to do more generally in his contribution to the text, namely, to interlace the various elements of his own apocalyptic vision with the written text of Isaiah's brass plates prophecies.

Why is all this important to the interpretation of the aside Nephi offers in the third part of 2 Nephi 25, within which his words regarding grace appear? It is because it was the apocalyptic vision of 1 Nephi 11–14, summarized in part 2 of 2 Nephi 25, that originally provided Nephi with his reasons for producing his record—the very reasons he reviews in part 3 of 2 Nephi 25. That apocalyptic vision, unmistakably the most important of Nephi's prophetic experiences, focused on a single, crucial event: the sudden emergence in the last days of a book that would solve the world's religious problems, unmistakably the Book of Mormon. The angelic guide who accompanies Nephi during the vision describes the book in the following words: "For behold, saith the Lamb, I will manifest myself unto thy seed, that they shall write many things which I shall minister unto them, which shall be plain and precious. . . . And the words of the Lamb shall be made known in the records of thy seed, as well as in the records of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (1 Nephi 13:35, 41).

From these words (and nothing more was told to Nephi by way of description of the book), and from the earlier part of his vision in which he saw the visit of the resurrected Christ to his father's descendants, Nephi would most naturally have concluded that the book he had seen coming forth to supplement the Bible in the last days would be, not his own writings, but the writings of his children living during and after the visit of the Christ. And indeed, as many textual details suggest, Nephi seems to have seen his major purpose in writing his record less to contribute to the book that would make known "the words of the Lamb" than to inspire the production of that book by his children.[24]

It is this that Nephi explains in 2 Nephi 25:23 and the verses surrounding it. The prophecy Nephi inserts into part 2 of 2 Nephi 25 culminates in a prediction of the coming forth of the book, but he clearly differentiates between *that book* and *his own record* as he explains, in part 3, his purposes in writing. Thus, Nephi describes the prophesied book from his vision as something that will eventually aid in "convincing [the Jews] of the true Messiah, who was rejected by them" (2 Nephi 25:18), while he describes his own record as addressed principally to his children, his brethren, his people, and, more generally, the seed of Joseph (2 Nephi 25:20–21, 23, 26–28).[25] And Nephi provides a set of purposes for directing his own writings to Lehi's children. He

writes his record with the intent: (1) "to persuade [them] to believe in Christ" (2 Nephi 25:23); (2) to help them to "know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins" (2 Nephi 25:26); (3) to be sure that they "know the deadness of the law" so that they will not "harden their hearts against [Christ] when the law ought to be done away" (2 Nephi 25:27); (4) to inform them that "the right way is to believe in Christ and deny him not" (2 Nephi 25:28); (5) to encourage them to "keep the performances and ordinances of God until the law shall be fulfilled" (2 Nephi 25:30); and, most importantly, (6) to instruct them to take as "the law" whatever "words" Christ would "speak" to them after he had "risen from the dead" (2 Nephi 26:1). From these and other texts, it is clear that Nephi's intention with his record was first and foremost to prepare his people for Christ's visit to the New World, thereby preparing them to assume the task they would have of producing a book reporting the words of the visiting Christ. Nephi saw it as his life's work to ensure, by writing for his direct descendants, that the book he saw in vision would eventually be written.

Significantly, in the middle of his explanation, Nephi refers to salvation by grace. His worry, clearly, was that his descendants who, six centuries later, would be present at the visit of Christ to the New World would be tempted to resist the announcement of the fulfillment of the law of Moses. Having come himself to see, after all he could do, that grace is what lies behind salvation, Nephi wanted his children to learn the same lesson. He wanted them to see, once the law had been fulfilled, that it was nothing they did or could have done that delivered them from sin and death, because it was in fact Christ who delivered them from sin and death. Nephi wanted his children—he wrote with the explicit hope to persuade them on this point—to believe in Christ and to be reconciled to God. His worry was that they might resist God, and specifically that they might do so in the name of the law of Moses. If they did that, they would certainly fail to write the book Nephi had seen in vision.

Nephi took the doctrine of grace to be most relevant when he recognized the real temptation human beings feel to resist the revelatory. This may come as a bit of a surprise. We are naturally inclined to feel that grace is what needs to be understood when we experience the burnout that can result from working intensely to fulfill the never-ending demands that come with activity in the Church.[26] For Nephi, though, the sole efficacy of grace is what needs remembering when we are inclined to think that programs and practices, norms, and traditions—even when these have their origins in inspiration—matter

more than what God wishes to teach us now. Grace is what we are ignoring whenever we resist God's gentle (or not-so-gentle) entreaties. We manifest our ignorance of the role played in salvation by grace whenever we feel guilty about waiting on the Lord, whenever we feel we ought just to get to work because we know what we are supposed to do and now just need to get it done. Grace is what we need to come to understand anew when we see that we simply do not have the patience to be still, and know that God is God. If we can be still—not only in body but also in spirit—we might know, as Nephi did, that God is God, and that it is God who saves by grace.

This is a lesson that Nephi himself had to learn with great difficulty. He retrieved a copy of the law of Moses for his people only after he finally ceased resisting God's Spirit—which he did twice: first by trying to do things his own way (simply asking Laban for the plates, and then attempting a trade), and then by refusing the constraint of the Spirit (to kill Laban with his own sword).[27] We should not be surprised that Nephi could not bear the thought that his children might eventually take the very law he had thus secured for them as a reason in turn to resist God's word to them. Nothing worried Nephi more than those who say, "We have received the word of God, and we need no more of the word of God, for we have enough!" (see 2 Nephi 28:29). Nephi testified clearly to the nature of his God: "For behold, thus saith the Lord God: I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little . . . unto him that receiveth I will give more" (2 Nephi 28:30). Thus, to realize fully that what saves is grace—God's good will, expressed in the form of covenantal bonds—is to realize that whatever our excuse might be for holding out against God, it is a poor one.

Conclusion

This, then, is the concrete meaning of salvation or deliverance by grace, as I think Nephi understands it: to be given to see that God still speaks, and to be given to receive what he says in full faith. All we can do is resist the temptation to hold out against the Spirit's enticements and constraints. After that, it only remains for us to remember the source of our strength to resist, which was never ours to begin with. RE

Notes

1. Sterling McMurrin, *The Theological Foundations of the Mormon Religion* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 1965), 67.

2. See Stephen E. Robinson, *Believing Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992); Robert L. Millet, *Grace Works* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003); and Brad Wilcox, *The Continuous Atonement* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2009).

3. Other important works along lines similar to those drawn by Robinson, Millet, and Wilcox are Bruce C. Hafen, *The Broken Heart: Applying the Atonement to Life's Experiences* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989); and Donald P. Mangum and Brenton G. Yorgason, *Amazing Grace: The Tender Mercies of the Lord* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996). Also worthy of mention, though written in a different vein, are Hugh Nibley, "Work We Must, but the Lunch Is Free," in *Approaching Zion*, ed. Don Norton (Salt Lake City and Provo: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1989), 202–51; C. Terry Warner, *Bonds That Make Us Free: Healing Our Relationships, Coming to Ourselves* (Salt Lake City: Shadow Mountain, 2001); Blake T. Ostler, *Exploring Mormon Thought: The Problems of Theism and the Love of God* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2006); and Adam Miller, *Rube Goldberg Machines: Essays in Mormon Theology* (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2012).

4. For a good but brief introduction to theological interpretation of scripture, see Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "What Is Theological Interpretation of the Bible?," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Craig G. Bartholomew, Daniel J. Treier, and N. T. Wright (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 19–23. Many helpful short articles on theological interpretation can be found in the same volume.

5. See Adam S. Miller, "Introduction" in *An Experiment on the Word: Reading Alma 32*, ed. Adam S. Miller (Salem, OR: Salt Press, 2011), 1–8.

6. Robinson, *Believing Christ*, 91; emphasis added.

7. Hafen, *The Broken Heart*, 155–56.

8. One might object at this point that the vulgar interpretation Robinson singles out is too easy to criticize, that it would be more responsible to focus on more sophisticated readings of 2 Nephi 25:23. Is it "demonstrably false," for instance, that Nephi has reference specifically to one sort of grace (the sort associated with salvation), where other prophets might have reference to another sort of grace (the sort associated with creation)? Presumably not. For my own purposes, though, such a rightly-concerned objection strengthens rather than weakens my point—namely, that an interpretation of Nephi's words must be undertaken more carefully, since the passage is more difficult than it might seem at first glance.

9. Robinson, *Believing Christ*, 91–92. Other interpreters have followed suit. See Mangum and Yorgason, *Amazing Grace*, 60–61; Millet, *Grace Works*, 131; and Wilcox, *The Continuous Atonement*, 104.

10. Noah Webster, *American Dictionary of the English Language*, facsimile ed. (Baltimore: United Book, 2009), s.v. "after."

11. While Nephi says relatively little about Atonement theology and focuses almost exclusively on covenant theology, Jacob seems to have been deeply interested in both themes. Jacob gives his attention to Isaiah and the covenant in major parts of his sermon in 2 Nephi 6–10 (likely providing Nephi with his motivations for including it along with Isaiah and his own prophecies in 2 Nephi 6–30), and he returns to the theme in a most striking way in Jacob 4–6.

12. Of course, it does not necessarily follow from the fact that Nephi *said* relatively little about atonement that he *knew* relatively little. It is entirely possible that Nephi came to understand the nature of the Atonement independently of Jacob but from the same source—whether divine (through the Spirit, presumably) or human (from his father, Lehi). I suspect otherwise, but there is more than one speculative story that could be told to account for the textual details.

13. Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 36.

14. See Joseph M. Spencer, *An Other Testament: On Typology* (Salem, OR: Salt Press, 2012), 53.

15. One might suggest that Jacob's talk of "reconciling oneself to God" indicates what must be done to be saved, but it is difficult to square too strong an interpretation along such lines with Jacob's insistence that "it is *only* in and through the grace of God" that salvation is granted. Jacob does not deny that something must be done, but he denies that anything apart from God's grace actually accomplishes the work of salvation.

16. Robert Millet connects 2 Nephi 25:23 to Alma 24:10–12, where the king over the newly-converted Anti-Nephi-Lehies says that "it has been all that we could do . . . to repent of all our sins," as well as that "it was all we could do to repent sufficiently before God." See Millet, *Grace Works*, 131–32.

17. Brad Wilcox makes some similar points in Wilcox, *The Continuous Atonement*, 109–11.

18. This last point, concerning the referent of "we," is one I return to in the third section of this paper.

19. Much more needs to be said to justify fully what I have offered here as a passing interpretation of "reconciliation" (that is, as a gesture of *stopping*). Here I mean only to indicate a direction for further theological reflection.

20. The exception is Mangum and Yorgason, *Amazing Grace*, 58–59. While these two scholars at least suggest the importance of the passage's textual context, they say very little about it.

21. Brant Gardner does provide interesting historical context, but he says little about the textual context of 2 Nephi 25:23. See Brant A. Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 2:343–48. In light of the textual context of 2 Nephi 25:23, I think some of Gardner's conclusions are overly hasty.

22. The structure of Nephi's record has been analyzed in Frederick W. Axelgard, "1 and 2 Nephi: An Inspiring Whole," *BYU Studies* 26, no. 4 (Fall 1986): 53–66; and, in much greater detail, in Spencer, *An Other Testament*, 33–68.

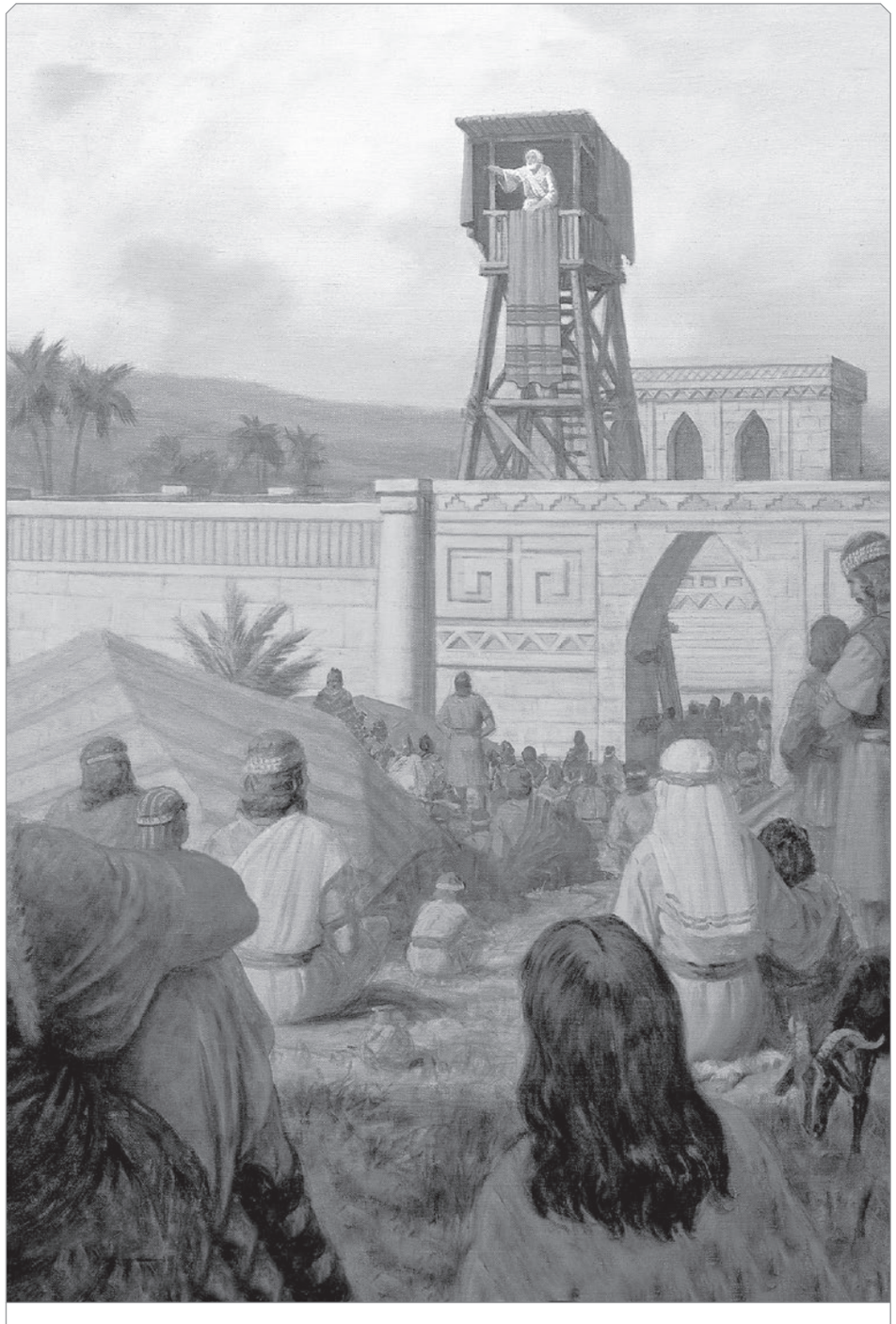
23. See Heather Hardy and Grant Hardy, "How Nephi Shapes His Readers' Perceptions of Isaiah," in *Reading Nephi Reading Isaiah: Reading 2 Nephi 26–27*, ed. Joseph M. Spencer and Jenny Webb (Salem, OR: Salt Press, 2011), 37–62.

24. Nephi seems to have begun to glimpse the possibility of a wider audience for his writings relatively early in his project (see 1 Nephi 19:18–21), but he seems only eventually to have come to the conviction that they would actually be a part of the book he saw in vision (see 2 Nephi 33:13). On this point, see Grant Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader's Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 79.

25. Second Nephi 25:22 makes clear again that Nephi recognized the possibility that his writings might have readers other than and in addition to his intended audience.

26. This is the scholarly conclusion of the anthropologist who studies contemporary Mormon culture as well. See Douglas J. Davies, *The Mormon Culture of Salvation* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2000).

27. Of course, the text never directly asserts that the first two attempts to retrieve the brass plates from Laban were at odds with divine purposes. I take it, however, that this is at least implied by the fact that the Spirit is mentioned for the first time when Nephi enters Jerusalem for the third attempt.



Gary Kapp, *King Benjamin Preaches to the Nephites,* © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

King Benjamin elaborated on the Judgment Day, suggesting that he may have seen it in vision.

Mosiah 3 as an Apocalyptic Text

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Mosiah 3 presents readers of the Book of Mormon with an intriguing situation. Beginning in Mosiah 2, King Benjamin has begun to speak to those gathered at the Zarahemla temple. In Mosiah 3, Benjamin relays to his listeners his knowledge regarding the coming of Jesus Christ, the problem of humanity's "natural" state, and the reality of the Atonement. Toward the end of Mosiah 3, Benjamin elaborates upon a future judgment, where both righteous and wicked will be judged. He states:

> And thus saith the Lord: They shall stand as a bright testimony against this people, at the judgment day; whereof they shall be judged, every man according to his works, whether they be good, or whether they be evil.
>
> And if they be evil they are consigned to an awful view of their own guilt and abominations, which doth cause them to shrink from the presence of the Lord into a state of misery and endless torment, from whence they can no more return; therefore they have drunk damnation to their own souls.
>
> Therefore, they have drunk out of the cup of the wrath of God, which justice could no more deny unto them than it could deny that Adam should fall because of his partaking of the forbidden fruit; therefore, mercy could have claim on them no more forever.

> And their torment is as a lake of fire and brimstone, whose flames are unquenchable, and whose smoke ascendeth up forever and ever. Thus hath the Lord commanded me. Amen. (Mosiah 3:24–27)

This description of the fate of the wicked shares a remarkable textual connection with the vision of John. In Revelation 14 and 20, John uses language similar to that of Benjamin in describing the fate of the wicked (language shared by both texts has been italicized):

> The same shall *drink of the wine of the wrath of God*, which is poured out without mixture *into the cup of his indignation*; and he shall be *tormented with fire and brimstone* in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:
>
> And *the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever*: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. (Revelation 14:10–11)
>
> And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and *they were judged every man according to their works*.
>
> And death and hell were cast into the *lake of fire*. This is the second death. (Revelation 20:13–14)

These textual links between Mosiah 3 and Revelation raise some interesting questions: Do these similarities hint to readers that Benjamin and John are recounting similar visions?[1] Can Mosiah 3 be interpreted as an apocalyptic text? Could reading and analyzing Mosiah 3 as apocalyptic prove illuminating to our understanding not only of the text but of King Benjamin as well? Interpreting Mosiah 3 as an apocalyptic vision would place Benjamin in an elite category of seers, one that includes Nephi, John the Revelator, and Joseph Smith. The purpose of this paper is to examine Mosiah 3 under an apocalyptic lens. A close examination of Mosiah 3 reveals it to be an apocalyptic text, and viewing it as such can open up additional insights into the Book of Mormon.

Due to the enigmatic nature of apocalyptic literature, any discussion is aided greatly by defining the scope of what apocalyptic literature actually is.[2] The term "apocalyptic"[3] derives from the Greek noun Ἀποκάλυψις, which literally means "to disclose" or "to unveil."[4] Grasping the sense of this term is fundamental to understanding the nature of apocalyptic literature, since what is being "disclosed" or "unveiled" is the gulf between heaven and earth, between God and humanity, between the celestial and the telestial. The curtain concealing the world of God and his role and movements within ours is drawn back, and the reader begins to view his or her world through God's cosmic lens. Simply put, apocalyptic revelation is "the manifestation of deity."[5]

John J. Collins, an expert in apocalyptic literature, defines it as "a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world."[6] The specific literary elements that are fundamental to apocalyptic texts include (but are not limited to) "the acute expression of the fulfillment of divine promises; cosmic catastrophe; a relationship between the time of the end and preceding human and cosmic history; angelology and demonology; salvation beyond catastrophe; salvation proceeding from God; a future Savior figure with royal characteristics; a future state characterized by the catchword glory."[7]

While there is no consensus list of characteristics that defines what makes a vision "apocalyptic," the following six elements are often present in apocalyptic texts:[8]

1. The presence of an angel who acts as
   a. Guide
   b. Interpreter
2. Symbolic images and language, usually interpreted by the angelic guide.
3. A radical dualism, whether
   a. *spatial* (earth vs. heaven)
   b. *ethical* (good vs. evil)
   c. *temporal* (present age vs. future age)
4. The promise of a future state where the righteous will dwell with God and the wicked will be punished.
5. The future state will be initiated by the intervention of a significant, quasi-divine figure.
6. A preoccupation with deterministic eschatology: future events have been set and cannot be altered.

1. Angelic Guide

Several apocalyptic texts begin with the introduction of an angelic figure who guides the seer through a heavenly vision, often engaging him in question-and-answer style dialogue. In Ezekiel 40:3, this divine messenger who leads Ezekiel on a tour of the eschatological temple is described, "And he brought me thither, and, behold, there was a man, whose appearance was like the

appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate."

While Ezekiel's guide does the majority of the talking in Ezekiel 40–48, specifically in regards to the measurements of the temple, Zechariah's angelic guide is more open to dialogue:

> Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Sebat, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying,
>
> I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom; and behind him were there red horses, speckled, and white.
>
> Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will shew thee what these be. . . .
>
> And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What be these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. (Zechariah 1:7–9, 19)

A similar encounter occurs in the extracanonical 1 *Enoch*, where Enoch is guided through the heavens by various guides, including Michael and Uriel. While viewing a tree growing upon a mountain, Michael enquires of Enoch, "And he said unto me, Enoch, 'What is it that you are asking me concerning the fragrance of this tree and you are so inquisitive about?' At that moment, I answer, saying 'I am desirous of knowing everything, but specifically about his thing.' He answered, saying, 'This tall mountain which you saw whose summit resembles the throne of God is (indeed) his throne, on which the Holy and Great Lord of Glory, the Eternal King, will sit when he descends to visit the earth with goodness.'"[9]

Similar encounters are preserved in the book of Daniel, *4 Ezra, 2 Baruch*, the Revelation of John, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the *Apocalypse of Peter*, and the *Apocalypse of Paul*.[10]

In Mosiah 3, an angel is clearly present; Benjamin tells us as much: "And the things which I shall tell you are made known unto me by an angel from God. And he said unto me: Awake; and I awoke, and behold he stood before me" (Mosiah 3:2).[11]

The question then becomes, does the angel who "made known" to Benjamin the events he will recount act in a similar fashion to the angelic encounters described above? It doesn't appear so from Benjamin's narration. The angel begins speaking in Mosiah 3:2 and continues speaking all the way through the chapter in what amounts to a relaying of information. The angel

mentions that he has been sent to Benjamin by the Lord, who "hath heard thy prayers" (Mosiah 3:4). The angel concludes his message in verse 23: "And now I have spoken the words which the Lord God hath commanded me." At this point, in verse 24, either Benjamin or the angel[12] adds a sort of addendum, either directly quoting or perhaps paraphrasing a statement made by the Lord: "And thus saith the Lord . . ." What is unclear is how much Benjamin is directly quoting or paraphrasing the words of the angel as he relays the "glad tidings" to the people. It is clear that Benjamin heard the angel, but it is unclear whether he saw the events being described by the angel.

2. Symbolic Images and Language

The visions of John, Zechariah, Enoch, and others are replete with symbolism. As for the reason for such abundant employment of animals, numbers, and colors, D. S. Russell writes, "The apocalyptic literature is marked by a highly dramatic quality whose language and style match the inexpressible scenes which it tries to portray. Such scenes cannot be portrayed in the sober language of common prose; they require for their expression the imaginative language of poetry."[13] This poetic language generally finds expression in terms of animals, numbers, or colors. Animals are prominent in such texts as the book of Revelation, where the image of a lamb (chapter 5) or a dragon (chapter 12) are used to describe Jesus and Satan, or the more developed "animal apocalypse" from *1 Enoch* (verses 83–90), where the principle figures of humanity's history from Adam to the Messiah are depicted as different types of animals. Numbers such as 3, 4, 7, 10, and 12 (and its multiples) are common, while the four horsemen of the apocalypse mentioned in Revelation 6 are described as being a specific, representative color, whether white (conquest), red (bloodshed), black (famine), or pale (death).[14]

The type of symbolism present in texts such as the book of Revelation or *1 Enoch* is almost wholly absent from Mosiah 3. On the contrary, one of the remarkable aspects about Mosiah 3 is the clarity with which it describes the future events. Benjamin is given a very detailed account of the Savior's ministry, death, and Resurrection, even being told that "he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (3:8). Mosiah 3 is just as clear when expounding upon the implications of the Atonement for humanity: the law of Moses means nothing removed from the context of the Atonement (3:14–15), the blood of Christ atones for little children (3:16), humanity is in a "natural" state and the only means of overcoming this is to "yield" and "submit" (3:19),

and God's judgment is a "just" and "righteous" one (3:10, 18). In fact, the only real symbolism present in Mosiah 3 comes in the description of those who submit to Jesus as becoming "as a child" and the description of the torment of the wicked being "as a lake of fire and brimstone" (3:27), but both of these phrases are a far cry from the level of symbolic language found in much of apocalyptic literature. This does not necessarily rule out the notion that symbols and images were absent from Benjamin's experience. He could simply be relaying to his audience the *interpretation* of the symbols as they were given to him by the angel, rather than risk the distraction or the confusion that may have arisen through mentioning any of the symbols or images he witnessed.[15]

3. Radical Dualism

The extensive symbolism present in apocalyptic literature becomes perhaps most fully realized in the radical dualism this genre of literature offers. This dualism most often takes one of three forms:

Spatial dualism. This type of dualism postulates two realms of existence: heaven and earth, the supernatural and the natural, the created and the eternal. The book of Revelation describes how the opening of John's apocalypse occurred when "I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven," at which point John, like Isaiah, finds himself in the throne-room of God (Revelation 4:1–2).[16] This spatial dualism accounts for the necessity of an angelic guide linking heaven to earth, as illustrated in the visions of prophets such as Enoch, Abraham, or John.[17]

Ethical dualism.[18] The existence of two realms—heaven and earth—lends itself to the development of ethical dualism, namely the idea that humanity can be divided into the righteous or the wicked, a process described in the apocryphal wisdom text of Ecclesiasticus, "And all men are from the ground, and Adam was created of earth: In much knowledge the Lord hath divided them, and made their ways diverse. . . . Good is set against evil, and life against death: so is the godly against the sinner, and the sinner against the godly. So look upon all the works of the most High; and there are two and two, one against another" (33:10–14).

The *Testament of Judah* illustrates a similar dichotomy: "So understand, my children, that two spirits await an opportunity with humanity: the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. In between is the conscience of the mind which inclines as it will."[19] While the terminology may differ from text to text, the ethical duality is common throughout most apocalyptic texts.[20]

Significantly, one of the primary ways ethical dualism is developed comes about through a merging with spatial dualism. One of the primary quests of apocalyptic literature is to identify and examine the origin of evil on this world. One way of explaining the presence of evil in the world was to see it as a force brought to earth by heavenly beings. Thus some apocalyptic texts develop a lengthy portrayal of a cosmic battle between the heavenly forces of evil (led by Beliar,[21] Mastema,[22] or Satan[23]) against the forces of righteousness (led by Michael[24] or the Messiah[25]) in a competition for the souls of men.

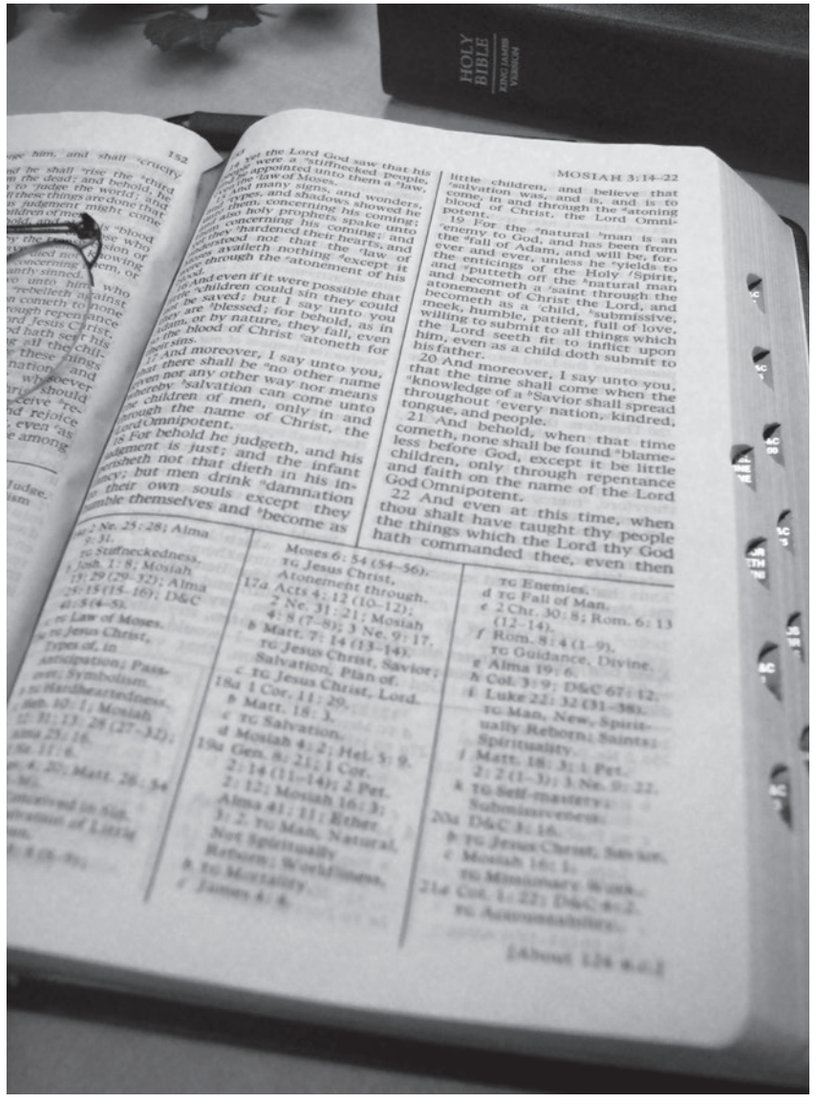
However, a second way of explaining the origin of evil in apocalyptic literature was to place responsibility for sin within man himself. According to D. S. Russell, when it came to defining the origins of evil within apocalyptic texts, "such choice was to be made in the light of two important and related factors: the fact of Adam's 'fall' and the involvement in it of all his descendants, and the fact that in every human being there is a propensity to evil in the form of an 'evil inclination' which is basic to human nature itself."[26] Thus the writer of *1 Enoch* can say, "I have sworn unto you, sinners: In the same manner that a mountain has never turned into a servant, nor shall a hill (ever) become a maidservant of a woman; likewise, never has sin been exported into the world. It is the people who have themselves invented it. And those who commit it shall come under a great curse."[27] This curse was, of course, due to Adam's Fall: "O Adam, what have you done? For though it was you who sinned, the fall was not yours alone, but ours also who are your descendants."[28] As a result (directly or indirectly) of Adam's Fall, humanity contains within themselves a natural proclivity to sin that must be overcome: "For although Adam sinned first and has brought death upon all who were not in his own time, yet each of them who has been born from him has prepared for himself the coming torment. And further, each of them has chosen for himself for the coming glory. For truly, the one who believes will receive reward. . . . Adam is, therefore, not the cause, except only for himself, but each of us has become our own Adam."[29]

As we turn our attention to Mosiah 3, two verses hint at a spatial dualism of heaven and earth. In verse 5, Benjamin relates, "For behold, the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity, shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of

clay." But while this verse relates that Jesus will come down to earth from heaven, it is silent on where Jesus will return to after his Resurrection. Verse 8 reveals that the name of this "Lord Omnipotent" shall be "Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning; and his mother shall be called Mary." Again a distinction is made between "heaven" and "earth," although it is not as strictly demarcated as some of the apocryphal writings such as *1 Enoch* or the *Testament of Levi*.

Much more developed in Mosiah 3, however, is the concept of ethical dualism. For example, Jesus is described as one who shall "cast out devils, or the evil spirits which dwell in the hearts of the children of men" (verse 6). But it is the question of the origin and nature of evil that becomes the crux of Mosiah 3. Benjamin begins his discussion of the Atonement in 3:11 by saying: "For behold, and also his blood atoneth for the sins of those who have fallen by the transgression of Adam, who have died not knowing the will of God concerning them, or who have ignorantly sinned." The Atonement, according to Benjamin, will cover those who have sinned in ignorance of the will of God, but they require this divine mediation due to their state as "fallen by the transgression of Adam." Adam's Fall will be mentioned twice more in chapter 3. First, Benjamin links the Fall to both Adam and "nature": "And even if it were possible that little children could sin they could not be saved; but I say unto you they are blessed; for behold, as in Adam, or by nature, they fall, even so the blood of Christ atoneth for their sins" (3:16). As Brant Gardner notes, "We expect the association of Adam and the fall, but the concept of 'by nature' is unique to Benjamin. Benjamin equates 'nature' with the fall. Because it occurs in children who cannot sin, the 'fall/nature' is an inheritance of Adam, not a personal defect of the child."[30] All this, of course, leads to the crucial statement in Mosiah 3:19, which reads "For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father."

With these two bold statements, the Book of Mormon pronounces its judgment on the question of the origin of sin. While there may be devils and demons, sin comes not as a result of the incursion of fallen angels to earth, but rather to a proclivity found within humanity due to the Fall of Adam. As



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Instead of looking to the future for final vindication from evil, the words of Benjamin force us to look to the past. Benjamin tells us the Judgment is already under way. Time will pivot not on a future coming, but on a past one.

quoted in *2 Baruch* earlier, "each of us has become our own Adam" because, when faced with a decision to choose good or evil, all of us inevitably choose evil at least once.

Yet Benjamin's development on humanity's fallen nature does not end with a simple attribution to Adam. Benjamin goes on to outline how all must either remain an enemy to God or else choose to submit to him, "putting off the natural man and becoming a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord." Humanity can resist its nature and, with divine aid, become sanctified. A similar sentiment emerges in a moving scene from *4 Ezra*. Ezra witnesses the wondrous fate of the righteous and then begins to lament for the wicked who have "miserably failed." In response, his angelic guide states: "This is the meaning of the contest which every man who is born on earth shall wage, that if he is defeated he shall suffer what you have said, but if he is victorious he shall receive what I have said."[31] Thus Mosiah 3 shares with the apocalyptic tradition a concern for the origin of evil, its negative effect upon humanity, and the personal battle that must be undertaken to overcome our "nature."

4. The Promise of a Future State

A third type of apocalyptic dualism, *temporal dualism*, is closely related to point 4, the promise of a future state where the righteous will dwell with God and the wicked will be punished. For this reason they will be considered together. Temporal dualism assumes a view of history that can be broken down into two stages: the current, contemporary age and the future age, two time periods that stand in fundamental opposition to each other. Whereas this present age is an era of sin and suffering, the future age will be akin to a "Golden Age" when wrongs will be righted and justice will prevail.[32] The phrase "the Most High has not made one age, but two"[33] is stated in *4 Ezra*, a text where this type of dualism is particularly strong. In this same text, Ezra the seer is told by his angelic guide:

> This present world is not the end; the full glory does not abide in it; therefore those who were strong prayed for the weak. But the day of judgment will be the end of this age and the beginning of the immortal age to come, in which corruption has passed away, sinful indulgence has come to an end, unbelief has been cut off, and righteousness has increased and truth has appeared. Therefore no one will then be able to have mercy on him who has been condemned to judgment, or to harm him who is victorious.[34]

This "immortal age" is described in 2 Enoch thus:

> And then all time will perish, and afterward there will be neither years nor months nor days nor hours. They will be dissipated, and after that they will not be reckoned. But they will constitute a single age. And all the righteous, who escape from the LORD's judgment, will be collected together into the great age. And the great age will come about for the righteous, and it will be eternal.[35]

However, the "eternal" age will not be so pleasant for the wicked, who will find only harsh judgment at the hands of the righteous:

> Hope not that you shall live, you sinners, you who shall depart and die, for you know for what (reason) you have been ready for the day of the great judgment, for the day of anguish and great shame for your spirits. . . . Do know that you shall be given over into the hands of the righteous ones, and they shall cut off your necks and slay you, and they shall not have compassion upon you.[36]

This dual demarcation between the ages is crucial: "The age to come is not simply the completion of this present age; it is altogether different from it. The beginning of the one marks the end of the other when time itself will end and eternity begin."[37]

This unique eschatological framework has implications for our exploration of Mosiah 3 as an apocalyptic text.[38] In an interesting twist, the angel in King Benjamin's vision seems to relay that the crucial moment of transition between this world and the next will not occur on some eschatological stage prior to the end of the earth, but rather during the life and ministry of Jesus Christ: "And he shall rise the third day from the dead; and behold, he standeth to judge the world; and behold, all these things are done that a righteous judgment might come upon the children of men. For behold, and also his blood atoneth for the sins of those who have fallen by the transgression of Adam, who have died not knowing the will of God concerning them, or who have ignorantly sinned" (Mosiah 3:10–11). The remainder of the angel's words to Benjamin will serve to explicate how Jesus' action will provide salvation and what will be the fate of those who reject him. For modern readers of the Book of Mormon, this shift in chronology is significant. Instead of looking to the future for final vindication from evil, as many millennial religions do, the words of Benjamin force the mind to turn to the past. Instead of a "future" eschatology, the Book of Mormon pushes strongly for a truly "realized" eschatology. The Judgment, Benjamin tells us, is already under way. Time will pivot not on a future coming, but on a past one. Following the statement that Jesus "standeth to judge the world," the remainder of the chapter simply serves to illustrate how that judgment will occur: little children are exempt (3:16); only repentance in Jesus' name can save those who have sinned (3:17); Jesus' "judgment is just"(3:18); the "natural man" must be overcome (3:19); and everyone will hear about Jesus and have the opportunity to repent

(3:20). Finally, in the climactic verses of Mosiah 3, readers encounter the realization of what has been promised: Jesus, as judge, pronounces his judgment upon the righteous and the wicked:

> They shall stand as a bright testimony against this people, at the judgment day; whereof they shall be judged, every man according to his works, whether they be good, or whether they be evil.
>
> And if they be evil they are consigned to an awful view of their own guilt and abominations, which doth cause them to shrink from the presence of the Lord into a state of misery and endless torment, from whence they can no more return; therefore they have drunk damnation to their own souls.
>
> Therefore, they have drunk out of the cup of the wrath of God, which justice could no more deny unto them than it could deny that Adam should fall because of his partaking of the forbidden fruit; therefore, mercy could have claim on them no more forever.
>
> And their torment is as a lake of fire and brimstone, whose flames are unquenchable, and whose smoke ascendeth up forever and ever. (Mosiah 3:24–27)

Thus Mosiah 3 follows the pattern of apocalyptic literature as it views history in terms of two different temporal periods. However, where Mosiah 3 differs is in seeing the climactic moment of transition between the two ages as in the past rather than the future. For Benjamin, history can be demarcated as pre- and post-Resurrection of Jesus.

5. A Divine Intervention

This leads us into a discussion of point 5, namely the idea that this future state will be inaugurated through the intervention of a significant, quasi-divine figure.[39] This figure was described in apocalyptic circles in various ways. In the *Testament of Levi*, this figure is described as a "new priest" who will "open the gates of paradise . . . and grant to the saints to eat of the tree of life."[40] *Second Baruch* mentions that the return of the "Anointed One" is expected,[41] while in *4 Ezra* he is described by the "Most High" as "my Son."[42] In oft-debated passages, both *1 Enoch* 46:3 and Daniel 7:13 make reference to the "Son of Man," but the textual origins and status of this figure remain unclear. His mission, however, is crucial: "And he (the Son of Man) will open all the hidden storerooms; for the Lord of the Spirits has chosen him, and he is destined to be victorious before the Lord of the Spirits in eternal uprightness. This Son of Man whom you have seen is the One who would remove the kings and the mighty ones from their comfortable seats and the strong ones from their thrones. He shall loosen the reigns of the strong and crush the teeth of the sinners."[43] Significantly, while some apocalyptic texts describe this figure

as simply setting in motion the events that will lead to the establishment of the "Golden age," other texts, such as *1 Enoch*, specifically discuss this figure in terms of judgment. Here the author of *1 Enoch* describes the time of judgment:

> For the Son of Man was concealed from the beginning, and the Most High One preserved him in the presence of his power; then he revealed him to the holy and the elect ones. The congregation of the holy ones shall be planted and all the elect ones shall stand before him. On that day, all the kings, the governors, the high officials, and those who rule the earth shall fall down before him on their faces, and worship and raise their hopes in that Son of Man, they shall beg and pleas for mercy at his feet. . . . So he will deliver them to the angels for punishment in order that vengeance shall be executed on them—oppressors of his children and his elect ones.[44]

The significant connection with Mosiah 3 is twofold. First, it is the condescension of the "Lord Omnipotent" who will intervene between humanity and the "devils, or the evil spirits which dwell in the hearts of the children of men" (Mosiah 3:5, 6). Jesus' death and Resurrection signify the turning point in history, as humanity now possesses a hope of salvation, for "there shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men" (Mosiah 3:17). While the Jews may have been blessed with the law of Moses, they "understood not that the law of Moses availeth nothing except it were through the atonement of his blood" (Mosiah 3:15). Second, terms such as "judge" or "judgment" are used in connection with Jesus six times in Mosiah 3. In fact, this seems to be one of his primary roles, if not the primary role, according to Benjamin:

> And he shall rise the third day from the dead; and behold, he standeth to *judge* the world; and behold, all these things are done that a righteous *judgment* might come upon the children of men. (3:10)
>
> For behold he *judgeth*, and his *judgment* is just; and the infant perisheth not that dieth in his infancy; but men drink damnation to their own souls except they humble themselves and become as little children, and believe that salvation was, and is, and is to come, in and through the atoning blood of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent. (3:18)
>
> And thus saith the Lord: They shall stand as a bright testimony against this people, at the *judgment* day; whereof they shall be *judged*, every man according to his works, whether they be good, or whether they be evil. (3:24)

6. A Preoccupation with Deterministic Eschatology

This theme of Jesus as Judge leads us to our final category, "deterministic eschatology," meaning that future events have been definitively fixed and cannot be

altered. While ethical dualism, the exploration of "good" and "evil," is a common trait found in apocalyptic texts, there is rarely, if ever, the implication that "evil" has a chance of conquering "good." Instead, apocalyptic literature consistently maintains that God has carefully charted out the course of history and that certain events, such as the vindication of the righteous and the judgment of the wicked, are unalterable: "Allied to the idea of present evil to be followed by the final triumph of good is the rigid determinism so characteristic of this class of literature. For the apocalypticists it was clear that the course of this world's history is pre-ordained. They were not unduly perturbed by the power of evil about them, for they held that it was all part of the divine plan."[45]

Thus readers encounter in texts such as *1 Enoch* and *Jubilees* a careful ordering of time and cosmos. In *Jubilees*, the "angel of the presence" took "the tablets of the division of years from the time of the creation of the law."[46] Jacob is allowed, in a scene similar to Moses 1, to read the seven tablets and thus "[know] everything which was written in them, which would happen to him and to his sons during all the ages."[47] Likewise, *1 Enoch* presents a lengthy illustration of the ordering of the cosmos (72–80) before Enoch inspects the "tablets of heaven": "So I looked at the tablet[s] of heaven, read all the writing [on them], and came to understand everything. I read that book and all the deeds of humanity and all the children of the flesh upon the earth for all the generations of the world. At that very moment, I blessed the Great Lord, the King of Glory for ever, for he has created all the phenomena in the world."[48]

In Mosiah 3 this sense of determinism is readily apparent. On one hand, Benjamin demonstrates a resounding confidence in the reality of the judgment of the wicked: "They shall be judged," "They are consigned," "Their torment is as a lake of fire." Benjamin speaks in a somewhat proleptic fashion, as if this final state of judgment has already been realized. On the other hand there is the usage of the word "omnipotent," meaning "all-powerful," in Mosiah 3. "Omnipotent" appears a total of six times in the Book of Mormon, all six in the context of Benjamin's speech, with four of these usages found in Mosiah 3 (verses 5, 17, 18, and 21) and the other two in Mosiah 5 (verses 2 and 15). This concentrated usage of an absolute term like "omnipotent" suggests Benjamin's attempt to assure his audience that Jesus can be trusted because he is all-powerful; he is, without a doubt, going to be victorious.

Furthermore, the placement of three of those usages directly around the pivotal verse 19 brings the Atonement into direct focus. The idea that the

Atonement will be the means of rendering one free from the effects of the "natural man" goes to the very heart of the angel's message—there can be no doubt as to who will prevail in this battle of good and evil. The strong emphasis on Jesus' absolute power, unusual in the Book of Mormon, is quite at home in the apocalyptic tradition: "You have made everything and with you is the authority for everything. Everything is naked and open before your sight, and you see everything; and there is nothing which can hide itself from you."[49] That Benjamin relayed the importance of Jesus' omnipotence as a means of conquering the "natural man" is clear from the reaction of the Nephite audience to his words in Mosiah 5:2. "Yea, we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, we know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually." John J. Collins writes of *Jubilees*, "The inevitability of judgment is the ultimate sanction for the laws of *Jubilees*."[50] One could say similarly of Mosiah 3 that "the inevitability of fair judgment is the ultimate sanction for the Atonement."

In reading through Mosiah 3, Benjamin demonstrates a remarkably detailed perspective of Jesus' divine status and how his mortal ministry will unfold: He will heal the sick, raise the dead, bleed from every pore, have a mother named Mary, be scourged and crucified, and finally be resurrected. While it is entirely possible that Benjamin is simply reciting what the angel has told him, it seems just as likely that Benjamin is relating what he himself has actually witnessed. In fact, the only other place in the Book of Mormon where such detailed information regarding Jesus' mortal ministry is given is Nephi's vision in 1 Nephi 11.[51] When Moses encounters God and learns about the Creation, he is told, "Look, and I will show thee the workmanship of mine hands" (Moses 1:4). Later he "cast his eyes and beheld the earth, yea, even all of it" (Moses 1:27). When Enoch has his vision of Jesus' condescension, he "saw" it as well (Moses 7:47). For Benjamin to receive such detailed information regarding the premortal, mortal, and postmortal mission of Jesus simply reported to him from an angel without seeing anything himself would make his situation somewhat unique in Mormon scripture.

This discussion raises two additional questions. First, can anything more be determined about the occasion of Benjamin's vision? Benjamin tells us that he was asleep prior to the angel's arrival. What Benjamin doesn't tell us are his actions prior to going to sleep. One possibility is that Benjamin had

prayed for inspiration, aware that his words at the temple would be important for maintaining an uneventful transition in the monarchy. The angel may have been sent as a response to his prayerful inquiries. A second possibility is that Benjamin had been reading in the small plates of Nephi, searching for insights about Jesus Christ, and had encountered or re-read Nephi's vision in 1 Nephi 11–14. In response to his ponderings and prayers about Nephi's vision, Benjamin received a vision of his own, one that bears striking similarities to Nephi's apocalyptic vision.[52]

A second question: If Benjamin did experience a vision similar to Nephi's, why not give some explicit indication? One possible answer is audience. Visions are sacred experiences, and to relate too many details to a mixed Mulekite/Nephite audience with unclear religious affiliations may have caused Benjamin to omit certain elements, to emphasize the message behind the vision rather than the circumstances of the vision itself.[53] Mosiah 2, in a way, seems designed to lessen Benjamin's standing among the people. A claim of receiving a remarkable vision would have spoiled that sentiment.[54] In a similar fashion, Moroni was commanded to seal up the record of the vision of the brother of Jared, to be preserved for a time when "they shall exercise faith in me . . . that they may become sanctified in me, then will I manifest unto them the things which the brother of Jared saw, even to the unfolding unto them all my revelations, saith Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of the heavens and of the earth, and all things that in them are" (Ether 4:7). A second, related possibility is written medium: Mosiah 3 is preserved on the large plates, while the two primary revelatory accounts preserved in the Book of Mormon are from plates other than the extant large plates. Nephi's vision in 1 Nephi 11–14 was preserved on the small plates and the brother of Jared's on a "sealed" portion of the record. Either Benjamin or Mormon may have felt that to reveal too many details upon the large plates of Benjamin's encounter with the angel would be to mix the sacred with the profane.[55] A third possibility is simply the practicality of the occasion: there simply wasn't enough time for Benjamin to relate everything that he saw. The primary purpose of Benjamin's speech was to convince his audience of the necessity of covenants. To elaborate upon a visionary experience may have been an unnecessary distraction.

So, to return to the questions posed at the beginning of this paper,

1. *Do these similarities hint to readers that Benjamin and John are recounting similar visions? If so, can Mosiah 3 be read and interpreted as an apocalyptic text?*

The answer to both of these questions, I argue, is yes. With varying degrees of success, Mosiah 3 meets the six criteria laid out at the beginning of the paper. While some elements, such as "symbolism," are absent, others, such as "dualism," an "angelic mediator," a "future state," "eschatological determinism," and a "divine intermediary," are all present. But if necessary, the criteria could be slightly expanded. In his seminal study of apocalyptic literature, John J. Collins compared the extant texts and noted several traits held by nearly every text.[56] For example, Collins wrote that the literature can be divided into two categories, those containing "otherworldly journeys" and "some, such as Daniel, [that] contain an elaborate review of history, presented in the form of a prophecy and culminating in a time of crisis and eschatological upheaval." Mosiah 3 presents readers with a prophetic preview of history in which the crisis is spiritual, not physical. Collins states, "The revelation of a supernatural world and the activity of supernatural beings are essential to all the apocalypses." Mosiah 3, with the presence of an angel and a God who condescends to mortality, certainly fits that requirement. "In all there are also a final judgment and a destruction of the wicked. The eschatology of the apocalypses differs from that of the earlier prophetic books by clearly envisaging retribution beyond death." Mosiah 3, which culminates in the lengthy judgment scene describing the fate of the wicked, again qualifies. Finally, "all the apocalypses have a hortatory aspect, whether or not it is spelled out in explicit exhortations and admonitions."[57] Benjamin's stern reminder that salvation comes by "no other name given nor any other way nor means" than casting off the "natural man" and becoming "as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father" (Mosiah 3:17, 19) fills this paraenetic requirement.

2. *Can reading and analyzing Mosiah 3 as apocalyptic prove illuminating to our understanding not only of Mosiah 3 but to King Benjamin as well?*

Again, I believe the answer to this question is yes. First, and perhaps most importantly, it reinforces for readers of the Book of Mormon the crucial

importance of Benjamin's vision. Viewing Benjamin's experience as an apocalyptic vision means that Mosiah 3 provides readers with a firsthand account of Jesus' godhood, condescension, Atonement, Resurrection, and Judgment. One of the reasons why the visions of Nephi, John, and Joseph Smith resonate with readers is that we are reading the accounts of what they themselves saw and witnessed. If Benjamin didn't actually have a vision and is simply repeating what he was told by the angel, the information is still valuable. But Benjamin becomes a conveyer of information, imparting to the Nephites what he has been told. To understand Mosiah 3 as Benjamin's own vision goes beyond a simple exchange of information and situates Benjamin as a firsthand witness of the divine.

Second, reading Mosiah 3 as an apocalyptic text further highlights the pivotal nature of Jesus' mission. Through a dualistic framing of history—good and evil, God and Satan—Mosiah 3 illustrates for readers *why* it is only in and through the name of Jesus Christ that we can hope to find salvation. It is Jesus who will condescend, Jesus who will sacrifice himself, Jesus who will bestow his grace upon us, and Jesus who will ultimately defeat those who oppose God's plan. Third, it underlines for readers that God's plan will unfold exactly as he determines it, knowledge that may be a comfort for some and a concern for others. Fourth, it boosts readers with the hope that the world we live in is destined for something greater than the current status quo. The realized nature of Book of Mormon eschatology further emphasizes that this process is not something far off in the future, but a process that is already underway. Fifth, it underpins the reality of the Judgment. All are sinners, and all are guilty in the eyes of justice. However, those who covenant to become "sons and daughters" of Jesus Christ will find him intervening on their behalf, while those who don't will feel the pains of a just, "awful" judgment.

Finally, the apocalyptic nature of Mosiah 3 gives readers no place to hide. The conflict between God and Satan involves everyone. The "natural man" affects everyone. Jesus sacrificed himself in the hopes of saving everyone, and, in the end, everyone will be judged. Whether we choose to admit it or not, we are active participants in a cosmic conflict, one that requires our full attention and effort if we wish to succeed.

Additionally, reading Mosiah 3 as an apocalyptic text also impacts our understanding of King Benjamin. Benjamin remains one of the more enigmatic figures in the Book of Mormon. The Words of Mormon hint at his military prowess; his sermon in Mosiah 2–5 clearly identifies him as a man of

deep faith, but so much of his life remains shrouded in mystery.[58] The Book of Mormon explicitly depicts Benjamin's son Mosiah II as a seer, but less is said of Benjamin's own prophetic competence. Mosiah 3, with its apocalyptic tone and structure, hints at something remarkable in the person of Benjamin. If we search the scriptures for those who have experienced apocalyptic visions, we would have to include Moses (Moses 1–5), Enoch (Moses 6–7), Nephi (1 Nephi 11–14), the brother of Jared (Ether 3), Joseph Smith (D&C 76), and Peter, James, and John (D&C 63:21, Revelation). The common element among all of these individuals is that they founded societies centered upon God's work and will: Moses and the Israelites; Enoch and Zion; Nephi and the Nephites; Jared and the Jaredites; Peter, James, and John and the early Christians; Joseph Smith and the Latter-day Saints. While Benjamin tends not to be included in this group of societal founders, perhaps he should be. Perhaps what Benjamin did in Mosiah 2–5 was not so much a spiritual reformation as a spiritual revolution, one that resulted in a people as distinct as Nephi's Nephites or the earlier Jaredites. Too much remains unclear to speak with any amount of certainty about the state of affairs among the Nephites and Mulekites during his reign, but the possible linking of Benjamin with other founders hints that much has been left unsaid regarding Benjamin and his accomplishments.

Mosiah 3 has long been recognized as one of the more crucial chapters in the Book of Mormon. In this chapter we learn details about the nature and ministry of Jesus, the nature and potential of mankind, and the delicate balance between justice and mercy. To read Mosiah 3 as an apocalyptic text is not to dust off a text that has long been ignored or misunderstood. Quite on the contrary, much has been written about Mosiah 3 and much will continue to be written. What this paper has attempted to do is shine a different light on the text, to tease out nuances and ideas that may not have been readily apparent. Studying Mosiah 3 through an apocalyptic lens is certainly not the only way to read Mosiah 3; it may not even be the best way. But it is, I believe, a viable way, one that adds to the message and meaning of the text, hints at its complexity, and demonstrates the rich rewards of a close study. RE

Notes

1. These textual parallels could extend to the opening verses of the book of Revelation as well. In Mosiah 3:5, Jesus is described as a being "who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity." In the opening words of John's apocalyptic vision, Jesus identifies himself as Ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ, λέγει κύριος ὁ θεός, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, ὁ παντοκράτωρ ("Alpha and

Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty"; Revelation 1:8).

2. Much ink has been spilt over the origins and purpose of the apocalyptic genre. Various scholars have identified it as emerging from such various sources as the Israelite prophetic and wisdom tradition, the result of oppression during the exile, the product of Hellenization interacting with Judaism, or even a Christian appropriation of Jewish texts. Even a definition of the genre itself, and what texts ought to be considered as apocalyptic, remain topics of heated debate. For a good discussion of the issues, see Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 5–6, and John J. Collins, "From Prophecy to Apocalypticism: The Expectation of the End," in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, ed. John J. Collins (Lexington: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1998), 1:145–47, 157–59.

3. "Apocalyptic" must be differentiated from "apocalypticism." The former refers to a genre of literature, the second to a world-view "which is extrapolated from the apocalypses." See *Anchor Bible Dictionary* 1:283, s.v. "Apocalypses and Apocalypticism."

4. Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 3:564, s.v. Ἀποκάλυψις.

5. Kittel, *Theological Dictionary*, 3:564.

6. John J. Collins, "Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre," in *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*, ed. John J. Collins; Semeia 14 (1979): 3.

7. Klaus Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic* (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1970), 28.

8. One characteristic often mentioned when discussing apocalyptic literature is pseudonymous authorship, which had at least two advantages for authors of apocalyptic texts. First, through connecting his work with that of an ancient figure, such as Enoch, Abraham, Moses, or Ezra, the author gained validity for his own text: "the apocalyptic writer would win much greater prestige and authority for his book than he otherwise would have done had he written simply in his own name." D. S. Russell, *Divine Disclosure: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 65. Second, the writer was able to describe events that had occurred for him in the past or present as being "future" events and thus his work represented a "fulfillment" of prophecy. The advantage of this type of prophecy, ex eventu, reinforced the crucial tenet that God had a firm hand on history, allowing it to occur exactly as he had determined. This would in turn instill a confidence in the reader that actual future events, such as a divine intervention or a judgment of the wicked, would occur just as the author described, seeing as how he had been accurate on his other predictions. In the Book of Mormon, Benjamin claims to have received information regarding the future birth and ministry of Jesus and the eventual state of the wicked and the righteous. Thus pseudonymity is not an issue to be considered, as Benjamin himself reports the content of the vision.

9. *1 Enoch* 25.1–4; OTP 1:26.

10. Nephi's vision preserved in 1 Nephi 11–14 involves a similar situation. Nephi is taken by "the spirit of the Lord" onto a mountain, where Nephi engages in a dialogue with the angel while witnessing significant events, such as the birth of Jesus and the rise of a "great and abominable church."

11. There is a fair amount of irony in the setting of this speech. First, it takes place at a temple, the place where heaven and earth symbolically meet. Second, due to the large number of listeners, Benjamin constructs a tower in order to be able to speak more effectively.

As he speaks the words of the angel from the tower, Benjamin effectively takes on the role of a second mediator. Whereas the angel had served as a cosmic guide for Benjamin, now Benjamin, hoisted high in his tower, leads his people on the journey which he himself has just experienced. He has symbolically, if not physically, assumed the role of mediator for the Nephite audience.

12. The second is more likely, based upon the language of Mosiah 4:1.

13. Russell, *Divine Disclosure*, 122.

14. Again, one can see a parallel with Nephi, who recognized the presence of symbolism in his own vision and desired from the angel "to know the interpretation thereof" (1 Nephi 11:11).

15. Perhaps a parallel to Benjamin's experience can be seen in Nephi's discussion with his brothers in 1 Nephi 15. Nephi is able to answer Laman and Lemuel's inquiries about Lehi's vision because he himself has just seen many of the same images described by Lehi and received an interpretation from his angelic guide in 1 Nephi 11–14. However, when Nephi uses this visionary experience to help his brothers understand Lehi's vision, he does not explicitly speak to them about the images he himself saw; rather he gives them the interpretation of the images in a clear, practical manner, similar to Benjamin's recounting of his own experience in Mosiah 3. It is fair to ask whether or not the discussion in 1 Nephi 15 would have been possible if Nephi hadn't experienced his own apocalyptic vision. He can speak so plainly with his brother because he now understands the issues and possesses the interpretation of the symbols Lehi described. In a similar fashion, the clarity with which Benjamin described the ministry and mission of Jesus Christ as well as the fate of the righteous and the wicked may have been informed by an experience similar to that of Nephi. Understood from this perspective, Mosiah 3 functions in a similar fashion as 1 Nephi 15. However, the issue is complicated by the exclusion of Benjamin's vision from Mormon's edited large plates, a complication avoided in 1 Nephi due to Nephi's inclusion of his vision upon the small plates.

16. See *4 Ezra* 4.21; *Jubilees* 5:13–19; 30:22; 36:10; *Testament of Judah* 21:2–4.

17. "The two worlds of earth and heaven were indeed realms apart, but by means such as these they were joined in one" (Russell, *Divine Disclosure*, 106).

18. John G. Gammie writes: "Ethical dualism is a leading concept in Jewish apocalyptic as well as Jewish sapiential literature." "Spatial and Ethical Dualism in Jewish Wisdom and Apocalyptic Literature," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 93, no. 3 (1974): 356–85.

19. *Testament of Judah*, 20:1–3; OTP 1:800

20. See *Testament of Asher* 3:1; 4:1; *Jubilees* 23:24; 24:29; *1 Enoch* 1:1.

21. *Testament of Levi* 3:3.

22. *Jubilees* 10:8.

23. Revelation 12:9.

24. Revelation 12:7.

25. *Testament of Levi* 18:12.

26. Russell, *Divine Disclosure*, 112.

27. *1 Enoch* 98:4; OTP 1:78.

28. *4 Ezra* 7:118; OTP 1:541.

29. *2 Baruch* 54:15–16, 19; OTP 1:640.

30. Brant Gardner, *Second Witness: An Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon* (Draper, UT: Greg Kofford Books, 2007–11), 3:157.

31. *4 Ezra* 7:127–29; OTP 1:541. Paul appears to share a similar sentiment in Romans 7:23, "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."

32. John J. Collins describes the motivation behind the temporal dualism present in texts such as *1 Enoch*: "In short, Enoch appeals to the authority of heaven to show that the righteous who are oppressed in this world can hope for salvation outside it and that the present world order will eventually be reversed. An apocalyptic view of the world provides consolation and the basis for perseverance in the seemingly unprofitable ways of righteousness." Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 53.

33. *4 Ezra* 7:50; OTP 1:538.

34. *4 Ezra* 7:112–15; OTP 1:541.

35. *2 Enoch* 65:7–8; OTP 1:192.

36. *1 Enoch* 98:10–12; OTP 1:79 . Richard Baukham states, "Though most of these apocalypses contain material other than the tour of hell, such as a visit to paradise, a revelation of what happens to a soul at death or a dialogue about the justice and mercy of God in relation to hell, nearly all of them are overwhelmingly concerned with the fate of the dead." Richard Baukham, "Early Jewish Visions of Hell," *Journal of Theological Studies* 41 (1990): 356.

37. D. S. Russell, *Method and Message*, 213. There are usually two forms of eschatology present in apocalyptic literature: *prophetic* eschatology, usually focused on the future establishment of a political kingdom, and *apocalyptic* eschatology, concerned more with the future establishment of a spiritual kingdom. Both types of eschatology, though, see the establishment of the kingdom as the climactic moment in history after which there will be no more conflict, only peace. Benjamin's eschatology tends to lean more toward *apocalyptic* eschatology (although one can see elements of *prophetic* eschatology as well). Russell writes: "Thus apocalyptic eschatology becomes more and more transcendent, with stress from first to last on the supernatural and the supra-mundane. Deliverance will come, not from men, but from God himself who will bring in his kingdom and usher in the age to come." Russell, *Method and Message*, 269.

38. Book of Mormon eschatology is a fascinating topic to explore. Contemporary Mormonism, relying largely upon the Doctrine and Covenants and American premillennial views popular at the time of Joseph Smith tends to see the great eschatological event as the "Second Coming" of Jesus Christ, where the wicked will be burned, followed by a lengthy millennial period enjoyed by the righteous prior to a final encounter between Satan and Jesus. Although there are references within the text to a future "second coming" of Jesus Christ, such as the Savior's quotation of Malachi 3 and 4 to the Nephites gathered at Bountiful, Book of Mormon writers rarely place emphasis upon Jesus' Second Coming. Instead, Book of Mormon writers see the great eschatological event as the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, which will be a sign that the gathering of Israel has commenced (see 3 Nephi 29:1).

39. Obviously, apocalyptic literature is not alone in this belief. Deuteronomy 18:15–18, 2 Samuel 7:12–16, Daniel 7:13, and Malachi 4:5 all promote a similar figure. Additionally, Qumran texts such as the "Rule of the Community" demonstrate that the Essene community maintained a firm belief in this eschatological figure as well. See John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 1–19.

40. *Testament of Levi* 18:2, 10–11; OTP 1:794–795.

41. See *2 Baruch* 30:1; OTP 1:631.

42. *4 Ezra* 13:52; 14:9; OTP 1:553.

43. *1 Enoch* 46:3–4; OTP 1:34.

44. *1 Enoch* 62:7–11; OTP 1:43.

45. Leon Morris, *Apocalyptic* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 47. D. S. Russell adds, "These prophecies of hope had been made in God's name; they were verily the word of God and so could not be set at naught. Their fulfilment was inevitable, for the word of God could not lie." *Message*, 98.

46. *Jubilees* 1:29; OTP 2:54.

47. *Jubilees* 32:21; OTP 2:118.

48. *1 Enoch* 81:2; OTP 1:59.

49. *1 Enoch* 9:5.

50. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 66.

51. Brant Gardner writes: "The numerous small differences in detail indicate that Benjamin received a vision of Jesus' ministry and is reporting his own experience, rather than citing scripture. Even where there is a thematic overlap, Benjamin is giving the information in a fresh way. Certain his prophetic vision would dominate his recollection, despite his familiarity with the scriptures left by earlier prophets who had similar experiences. For example, Nephi had a similar vision, but it came in response to a personal question" (*Second Witness*, 3:147).

52. For a treatment of Nephi's vision as "apocalyptic," see Jared M. Halverson, "Lehi's Dream and Nephi's Vision as Apocalyptic Literature," in *The Things Which My Father Saw: Approaches to Lehi's Dream and Nephi's Vision*, ed. Daniel L. Belnap, Gaye Strathearn, and Stanley A. Johnson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2011), 53–69.

53. This setting presents a possible further parallel between apocalyptic literature and Benjamin's speech. Much has been made of the function of apocalyptic literature as "crisis" literature. There is some hint that Benjamin's speech was presented in the context of Nephite political crisis, as Benjamin is preparing the people for the reign of his son Mosiah II. How Mosiah I managed to ascend to rule in Zarahemla remains shrouded, and the later schism of the Nephites into "Kingmen" and "Freemen" suggests that the current monarchy may not have been the consensus choice. See John A. Tvedtnes, "Tribal Affiliation and Military Castes," in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo: FARMS), 298–99.

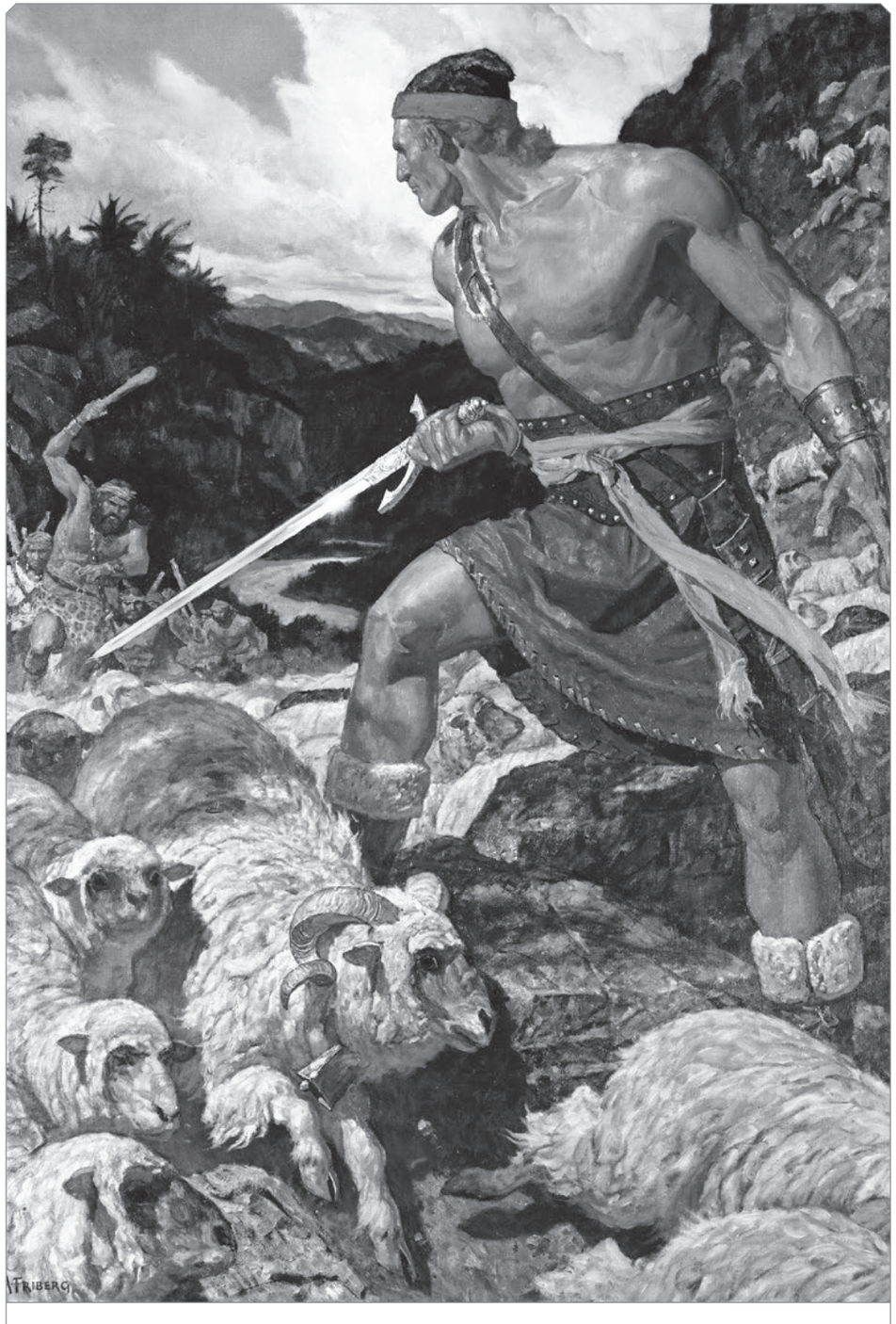
54. For a possible Mesoamerican answer to this question, see Gardner, *Second Witness*, 3:145–46.

55. It would be useful in this discussion to know how much, if any, of Lehi's visions recorded in 1 Nephi 1 and 8 and Nephi's vision in 1 Nephi 11–14 were recorded on the large plates.

56. Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 6.

57. Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 5.

58. If Royal Skousen is correct, and the 116 pages lost by Martin Harris extended into Mosiah, then the seeming lack of attention paid by Mormon to Benjamin would be due more to the material about Benjamin being lost than to Mormon's editorial decision to omit information about him. See Royal Skousen, "Critical Methodology and the Text of the Book of Mormon," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6, no. 1 (1994): 121–44. Skousen believes two chapters from Mosiah may have been lost.



When Lamoni learned of the faithfulness of Ammon in preserving his flocks, he was astonished exceedingly.

Arnold Friberg, *Ammon Defends the Flocks of King Lamoni*, 1951. © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

The Faithfulness of Ammon

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Ammon is one of the most skillful missionaries and teachers of the gospel of Jesus Christ described in scripture or anywhere else. Ammon and the other sons of King Mosiah had been "the very vilest of sinners," but the Lord "saw fit in his infinite mercy to spare them," and the "Spirit of the Lord [had] work[ed] upon them" (Mosiah 28:4) so that "they could not bear that any human soul should perish; yea, even the very thoughts that any soul should endure endless torment did cause them to quake and tremble" (28:3). Their spiritual transformation bears witness of the rehabilitating power of Christ's Atonement.[1]

This transformation empowered Ammon and his brethren to be "instruments"[2] in the Lord's hand in bringing the Lamanites to a knowledge of the truth (Mosiah 27:36; Alma 17:9). However, Ammon and his royal brothers were uniquely prepared for the greatness of "the work which they had undertaken" (Alma 17:13) precisely because issues of monarchic legitimacy—the right to rule—were at the heart of Lamanite and Nephite enmity (see 2 Nephi 5:3; Mosiah 10:15) and had worsened Lamanite unbelief. All four sons, former unbelievers themselves, refused to succeed their father as king (see Mosiah 29:3).[3] On several occasions, Ammon, like David in his encounters with Saul (see 1 Samuel

24, 26), had the opportunity to take royal power among the Lamanites, but did not (see Alma 17:24; 20:17–27).

The Lamanite mission became a phenomenal success because of the singleness of Ammon's vision as leader of the mission—his faithfulness to the Lord, his love for Lamoni and the Lamanites, and his total self-abnegation. In this paper I will show how the account of the Lamanite conversions in Alma 17–27 evidences intriguing parallels and contrasts between Ammon's and David's biographies. One of the most striking of these is Lamoni's words regarding Ammon's "faithfulness" in Alma 18:10, which recall Ahimelech's words regarding David's faithfulness in 1 Samuel 22:14 almost verbatim. I will further suggest that the description of Ammon's "faithfulness" in Alma 18:10 constitutes a wordplay on Ammon's name, emphasizing that his missionary approach was the perfect remedy for Lamanite unbelief.

Ammon's mission succeeded because he remained true and faithful and utterly refused royal power when presented opportunities to take it, whereas David acquired it to the peril of himself and his family, both temporally and eternally (see 2 Samuel 13–18; D&C 132:39). Ammon, as a royal son, was effective in his missionary service among the Lamanites because he was *unlike* David and his sons with respect to the seeking and unrighteous use of royal power (see also D&C 121:39). The reader will be the final arbiter on whether the parallels to the biblical Hebrew biography of David[4] proposed here are deliberate;[5] however, the presentation of Ammon's story with echoes of David's virtues and failings becomes especially meaningful against the backdrop of the Nephites' movement from monarchy and their blended society, which included descendants of David (i.e., the Mulekites; see Mosiah 23:3; Helaman 6:10; 8:21). The "faith of Ammon and his brethren," and Ammon's faithfulness in particular, were sufficient to move the mountain of Lamanite unbelief and hatred (Ether 12:15), which had a seismic impact on Nephite-Lamanite society for good.

The Growth of Antimonarchism from Nephi to Alma

The problems with monarchy in ancient Israel and Judah are well chronicled in the so-called Deuteronomistic history (Deuteronomy–2 Kings)[6] and the sources which the Deuteronomistic historian(s)[7] used. The brass plates likely contained versions of many, if not most, of the sources that the Deuteronomistic historian used (see 1 Nephi 13:23), including the stories of Saul, David, Solomon, and the dysfunctional monarchies of the divided

kingdoms of Israel and Judah.[8] The Hebrew Bible is ambivalent about David. On one hand he is regarded as Israel's greatest military hero and a paragon of religious faithfulness (the "man after [the Lord's] own heart," 1 Samuel 13:14), while on the other hand he is presented as having "despised the commandment of the Lord" (2 Samuel 12:9), even the Lord himself (12:10) in taking Bathsheba and murdering her husband, Uriah. The words of Jacob, the brother of Nephi (see Jacob 2:23–26), suggest that the Nephites were very aware of the negative aspects of David and Solomon's kingships and that it influenced their view and practice of kingship.

In the Book of Mormon, traces of antimonarchism can be detected as early as the time of the Nephites' separation from the Lamanites (e.g., 2 Nephi 5:18) and Jacob's first recorded speech, given at what some consider to have been Nephi's coronation.[9] In this speech, Jacob calls the land of promise (the Americas) "a land of liberty unto the Gentiles" on which "there shall be no kings . . . who shall raise up unto the Gentiles" (2 Nephi 10:11). Quoting the Lord, Jacob then declares, "For he that raiseth up a king against me shall perish, for I, the Lord, the king of heaven, will be their king, and I will be a light unto them forever, that hear my words" (2 Nephi 10:14). His words recall Gideon's response to the Israelites who wanted him and his sons to be kings over them: "Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian. And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you."[10] Gideon's refusal of kingship was more apparent than real (see below). The Lord's words through Jacob also recall the Lord's words to Samuel when Israel "asked" or demanded (*haššō'ălîm*) a king (1 Samuel 8:10), who later emerged as Saul (*šā'ûl*, meaning "asked" or "demanded"): "And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them" (8:7). The wordplay emphasizes the appropriateness of Saul's name.

Nephi himself stated his reluctance to be called a king,[11] whether the title "king" was an apt title for one who chronicles his own reign[12] and ministry[13] or not: "And it came to pass that they would that I should be their king. But I, Nephi, was desirous that they should have no king; nevertheless, I did for them according to that which was in my power" (2 Nephi 5:18). Jacob informs us later, however, that Nephi "anointed a man to be a king and a ruler over his people" and that because "the people . . . *loved* Nephi [so] exceedingly" (Jacob 1:9; italics in scriptures throughout signify emphasis added; see

also 1 Samuel 18:16), they "were desirous to retain in remembrance his name. And whoso should reign in his stead were called by the people, second Nephi, third Nephi, and so forth, . . . and thus they were called by the people, let them be of whatever name they would" (Jacob 1:11).

And thus began dynastic kingship among the Nephites. Nephi accepted the mantle, if not the trappings, of kingship even in the apparent act of denying it, in a manner both like and unlike Gideon in Judges 8:22–23.[14] Gideon not only proceeded to act like a king by multiplying gold and wives (see Judges 8:24–27, 30), but even named his son Abimelech ("my father is king," see 8:31). After the death of Nephi, Jacob addressed problems particularly associated with the reigns of David and Solomon (i.e., the multiplication of gold, illicit wife-taking, and the concomitant mistreatment of women) that began to crop up among the Nephites under the Nephites' second king (see Jacob 1:15–16; see also Deuteronomy 17:17), possibly Nephi's own son.

For the Nephites, a discernible movement away from monarchism is evident as early as the time of King Benjamin, who, arguably more than any other ruling king in the Bible or the Book of Mormon, embraces the Deuteronomic model of kingship (see Deuteronomy 17:14–20). This meant placing himself on more equal footing with his people (see Mosiah 2:10–12) and ensuring that his subjects did not consider him divine (see also 2:19).[15] Not long thereafter, when the people of Alma the Elder endeavored to make him a king over them, he refused: "It is not expedient that ye should have a king. Nevertheless, if it were possible that ye could always have just men to be your kings it would be well for you to have a king" (Mosiah 23:7–8). Alma rejected their overture not because human kingship is inherently evil, but on the evidence of their own experience: "But remember the iniquity of king Noah and his priests; and I myself was caught in a snare, and did many things which were abominable in the sight of the Lord, which caused me sore repentance" (23:9). In other words, human kingship by "just men," while good and desirable in theory and sometimes in practice, cannot be guaranteed to be maintained from generation to generation.[16]

The experiences of Alma, Limhi (son of Noah), and those whom they led were a major factor in the Nephite movement away from monarchism. In the speech in which he declared his intention to dismantle the Nephite monarchy, Mosiah quoted Alma almost verbatim, perhaps from Alma's own record:

> Therefore, *if it were possible that you could have just men to be your kings*, who would establish the laws of God, and judge this people according to his commandments, yea, if ye could have men for your kings who would do even as my father Benjamin did for this people—I say unto you, if this could always be the case then *it would be expedient that ye should always have kings* to rule over you. (Mosiah 29:13; see also 23:8)

But King Mosiah seems to have been persuaded to abandon monarchy not only by those of his subjects (the former peoples of Limhi and Alma) who had suffered the consequences of King Noah's wickedness and unwise leadership (Mosiah 11–17) and his sons' refusal to accept the kingdom (see Mosiah 28:10; 29:1–11), but also by the Jaredite record, which he himself read and translated as a "seer" (Mosiah 28:11–18). The Jaredite record highlights not only the problem of secret combinations, but also dynastic families—royal sons attempting to usurp their fathers' power, brothers vying for the throne, and so forth. The Jaredite record confirms what the stories about David and his sons (2 Samuel 13–18 and 1 Kings 2)[17] demonstrate regarding intrafamilial rivalry for the throne.[18]

In the book of Alma, we see that even after Mosiah had dispensed with kingship among the Nephites, nostalgia for monarchy remained. The narratives include the stories of Amlici and Amalickiah, respectively: two insurrectionists who attempt to become king. It is tempting to see in these narratives a play on the similarity in sounds between the names Amlici,[19] Amalickiah,[20] and the Hebrew verb *mālak* ("to become king," "reign [as king]"; also the "king-men").[21] Like the stories of Saul, David, and Solomon, the brass plates may have contained the ancient Israelite story of Gideon's son, Abimelech ("my father is king"), in Judges 9 with its iterative wordplay on **mlk* (to "reign" as king)[22] and a first ill-fated attempt to establish dynastic kingship in Israel.[23]

It is against the backdrop of the Nephite abandonment of monarchy (see Mosiah 29) and insurrectionists' attempts to reinstitute it (see Alma 3; 47–63) that the story of the mission of the self-abasing royal sons of Mosiah to the Lamanites takes place. Ammon's refusal to pursue monarchy or power of any kind is the very thing that keeps their mission on track and paves the way for their success among the Lamanites. In contrast, it is the pursuit of monarchy at all hazards by some Nephites that leads to repeated disasters for the Nephite nation. Thus Ammon and his brothers as royal missionary sons stand in stark contrast to David and his royal sons (Amnon, Absalom, Adonijah, and Solomon) and in contrast to Amlici and Amalickiah, their kingship-seeking contemporaries. Israel's history shows that monarchy (and

the pursuit of it) is not effective at sustaining, let alone spreading, the proper practice of Israelite religion. Ammon's story shows that the opposite is true.

The Connection of the Name Ammon to Faithfulness

The biblical stories about the rise of the monarchy in Israel exhibit a high degree of concern for the meanings (or perceived meanings) of the names of its principle figures (Saul means "asked" or "demanded," David means "beloved,"[24] Absalom means "father is peace"). Do the narratives about Ammon and his refusal of monarchy among the Lamanites amid the Nephites' movement away from monarchy emphasize name meanings as well?

The name Ammon may be a variation on "Amnon" ("faithful")[25] or "Amon" ("faithful"),[26] a Davidic king who reigned around the time Lehi was born (2 Kings 21:19–26). Both of these names, apparently formed from the root **'mn*, appear as Davidic royal names in the Deuteronomistic history. Amnon is the firstborn son (see 1 Samuel 3:2) and heir of David, on whom David's promised "sure house" (1 Samuel 25:28; 2 Samuel 7:16; see also 1 Samuel 2:35; 1 Kings 11:38) might have been built, but who instead "takes" and rapes his half sister Tamar (perhaps in imitation of his father's "taking" of Bathsheba),[27] setting off a chain of events that eventuate in Amnon's death and David's near loss of both his kingdom and his life (see 2 Samuel 13–19). The Deuteronomistic historian reports that David's descendant Amon was anything but "faithful" to the Lord and his covenant as king of Judah (2 Kings 21:18–22) and was assassinated "in his own house" (21:23).

Ammon could also be derived from or related to the Akkadian *ummânu* ("craftsman" or "expert"),[28] which comes into Hebrew as *'ămmān* and *'āmôn*.[29] The potential for word association with Hebrew **'mn* ("faithful," "sure") on the basis of sound similarity (homophony) is clear. It is less likely that Ammon is the national name *'ammôn*, which is not, as far as I am aware, ever attested as an Israelite personal name and is in fact ascribed highly pejorative connotations in Genesis 19:30–38 (see especially v. 38; see also the ancestral name Ben-ammi, "son of my [near] kin"). Whatever its precise etymology, however, the homophony between the name Ammon and the root **'mn* ("faith," "loyalty," and "faithfulness") may have been the basis for a wordplay reinforcing the idea that Ammon's name fit his character: a name he proved entirely in the performance of his mission among the Lamanites and the fruit his faithfulness bore in their lives.

The Exceeding Faithfulness of Ammon: Ammon as Servant in Lamoni's Court

Ammon's going up among the Nephites' traditional enemies, the Lamanites, was both a reflection and a refraction of David's "going over" to the Philistines (see 1 Samuel 27:1–28:2). Although David earlier had been described as the most "faithful" of Saul's servants (22:14), that description was no longer valid when he allied himself with Israel's traditional enemies.

David's motives for going over to the Philistines were (1) for his personal safety and (2) to weaken Saul's kingship, though he refused to attack Saul directly.[30] To say that David was a traitor to Israel[31] is no exaggeration. He was not unlike Nephite dissenters who deserted over to the Lamanites,[32] in most cases for their own monarchic ambitions.[33] Ammon, however, went up to the land of Nephi among the Lamanites with no other intent than to "save some few of their souls" (Alma 26:26).

Ammon, unlike David, had no monarchic ambition. Rather, he understood that issues of power and monarchy were at the heart of Lamanite resentment toward the Nephites (see 2 Nephi 5:3; Mosiah 10:15).[34] Ammon moved to specifically redress[35] three traditional Lamanite grievances against the Nephites[36] in his service to Lamoni: (1) taking the ruling out of their hands, (2) abandoning the Lamanites by those who followed Nephi, and (3) Nephi's robbing of the brass plates (i.e., loss of the scriptures).

Ammon's refusal to marry Lamoni's daughter is a key narrative detail. Readers often find it odd that Lamoni offered one of his daughters in marriage to Ammon, forgetting that Ammon was the son of Mosiah, the Nephite king. Although the narrative does not say it explicitly, Lamoni apparently *recognized* Ammon as a Nephite prince.[37] In fact, Lamoni wished to make a marriage alliance with the Nephite monarchy (perhaps even for traditional Lamanite monarchic aims). This was a critical moment for Ammon and the success of the mission to the Lamanites. One false move on Ammon's part might have ruined the whole mission.[38]

At one point, King Saul offered his daughter Merab to David (see 1 Samuel 18:17). David at first appears to decline a marriage (v. 18), but not out of true self-abnegation[39]—he had his sights set on and had been anointed to take Saul's throne. He declined at first because he discerned Saul's own motives. Later, a second daughter of Saul, Michal, "love[d] David" (David's name means "beloved"; see 1 Samuel 18:20, 27), and David did marry her (18:27), because he was interested in marrying into the royal family as a

means of strengthening his claim on the throne in a post-Saul world (see 2 Samuel 3:12–14).

Ammon's refusal to marry Lamoni's daughter,[40] however, was based on a different motive: his desire to be a blessing to Lamoni's house and a blessing in the lives of as many Lamanites as possible. Ammon understood deeply and personally what it was like to be captive to "unbelief" (Mosiah 27:8, 10–12). His desire was to bring Lamoni and the Lamanites to Christ, the true king. Ammon's decline of Lamoni's offer and his consistent refusal to assume any authority or power among the Lamanites resolved Lamoni's concern about the Nephites' seeking to take the ruling out of the Lamanites' hands, thus making Lamoni more open to Ammon's teachings. If Ammon's motives had been like those of David, things would likely have gone much differently.

Ammon's entry into Lamoni's service recalls David's entry into Saul's service in other important respects. It is not difficult to see the parallel between David's miraculous defeat of Goliath with the sling and sword and Ammon's use of the sling (see Alma 17:36; 18:16) and sword to defeat the Lamanite sheep stealers at the waters of Sebus. Ammon is like a young David: full of faith in Israel's God and willing and capable to fight the king's enemies (see 1 Samuel 17; also Ahimelech's remark on David's faithfulness in 1 Samuel 22:18 is a reference to his deeds in chapters 17–18). But this very association will also sharpen the contrast between David and Ammon's respective goals and their means of achieving them.

Lamoni here further emerges as a refraction of Saul (as his father will later). After watching David's feat in killing Goliath with his sling and sword, Saul thus commands his servant Abner: "*inquire* [*šĕ'al*] thou whose son the stripling is" (1 Samuel 17:56). When Lamoni learns of Ammon's feat in killing the Lamanite sheep stealers, Lamoni's reaction echoes Saul's: "And it came to pass that king Lamoni *inquired* [a Hebrew vorlage[41] could have been **šā'al*; see note 4 herein] of his servants, saying: Where is this man that has such great power?" (Alma 18:8). If the verbal echo constitutes wordplay on the name "Saul," it strengthens the literary connection between Saul and Lamoni.

When Lamoni "learn[s] of the faithfulness of Ammon in preserving his flocks, and also of his great power in contending against those who sought to slay him," the narrator states that "he was astonished exceedingly" (Alma 18:2). The self-abnegating Ammon places himself at the king's disposal: "Now when king Lamoni heard that Ammon was preparing his horses and his chariots he was more astonished, because of the faithfulness of [a Hebrew vorlage could have been **ĕmûnat*] Ammon, saying: Surely [**'āmnām*] there has not been any servant among all my servants that has been so faithful [*ne'ĕman*] as this man; for even he doth remember all my commandments to execute them" (Alma 18:10). Mormon (or his source) reports Lamoni's words so as to evoke Ahimelech's words to Saul in 1 Samuel 22:14: "Then Ahimelech answered the king [Saul], and said, And who is so faithful [*ne'ĕman*] among all thy servants as David, which is the king's son in law, and goeth at thy bidding, and is honourable in thine house?"[42]

The result of this literary allusion is a vivid wordplay which emphasizes that Ammon's name is the sign of his character, "faithful" (*ne'ĕman*). In the David story, Ahimelech has to point out David's surpassing faithfulness to Saul, whereas in the story of the Lamanite conversions, Lamoni recognizes Ammon's faithfulness himself. Unlike Saul, who feels threatened by David's growing popularity in his court, Lamoni, though initially intimidated by Ammon's spiritual power, is convicted of his own sins under the influence of Ammon's "faithful" service[43] and desires repentance.[44]

The Mountain to Be Moved: Lamanite Unbelief and Desire for Monarchy

To comprehend the magnitude of the miracle wrought through Ammon and his brothers, one must first appreciate how steeped in unbelief the Lamanites had become and the degree to which the Lamanites felt entitled to monarchic power over the Nephites (see 2 Nephi 5:3; Mosiah 10:15). They are, in fact, related problems.

Nephi's account of his family's journey from Jerusalem frequently emphasizes Laman and Lemuel's lack of faith in contrast to his own:[45] "And thus Laman and Lemuel . . . did murmur because they knew not the dealings of that God who had created them. Neither did they believe [**wĕlō' ha'amînû*] that Jerusalem, that great city, could be destroyed" (1 Nephi 2:12–13). Nephi constantly exhorts his "brethren to faithfulness [**ĕmûnâ*] and diligence" (1 Nephi 17:15) because, for example, "they did not believe [**lō' ha'amînû*] that I [Nephi] could build a ship; neither would they believe that I was instructed of the Lord" (17:18). Nephi contrasts his own approach to problem solving with Laman and Lemuel's "quit quick" approach: "Wherefore, let us be faithful [*nē'āmēnû*] in keeping the commandments of the Lord; therefore let us go down. . . . And it came to pass that after this manner of language did I persuade my brethren, that they might be faithful [*yē'āmēnû*] in keeping the commandments of God" (1 Nephi 3:16, 21); "Yea, and how is it that ye

have forgotten that the Lord is able to do all things according to his will, for the children of men, if it so be that they exercise faith [**ya'ămînû*] in him? Wherefore, let us be faithful [**nē'āmēnû*] to him" (1 Nephi 7:12). Nephi, as opposed to Laman and Lemuel, is blessed for his faith (see 1 Nephi 2:18–19; 11:6). Like David (see 1 Samuel 22:14) and his descendant Ammon (see Alma 18:10), Nephi is "faithful"—a necessary royal quality.

Laman and Lemuel's refusal to have faith is perfectly captured in Lehi's description of his dream: "they would not come unto me and partake of the fruit,"[46] or "they did not *want* to come."[47] Nephi sees—and is shown—that Laman and Lemuel's refusal to have faith and to be faithful (i.e., to partake of the fruit of the tree of life) will have enormously negative consequences for their posterity: "These shall dwindle in unbelief" (1 Nephi 12:22–23).

The expression "dwindle in unbelief" is hereafter used primarily of the Lamanites.[48] In fact, this expression may have originally constituted a wordplay on the name "Laman,"[49] perhaps based on Deuteronomy 32:20. This very old poetic text declares the Lord's displeasure with rebellious Israelites, speaks of them being cut off from his "face," i.e., "presence" (*pānîm*): "And he said, I will hide my face [*pānay*] from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is *no faith*, *lō' 'ĕmun*, "no faithfulness,"[50] "unfaithful"[51]]" (compare especially Numbers 14:11).

Ammon's grandfather King Benjamin articulated the traditional Nephite view of the Lamanites' lack of faith and faithfulness. His words are taken from the negative Laman (*lō' 'ĕmun*) "unbelief" description from 1 Nephi 12:22–23 and elsewhere in Nephi's writing:

> I say unto you, my sons, were it not for these things, which have been kept and preserved by the hand of God, that we might read and understand of his mysteries, and have his commandments always before our eyes, that even our fathers would have *dwindled in unbelief*, and we should have been like unto our brethren, the Lamanites, who know nothing concerning these things, or even do not believe them when they are taught them, because of the traditions of their fathers, which are not correct. (Mosiah 1:5)

The Spirit had warned Nephi that "a nation [would] dwindle and perish in unbelief" without the scriptures (1 Nephi 4:13),[52] a prediction that proved remarkably accurate when Lamanites dwindled in unbelief after Nephi took the brass plates and left Laman and Lemuel and incessantly sought to bring the Nephites under Lamanite royal hegemony.

When Ammon opens the scriptures to Lamoni, he not only addresses the traditional Lamanite grievance that Nephi (or perhaps Mosiah I) had "robbed"[53] Laman and Lemuel of the brass plates (e.g., Mosiah 10:16), but also begins to redress the effects that the loss of the brass plates—the scriptures—had had on the Lamanites: that the loss of the scriptures and the attendant loss of the Holy Ghost had had a grossly degenerative effect on Lamanite culture.[54] The Lamanites had been "cut off from the presence of the Lord" by the loss of the scriptures, the priesthood, the gift and reception of the Holy Ghost, the words of living prophets, and the temple. As the Lamanites are taught the scriptures, they are restored to the Lord's "presence." The visions and blessings of old return to them, as does the right to rule—in an eternal sense.

Lamoni at the Veil: Faithfulness Begets Faith

The narrative describes in very emotive language how Lamanite "unbelief" was overcome. When Lamoni prays to the Lord and asks the Lord to have mercy on his people in the same way that he has had mercy upon the Nephites, Lamoni is "overcome" and "carried away" by the power of the Spirit and has a theophanic vision. The narrator's combination of these two expressions, which are used elsewhere to describe Lehi's[55] and Nephi's visions,[56] suggests that he wants to show us that Lamoni had a vision of the same character and quality that their ancestor Lehi and their "enemy" Nephi had (see 1 Nephi 1; 8; 11–14)—the same spiritual experiences that Laman and Lemuel had refused to ask for ("We have not; for the Lord maketh no such thing known unto us"; 1 Nephi 15:9).

Lamoni's willingness to exercise faith in asking (contrast Laman and Lemuel in 1 Nephi 15:8–11) begins a reversal of the Lamanites being cut off from the presence and face of the Lord:

> Now, this was what Ammon desired, for he knew that king Lamoni was under the power of God; he knew that the dark veil of unbelief was being cast away from his mind, and the light which did light up his mind, which was the light of the glory of God, which was a marvelous light of his goodness—yea, this light had infused such joy into his soul, the cloud of darkness having been dispelled, and that the light of everlasting life was lit up in his soul, yea, he knew that this had overcome his natural frame, and he was carried away in God. (Alma 19:6)

Ammon wisely[57] uses this event to engender faith in Lamanites closest to Lamoni. He first teaches Lamoni's wife, who demonstrates astonishing faith in his words:

> And Ammon said unto her: Believest thou this? And she said unto him: I have had no witness save thy word, and the word of our servants; nevertheless *I* believe that it shall be according as thou hast said.
>
> And Ammon said unto her: Blessed art thou because of thy exceeding faith; I say unto thee, woman, there has not been such great faith among all the people of the Nephites. (Alma 19:9–10)

Ammon's efforts create a situation which could have easily been exploited for less altruistic purposes. However, he is careful here, as at other times, to avoid exploiting these opportunities for personal power and enrichment, but instead to "win the hearts of . . . [his] fellow-servants" to "lead them to believe in [his] words" (17:29).[58]

The Legitimation of the Holy Ghost: Divine Rebirth through the Spirit

The story of Saul and David illustrates the legitimation of David and his kingship-to-be and the delegitimation of Saul as king by the Spirit of Jehovah, which comes upon[59] David at his anointing (see 1 Samuel 16:13) as a sign of his legitimation. It also simultaneously withdraws from Saul and is replaced by an "evil spirit" (see 1 Samuel 16:14–16, 23; 18:10) as a sign of his delegitimation[60] (as pronounced earlier by Samuel; see 1 Samuel 13:14; 15:28).[61] Years earlier, when Saul was first anointed, he too received the Spirit and was "turned into another man" (1 Samuel 10:6). The change manifest in Saul was a sign of his reception of the Spirit of the Lord and thus legitimation as king of Israel and it was the same for David.

Ammon is filled with the Spirit of the Lord, which indicates his divine rebirth (see Alma 18:16). However, unlike David in his interaction with Saul, Ammon does not enjoy the presence of that Spirit to the Lamanites' detriment, but he prays to see that Spirit poured out on Lamoni and all the Lamanites. While Lamoni believes in a "Great Spirit" (Alma 18:2–5), he has never been anointed with that Spirit as Saul was in 1 Samuel 9–10. This situation changes with the coming of Ammon, whose faithfulness results in a flowering of faith among the Lamanites and "the Spirit of the Lord poured out according to his prayers upon the Lamanites" (Alma 19:14).

What we see here is not the legitimation of one king and dynasty to the detriment and delegitimation of another,[62] but all are "born of God" (see Alma 22:15), i.e., receive a royal rebirth[63] or adoption.[64] Under the Israelite monarchy, the king became a son of God through a divine rebirth or adoption (see Psalm 2:7; 2 Samuel 7:14). Here, as at the time of King Benjamin's sermon, we see an entire people "becoming [the] sons and daughters" of God

(Mosiah 5:7; 27:25; Ether 3:14) through "faith in [his] name" (Ether 3:14). Just as Saul and David were changed and legitimated through the "anointing" of the Spirit (1 Samuel 10:6, 9–12; 16:13), all of Lamoni's court and house "did all declare unto the people the selfsame thing—that their hearts had been changed; that they had no more desire to do evil" (Alma 19:33).

The issue of monarchic power, which for so long had been a wall between the Lamanites and Nephites, begins to be broken down. The converted Lamanites no longer seek for monarchic power over the Nephites; Ammon, through his self-abasing approach, shows them that there is a much higher kingdom for them to inherit and more important issues at stake (namely Christ's kingdom and the salvation of their own souls). Mormon summarizes the situation thus: "And thus the work of the Lord did commence among the Lamanites; thus the Lord did begin to pour out his Spirit upon them; and we see that his arm is extended to all people who will repent and believe [**ya'amîn(û)*] on his name" (Alma 19:36). All of King Benjamin's people are enthroned as sons and daughters "at the right hand of God" through "faith on his name" (Mosiah 5:7–9; see also 5:1–4);[65] so too are Lamoni's people.

Ammon's Great Love for Lamoni: Lamoni as a Literary Refraction of Jonathan

Previously in the conversion narrative, Lamoni is presented as a refraction of Saul. Beginning in Alma 20, however, the narrator describes the relationship between Ammon and Lamoni as one that is similar to the relationship between Jonathan and David. Lamoni's father is now cast in the role of Saul. The narrative makes more artful comparisons and contrasts between David and Ammon, Lamoni and Jonathan, and Saul and Lamoni's father.

In the David story, the narrator states that Jonathan loved David (see 1 Samuel 18:1, 3; 20:7; 2 Samuel 1:26) and is shown acting repeatedly in David's interest against Saul's interest and even against his own. Saul, fearful of David as a threat to his throne, attempts to kill David and is extremely displeased with the aid that Jonathan gives David.

In Hebrew, the name Jonathan (*Yĕhônātān*) means "Yahweh [Jehovah] has given" or "Yahweh has granted" (*Yĕhô* + *nātān*). In the David story, Jonathan is the instrumentality of the Lord's "giving" David the kingdom. Famously, of his love for David, "Jonathan [*Yĕhônātān*] stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it [*wayyitnēhû*] to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle" (1 Samuel 18:4

[MT 18:4]). Jonathan literally divests himself of his own royalty and gives it to David.

Alma chapter 20 presents some notable parallels to the David-Jonathan-Saul story. Similar to Saul's view of Jonathan's relationship with David, when Lamoni's father sees the friendship between Lamoni and Ammon, he fears that Lamoni is acting against his (Lamoni's father's) interests and against Lamoni's own interests. He believes Ammon is seeking monarchic power. The scene that ensues begins to resemble Saul's inquiry to Jonathan over coming "to *meat*" (literally "to bread," i.e., to a feast) on the new moon (1 Samuel 20:23–33). Lamoni's father asks Lamoni, "Why did ye not come to the feast on that great day when I made a feast unto my sons, and unto my people?" (Alma 20:9). This question recalls Saul's question to his son Jonathan in 1 Samuel 20:27: "Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat, neither yesterday, nor to day?" Saul knows that David is seeking his kingship, but David carefully and cleverly avoids Saul's attempts on his life.

The biblical narrator notes that "Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan" (1 Samuel 20:30) because he had aided David. Lamoni's father suspects the same of Lamoni: "behold, to his [Lamoni's] astonishment, his father was angry with him" (Alma 20:13). Like Saul, Lamoni's father seeks to inflict physical violence on his son, because he feels that Lamoni is acting against him (and against Lamoni's own interests) on Ammon's behalf, since he assumes Ammon is seeking royal power (see Alma 20:10, 13).

In earlier parts of the narrative, the narrator has already used verbal cues that link this story to the David-Jonathan-Saul cycle.[66] We have already noted the verbal allusion to 1 Samuel 17:5 in Alma 18:8. The narrator particularly establishes a connection between Jonathan and Lamoni with the latter's reported speech: "And now, if thou wilt tell me concerning these things, whatsoever thou desirest *I will give unto thee*; and if it were needed, I would guard thee with my armies; but I know that thou art more powerful than all they; nevertheless, *whatsoever thou desirest of me I will grant it unto thee*" (Alma 18:21). Lamoni would have given all his regalia to Ammon if he had asked (see 1 Samuel 18:4), but Ammon does not ask.

Rather than fleeing from Saul with Jonathan's help, as David does, Ammon intercedes to prevent Lamoni's father from committing further violence towards his son. When Lamoni's father makes an attempt on Ammon's life ("and he stretched forth his hand to slay Ammon," Alma 20:20), Ammon strikes the king's arm so that he cannot use it. Ammon then prevails upon

the king with these words: "Behold, I will smite thee *except thou wilt grant* [a Hebrew vorlage could have been **titēn*; see note 4] unto me that my brethren may be cast out of prison" (Alma 20:22). Lamoni's father, fearful, declares: "If thou wilt spare me, I will grant [**'etēn*] thee whatsoever thou wilt ask [**tiš'al*], even to half of the kingdom" (Alma 20:23). The wordplay casts the shadow of Saul on Lamoni's father. Like David, who spared the life of Saul twice (see 1 Samuel 24, 26), Ammon spares Lamoni's father, but with much better results. Saul knows that David will eventually take the kingdom (24:20). Lamoni's father suspects that Ammon also aims to take monarchic power.

Ammon, however, makes demands only for his brothers' release and for Lamoni: "If thou wilt grant that my brethren may be cast out of prison, and also that Lamoni may retain his kingdom, and that ye be not displeased with him, *but grant* that he may do according to his own desires in whatsoever thing he thinketh, then will I spare thee" (Alma 20:24). Ultimately what Ammon and Aaron prevail upon Lamoni's father to do is not merely be willing to "*give up* all that [he] possess[es]" and "forsake [his] kingdom" to receive the "great joy" of the fruit of the tree of life, but more importantly to "give away all [his] sins to know" God (22:15, 18). Lamoni, Lamoni's household, Lamoni's father, and the other converted Lamanites become so Jonathan-like that they not only make a covenant (see 1 Samuel 18:13; 20:16; 23:18) to give up their earthly "royal" prerogatives (including the age-old desire to rule), but they even covenant to "give up their own lives," rather than sin, i.e., that "rather than take away from a brother they would give unto him" (Alma 24:18).

What really changes Lamoni's father, however, is Ammon's love for Lamoni. Again, Ammon emerges as a refraction of David:

> And when he [Lamoni's father] saw that Ammon had no desire to destroy him, and when he also saw the great love he had for his son Lamoni, he was astonished exceedingly, and said: Because this is all that thou hast desired, that I would release thy brethren, and suffer that my son Lamoni should retain his kingdom, behold, *I will grant* unto you that my son may retain his kingdom from this time and forever; and I will govern him no more—And I will also grant unto thee that thy brethren may be cast out of prison, and thou and thy brethren may come unto me, in my kingdom; for I shall greatly desire to see thee. For the king was greatly astonished at the words which he had spoken, and also at the words which had been spoken by his son Lamoni, therefore he was desirous to learn them. (Alma 20:26–27)

Alma 21:21 reports that because of Ammon's unwillingness to pursue monarchic power, Lamoni's father frees Lamoni's people from his own oppressions and *grants* that Lamoni might reign over a "free people" (21:21). Similarly,

because of Ammon's "love" and "generosity," Lamoni's father *grants* Aaron and Ammon's other brothers their lives (22:3). But most importantly, Ammon's love for Lamoni results in an opportunity to teach Lamoni's father the gospel, and that makes all the difference for many thousands of Lamanites.

The Saul-David story places tremendous emphasis on Jonathan's providential "love" for David (see 1 Samuel 18:1, 3; 20:17; 2 Samuel 1:26), which enables David to escape from Saul's rage-fueled attempts on his life and to eventually accede to the throne. A major point of the biblical narrative is that David is, as his name suggests, "beloved" (see 1 Samuel 16:21; 18:1, 3, 16, 20, 22; 2 Samuel 1:26). In fact, the text is careful to state that David is never the giver of "love" (i.e., the subject of the verb "love"); he is always the object,[67] except in a single crucial instance prior to Joab's accusation in 2 Samuel 9:6: his enabling "love" for his heir-apparent Amnon,[68] the consequences of which nearly destroy his "sure house" within his own lifetime.

The narrator here, however, inverts this situation, indicating that Ammon, unlike David, has the capacity to love: Ammon had "great love"—selfless love—for Lamoni. Unlike David's relationship with Jonathan, Ammon's relationship with Lamoni is free of the underlying issue of David's future kingship. David will ascend the throne of Israel and Jonathan will die, and once upon the throne David will leave only a meager remnant of Saul's and Jonathan's descendants alive (see 2 Samuel 9; 21:1–14), making Saul's house "unsure." Ammon repeatedly refuses kingship, and Lamoni makes his people "a free people" (see Alma 21:21; 62:27; 30:24).[69]

Lamoni's father, king of all the Lamanites, offers half his kingdom to Ammon, but Ammon again refuses to assume any royal authority or power (see Alma 20:24–26). Ammon's magnanimity turns a volatile situation into a blessing for both Lamoni and his father: "I will grant unto you that my son may retain his kingdom from this time and forever; and I will govern him no more" (20:26). His magnanimity further creates an opportunity for Aaron to teach the gospel to Lamoni's father: "And I will also grant unto thee that thy brethren may be cast out of prison, and thou and thy brethren may come unto me, in my kingdom; for I shall greatly desire to see thee" (20:27; see also Alma 22:3).[70] This opportunity would not have come about if Ammon had pursued a monarchic agenda. Ammon again does the right thing at the right time.

Nonmonarchic Dynasties: Sure Houses for Mosiah and Lamoni's Father

Because of Ammon and Aaron's missionary endeavors, both Mosiah and Lamoni's father will have their kingdoms irrevocably altered. Mosiah's sons refuse to be dynastic sons in the traditional sense (meaning Mosiah's kingdom will no longer be a kingdom), and the dynastic sons of Lamoni's father (Lamoni, Anti-Nephi-Lehi, and probably others) will not be able to maintain their father's kingdom as it had previously existed (see Alma 24:2; 27:3–15).

Ammon put his own life at risk by even going up to the land of Nephi among the Lamanites (see Alma 17:6–13), and his life is seemingly in danger thereafter. The narrator describes an attempt on Ammon's life in which further wordplay on the name "Ammon" emphasizes Mosiah's faith in the Lord and the surety of the Lord's promise that he would keep him safe:

> Now, one of them, whose brother had been slain with the sword of Ammon, being exceedingly angry with Ammon, drew his sword and went forth that he might let it fall upon Ammon, to slay him; and as he lifted the sword to smite him, behold, he fell dead.
>
> Now we see that Ammon could not be slain, for the Lord had said unto Mosiah, his father: I will spare him, and it shall be unto him according to thy faith [*'ĕmûnatĕkā*]—therefore, Mosiah trusted him unto the Lord. (Alma 19:22–23)

Mosiah exercised great faith in allowing not only Ammon but also his other three sons to undertake this mission. Mosiah, like Lamoni's father later, was willing to "forsake his kingdom" in order to be an heir to a heavenly kingdom, so much so that he was willing to entrust Ammon and his brothers to his Lord (see Alma 22:15). It was Mosiah's faith and faithfulness to the Lord that would ensure his sons' safety. Notably, the narrative here only mentions the connection between Ammon and Mosiah's faith (i.e., the other sons are not mentioned). Seemingly, it was the connotative associations between the name "Ammon" and "faith" (*'ĕmûnâ*) that the narrator wished to emphasize (or create). Ammon's faithfulness begat faith among the Lamanites, but it was also Mosiah's sacrifice of faith in letting his sons go up (see Mosiah 27:5–8) that ensured the eternal welfare (the "surety") of numerous Lamanite houses.

Lamoni's father's sacrifice is similar. As noted above, not only was he willing to "forsake [his] kingdom" (Alma 22:15) but he was also willing to "give away all of [his] sins to know" the Lord (Alma 22:18). Lamoni's father dies not long after he converts to the Lord (see 24:4). After his death, his heir Anti-Nephi-Lehi loses hegemony over the unconverted Lamanites and their Amalekite cohorts. Both Anti-Nephi-Lehi and Lamoni are compelled

to leave with those of their subjects who converted. While the loss of dynastic royal power might seem like a large sacrifice, these two sons (like their father) understood that an eternal inheritance in an eternal kingdom is worth more than any earthly sacrifice.

Thus Ammon's faithfulness, though it altered dynastic politics among both the Nephites and Lamanites, begets sure faith and thus sure houses among the Lamanites:

> And as sure as the Lord liveth, so sure as many as believed, or as many as were brought to the knowledge of the truth, through the preaching of Ammon and his brethren, according to the spirit of revelation and of prophecy, and the power of God working miracles in them—yea, I say unto you, as the Lord liveth, as many of the Lamanites as believed in their preaching, and were converted unto the Lord, never did fall away. (Alma 23:6)

Mormon emphasizes the fact that faith and faithfulness only increased among the children of the first generation of Ammon's converts. They engendered faithfulness among their children just as Ammon had engendered "exceeding faith" among them (see Alma 57:21, 26–27).[71]

"A Beloved People of the Lord": Ammon's Legacy of Faith and Faithfulness

Ammon establishes churches (Alma 20:1; 28:1) rather than his own dynasty among the Lamanites, and Aaron establishes churches rather than his own throne (Alma 23:4). There is no indication that the sons of Mosiah have families of their own (wives or children) before or during their ministry among the Lamanites, although we might surmise that they did after. The point seems to be that their eyes were single to the glory of God, and thus they were blessing the lives of the Lamanites whom they served and establishing God's kingdom—not an earthly kingdom—among them. Consequently, their converts are built upon the right foundation, and so never fall away, but become a "favored people of the Lord" (Alma 27:30).

Thus, where love turns to hate in David's house because of his sins (i.e., his "taking" of Bathsheba and murder, and Amnon's imitative rape of his half sister Tamar; see 2 Samuel 13, especially v. 15), Ammon and his brethren, through the pure love (Alma 20:26; 53:11) of Christ, turn the Lamanites' "eternal hatred"[72] into love, and Ammon is able to thus reflect at the close of his missionary labors: "If we had not come up out of the land of Zarahemla, these our dearly beloved brethren, who have so dearly beloved us, would still have been racked with hatred against us . . . [and have] been strangers to God" (Alma 26:9). The narrator stresses the depth and mutuality of the love that overcomes the Lamanites' eternal hatred of the Nephites. Ammon and his converts are all royal heirs and beloved, not just David.[73]

David's sins result in "the sword . . . never depart[ing] from [his] house" (2 Samuel 12:10—in other words, violence will plague the house of David thereafter) and result in a loss of eternal exaltation (see D&C 132:39), whereas Ammon's Lamanite converts had such faith in the Lord that they "*never* did fall away" (Alma 23:6). Hundreds of years afterward, and after the destruction of the Nephite nation, Moroni still reflected on the greatness of what Ammon's faith had accomplished: "Behold, it was the faith [*'ĕmûnat*] of Ammon and his brethren which wrought so great a miracle among the Lamanites" (Ether 12:15). Ammon's faith in Christ and faithfulness to his mission continue to bear fruit among those who prize the Book of Mormon and strive to internalize the meaning of the account of his missionary labors.

Conclusion: Faithfulness and the Right to Rule

While both David and Ammon could be commended for their "faithfulness" (1 Samuel 22:14, Alma 18:10), it was the purity of Ammon's intent (i.e., a desire to save souls and a lack of monarchic ambition) that made his life's work such a success compared to the decidedly mixed bag that David's life became. Lamoni and his father, while beginning in the mode of Saul, became more Jonathan-like, willing not only to give away their possessions and their kingdoms, but even to give their lives and, perhaps hardest of all, to "give up [their] sins" to know God.

The narrative emphasizes the name Ammon as a symbol of faith and faithfulness, precisely because of the faithfulness that its bearer's labors produced in the Lamanites, who had for so long "dwindled in unbelief." Ammon's efforts, through the scriptures which testify of his faith and faithfulness in Christ, continue to beget faithfulness even at this moment. As beneficiaries of Ammon's efforts, we (like Lamoni) can, through faith, pass through the rent "veil of unbelief," and be "brought into the light" (Ether 4:15; 2 Nephi 32:4), bringing others with us.

Finally, if the right to rule and reign in the house of Israel in some eternal sense is dependent upon our faithfulness, Ammon's self-abnegating approach to our brothers and sisters—like the similar self-emptying approach of the Savior himself (see Philippians 2:5–11)—recommends itself as the best. David's gradual deviation from that approach cost him the right to rule and

reign eternally in the house of Israel (see D&C 132:39), a right available to all through the Atonement of Jesus (see Moses 7:59) that many of Ammon's converts would enjoy. Our right to rule and reign will similarly depend upon our willingness to be and to remain faithful and to instill faith and faithfulness in our brothers and sisters—our missionary work. As the Prophet Joseph Smith stated, "There is much which lieth in futurity, pertaining to the saints, which depends upon these things" (D&C 123:15). RE

Notes

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1. On the rehabilitative power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, see Bruce C. Hafen, "Beauty for Ashes: The Atonement of Jesus Christ," *Ensign*, April 1990, 7–13; and Bruce C. Hafen, *The Broken Heart: Applying the Atonement to Life's Experiences* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 143–54.

2. The terms "instrument" and "weapon" are represented by the same word in Hebrew [kĕlî] = "implement, instrument"; "weapon." See Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 478–79; hereafter cited as *HALOT*. Note the distribution of instrument/weapon/arms as a motif throughout Alma 17–29: instrument (Alma 17:9, 11; 26:3, 15; 29:9); weapons (23:7, 13; 24:17–19, 25; 25:14; 26:32). As "instruments" in the Lord's hand, Ammon and his brothers succeed in getting many of the Lamanites to lay down their arms and bury their weapons (see especially Alma 23:7).

3. Robert A. Rhees, "Ammon," *Ensign*, June 1997, 75, notes, "While Ammon apparently was not the eldest of Mosiah's sons (the kingship was first offered to Aaron; see Mosiah 29:1–3), he was 'chief among them,' possibly because of his great faith and leadership."

4. For the purpose of my thesis, I presuppose that the language on the brass plates was Hebrew in character, even if the script was Egyptian (Mosiah 1:2–5). I also presuppose that the Nephites' religious language continued to be essentially Hebrew in character (see Omni 1:16–17) and that many of their records were kept in Hebrew as Moroni indicates (Moroni 9:33). Thus the Lamanite conversion narratives (including Ammon's story) may have originally been chronicled in Nephite Hebrew. The rejoicing of the people of Zarahemla at Mosiah I's bringing them the uncorrupted version of their own language on the brass plates may be further evidence of this.

5. This study is not the first to propose the possible political/literary use of the Saul-David cycle in Nephite writings. See Ben McGuire, "Nephi and Goliath: A Case Study of Literary Allusion in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Restoration Scripture* 18, no. 1 (2009): 16–31.

6. Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, JSOTSup 15 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981). German original: Martin Noth, *Uberlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1943).

7. Scholars are divided on the number of "historians" or writers involved in the compilation of the Deuteronomistic history and the number of redactional layers that can (or cannot be) detected in this work (I proceed on the assumption that it is a unified work). It is not my intention to enter into this debate here, and even an attempt at summarizing the arguments falls well outside the scope of this paper. I would, however, note that the Book of Mormon, apart from the "small plates" portion (1 Nephi–Omni), is largely the work of two author-historians (Mormon and Moroni) drawing upon a large number of sources, like the Deuteronomistic historian(s).

8. See also Jacob 2:23–26. The brass plates may have contained royal annals, among other things.

9. See, e.g., John M. Lundquist and John W. Welch, "Kingship and Temple in 2 Nephi 5–10," *Insights* (1991): 2; also in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon: A Decade of New Research*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 66–68.

10. Frank Crüsemann (*Der Widerstand gegen das Königtums: Die antiköniglichen Texte des Alten Testaments und der Kampf um den frühen israelitischen Staat*, WMANT 49 [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978], 42) writes, "This brief conversation between the men of Israel and Gideon contains, along with Jotham's fable, the clearest and most fundamental repudiation of kingship in the Old Testament." Gideon, however, undermines his antimonarchic declaration with his subsequent kinglike behavior (assembling a royal harem, establishing an idolatrous cult site, etc.).

11. On the question of whether Nephi actually became king, see Noel B. Reynolds, "Nephite Kingship Reconsidered," in *Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson*, ed. Davis Bitton (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 151–89; see also Joseph Spencer, *An Other Testament: On Typology* (Salem, OR: Salt Press, 2012), 39–40.

12. Possibly *mālkî/mālkô*, "my reign"/"his reign," an infinitival form of *mālak*, "reign," and of the same root as *melek*, "king."

13. See especially the superscription to "The Book of Nephi, his reign and ministry" and 1 Nephi 10:1. See Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part 1: 1 Nephi 1–2 Nephi 10* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004), 42–44.

14. Katie Heffelfinger, "My Father Is King: Chiefly Politics and the Rise and Fall of Abimelech," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 33, no. 3 (2009): 277–92.

15. John W. Welch, "Democratizing Forces in King Benjamin's Speech," in *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 110–26. For the implications of this going forward, see also Spencer, *On Typology*, 124–25.

16. This is a major point of the Deuteronomist, who evaluates all of the kings of Israel as wicked, and most of the kings of Judah. He singles out only a few of the kings of Judah as righteous (e.g., Asa, Hezekiah, Josiah). Kingship in Israel and Judah fails, because human kings are almost always unrighteous (see also D&C 121:39): "We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion."

17. I.e., Absalom's attempted usurpation of David (a son-father usurpation), and Adonijah's rivalry with Solomon for the throne of a dying David, which resulted in a monarchic purge (a brother purging a brother and others deemed a threat to the throne). The Jaredite record is replete with intrafamilial rivalry for the throne.

18. The brother of Jared's words regarding the Jaredites' proposed monarchy, "surely this thing leadeth into captivity" (Ether 6:23), anticipated the kinds of troubles that he foresaw

that kingship would bring the Jaredites, i.e., "captivity," near-extinction, and then (eventually) extinction. However, he might as well have been speaking about Israel and Judah. For Israel, and later Judah, kingship resulted in another kind of "captivity," i.e., exile.

19. The paronomasia (play on like sounds) involving Amlici and **mlk* occurs in Alma 2:2, 7, 9–10.

20. Some instances of the paronomasia on Amalickiah and **mlk* occur in Alma 46:4–5; 47:1–35; 49:10, 25; 52:3; 54:16; 55:5.

21. The book of Alma also devotes substantial time to the so-called "king-men" who are intent on reestablishing kingship among the Nephites (see Alma 51:5–21; 60:16–17; 62:9).

22. See especially Judges 9:8–14, 22. Notably, Abimelech will not use the verb **mlk* of himself, but uses the verb **mšl* (Judges 9:2), the very term that the men of Israel and Gideon use in their conversation (Judges 8:22–23). Gideon denies that he or his sons will "rule" over, and yet his son Abimelech ("my father is king") "reigns" over Israel (Judges 9:22). (Unhelpfully, the KJV uses the word "reign" to translate both **mlk* and **mšl* in Judges 9:2).

23. If Amlici and Amalickiah were Mulekite descendants of Zedekiah (and thus of David), this wordplay would be highly suggestive; however, there is no direct text to support this.

24. See, e.g., Moshe Garsiel, *Biblical Names: A Literary Study of Midrashic Derivations and Puns*, trans. Phyllis Hackett (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University, 1991), 242. For a discussion of the origin and meaning of "David," see Baruch Halpern, *David's Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2001), 266–69.

25. Martin Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengebung* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Veragsbuchhandlung, 1966), 32, 228; see also *HALOT*, 65.

26. Noth, *Personnenamen*, 228; see also *HALOT*, 62.

27. 2 Samuel 13:3–5 indicates that Amnon's actions are partly instigated (or abetted) by Jonadab, David's nephew (the son of his brother Shimeah), who may have had monarchic ambitions of his own.

28. See *A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian*, ed. Jeremy Black, Andrew George, and Nicholas Postgate, *SANTAG* 5 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2000), 422.

29. See *HALOT*, 64.

30. David, who is transitioning to being "the Lord's anointed" in more than the king-to-be sense (1 Samuel 16), has a vested interest in not murdering Saul, the still-regnant Lord's anointed. For David to do so would be for him to set a precedent for his own violent overthrow.

31. On David's collusion with the Philistines, see Halpern, *David's Secret Demons*, 304–6.

32. Alma 43:13–14 (emending "descendants" in v. 14 to "dissenter," see Skousen); 47:35–36.

33. E.g., Amalickiah (Alma 47, see especially v. 1; Alma 57; etc.), Pachus (Alma 61:8; 62:6).

34. See Richard L. Bushman, *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: FARMS, 1990), 2:52–72; Noel B. Reynolds, "The Political Dimension in Nephi's Small Plates," *BYU Studies* 27, no. 4 (1987): 15–37.

35. Stanley A. Johnson, personal communication, spring 2012.

36. For a fuller list and treatment of these grievances and issues, see Reynolds, "Political Dimension," 15–37.

37. Lenet H. Read notes that in explaining his intentions to Lamoni, "Ammon was either extremely impressive or King Lamoni possessed much basic goodness, or both—or perhaps Lamoni had learned that Ammon was the son of a king and saw the possibility of some kind of political opportunity." "King Lamoni," *Ensign*, August 1977, 61.

38. Alma makes a point of how Corianton's two false moves negatively affected the Zoramite mission (see Alma 39:2–3), a mission on which Ammon himself served later in life.

39. I.e., David has already been anointed to become king (1 Samuel 16), but he must tread carefully. Thus the David's rejoinder to Saul ("Who am I? and what is my life, or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son in law to the king?" 1 Samuel 18:18) is not to be taken at face value. First Samuel 18:19 indicates that David was still supposed to have married Merab, who is instead given to Adriel the Meholathite.

40. Note how Amalickiah married the widowed Lamanite queen in Alma 47:34–35 to lay a foundation for a "legitimate" claim to the Lamanite throne.

41. The term *vorlage* refers to the original text before the word of a translator, editor, or copyist (reconstructed by working backwards from the words of the translation, but in reality unknown).

42. First Samuel 22:14 gives us a control text for Alma 18:10; see also note 4.

43. Henry B. Eyring: "I have always focused before on how mixed up Lamoni was in his doctrine, without seeing the miracle. The miracle was that a spiritual need was created in a man, that he might be taught the gospel of Jesus Christ. His heart was broken. He felt guilt. And it came from the temporal things that Ammon had done. . . . Never, never underestimate the spiritual value of doing temporal things well for those whom you serve." "The Book of Mormon Will Change Your Life," *Ensign*, February 2004, 13–14.

44. Although Saul later recognizes David's "righteousness" versus his own, at this point he is on a trajectory toward personal, familial, and dynastic destruction.

45. See Matthew L. Bowen, "*Not* Partaking of the Fruit: Its Generational Consequences and Its Remedy," in *The Things Which My Father Saw: Approaches to Lehi's Dream and Nephi's Vision*, ed. Daniel L. Belnap, Gaye Strathearn, and Stanley A. Johnson (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2011), 242–43.

46. See Bowen, "*Not* Partaking of the Fruit," 242–43.

47. Jennifer Clark Lane, "The Presence of the Lord," in *The Things Which My Father Saw*, 130.

48. The first use of "dwindle in belief" occurs in 1 Nephi 4:13, where the broader reference is to all the children of Lehi, but hints at the fate of the Lamanites in particular. Thereafter it is used specifically of the Lamanites in 1 Nephi 12:22–23, the mixture of Lamanite and Nephite dissenters that survive the destruction of the Nephite nation in 1 Nephi 13:35 and 15:13; 26:15, 17, 19; 2 Nephi 1:10. King Benjamin uses it exclusively of the Lamanites in Mosiah 1:5. Alma 45:10, 12 and 50:22 speak of the Nephites dwindling in unbelief like the Lamanites. As the Lamanites become more faithful and righteous than the Nephites, Mormon contrasts the Nephites' dwindling unbelief with the Lamanites' belief in Helaman 4:23, 6:34. Samuel the Lamanite infuriates the Nephites of Zarahemla by prophesying that the Lord would bless the Lamanites in spite of their dwindling in unbelief and stating that they never would dwindle in unbelief if they had been shown as many miracles and had been given as much light and knowledge as the Nephites (Helaman 15:11, 15). Third Nephi 21:5, Mormon 9:20, and Ether 4:3 again speak of the Lamanites (and the Nephites who mix with them) dwindling in unbelief, while 4 Nephi 1:34 and 38 emphatically speak of the Lamanites, Lemuelites, and Ishmaelites not merely dwindling in unbelief, but willfully

rebelling against the gospel of Christ (see D&C 3:18). Words translated as "unbelief" are attested some thirty-five times in the Book of Mormon (and fifty-two times in the standard works altogether).

49. Bowen, "*Not* Partaking of the Fruit," 242–43.

50. So, e.g., New Revised Standard Version, English Standard Version.

51. So, e.g., New International Version.

52. Nephi is finally persuaded to kill Laban in order to obtain the brass plates by the realization that his people would need the scriptures. He reports that the Spirit said to him: "Behold the Lord slayeth the wicked to bring forth his righteous purposes. It is better that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief" (1 Nephi 4:13).

53. Later, when Lamoni's father broaches this subject, he does not nominally identify Nephi as the one who "robbed" the Lamanites of the brass plates. The possibility exists that he could also have been referring to Mosiah I (see Omni 1:12–14).

54. Compare Nephi's initial, unflattering descriptions of Lamanite degeneracy (e.g., 1 Nephi 12:23; 2 Nephi 5:14, 22–24) and those of his prophetic successors (Jacob 7:24; Enos 1:20; Jarom 1:6; Mosiah 10:20; Alma 17:14; Alma 47:36; Helaman 3:16, etc.). Mormon noted that such descriptions had been "ever . . . among" the Nephites (Mormon 5:15).

55. See especially 1 Nephi 1:7–8, where the two phrases are paired: "And it came to pass that he returned to his own house at Jerusalem; and he cast himself upon his bed, being overcome with the Spirit and the things which he had seen. And being thus *overcome with the Spirit*, he was *carried away* in a vision, even that he saw the heavens open, and he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God."

56. Nephi consistently speaks of being "carried away" in visions (see 1 Nephi 14:30; 15:1; 2 Nephi 4:25).

57. See also the narrator's characterization of Ammon in Alma 18:22: "Ammon being wise [Hebrew *hākām*], but harmless," which echoes the description of Amnon's friend/cousin Jonadab as a "subtle [literally wise, *hākām*] man" (2 Samuel 13:3). Ammon puts his "wisdom" to much more altruistic purposes than does Jonadab, and with much better results: Ammon's "wisdom" blesses thousands of lives, whereas Amnon and Jonadab's scheme results in rape, death, and eventually the near-destruction of David's "house."

58. Contrast Amalickiah's "le[ading] away . . . hearts" (Alma 46:10), "gain[ing] the hearts of the people" by "fraud" (47:30), negatively "inspir[ing] the hearts of the Lamanites against the people of Nephi" (48:1), and "stir[ring] up the hearts of the people of the Lamanites against the Nephites" (51:9).

59. Isaiah 61:1 illustrates how the Spirit of the Lord brings "legitimacy" or "legitimation," i.e., royal or divine authority ("The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me").

60. See David Wagner, *Geist und Tora: Studien zur göttlichen Legitimation und Delegitimation von Herrschaft im Alten Testament anhand der Erzählungen über König Saul*, *ABG* 15 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2005), 189–216.

61. Samuel declares the end of Saul's dynasty in 1 Samuel 13:14 (i.e., his sons will not remain on the throne) and the "tearing" of his kingship (1 Samuel 15:28).

62. Later when the Nephites "dwindle in unbelief" (Helaman 6:34), we will see this legitimation/delegitimation phenomenon: "And thus we see that the Spirit of the Lord began to *withdraw* from the Nephites, *because of the wickedness and the hardness of their hearts* [i.e., delegitimation]. And thus we see that the Lord began to *pour out his Spirit* upon the Lamanites, because of their *easiness and willingness to believe* in his words [i.e., legitimation]" (Helaman 6:35–36).

63. Matthew L. Bowen, "Becoming Sons and Daughters at God's Right Hand: King Benjamin's Rhetorical Wordplay on His Own Name," *Journal of Book of Mormon and Restoration Scripture* 21, no. 2 (2012): 6–8, 13.

64. See Jennifer Clark Lane, "The Redemption of Abraham," in *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, ed. John Gee and Brian M. Hauglid (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2005), 169–74; Brian K. Ray, "Adoption and Atonement: Becoming Sons and Daughters of Christ," *Religious Educator* 6, no. 3 (2005): 129–36.

65. Bowen, "Sons and Daughters at God's Right Hand," 6–8.

66. In advance of their mission, Ammon and his brethren had "fasted much and prayed much that *the Lord would grant* [**Yhwh yitēn*, similar to the name Jonathan] unto them a portion of his Spirit to go with them" (Alma 17:9). They do not want monarchy among the Lamanites, but to "save some few of their souls." The narrator notes that the king "*inquired* [**šā'al*, see Saul] of Ammon if it were his desire to dwell in the land among the Lamanites, or among his people" (Alma 17:22).

67. Dana Nolan Fewell and David M. Gunn, *Gender, Power, and Promise: The Subject of the Bible's First Story* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 148–51; see also Tod Linafelt, "Private Poetry and Public Eloquence in 2 Samuel 1:17–27: Hearing and Overhearing David's Lament for Jonathan and Saul," *Journal of Religion* 88, no. 4 (2008): 497–526.

68. See the Septuagint (LXX) and Dead Sea Scrolls (4QSam[a]) versions of 2 Samuel 13:21.

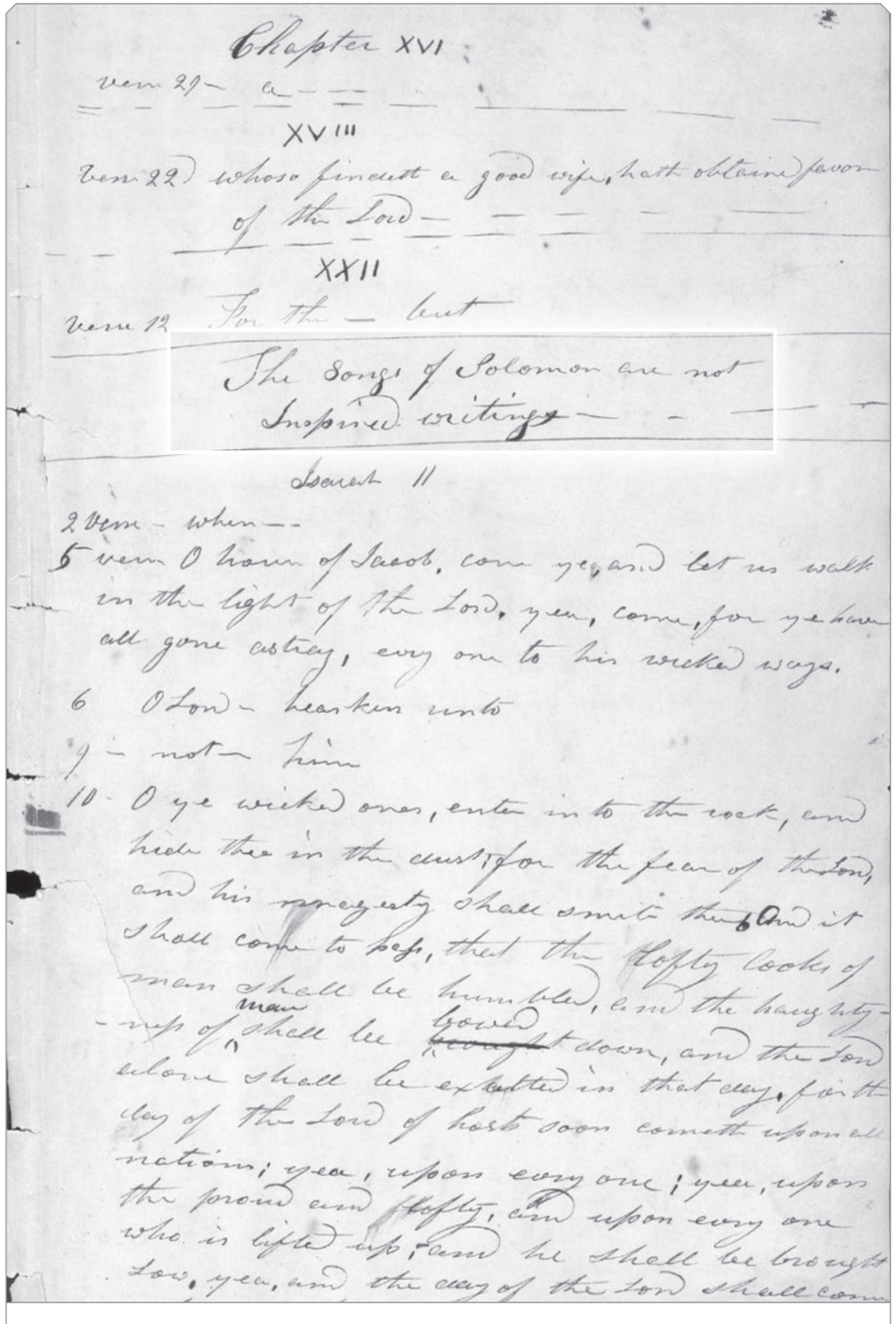
69. Notably, Korihor strikes at the idea of Ammon's converts being a "free people" in Alma 30:24.

70. The lead word "grant" occurs six times; forms of "desire" occur seven times in Alma 20.

71. Later narratives depict the faith of the Ammonite "sons" of Helaman as being greater than that of the Nephites in general: "Yea, and they did obey and observe to perform every word of command *with exactness*; yea, and even *according to their faith* [*'emûnatam*] it was done unto them; and I did remember the words which they said unto me that their mothers had taught them" (Alma 57:21). Helaman further notes how astonished the Nephites were at their preservation in battle: "And now, their preservation was astonishing to our whole army, yea, that they should be spared while there was a thousand of our brethren who were slain. And we do justly ascribe it to the miraculous power of God, because of *their exceeding faith* in that which they had been taught to *believe*—that there was a just God, and whosoever did not doubt, that they should be preserved by his marvelous power. Now this was *the faith* of these of whom I have spoken; they are young, and their minds are *firm*, and they do put their trust in God continually" (Alma 57:26–27).

72. So described in Jacob 7:24 and Mosiah 10:27.

73. This stands in stark contrast to Jonathan's one-way, unreciprocated "love" for David that enables him to accede to the throne (even the plaintive lament of 2 Samuel 1:26 emphasizes that it was Jonathan who "loved" David, *not* the other way around).


Chapter XVI
vers 21 — a — — —
XVIII
vers 22 whoso findeth a good wife, hath obtained favor of the Lord — — — — —
XXII
vers 12 For th — lent
The Songs of Solomon are not Inspired writings — — — —
Isaiah 11
2 Vers — when —
5 vers O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord, yea, come, for ye have all gone astray, every one to his wicked ways.
6 O Lord — hearken unto
9 — not — him
10 O ye wicked ones, enter in to the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for the fear of the Lord, and his arrogancy shall smite the [illegible] And it shall come to pass, that the lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of man shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day, for the day of the Lord of hosts soon cometh upon all nations; yea, upon every one; yea, upon the proud and lofty, and upon every one who is lifted up, and he shall be brought low, yea, and the day of the Lord shall com

Manuscript page of the Joseph Smith Translation. Courtesy of Community of Christ Archives.

If it is not inspired scripture, why does a passage from the Song of Solomon appear three times in the Doctrine and Covenants?

Reading the Song of Solomon as a Latter-day Saint

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When I ask my Old Testament students at BYU what they know about the biblical book Song of Solomon, they respond almost in unison, "It's not inspired!" "How do you know that?" I ask them.

"Joseph Smith said so," they reply. My students accept the Prophet's assessment, as indicated in the Joseph Smith Translation. And so do I.[1]

But when I ask my classes what else they know about the Song of Solomon, I get little or no response. "Since it is not inspired scripture, why is it in the Bible?" Silence. "Since it is not inspired scripture, what is it?" More silence. "Since it is not inspired scripture, why does a passage from the Song of Solomon appear three times in the Doctrine and Covenants?" Further and somewhat confused silence. These are questions I think all Latter-day Saint students of the scriptures ought to be able to answer. My Old Testament students are required to learn the answers.[2]

Although the Song of Solomon (hereafter, the Song) is generally ignored in the standard Latter-day Saint Church curriculum,[3] it *is* part of the traditional biblical canon that Latter-day Saints share with Jews and other Christians. It has been the object of much study by many Bible believers

during the past two millennia, and an exceptionally large amount of commentary has been produced on this small book during this time. Furthermore, there are a few distinct Latter-day Saint connections to the Song. I therefore think there is value for all students of the Bible in knowing a few basic points about this book, rather than being willfully ignorant of it. Following a brief introduction to the Song, I will answer the four questions posed in the opening paragraphs.[4]

Introduction: About the Song

Containing no third-person narration, the Song employs only spoken words, primarily those of its two main characters: a male and a female lover.[5] The opening line of the book, "The song of songs, which is Solomon's" (1:1), provides the basis for its two most common names in English, "Song of Songs" and "Song of Solomon." It is also known as "Canticles," anglicized from its Latin name *Canticum Canticorum* (Song of Songs) in the Vulgate. Most modern-day Jews and Christians now refer to this book as the "Song of Songs," based on the first phrase of the book, while those who still use the King James Version (KJV) usually refer to it as the Song of Solomon, in harmony with the older tradition represented therein.

The expression "song of songs" represents a Hebrew idiom used to express the superlative. Thus the "song of songs" means "the best song, the most wonderful song." As grammarians routinely indicate, other biblical examples of this type of superlative phrasing include holy of holies (usually translated "most holy" in the KJV, e.g., Exodus 26:33), "God of gods, and Lord of lords" (Deuteronomy 10:17), the "heaven of heavens" (usually translated "the highest heavens," 1 Kings 8:27), and "king of kings" (Ezekiel 26:7). Thus the opening phrase of the Song declares the nature and status of the book. It presents itself as a great song, celebrating certain aspects of human love.

According to 1 Kings 4:32 (Heb. 5:12), Solomon composed 1,005 songs. However, actual Solomonic authorship of the Song is now generally viewed as having no real basis in history.[7] There are, of course, allusions to Solomon and some of his possessions in the Song (1:5; 3:7, 9, 11; 8:11–12), as well as the fact that the woman refers early on to her lover as a "king" (1:4; although see 1:7, in which she depicts him as a shepherd).[8] However, the LDS Bible Dictionary rightly indicates that the traditional ascription of this book to Solomon "is doubtful."[9] So, while linking the Song *to* Solomon in antiquity presumably helped provide the text with a regal aura, may have increased its

authoritative status, and secured its place in the biblical canon, there is really no reliable way to know who composed it.

Ascertaining the date of the Song's composition is equally challenging, with suggestions ranging from the tenth to the third centuries BC. Most scholars tend to favor a later date (Persian to Greek period), based in part on certain linguistic considerations.[10] Interestingly, one Talmudic tradition insists that the "men of Hezekiah" were responsible for collecting these love poems, about two centuries after Solomon.[11] Recently, a composition date of about 900 BC "in the northern kingdom of Israel" has been proposed.[12] There is, however, no way to confidently date the original form of the Song.[13]

Bound up with the question of dating is also the question of the unity of the Song. Earlier scholars generally presumed the Song was an originally unified composition, while many scholars now judge the canonical form of the Song to be a compilation of several previously independent songs, which may have been composed in different centuries.[14] Ultimately, this question, like the issue of the Song's date, remains unanswered.

Question 1. What is the basis for the Latter-day Saint claim that the Song of Solomon is not "inspired" scripture?

The fact that Latter-day Saints institutionally ignore the Song of Songs is, I presume, primarily due to what is probably the best known fact regarding the Song in the Latter-day Saint tradition: that the Joseph Smith Translation, Joseph Smith's inspired revision of the Bible, not only provides no revisions at all to the text of the Song,[15] but contains the comment "The Songs of Solomon are not Inspired writings [*sic*]."[16] This statement dates to July 1832.[17]

Among other things, this assertion implies that the other books of the Bible, in whole or in part, *are* inspired writings, thus giving the Song a lesser status compared with the rest of the biblical canon. Given that Joseph Smith taught that there was even some potential religious value in the Apocrypha and that the Holy Spirit could guide one to whatever truths were found therein (see D&C 91:1-6), my interpretation of the JST claim that the Song is "not inspired writings" is that it was not produced with the assistance of the Holy Spirit and that is contains no explicit religious truths. Seen as such, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints views the Song of Songs as void of religious authority and value.

A secondary question raised by Joseph Smith's claim is, what does the plural form "Songs . . . are" convey in the statement "The Songs of Solomon

are not Inspired writings"? Although this could be viewed as support for the position mentioned above, that the canonical form of the Song resulted from the compilation of several originally independent songs, it is perhaps just a slip of the tongue or the pen.[18] The fact is that neither Joseph Smith nor his peers provided any surviving commentary on this JST claim.

This latter point makes it difficult to *confidently* suggest *why* the Song is considered "not inspired." Although the Song's sexual nature and its dearth of explicit religious content are potential reasons for its status, no official reason has been stated by the Church beyond the JST statement itself (see also the discussion of what the Song was originally, below). Thus the JST statement has, in effect, come to represent the official Latter-day Saint position.

Question 2. Since the Song of Solomon is not inspired scripture, why is it in the Bible?

Commentators usually attribute to Rabbi Aqiba the influence that swayed early Jewish rabbinic leaders to include the Song in the Hebrew canon of scripture.[19] Aqiba was active in the early decades of the second century AD (lived ca. 50–135). Reading in its full context the oft-quoted statement from the Mishnah (*Yadayim* 3:5) that is attributed to Aqiba is instructive because it illuminates the debate that occurred among at least some Jewish leaders concerning the status of the Song.

A. All sacred scriptures impart uncleanness to hands [i.e, are holy and inspired].[20]
B. The Song of Songs and Qohelet [Ecclesiastes] impart uncleanness to hands.
C. R. Judah says, "The Song of Songs imparts uncleanness to hands, but as to Qohelet there is dispute."
D. R. Yose says, "Qohelet does not impart uncleanness to hands, but as to Song of Songs there is dispute." . . .
E. Said R. Simeon b. Azzai, "I have a tradition from the testimony of the seventy-two elders,
F. "on the day on which they seated R. Eleazar b. Azariah in the session,
G. "that the Song of Songs and Qohelet do impart uncleanness to hands."
H. Said R. Aqiba, "Heaven forbid! No Israelite man ever disputed concerning Song of Songs that it imparts uncleanness to hands.

I. "For the entire age is not so worthy as the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel.
J. "For all the scriptures are holy, but the Song of Songs is holiest of all.
K. "And if they disputed, they disputed only concerning Qohelet."
L. Said R. Yohanan b. Joshua the son of R. Aqiba's father-in-law, according to the words of Ben Azzai, "Indeed did they dispute, and indeed did they come to a decision."[21]

Aqiba's claim in this passage is an eloquent overstatement, presumably made to help fortify in rabbinic circles his perspective of the Song. Unfortunately, neither this nor any other ancient text indicates the *basis* for the determination by some early Jewish leaders that the Song of Songs was holy scripture. About a century later, early Christian Father Origen of Alexandria (ca. 185–254) expressed a sentiment similar to Aqiba's: "Blessed . . . is he who understands songs and sings them . . . , but much more blest is he who sings the Songs of Songs!"[22]

The standard explanation for the Song's canonization as a biblical text is the allegorization of its content—the Song's portrayal of the delightful love of a man and a woman seen as representing Yahweh's/Jehovah's love for Israel, or for Christians, Jesus' love for the Church, or for individual Christian souls.[23]

However, allegorization of the Song is a process about which nothing is known. It is not clear whether the Song was viewed allegorically *prior* to canonization or whether it was later allegorized to justify its canonization. If the latter option is true, that the allegorization of the Song came after its canonization, there is no ancient indication of how or why the Song gained the popularity necessary to be canonized in the first place.[24] (I assume Aqiba's statement indicates allegorization had taken place by his day.) The remains of four copies of the Song of Songs were found among the Qumran manuscripts (Dead Sea Scrolls), suggesting the text had a certain amount of popularity among some Jews in the Herodian period (30 BC–AD 50), but again, no explanation of how the Song was actually viewed has survived from before the Jewish Mishnah (ca. AD 200; quoted above).[25]

Whether the allegorical (sometimes called the spiritual) approach to the Song of Songs was intended from the start or later developed, the Song was accepted by the majority of premodern Jewish and Christian exegetes and Bible believers as allegorically representing the reciprocal love and desire between the Lord and his people.[26]

Question 3. Since the Song of Solomon is not originally inspired scripture, what is it?

Joseph Smith is not the only one to claim that the Song of Solomon is not inspired scripture. Already in the eighteenth century some scholars asserted the Song was not about God and his people. For example, William Whiston (1667–1752), known for his translation of Josephus' works, wrote in 1723 that "the Book of Canticles is not a Sacred Book of the Old Testament; nor was it originally esteem'd as such, either by the Jewish or the Christian Church [*sic*]."[27] A century later, Harvard University professor George R. Noyes, who considered the allegorical view of the Song as "mere fancy," declared in 1846, "I do not regard . . . the Song of Solomon, to have an express moral or religious design."[28] Noyes went on to cite scholars in Europe, and specifically in England, who in the preceding century had rejected the allegorical or "spiritual" view of the Song, including Eichorn, Jahn, and Ewald, as well as "the distinguished Methodist, Adam Clarke" and "the Calvinist dissenter, John Pye Smith."[29] Adam Clarke skeptically asked in his commentary, originally published in eight volumes between 1810 and 1826 (the 1830 edition is used herein), "In a word, does Solomon here represent Jesus Christ? . . . And where . . . is the proof?" After then reviewing the various allegorical proposals known to him, Clarke defiantly claimed, "Nothing but a direct revelation from God can show us which of these opinions is the correct one, or whether any of them are correct. The antiquity of an opinion, if that be not founded on a revelation from God, is no evidence of its truth."[30]

There is no reason to suggest a cause-and-effect influence from Clarke or anyone else on Joseph Smith and his thinking that the Song was "not inspired." There is no explicit support for such a supposition.[31] Rather, Joseph Smith appears to be one of several independent thinkers—and an inspired thinker, as Latter-day Saints would add—arriving at the same conclusion concerning the status of the Song. But in the early 1800s, religious leaders (as opposed to scholars) in the United States who shared his view were definitely in the minority. As Noyes observed in 1846, "in this country [the USA], the old notion, that the book sets forth the mutual love of Christ and the church, is probably the most prevalent."[32] Furthermore, Joseph Smith is the only religious leader I know of in his time period (or any other) who made his assertion about the Song in the context of his role as a prophet.[33]

Currently, the vast majority of Bible scholars agree that the Song did not originate as inspired scripture. As indicated above, the opening line of this book concisely indicates its genre: "The song of songs, which is Solomon's" (1:1). And since this poetic book is about love, the Song is best understood and is now commonly accepted as an example of Israelite love poetry.[34] This conclusion is supported by at least three points: (1) the Song is devoid of the name of God, (2) it demonstrates no obvious religious intent, and (3) it shares several features with Egyptian love poetry. Egyptian texts from the nineteenth and early twentieth dynasties (ca. 1300–1150 BC) of the New Kingdom period currently provide the closest non-Israelite parallels to this love poetry.[35] These factors have led some scholars, attempting to distance the Song from the traditional view of divine allegory, to refer to the Song as "secular" poetry.[36]

Some similarities between the Song and Egyptian love poetry can easily be illustrated with these excerpts from the Egyptian text known as Papyrus Chester Beatty I:

> The Beginning of the Sayings of the Great Entertainer
> (*Boy*) (Number 31)
> One alone is my sister, having no peer:
> more gracious than all other women.
> Behold her, like Sothis rising
> at the beginning of a good year:
> shining, precious, white of skin,
> lovely of eyes when gazing.
> Sweet her lips when speaking:
> she has no excess of words.
> Long of neck, white of breast,
> her hair true lapis lazuli.
> Her arms surpass gold,
> her fingers are like lotuses.
> Full (?) her derrière, narrow (?) her waist,
> her thighs carry on her beauties.
> Lovely of walk when she strides on the ground,
> she has captured my heart in her embrace.
> She makes the heads of all men
> turn about when seeing her. . . .
>
> (*Girl*) (Number 32)
> *Second Stanza*
> My brother roils my heart with his voice,
> making me take ill [i.e., love sick].
> Though he is among the neighbors of my mother's house,
> I cannot go to him. . . .
> O brother, I am decreed for you
> by the Golden One. . . .

(*Girl*) (Number 36)
Sixth Stanza
I passed close by his house,
and found his door ajar.
My brother was standing beside his mother,
and with him all his kin.

The first shared trait illustrated here is that the male and female lovers refer to each other in the Egyptian text as "my sister" and "my brother," respectively. See similarly in Song 4:9–10, "You have captivated my heart, my sister, my bride; . . . How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride!" (ESV; see also 4:12; 5:1, 2, for "my sister"; and Song 8:1 for "brother"). Clearly, the language in both Egyptian and Israelite texts does not refer to incestuous activity; rather, these are expressions of endearment, and similar usage appears sporadically in other ancient Near Eastern texts.[38]

The second shared trait, evident between this passage of Egyptian love poetry and the Song, is the male's poetic description of the female, beginning with features of her head and moving down her body.[39] See similarly, the male's description of the female's body in Song 4:1–7:

Behold, you are beautiful, my love,
behold, you are beautiful!
Your eyes are doves
behind your veil.
Your hair is like a flock of goats
leaping down the slopes of Gilead.
Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes. . . .
Your lips are like a scarlet thread,
and your mouth is lovely.
Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate
behind your veil.

This situation is a classic illustration of how knowing something about the cultural world that lies behind the biblical text helps us better understand and interpret the contents of the Bible itself.[40] Thus the answer to the question "since the Song of Solomon is not originally inspired scripture, what is it?" is, it was originally Israelite love poetry. This interpretation correlates with the JST claim that the Song is "not inspired."

Question 4. Since the Song of Solomon is not inspired scripture, why is a passage from the Song of Solomon quoted several times in the Doctrine and Covenants?[41]

Joseph Smith's claim that the Song of Solomon/Songs is not inspired appears to be at least superficially at odds with his use of Song 6:10 in the 1836 dedicatory prayer for the temple in Kirtland, Ohio (D&C 109). Song 6:10 reads in the KJV, "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?" The Hebrew word *shahar*,[42] translated "morning" in the KJV, more specifically designates the "dawn, the first light of the new day."[43] It is generally accepted that the "comparison [of the female in Song 6:10] to the dawn, moon, and sun suggests the radiant beauty of the woman."[44]

The restoration passage in question is Doctrine and Covenants 109:73, presented here in the context of verses 72–74:

> Remember all thy church, O Lord, with all their families, and all their immediate connections, with all their sick and afflicted ones, with all the poor and meek of the earth; that the kingdom, which thou hast set up without hands, may become a great mountain and fill the whole earth;
>
> That thy church may come forth out of the wilderness of darkness, and shine forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners;
>
> And be adorned as a bride for that day when thou shalt unveil the heavens, and cause the mountains to flow down at thy presence, and the valleys to be exalted.

Although this paper is not the place for a detailed study of this or of the other two passages in the Doctrine and Covenants that contain the language of Song 6:10 (mentioned below), it can at least be observed that D&C 109:73 is part of a passage that contains bold imagery from several passages from the Bible: verse 72, Daniel 2:44–45; verse 73, Song of Songs 6:10 (however, the phrase "come forth out of the wilderness of darkness" is only found in D&C 109:73); verse 74a, Revelation 21:2; verse 74b, Isaiah 64:1; and verse 74c, Isaiah 40:4.

Joseph Smith shows no apparent concern about quoting from a biblical book that four years earlier he labeled as "not inspired writings." The Song of Songs *is*, after all, in the traditional biblical canon, and as such the Prophet utilized it as a source for imagery depicting the latter-day Church (then beginning to "dawn" upon the world), along with imagery from other canonical sources, in this temple-focused prayer. Seen this way, the lyrical line

in Song 6:10 aptly conveys a significant attribute of the restored Church, as expressed in D&C 109:73.[45]

Two other passages in the Doctrine and Covenants contain language from Song 6:10. D&C 5:14 uses the language of this verse in reference to the Church, but reverses the adjectives describing the sun and moon: "And to none else will I grant this power, to receive this same testimony among this generation, in this the beginning of the rising up and the coming forth of my church out of the wilderness—clear as the moon, and fair as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." This text is dated to March 1829, and thus precedes Joseph Smith's work on the JST. As with D&C 109:73, D&C 5:14 employs the description of the female's radiant and overpowering beauty in Song 6:10 to signify the nature of the restoration as it dawned upon the world. Accepting D&C 5 as a revelation from the resurrected Christ through Joseph Smith, as Latter-day Saints do, implies that the Lord himself approved of utilizing this phrase from the Song for its symbolic value.

The final text in the Doctrine and Covenants that contains the language of Song 6:10 is section 105:31: "But first let my army become very great, and let it be sanctified before me, that it may become fair as the sun, and clear as the moon, and that her banners may be terrible unto all nations." Again, the wording of Song 6:10 is somewhat rearranged, but is unmistakable. This time, however, the imagery of Song 6:10 does not specifically represent the dawning of Christ's latter-day Church, but rather is applied to the Lord's "army." Dating to June 1834, the historical context for this revelation is the march of Zion's Camp "army" from Ohio to the Jackson County to deal with mob violence against Latter-day Saints in Missouri, although no military action resulted. The context suggests the emphasis in D&C 105:31 is thus on the latter phrase in Song 6:10: "terrible as an army with banners." Thus all three passages in the Doctrine and Covenants that employ the language of Song 6:10 are viewed by Latter-day Saints as the inspired use of imagery from a source that is "not inspired."

In an effort to seemingly justify the use of Song 6:10 in the Doctrine and Covenants, a few Latter-day Saint commentators have proposed that the canonical form of Song 6:10 may contain a quote from an earlier inspired source no longer available to us.[46] Certainly, this is possible, but I take such a suggestion as evidence of an attempt to distance the canonical Song of Songs from the Doctrine and Covenants, as if the communicative value of the imagery in Song 6, on its own and by itself, is not enough justification for its use.

D&C 5:14 and 109:73 may well employ the imagery of Song 6:10 in relation to the coming forth of the latter-day Church *because* female imagery was sometimes used anciently to represent God's people in the Old Testament and Christ's Church in the New Testament (see, for example, Hosea 1–3; Isaiah 54:5; Matthew 25:1–13; Ephesians 5:28–33).[47] Of course, Latter-day Saints do accept the scriptural meta-allegory that presents Christ's Church as a beloved woman, as his "bride."

In addition to the three passages in the Doctrine and Covenants just cited, it is worth noting that a phrase from Song 6:10 is also found towards the end of a multipage entry in Joseph Smith's journal, under the date of February 21, 1843. Although not scripture, it provides additional indication that Joseph Smith did not shy away from the language of the Song. Willard Richards recorded some comments by Joseph Smith about finishing the Nauvoo House, and at one point notes, "& if you are not careful will be lifted up & fall and they will cover up & cloak all your former sins— & hide a multitude of sins. & shine forth fair as the sun &c." However, it is challenging to make very much of this, given the incomplete nature of the journal entry.[48]

Lastly, there is one other reported occasion when Joseph Smith employed imagery from the Song of Songs in his communications, again beyond canonical scripture. Song 2:15 reads in the KJV: "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes." The Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book reports that in August 1842 Joseph Smith taught, "The servants of the Lord are required to guard against those things that are calculated to do the most evil—the little foxes spoil the vines—little evils do the most injury to the church."[49] Whether this indicates that this phrase was a popular saying with which Joseph Smith was familiar or whether he was aware of it from reading the Song of Songs cannot be determined.[50]

Although finding a few connections with the Song in reports of his speech is statistically insignificant, such instances, in addition to the three occurrences of Song 6:10 in the Doctrine and Covenants, further demonstrate that Joseph Smith (and the Lord) did not shy away from using the language found in the Song of Songs, even though he stated the Song was "not inspired writings." On the one hand, this does not seem to me to be all that different from Elder Henry D. Taylor quoting Song 2:11–12 in his April 1959 general conference address: the poetic imagery in Song 2 beautifully expressed his point.[51] On the other hand, of course, the employment of Song

6:10 is more theologically focused in the Doctrine and Covenants, and its use therein is attributed by Latter-day Saints to the inspiration of the Lord.

Concluding Thoughts on the Latter-day Saint Position

Obviously, there is much more that can be (and has been) said about the Song of Songs/Solomon. And there are certainly some understandable reasons why the Church has chosen to avoid the Song of Songs in its curriculum and other venues. Besides the claim that the Song is not inspired writing, the next most likely reason for this stance is the imagery and language employed to express the beauty and appeal of human bodies and the emotions and desires these can arouse. The exotic and sometimes erotic nature of the text, with its frequent use of nature imagery to convey sexually oriented allusions and double entendres, is presumably what led Elder Bruce R. McConkie, in a 1984 address to students at Brigham Young University entitled "The Bible, a Sealed Book," to claim "the Song of Solomon is biblical trash—it is not inspired writing."[52] In this statement, Elder McConkie not only cited the JST claim about the Song, but went further by employing the pejorative term "trash" to emphasize what he considered the Song's inappropriate and uninspiring sexually oriented contents.[53]

Finding support from the era of Joseph Smith and the Restoration, Elder McConkie's view is much closer, for example, to that of non-Mormon Professor George Noyes, who, in arguing against the allegorical view of the Song in 1846, compared it to "erotic poetry," claiming that "there is language in the Canticles which I could not apply to the Supreme Being . . . without feeling guilty of blasphemy."[54] However, this perspective is far removed from the one expressed, for example, by John Wesley (1765), who claimed the Song was "pious . . . , breathing forth the hottest flames of love between Christ and his people, most sweet and comfortable, and useful to all that read it with serious and Christian eyes."[55] Similarly, Watson, who accepted the Song as an allegory, claimed in 1832 that "it is justly entitled Song of Songs, or most excellent song, . . . tending, if properly understood, to purify the mind, and to elevate the affections from earthly to heavenly things."[56]

I understand *why* the Song is not in the seminary and youth Sunday School curricula. However, the Song *is* in the Bible. Commentators have wrestled with it for centuries. Preachers have employed it in sermons for just as long. Although Latter-day Saints have never institutionally accepted the allegorical approach to the Song of Songs, such an approach has been

productive for many Jews and traditional Christians over many centuries. Still today, for example, many Jews read the Song of Songs at Passover as a celebration of God's love for his chosen people, whatever each individual Jewish person might think of the Song. And, as reviewed above, one passage of the Song is employed in the Doctrine and Covenants to symbolically convey the beautiful nature of the Lord's restored Church.

Beyond its theological value for some readers, the Song is also a cultural artifact. Artists and authors have applied their talents to expressing the content and mystery of the Song and its evocative imagery.[58] As former BYU religion professor Ellis Rasmussen wrote, the Song is "worthwhile to enjoy [for] its beauty as romantic literature, complementary to the other great types of the literature of Israel . . . [the Latter-day Saint designation] 'not inspired writings' . . . does not negate or depreciate its value as romantic . . . poetry from a very literate people."[59] Furthermore, a number of popular sayings derive from the Song, including "your love is better than wine" (1:2);[60] "the flowers appear on the earth . . . and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land" (2:12);[61] "the little foxes that spoil the vines" (2:15);[62] and "set me as a seal upon your heart . . . for love is strong as death" (8:6).

For all these reasons, *I* believe it is important for students of the scriptures to at least know these few basic things about the Song of Songs, not just that it is "not inspired." It is possible to understand and appreciate the Song, like most other literature, for what it is without wholeheartedly embracing it as divinely inspired or without completely denigrating it. Reading the Song of Songs can be viewed as comparable to going to an art museum. Depending on individual inclinations, some people will marvel at the skill of a painter or sculptor to express the beauty and subtleties of the human form, including depictions of nudes, while some others may avoid representations of the nude human form because they deem them inappropriate. This latter perspective does not diminish the skill of the artist or the power of the work to convey beauty or emotion, but is a personal choice about taste.[63] That some people have long struggled with the sexual nature of the canonical Song is evident in statements such as this one by Origen of Alexandria: "I advise and counsel everyone who is not yet rid of the vexations of flesh and blood and has not ceased to feel the passion of his bodily nature, to refrain completely from reading this little book and the things that will be said about it."[64]

As David Rolph Seely has observed, "the Song of Solomon can be profitably read from many perspectives."[65] One illustration of this is evident in the

statement by Rasmussen, quoted above, "[the Latter-day Saint designation] 'not inspired writings' . . . does not negate or depreciate its value as romantic . . . poetry." Another perspective is now evident in the non-allegorizing view found in the writings of some conservative commentators. For example, Tremper Longman III, a conservative Christian Bible scholar, writing in the series preface to a commentary on the Song states that "the Song of Songs is a passionate, sensuous love poem that reminds us that God is interested in more than just our brains and our spirits; he wants us to enjoy our bodies. It reminds us that we are not merely a soul encased in a body but [are] whole persons made in God's image."[66] And the introductory comments to "The Song of Songs" in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible* claims that perspectives such as Longman's are "to be welcomed by our various faith communities, since they affirm that the God who created us is concerned with our sexuality and romantic dimensions, that these are significant aspects of marriage, and that religious people can enjoy them without shame."[67] Such comments, of course, are made within canonical constraints or parameters to which Latter-day Saints do not feel bound (Articles of Faith 1:8).

Thus, although the Song is institutionally marginalized by the Church, it has proven to be a rich, long-term source of imagery for artists, theologians, and Bible believers, as well as for the imagery incorporated into D&C 5:14; 105:31; and 109:73 (all utilizing Song 6:10). In following the Lord's injunction to learn what we can about the world and people around us, past as well as present (see D&C 88:78–79, 118; 90:15; 93:53),[68] it is worth knowing a little bit about the Song and its unique status as ancient Israelite love poetry that according to Latter-day Saints has the unique status of being biblical but not inspired. RE

Notes

I began outlining this paper several years ago. The impetus to finish it came from my work on another paper: "Fair as the Moon and Clear as the Sun: The Song of Songs in the Latter-day Saint Religious Tradition," presented at the November 2012 national meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature. I thank my former student assistant Courtney Dotson for her assistance in gathering material for this paper, and my colleague Kent P. Jackson and my wife, Jane Allis-Pike, for suggestions to improve it.

1. I accept Joseph Smith's statement as theologically valid, and this position is expressed throughout the rest of this article. The Joseph Smith Translation statement is discussed below.

2. Given the size and nature of the Song of Solomon, I have my university students do a little background reading on it, and then we spend about ten to fifteen minutes discussing it in class.

3. This claim is easy to verify by examining, for example, current and past Sunday School (youth and adults), seminary, and institute manuals, as well as the *Ensign* magazine. All these are available at https://www.lds.org/manual?lang=eng and also https://www.lds.org/ensign?lang=eng .

4. Latter-day Saint treatments of the Song of Solomon are few and generally brief. See, for example, David Rolph Seely, "The Song of Solomon," in *1 Kings to Malachi*, ed. Kent P. Jackson, *Studies in Scripture*, vol. 4 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993), 467–70; Ellis T. Rasmussen, *A Latter-day Saint Commentary on the Old Testament* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993), 497–501; and Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Old Testament* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 281.

A very large number of non–Latter-day Saint commentaries on the Song of Songs have been published, including many in the past decade or two. These commentaries provide much greater detail than my summary introductory remarks here, so interested readers are advised to pursue these for further information. Some of the more recent commentaries include Duane A. Garrett, *Song of Songs* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004); J. Cheryl Exum, *Song of Songs* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005); Richard S. Hess, *Song of Songs* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005); Robert W. Jenson, *Song of Songs* (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 2005); and Anselm C. Hagedorn, ed., *Perspectives on the Song of Songs* (New York: de Gruyter, 2005). Additionally, I have consulted J. Cheryl Exum, "Song of Solomon" in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Books of the Bible*, ed. Michael D. Coogan, vol. 2 (New York: Oxford, 2011), 335–39; Marvin H. Pope, *Song of Songs, A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 7c (New York: Doubleday, 1977); Ronald E. Murphy, *A Commentary on the Book of Canticles or The Song of Songs,* Hermeneia Commentary, vol. 22 (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1990); Tremper Longman III, *Song of Songs*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001); and David M. Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible, A New Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford, 2011), 432–48.

5. The Song also occasionally includes comments to and by a group of women, who are several times referred to as "daughters of Jerusalem" (e.g., 1:5; 2:7; 5:8–9; 6:1), and one short passage presumably representing the comments of the female's brothers (8:8–9).

6. See, for example, Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 270, §14.5d.

7. The NET Bible Notes on Song 1:1 accessibly summarize the possibilities of how the Hebrew preposition *l-* in the phrase *lišlomoh*, literally "(belonging) to/for Solomon," can indicate possession or authorship, but also dedication to and topic (about). I agree with their assessment that the ancient intent here was most likely authorship, but that this is a traditional ascription, not proof of actual authorship. See further, for example, Michael D. Coogan, *The Old Testament, A Historical and Literary Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford, 2011), 487; Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 481, and Exum, "Song of Solomon," 335. Contrast the views of older commentators who assumed Solomonic authorship, such as Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments: The Text carefully printed from the most correct copies of the present Authorized Translation, including the Marginal Readings and Parallel Texts with A Commentary and Critical Notes*, "A New Edition with the Author's Final Corrections," vol. 3 (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1830), 841; and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Song of Solomon and*

Ecclesiastes, trans. M. G. Easton (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968; originally pub. 1875), 11, 111.

8. See, for example, Longman, *Song*, 16, who accepts both of these depictions (1:4, 1:7) as "figurative," providing a basis on which this literary creation was built, but not as "historical" connections. Coogan, as well as others, uses Song 8:11–12 as support against Solomonic authorship. Coogan, *The Old Testament*, 487.

9. https://www.lds.org/scriptures/bd/song-of-solomon?lang=eng&letter=s ; accessed October 18, 2013.

10. See for example, Exum, *Song of Songs*, 66–67, and Hess, *Song of Songs*, 17–19, 37 n 1. In support of a later dating, commentators often cite the relative pronoun *še-*, words whose etymologies are usually traced to Persian and Greek, and the names of spices. I agree with those commentators who ultimately view such elements as non-defining of the Song's compositional date, since they could merely represent a later reworking of an earlier composition.

11. *b. Baba Batra*, 15a. Mentioned, for example, by Rendsburg, "Song of Songs, book of," 652, and Christl M. Maier, "Song of Songs," *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freedman (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 1245.

12. Scott B. Noegel and Gary A. Rendsburg, *Solomon's Vineyard: Literary and Linguistic Studies in the Song of Songs* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 184. Their perspective on the Song's creation in northern Israel is based on their seeing "these Aramaic and M[ishnaic] H[ebrew] parallels not as signs of lateness but as indications of northernness . . . [with comments about Phoenician and Ugaritic]. . . . The totality of the evidence, as realized long ago by Driver, is that the Song of Songs was composed in the northern part of ancient Israel" (54; see 53–55). See, for example, Carr's challenge to this view in *Formation of the Hebrew Bible*, 439 n. 22.

13. As Roland Murphy rightly observed decades ago, "very little can be said with confidence about the authorship and date or social provenance of the Song." Murphy, *Commentary*, 5. See also Longman, *Song*, 18–19.

14. Coogan, *The Old Testament*, 487: "probably also an anthology of love poems, perhaps from several periods." See also Exum, *Song of Songs*, 33–37; Longman, *Song*, 19; and Jenson, *Song of Songs*, 3. Earlier authors, such as William Wright, writing in 1845, observed that "the learned are divided on the point whether the Canticles consist of one continued and connected poem, or of a number of detached songs or amorets." Wright, "Canticles," in *A Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature*, ed. John Kitto, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1845), 383. See similarly, Thomas Edward Brown, "Canticles," in the first edition of *A Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. William Smith (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1863), 383 (see also 269). Additionally, there is disagreement over the number of literary units in the Song. Collins notes that the suggested number of poetic songs in the Song "ranges from as few as six to more than thirty." *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 431 (see also, 480–81). See also Exum, *Song of Songs*, 37–41.

15. This same point can also be made about fifteen books in the Bible, thirteen of which are in the Old Testament, so by itself it is not too persuasive. See Scott H. Fahlring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews, *Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 2004).

16. Fahlring, Jackson, and Matthews, *Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible*, 785. Initial printings of the Latter-day Saint Bible Dictionary included this not-quite-literal version of this statement: "the JST manuscript contains the note that 'the Song of Solomon is not inspired scripture.'" However, this has been corrected in the current version. See, for example,

http://www.lds.org/scriptures/bd/song-of-solomon?lang=eng&letter=s, accessed September 12, 2013.

As an aside, I find it an interesting irony that, based on the canonical order in the English Bible, the "not inspired" Song of Songs is placed just before the book of Isaiah, whose writings were loved by the Book of Mormon prophet Nephi and praised by the resurrected Jesus (see respectively, 2 Nephi 25:5, "my soul delighteth in the words of Isaiah," and 3 Nephi 23:1, "great are the words of Isaiah").

17. See Fahlring, Jackson, and Matthews, *Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible*, 70–72, for the dating of the various portions of JST OT Manuscript 2.

18. In theory, the plural form could result from misspeaking or mishearing the traditional singular form, or from personal convictions of Joseph Smith, or from impressions from the Spirit. Common usage at the time, based on non–Latter-day Saint publications from the early 1800s, was to refer to the Song in the singular, "the Song of Solomon is." Note that many centuries earlier (about AD 240–50), Origen of Alexandria complained, "let us not overlook the further fact that some people write the title of this little book as Songs of Songs. That, however, is incorrect; it is called the Song of Songs in the singular, not the plural." Origen, *The Song of Songs Commentary and Homilies*, trans. and annot. R. P. Lawson (New York: Newman, 1957), 55.

19. See, for example, Seely, "The Song of Solomon," 468.

20. On the rabbinic notion, still challenging to understand, that sacred objects, including inspired scripture, defiled the hands of a person touching them, see Jodi Magness, *Stone and Dung, Oil and Spit: Jewish Daily Life in the Time of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 25–31, who provides discussion along with Talmudic and modern academic citations.

21. Jacob Neusner, *The Mishnah: A New Translation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1991).

22. A fuller quotation is "Blessed too is he who enters holy places, but far more blest the man who enters the holy of holies! . . . Blessed likewise, is he who understands songs and sings them . . . but much more blest is he who sings the Songs of Songs! And as the man who enters holy places still needs much to make him able to enter the holy of holies . . . so also is it hard to find a man competent to scale the heights of the Songs of Songs, even though he has traversed all the songs in Scripture." Origen, "The First Homily," in *The Song of Songs Commentary and Homilies*, 266. The careful reader will have noted the plural form "Songs of Songs." This is unusual in light of Origen's comment quoted above; see note 18. Other Church Fathers, including Hippolytus (ca. AD 170–236) similarly shared Origen's opinion about the Song's canonical status and allegorical representation. For an overview, see "Solomon, Song of," in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed., ed. F. L. Cross (New York: Oxford, 1997), 1517.

23. This point is so commonly made that I provide only two references here: Coogan, *The Old Testament*, 488 ("so erotic is the Song that from early in the Common era, Jewish and Christian commentators generally interpreted it allegorically"); and Exum, "Song of Solomon," 336. Note also that Adam Clarke in the early nineteenth century cited six different interpretations for the Song of Songs of a spiritual nature, each of which "has its powerful supporters." Clarke, *Commentary*, 3:842.

24. As Exum has stated, "whether the Song was included in the canon because it had been allegorized or was allegorized because it had been included in the canon has long been debated." She further claimed, "allegorization alone cannot have been the reason the Song was included, since the text must have already achieved a certain status—perhaps as national

religious literature—for anyone to have taken the trouble to develop an allegorical interpretation of it." Exum, "Song of Solomon," 336. On our lack of knowledge about how and why the Song was canonized, see also, for example, Murphy, *Commentary*, 5–6; and J. P. Fokkelman, who claims that because of the sexual nature of the Song, "interpreters decided to whitewash all offensive elements . . . by . . . allegorization. . . . [Jews and Christians] tried to sell this interpretive technique as a form of spiritualization." Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Poetry, An Introductory Guide*, trans. Ineke Smit (Loiusville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 190.

25. Crawford notes that "the presence of the *Song of Songs* and *Ecclesiastes* at Qumran would at least indicate their acceptability as reading matter during the Second Temple period." Sidnie White Crawford, "Five Scrolls," in *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. VanderKam (Oxford: New York, 2000), 295. For summary comments on the fragmentary remains of the manuscripts of the Song of Songs found at Qumran, see Crawford, 295, and Abegg, Flint, and Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible*, 612.

26. As true as this general statement is, Jenson points out, "there was no consensus [among commentators] about what the Song says about them [the man and woman / the Lord and his people] in any individual passage." Jenson, *Song of Songs*, 10. See also page 11. See similarly in older publications such as, for example, Adam Clarke, *Commentary*, 3:842; and Richard Watson, *A Biblical and Theological Dictionary: Explanatory of the History, Manners, and Customs of the Jews and Neighboring Nations*, "Revised by the American Editors" (New York: B. Waugh and T. Mason, 1832), 217–18.

Jenson is one modern commentator (2005) who has proposed that the Song did not originate as simply love poetry but originated with coding to invite hearers to think of divine love for humans. He asserts, "there seems to be no reason why such an Israelite poet should not have written these songs for that love [between the Lord and his people]." Jenson, *Song of Songs*, 7 (for the quote; Jenson discusses his suggestion on pages 5–8). Although it really is not proof of his position, Jenson does not see how else to explain that allegorization "was the unanimous answer of Jewish and Christian premodern exegesis—of the ancient rabbis and the later Jewish commentators, and the Fathers of the church and the medieval and Reformation commentators—that these poems belong in the canon."

27. William Whiston, *A Supplement to Mr. Whiston's Late Essay, towards Restoring the True Text of the Old Testament, Proving That the Canticles Is Not a Sacred Book of the Old Testament; Nor Was Originally Esteemed As Such Either by the Jewish Or the Christian Church* (London, 1723), 5. A century later, John Brown complained, "in vain Whiston, and others, upon scarcely the shadow of a ground, have denied its [the Song's] authenticity." "Song, or Hymn," in *A Dictionary of the Holy Bible* (London, 1824), 639.

28. Noyes, *A New Translation of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Canticles* (Boston: James Munroe, 1846), 123, 119.

29. Noyes, *A New Translation*, 121. See also the names provided by Thomas Brown, "Canticles," in Smith's *A Dictionary of the Bible*, 271–72.

30. Clarke, *Commentary*, 3:842. Because he thought that there was no *scriptural* support for an allegorical reading of the Song, Clarke further wrote, "I advise all young ministers to avoid preaching on Solomon's Song. . . . I repeat it, and I wish to be heard by young ministers, take the plainest texts when you attempt to convince men of sin." He further observed that "What eminent talents, precious time, great pains, and industry have been wasted" in an attempt to "explain the Canticles" in a way that Clarke saw as invalid (849).

31. For the possibility of Joseph Smith's exposure to, or at least proximity with a copy of, Clarke's Commentary in the late 1820s, see, for example, the comments by Ronald V. Huggins, "'Without a Cause' and 'Ships of Tarshish': A Possible Contemporary Source for Two Unexplained Readings from Joseph Smith," *Dialogue* 36, no. 1 (2003): 173. However, there are no specific reports of Joseph Smith consulting the commentary on the Song or any other issue, so no direct link can be established. References to Adam Clarke and his commentary in the *Times and Seasons* are too late for consideration with the status of the Song.

32. George R. Noyes, *A New Translation*, 122. See further pages 120–21, where Noyes claimed the allegorical view "would seem to be the most general opinion at the present day, if we may judge of the opinion of the Christian church by what is expressed in the popular commentaries." See also Thomas Brown's overview of the developing "literalist" movement in the 1700s into the 1800s, and of those who reasserted the "allegorical" approach ("it must not be supposed, however, that the supporters of the allegorical interpretation have been driven from the field") in "Canticles," in Smith's *A Dictionary of the Bible*, 270–72; quotation from 271b.

33. D&C 35:20; 42:56–59; and 76:15 all connect Joseph Smith's JST "new translation" with his prophetic calling. See also such later claims as Elder Dallin H. Oaks's statement that the JST "contains inspired revisions to Bible . . . there should be no doubt about the current status of the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible. It is a member of the royal family of scripture." "Scripture Reading, Revelation, and Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible," in *Plain and Precious Truths Restored: The Doctrinal and Historical Significance of the Joseph Smith Translation*, ed. Robert L. Millet and Robert J. Matthews (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995), 11, 13.

34. See, for example, Exum, "Song of Solomon," 335, and Michael V. Fox, *The Song of Songs and Ancient Egyptian Love Songs* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1985).

35. See Michael V. Fox, "Love Songs," in *The Context of Scripture*, ed. William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger, vol. 1 (New York: Brill, 1997), 125–30, for brief introductory comments and a sample of Egyptian texts, with annotations. Still the most extensive work on the Song of Songs and Egyptian love poetry is Fox's *The Song of Songs and Ancient Egyptian Love Songs* (1985). For comments on Mesopotamian love poetry and its relationship to the biblical Song, see Tawny L. Holm, "Ancient Near Eastern Literature: Genres and Forms," in *A Companion to the Ancient Near East*, ed. Daniel C. Snell (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 285–87. See also the review by Exum, *Song of Songs*, 47–63.

36. For example, Gary A. Rendsburg, "Song of Songs, Book of," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Jewish Religion*, ed. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky and Geoffrey Wigoder (Oxford: New York, 1997), 652 ("manifest secular character"). See also Exum, "Song of Songs," 336; and Jenson, *Song of Songs*, 2. While I understand this distancing effort, the word "secular" seems to me oddly out of character with the ancient Near Eastern world.

37. Michael V. Fox, "Papyrus Chester Beatty I (1.51)," in *The Context of Scripture*, 1:128–29 (text #1.51).

38. As observed for example in the NET Notes, Song 4:9 (note 13), "The appellatives 'my sister' and 'my brother' were both commonly used in ancient Near Eastern love literature as figurative descriptions of two lovers. For instance, in an Ugaritic poem when Anat tried to seduce Aqhat, she says, 'Hear, O hero Aqhat, you are my brother and I your sister' (Aqhat 18 i 24). In the Old Testament Apocrypha husband and wife are referred to several times as 'brother' and 'sister' (e.g., Add Esth 15:9; Tob 5:20; 7:16)."

39. Such descriptions, found in Song 4:1–7; 5:10–16; 6:4–7; and 7:1–7 (moving in this last passage in reverse order from foot to head), and which involve metaphorical analogies,

are sometimes compared with later Arabic love poetry known by the term *waṣf*. See, for example, comments by Hess, *Song of Songs*, 31, and Exum, *Song of Songs*, 20.

40. Of course, there are other minority views currently held on the original intent and context of the Song, but they are not the focus of this paper. See summary comments in, for example, Jenson, *Song of Songs*, 5; and see John J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 481. For an overview of the opinions of early Christian authors, see, for example, P. Meloni, "Song of Songs," in *Encyclopedia of the Early Church*, ed. Angelo Di Berardino, trans. Adrian Walford (New York: Oxford, 1992), 786–87.

41. In addition to what follows in this section, it is interesting to consider that the name of a city Latter-day Saints established on a bend of the Mississippi River is "Nauvoo," which is a transliteration of the plural form of a rare Hebrew verb form, *na'vu*, that means, "to be pleasing, delightful." This particular form occurs only twice in the Hebrew Bible: Isaiah 52:7 and Song of Songs 1:10, which reads, "Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments" (plus, there is a related adjective *na'veh*, which means "lovely, delightful"). Joseph Smith and some other early Mormon leaders began to study Hebrew in Kirtland, Ohio, in late 1835. Professor Joshua Seixas was hired to teach biblical Hebrew in Kirtland from January 6 to March 29, 1836. They used Seixas's *A Manual Hebrew Grammar for the Use of Beginners*, 2nd ed. (Andover, MA: Gould and Newman, 1834). In 1839, Nauvoo was named. Although it cannot be proved, this interesting datum provides one more potential link between Joseph Smith and the Song of Solomon. I thank my colleague Matthew Grey for reminding me of this fact.

42. In this article I have used the "General-Purpose Style" of transliterating Hebrew words, as found in *The SBL Handbook of Style*, ed. Patrick H. Alexander et al. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 28, §5.1.2.

43. Additionally, it is interesting to note that the Hebrew words translated "moon" and "sun" are not the usual Hebrew words for these celestial bodies, but descriptors. The word *lebanah*, "white one," represents the moon in this verse, and *hemmah*, "hot one," denotes the sun. These two words also appear together in a different context in poetic passages in Isaiah 24:23; 30:26. Presumably, these terms occur in the Isaiah and Song passages to more fully evoke the aspects of whiteness, brightness, and heat that the moon and sun represent, respectively.

44. Murphy, *Song of Songs*, 178. There is some debate on who actually speaks the boast of the female's beauty in 6:10. Most commentators think the group of women say this, while a few suggest it is the man who makes this claim.

45. A major challenge, which must be dealt with elsewhere, is the meaning or intent of the last phrase of Song 6:10, "terrible as an army with banners." How does this relate to the church of God coming out of darkness to light? Is the church of God as referenced in this phrase supposed to be "terrible or fearsome"? Is it supposed to be "like an army [charging forth] with banners"? Some earlier non–Latter-day Saint commentators have argued that it is, at least in regards to "heretics" and rebellious people. See, for example, Richard F. Littledale, *A Commentary on the Song of Songs* (New York: Pott and Amery, 1849), 273.

46. See, for example, Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl, who suggest with no real basis: "this beautiful expression [Song 6:10], it is reasonable to suppose, is not original with this uninspired book and, we may well suppose, was a current expression in ancient times." They go on to say, however, that whatever its source, there "is no reason why the Lord could not use it in a revelation given to the Church in our own day." *The Doctrine and Covenants Containing Revelations Given to Joseph Smith Jr., the Prophet, with an Introduction and Historical and Exegetical Notes*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978, reprint of 1955 2nd ed.; originally published in 1919 as *A Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants*),

27–28. See also Joseph F. McConkie, who commented that the use Song 6:10 in the Doctrine and Covenants suggests the "possibility" that it comes from "a scriptural source now lost to us." "Joseph Smith and the Poetic Writings," in *The Joseph Smith Translation: The Restoration of Plain and Precious Truths*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Robert L. Millet (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 1985), 106. Also, Monte Nyman wrote in reference to D&C 5:14 that "the book [Song of Songs] may be quoting from other inspired writings which are now lost." Nyman, *More Precious Than Gold*, 100. See also Monte S. Nyman, *It Came from God: Commentary on The Doctrine and Covenants*, vol. 2 (Orem, UT: Granite, 2009), 345. To be fair, McConkie found this thought expressed as a possibility, albeit in reference to the content of verse 10 and its relation to the rest of Song 6 (not in relation to the Doctrine and Covenants) in Theophile J. Meek, "Song of Songs," in *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 5 (New York: Abingdon, 1956), 133. And Nyman also wrote, "there may be parts of it [the Song] which are inspired." But this suggestion is challenging in its own right, at least because the JST claim is pronounced on the Song as a whole, not on parts of it. Interestingly, neither McConkie nor Nyman referenced the statement by Smith and Sjodahl.

47. This point, of course, is one that is made by those who have justified the allegorical interpretation of the Song. See for example, John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament* (Bristol: William Pine, 1765; reprinted Salem, OH: Schmul, 1975), 3:1926.

48. Joseph Smith's Journal, December 1842–June 1844; Book 1, 21 December 1842–10 March 1843, p. 208, as found at http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/journal-december-1842-june-1844-book-1-21-december-1842-10-march-1843?dm=image-and-text&zm=zoom-inner&tm=expanded&p=216&s=undefined&sm=none, accessed November 8, 2013. Also found in Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, 1980), 166.

49. See the Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book, 31 August 1842, p. 81, at http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/nauvoo-relief-society-minute-book?p=78, accessed May 14, 2013. Also found in Ehat and Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, 130. Cited in Galbraith, ed., *The Scripture Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993), 258 (hereafter, *STPJS*).

50. Latter-day Saint Church leader Heber C. Kimball observed in a sermon in 1861, "You know the old proverb says that it is the little foxes that spoil the vines." *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 9, 40. This suggests the possibility of Joseph Smith's use of this expression from Song 2 as being dependent on popular usage in his day. Likewise, Brigham Young employs the "little foxes" expression in a sermon preserved in *Journal of Discourses*, 8:318.

Perhaps language from the Song of Songs lies behind two other expressions attributed to Joseph Smith: (1) Richard C. Galbraith (*STPJS*, 149, n. 13) suggests connecting Joseph Smith's statement "that every species of wickedness and cruelty practiced upon us will only tend to bind our hearts together and seal them together in love" with Song 8:6, which in the KJV reads, "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death." (2) Galbraith (*STPJS*, 153 n. 4) suggests connecting Joseph Smith's statement "those who have not been enclosed in the walls of a Prison without cause or provocation can have but little idea how sweet the voice of a friend is" with Song 2:14, which in the KJV reads, "O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." These statements from Joseph Smith occur, respectively, in (1) a letter written from Liberty Jail, 20 March 1842; found in History, 1838–1856, volume C-1, p. 81, and available at: http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/

history-1838-1856-volume-c-1-2-november-1838-31-july-1842?p=81 [accessed March 5, 2014], and (2) the same letter written from Liberty Jail; found in History, 1838–1856, volume C-1, p. 84, and available at: http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/history-1838-1856-volume-c-1-2-november-1838-31-july-1842?locale=eng&p=84 [accessed March 5, 2014].

51. Henry D. Taylor, "Gratitude," found at http://scriptures.byu.edu, accessed May 14, 2013. Similarly, many different modern Church leaders have quoted non-scriptural poetry or other literature to help illustrate or clarify points they were emphasizing in their remarks.

52. Available at https://www.lds.org/manual/teaching-seminary-preservice-readings-religion-370-471-and-475/the-bible-a-sealed-book?lang=eng&query=Song+of+Solomon; accessed October 18, 2013. Although presumably representing his own opinion, at the time of his remarks Elder McConkie was one of the Twelve Latter-day Saint Apostles. The full sentence in which his comment was made is "Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Lamentations are interesting books; Job is for people who like the book of Job; and the Song of Solomon is biblical trash—it is not inspired writing," spoken in the context of a paragraph in which he overviewed the books of the Old Testament, commenting on their varying worth.

53. A further additional example of concern about the Song was expressed to me in personal communication by someone in relation to 3:1–3, in which the young female relates that her unrealized desire for her male companion to join her results in her roaming the city at night looking for him. While I agree that this teaches an undesirable model for youth, there are certainly more challenging and troublesome passages elsewhere in our canonical Old Testament.

54. Noyes, *A New Translation*, 125. William Wright, quoting Beza, noted that Castellio of Geneva (1544) saw the Song as "impure and obscene," once he denied the allegorical view of it. Wright, "Canticles," 387.

55. Wesley, *Explanatory Notes*, 3:1927.

56. Watson, *A Biblical and Theological Dictionary*, 218. See, similarly, Brown's claim that "to such as have experienced much fellowship with Christ, and read it [the Song] with a heavenly and spiritual temper of mind, it will be the savour of life unto life." John Brown, *A Dictionary of the Holy Bible*, 639–40.

57. Rendsburg, "Song of Songs, Book of," 652.

58. For a brief overview of the Song in art and other media, see J. Cheryl Exum, "Song of Solomon," 2:338–39.

59. Rasmussen, *A Latter-day Saint Commentary on the Old Testament*, 497.

60. The four phrases quoted here from the Song are taken from the English Standard Version translation.

61. Song 2:11–12 was included by Henry D. Taylor in an April 1959 sermon on gratitude, in which he commented on the beauty of nature in the springtime. Henry D. Taylor, "Gratitude," found at http://scriptures.byu.edu, accessed May 14, 2013.

62. See, for example, Joseph Smith's use of this expression, as recorded in the Nauvoo Relief Society Minute Book, 31 August 1842, p. 81, at http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/nauvoo-relief-society-minute-book?p=78, accessed May 14, 2013. See also Heber C. Kimball's claim in a sermon in 1861: "You know the old proverb says that it is the little foxes that spoil the vines." *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 9, 40.

63. There are, obviously, literary and graphic depictions that cross the line between artistic and pornographic. Additionally, I am always perplexed and distressed when I hear what I consider to be extreme action in admittedly anecdotal incidents about a few mission presidents who have instructed missionaries to either staple together or rip out of their Bibles the pages containing the Song of Songs/Solomon (personal and written communications, in my possession). Ironically, there are more explicit things than the Song in the Bible itself (e.g., Gen 19, including verses 30–38), as well as what can be found almost instantaneously on the World Wide Web and in many public places.

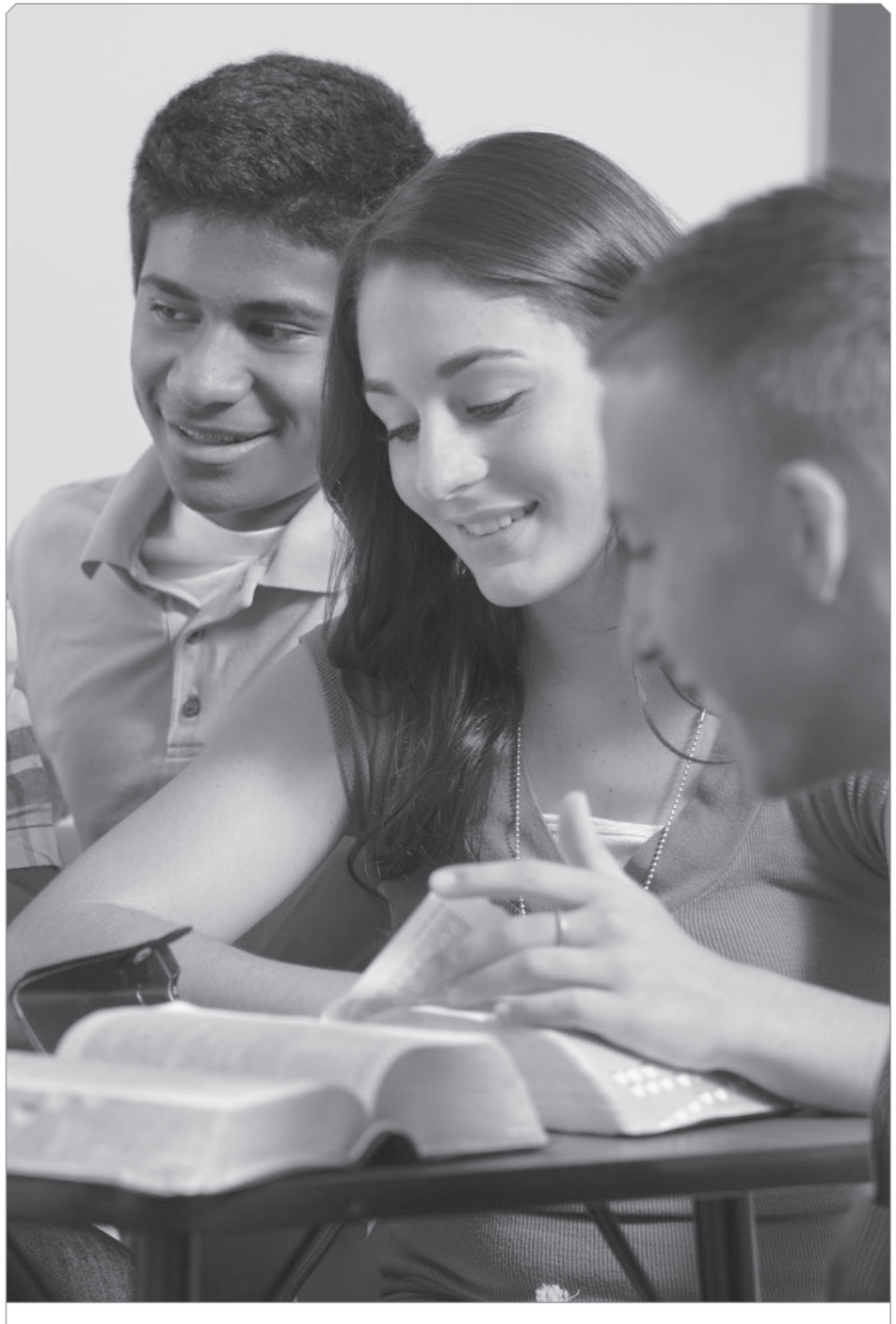
64. Origen, *The Song of Songs Commentary and Homilies*, 23. Note, however, that Origen was a severe ascetic.

65. Seely, "The Song of Solomon," 470.

66. Longman, in Hess, *Song of Songs*, 8. Likewise, Hess, another conservative Christian Bible scholar, writes in his own preface to his commentary, *Song of Songs*, 11, "In a fallen world in which the first couple was expelled from the garden of Eden, this song [the Song of Songs] offers the hope that couples today may find something of that garden again and may see in their love that which is beautiful and good, from the good God."

67. Abegg, Flint, and Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible*, 611. Of course, there is no clear indication in the Song that the lovers are actually married; they certainly do not live together. However, Abegg, Flint, and Ulrich appear to be applying the theme(s) of the Song to married couples, as premodern commentators had done. See also, for example, Jenson, *Song of Songs*, 13–14.

68. I realize that some may object to me citing D&C 88:118 or 90:15 here, since they may think the Song does not qualify as among the "best books" or "good books," but I am thinking in the broader perspective of these D&C passages.



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Active learning assists the learner to engage the course materials through reading, writing, talking, listening, and reflecting.

The Enhanced Lecture: An Effective Classroom Model

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Learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much just by sitting in class listening to teachers, memorizing prepackaged assignments, and spitting out answers. They must talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences, apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves.[1]

"The teacher who is indeed wise does not bid you to enter the house of his wisdom but rather leads you to the threshold of your mind."[2] Leading students to discover, evaluate, reflect, and act on new information and knowledge is one of the challenges and rewards of teaching, whether teaching at a university, in the seminary or institute classroom, or in Sunday classes. Teaching is especially rewarding when teachers sense they are assisting and guiding students in the learning process. Despite the joy of teaching, however, there are (as every teacher recognizes) challenges and frustrations.

Learning and Student Passivity

One of the frustrations for some teachers is the lack of student engagement and motivation in the learning process. Another word to describe this challenge is "passivity." Passive learning occurs when "students take on the role of receptacles of knowledge; that is, they do not directly participate in the learning process."[3] Granted, there are students who appear disengaged, but are, in fact, carefully attending to the material presented in class. Even so, there are too many students struggling to maintain focused attention during traditional classroom lecturing.

Passivity among students is not surprising, given the number of teachers who rely on the classic "sage on the stage"[4] lecture method for most, if not all of the class. For example, researchers surveying faculty at twenty-four colleges found that 83 percent of the teachers used lecturing as their primary method of instruction. Further, an extensive survey of university professors in the US found that 89 percent of the physical scientists, 81 percent of social scientists, and 61 percent of the humanities faculty used the lecture method as their primary method of teaching. Despite the lower percentage in the humanities, 81 percent of the art historians and 90 percent of the philosophy teachers still lectured for the majority of class time.[5] In short, lecturing continues to be widely used among college professors and probably at other educational levels as well, and for good reasons.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Lecturing

Lecturing can be effective, especially in the hands of a well-prepared, enthusiastic instructor. An organized and thoughtful lecture allows teachers to control the amount of information students receive and to deliver large amounts of information in short spans of time, deciding in advance which information is most pertinent to student learning. Lecturing also allows teachers to present information in a manner not readily available to students that presents little, if any, emotional risks to students and appeals to those who learn by listening.[6] If gospel teachers are prepared, lecturing helps assure that students will be introduced to new ideas and correct doctrines from someone who understands the implications of the concepts and can carefully guide students into more nuanced views of the scriptures.

While lecturing has its upsides, there are weaknesses to this time-honored approach. The most obvious downside to lecturing is the risk of student disengagement during the lecture period. Students who quietly sit through a

fifty-minute (or longer) teacher-centered lecture may find it challenging to remain attentive and involved. For instance, one study showed that students in a lecture-based classroom were not attentive about 40 percent of the time,[7] while another study found that students retain 70 percent of the material in the first ten minutes of the lecture, but only 20 percent in the last ten minutes.[8] Similar research found that students readily attended to the lecture material being presented during the first five minutes. However, within ten to twenty minutes into the lecture students experienced boredom and found it difficult to remain attentive. This state continued until the end of the lecture when students were reenergized with the knowledge that the lecture would soon end.[9] As stated earlier, while lecturing may give the instructor more control over the depth and breadth of what is taught, research has demonstrated that lecturing may also lead to student passivity and limited retention and recall of knowledge.[10] Perhaps the greatest weakness to lecturing is the possibility that students will hear the presentation without giving much thought or reflection to what is presented.

In relation to teaching scripture, lecturing may increase the student viewpoint that religious education is simply the acquisition of data—the who, where, and what of the scriptures—without any relevance to the student's life. This type of learning may become meaningless, since it does not engage the student in an affirmation of the scriptural principles. Among highly motivated students, lecturing may produce gospel learners who can fluidly recite scriptural facts and trivia, but it may also produce students who lack emotional or spiritual connection to those facts.

Consider Leon Solomon and Gertrude Stein's late-twentieth-century research, in which they concluded that both reading and writing could be done automatically, with little thought on the part of the learner. That is, subjects were able to write English words while otherwise engaged in reading an interesting story. With practice, these subjects were also able to take notes automatically while reading. Afterward, they were unable to recall what they had written, even though they were sure they had written something.[11] Similarly, some students may become "learning automatons" as they listen to their instructor, take notes, or read from a text (such as the scriptures), but they are giving little thought to any of it, and in the end, cannot remember—or worse, even care about—much of what was presented.

What is needed then, to assist students in giving more "cognitive investment"[12] or physical and psychological energy[13] to the material presented to

students? What will help them to create that emotional or spiritual connection to the material presented to them in a gospel setting?

A recommended solution would be to insert several short, active learning exercises into the lecture to "promote self-reflection, leading to more integrated, personally meaningful learning."[14] While active learning is not a new methodology, for some educators it remains a catchphrase lacking concrete, applicable ways to employ it in the classroom, or it is viewed as a chaotic classroom full of student novices sharing meaningless comments, with the teacher acting as an upbeat educational cheerleader.

For those teaching gospel principles professionally or in a volunteer capacity, Church leaders have discussed the importance of students becoming faithful "agents" in the learning process,[15] with Seminaries and Institutes as well as the *Come, Follow Me* Sunday School curriculum encouraging the use of active participation methods in the classroom.[16]

Active Learning and the Modified Lecture

Active learning is traditionally defined as in-class activities that "involve students doing things and thinking about the things they are doing."[17] Other definitions of active learning include activities that assist the learner to engage the course materials through "reading, writing, talking, listening, and reflecting, . . . which stands in contrast to standard modes of instruction in which teachers do most of the talking and students are passive."[18] In a broader sense, active learning can be anything the students do during class time other than passive listening.[19]

Active learning strategies provide students with opportunities to think about the material presented to them and assess what is meaningful and applicable to their life experiences or to their existing knowledge. More to the point, since learning is not a "spectator sport," students need the opportunity to discuss, reflect, question, and write about the materials presented to them.[20] Consequently, short, active learning exercises inserted during the lecture will provide students with opportunities to engage with the material in a more personal and meaningful way. These activities create "the modified or enhanced lecture," which is defined as "a series of short mini-lectures punctuated by specific active learning events designed to meet class objectives," involving "two to three pauses during the lecture to allow students to compare notes or ask questions."[21] This teaching method retains the benefits of lecturing, while incorporating learning strategies that maximize the effectiveness of increased student participation. There are numerous lecture-enhancing strategies available to teachers who are willing to implement them.

The Benefits of Active Learning

Using a few of these "enhanced lecture activities" during a fifty-minute class will not consume a great deal of time; it may, however, reduce the pace and amount of information normally covered during a teacher-centered lecture. On the upside, giving students an opportunity to reflect and think about the material through writing a short one- to two-minute response paper, reviewing a concept in small groups, or quizzing a person seated next to them about information discussed in class will likely enhance their understanding and retention of the material in ways an additional five to ten minutes of lecturing cannot. The act of reflecting alone or in small discussion groups encourages students to find meaning to new information. Without the opportunity for reflection, students may learn something, but the learning may not have much significance for them.[22] In addition, using these learning activities shifts some of the responsibility for learning from the teacher to the students, provides the students with increased control over what they see as important to learn, and sprinkles the lesson with a change of pace that is helpful in reducing boredom and passivity.

Besides these benefits, there are other rewards to integrating short, active learning strategies into the lesson plan. For example, researchers found a positive (and statistically significant) relationship between active learning and students' perceptions of their school's commitment to their well-being. In other words, short, active learning exercises positively influenced the students' belief about how much their school was committed to and concerned with their educational success.[23] Further, the use of active learning practices exerts a positive influence on the students' commitment to their institution and their intent to return to that institution (in the case of college students).[24] That is, instructors who take the time to plan and implement activities designed to involve students in the learning process may be perceived as teachers (and also representatives of their institution) who are committed to their students' learning.

Finally, active learning has been found to have a positive influence on student social integration.[25] Consider the benefits of encouraging sociality through pairing students for short periods of time in order to have them discuss a concept, compare notes, quiz each other, or solve a problem. Having

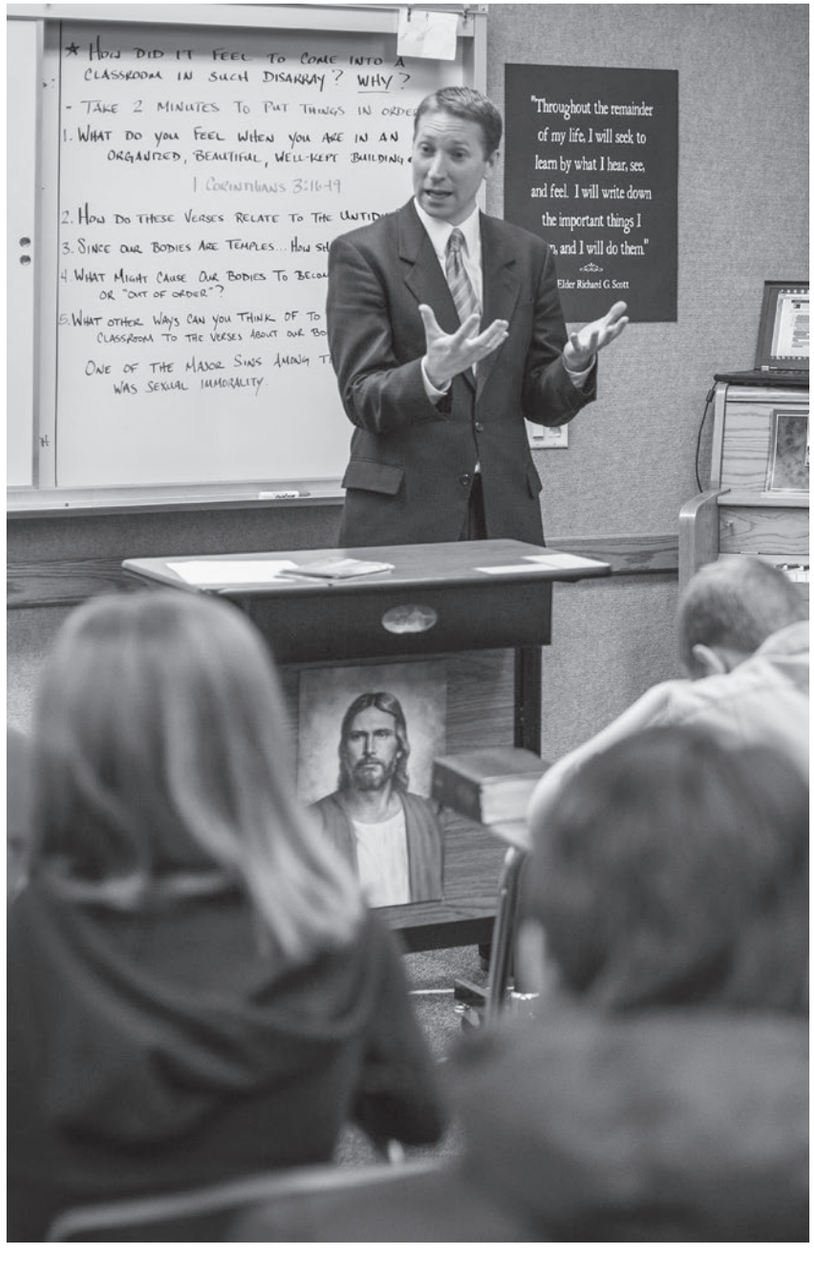
students work in small groups in which they rely on each other to complete an assignment is an excellent way to capitalize on their social needs. In this social setting, engagement in the learning process is greatly enhanced, since it is done with their peers.[26]

Concerns about Active Learning Methods

Naturally, some teachers have concerns about using active learning in their classrooms. These include worries about limited class time ("How can I use active learning strategies when I have barely enough time to make it through the material I need to cover?"), increased preparation time, the difficulty of using active learning in large or small classes, the challenge of finding and using a variety of active learning strategies, the risk that students will not participate or will waste time during paired or small group activities, the increased risk of incorrect viewpoints being shared and validated, and the belief that active learning is an alternative to, rather than an enhancement of, lecturing.[27]

These concerns, however, may reflect the results of methods which are poorly planned, or when active learning is used as an end rather than as the means to an end. Hopefully, these concerns will not discourage teachers from using this methodology in their classes. For example, do large or small classes pose logistical challenges for active learning? Certainly—dividing students into small groups in large classes requires more time and will likely be more difficult to monitor. However, pairing students in a seminary class in order to search a scripture block, discuss an idea, or collaborate on a two-minute paper will work efficiently in any class size. Although it is possible that some students will waste time when paired with another student, teacher engagement will help most, if not all, paired groups to stay on task, complete the assignment, and enjoy a worthwhile experience.

An additional concern relates to teachers who abandon active learning methods after exploratory efforts. While there are benefits with using the enhanced lecture, those benefits may not be immediate and may not come without student opposition, since some students have become dependent on their teachers for their learning. That is, they expect their instructor to tell them what is important to know and why it is important to know it. As a result, some students may resist, complain, become sullen, or act out[28] when given increased intellectual autonomy and responsibility for their own education through active learning.[29] During times of student pushback, persistence



Teachers can create a vision for the class—explaining to students why they are using active learning methods, discussing the benefits, and using General Authority statements supporting an enhanced learning environment.

is critical, since students will adjust to the opportunities and benefits these learning exercises provide them and will see them as highly beneficial. Teachers in a religious education setting can assist with this transition by creating a vision for the class—explaining to students why they are using active learning methods, discussing the benefits of that type of learning, and using General Authority statements supporting active participator learning.

Having discussed the rationale for using the enhanced lecture in religious education, the remainder of this paper will offer a number of strategies recommended by the authors, other teachers, and learning experts.[30] Most of these activities can be done in two or three minutes during planned pauses in the lecture. Although many of these activities may seem to fit better in a graded-class environment such as seminary, institute, or a Church university, students in Sunday classes can receive similar benefits as well. In fact, some activities may have even greater results in Sunday class settings because they encourage students to think about the material in new ways, employing behaviors sometimes relegated exclusively to a graded-class setting.

The following learning activities are those that the authors have used in their seminary and institute classes and in religion classes at Brigham Young University. They are recommended since they have proven to assist students in becoming more responsible for their own learning and more actively engaged in the learning process. In short, these activities should be successful in most class settings.

The Enhanced Lecture: Small Group Work

Grouping students into pairs or larger groups allows them to work collaboratively on a problem, share their views on a topic, and listen to others' ideas, opinions, and perspectives. Pairing also encourages the less-involved students to participate in an environment seen as less threatening while also encouraging students to be more responsible for their own learning.[31]

Pair and Share

In this pairing activity, the teacher poses a question or a problem needing a solution or asks students to think about the most important concept or idea they have learned. After a short time for reflection, students divide into groups of two or three in order to share their ideas with each other. After one or two minutes of discussion, a few of the groups are invited to share their ideas with the class.[32] In a religious education setting, these pairing opportunities can be very helpful in encouraging students to share thoughts about personal application, viewpoints, experiences, or feelings about the concept being discussed. They can also provide time to reason through an idea or doctrine or respond to a scenario requiring application of a gospel principle. Lastly, one of the great benefits of pair and share activities is that every person in the classroom has the opportunity to share their thoughts in a setting that is less intimidating than speaking in front of the entire class. Pairing can take place at the beginning of class, midway through the lecture, or at the end of class.

Collaborative Learning Groups

Similar to the pair-and-share method, students divide into larger groups of three or four and work cooperatively on a task. For example, the teacher may present a problem or dilemma that requires critical thinking in order to arrive at a solution. Through small group work, the students reach an agreement on a "best solution" to the problem/dilemma. Each group presents their solutions to the class during a brief sharing time.[33]

This activity also works well with an assigned reading task. For instance, after having the learning groups read a specific scripture block (all or part), have them answer questions such as "What does the author want you to know or feel?" "Why do you suppose the author wrote this?" or "What are the key doctrines found in this scripture block, and why are they important?"

Students may appoint a group member to write their responses on a single sheet of paper that is submitted at the end of class or is used by a group spokesman during class sharing time. This three- to five-minute activity gives students an opportunity for increased participation, mindful thinking of the material, and an opportunity for students to be both teacher and learner.

Thirty-Second Sharing

This activity is also similar to the pair-and-share activity described above, and is very effective when used as one of the lecture pauses.[34] At any time in the lecture, the teacher may instruct each student to turn to the person seated next to him or her and share one idea, concept, or fact he or she has learned up to that point in the lecture. This one-minute activity (thirty seconds for each student to share) is effective in encouraging attention and involvement. It is also important to call on a few of the groups to share their ideas with the rest of the class, since this act of sharing will alert students that the instructor values the comments made during the sharing activity.

Exam Questions

Surprisingly, some students enjoy creating questions for exams and quizzes. Divide students into small groups of two or three and ask them to construct one or two multiple choice, true-false, or essay exam questions based on the lecture material for the day, along with the answers.[35] The questions could be used in a graded or nongraded quiz at the end of class or at the beginning of the next class, while the essay questions could be used as topics for a short writing assignment.

Guided Lectures with Feedback

Guided lectures help students to improve listening and note-taking skills and to apply the lecture material. After explaining the objectives of the presentation, students are instructed to lay their pencils down and listen attentively to the material presented to them in a ten- to fifteen-minute lecture from the scripture block or the topic at hand. Students are encouraged to identify and remember the most important concepts or ideas, as well as any supporting information. At the conclusion of the lecture, students are given five minutes to write down all they can remember from the presentation. Following the five minutes of note writing, students meet in discussion groups of two or three students to compare, refine their notes, and fill in missing information provided by the other group members. During the group discussions, the instructor may want to move around the classroom to answer questions and assess how students are responding to the activity. An optional activity could also include an open-note quiz at the beginning of the next class, with questions based on the lecture materials the students have captured through this activity.[36]

Notable Quotes

After posting a thought-provoking quotation on the blackboard or on a PowerPoint slide, students are given thirty seconds for reflection (How do you feel about the quote? What does the quote mean to you? Do you agree or disagree with the quote? Why or why not?). After the pause time, students meet in small groups to discuss their feelings or insights. At the conclusion of the group discussion, the instructor may call on a few students to share their thinking or have each student submit a short one or two paragraph summary of their reactions to the quotation.[37] Students can engage in a similar activity by responding to artwork, which portrays a scriptural story. Students could be asked to respond to the following questions: "How do you feel about the artwork?" "What was the artist trying to show or emphasize, or what emotions or lessons does the artwork convey?" and "What are elements from the scriptural story that you see accurately reflected in the artwork?"

Quizzing One Another

This simple activity can be done at any time in the lecture. Divide students into pairs and request they each take thirty seconds to test one another on the material just presented to them. This may involve students asking each other questions about the material or having each student explain to the other what they learned.[38]

Breaking It Down

After students are divided into groups of three, assign each group one or more verses from the scripture block to be covered for the day. Depending on the size of the class and the scripture block, the teacher may want to assign two or three of the groups the same verse. Instruct each group to highlight the most important words or phrases in their verse and discuss possible meanings. Groups could also discuss what they see as the overall meaning to their passage of scripture. At the end of the discussion time, ask the groups to briefly share their insights with the class.[39]

Rehearsal Pairs

This is an excellent exercise to rehearse a concept or idea. After creating pairs, assign one student to be the explainer or demonstrator and another student to be the checker. The explainer/demonstrator explains the concept, idea, or demonstrates how to perform the skill, while the checker verifies the accuracy of the explanation or the performance of the skill. The partners then reverse roles and repeat the activity using the same topic/skill or are given a new topic to explain or a new skill to demonstrate.[40]

The Enhanced Lecture: Written Work

In examining the link between student engagement and writing, one scholar noted, "the relationship between the amount of writing for a course and students' level of engagement—whether engagement is measured by time spent on the course, or the intellectual challenge it presents, or students' level of interest in it—is stronger than the relationship between students' engagement

and any other course characteristic."[41] When students are given time to write about the course content, they have opportunities to reflect, assess, and think about the material from their own unique perspectives. In other words, learning becomes more personalized and engagement with the course material increases significantly.

Video Clips

Short video clips are a good way to supplement, reinforce, or enliven the lecture material. Unfortunately, this visual activity may also promote passivity unless students are given an opportunity to evaluate the video material through discussion or a short writing assignment, in which they answer questions such as "What did you learn from the video?" "What were the main points of the video?" or "Did you agree or disagree with the material presented to you in the video clip? Why or why not?"[42]

Reflection Papers

Sometimes called a "personal reaction paper," this activity invites students to engage in writing that is more exploratory, uncertain, and personal. It encourages students to look for connections between the lecture material or scripture-block and their personal life. Reflection papers invite the writer to "speak back . . . in a musing, questioning and probing way."[43] Reflection papers can be assigned as homework or can be done at any point in the class presentation. For instance, during one of the planned pauses in the lecture, assign students to write about their feelings on a specific topic or something discussed or read about in class. Reflection papers during the short, planned pauses will typically be only one to two paragraphs in length.

Reading Journals

A reading journal requires students to write regular entries each time they complete a reading assignment or attend a class presentation. This type of activity encourages students to reflect and think about their learning experiences.[44] This activity also works well in religious education classes where students write about their feelings, insights, or reactions to an assigned scripture block. The reading journal encourages students to answer questions like "How does the information in this scripture block apply to me?" "What are the key doctrines in this reading?" or "What do I understand or not understand from this reading?" The entries can also include observations, feelings, questions, impressions, or insights. Student journals should be checked periodically to encourage consistent writing and discourage meaningless "catch-up" entries. In a Sunday class environment, time can be given at the beginning of class for students to share something from their entries in a small group setting or to use their entries to ask questions or explain concepts to the class.

Summarize It

This simple exercise can be done at any pause in the lecture and requires students to summarize in a numbered list or in bullet points what they have learned in the lecture. At the conclusion of this writing exercise, the instructor randomly calls on students to share portions of their lists or asks all to submit their list as a graded or nongraded assignment.[45] The value of this short exercise is to move the students from passive listener to active participant.

"I Was Surprised"

At the conclusion of class, ask students to complete the following statement in a short written exercise: "I was surprised . . ." or "I wonder about . . .?" or "I did not know . . ." This activity encourages students to think about material that surprised them or material that motivated new insights or new questions.[46]

The Muddiest Point

During one of the lecture pauses or at the end of class, ask students to write down what they understood from the class presentation, and whether there were any "muddy points" they were confused about or couldn't understand. Have students submit their papers in order for the instructor to identify areas of confusion and needed clarification.[47]

Other Enhanced Lecture Strategies

Note Pauses

After fifteen to eighteen minutes of lecturing or presentation, pause for one or two minutes to let students review and compare their notes with someone seated next to them. This short exercise allows students to refine their notes, while also encouraging them to think and reflect about the material. These pauses also break up the class period into shorter chunks of time, while providing a short break for the instructor. The note pauses, or any of the other

small group exercises, are critical for maintaining interest and engagement.[48] From the author's standpoint, this is a very worthwhile and effective learning exercise.

Clarification Pauses

After teaching or explaining a concept or idea in the lecture, stop for a few moments to let students think about the concept or idea, then ask if anyone needs to have the information clarified. While some students are hesitant to ask for clarification, there are others who are not and will provide help in the class as they ask for clarification.[49]

Conclusion

It is no surprise that students learn in a variety of ways. Some are visual learners who enjoy videos, whiteboard notes, images, and PowerPoints, while other students are auditory learners, who favor listening to a teacher or to other students as they present material. Regardless of learning style, there is a place for short, well-planned active learning exercises during pauses in the traditional lecture. Consistently using these activities will provide students with opportunities to assess, reflect, engage, and construct meaning for the material presented to them.

As professional educators, we have tried to shift from traditional lecturing and teacher-centered approaches to a style of teaching that makes room for short, student-centered activities during timed pauses in the lecture, in order to help students engage the course material in a more reflective and thoughtful way. As we have done so, we have not abandoned the positive benefits of the lecture method, nor have we found it necessary to give students the majority of class time. Instead, we have found that students benefit from brief, mid-lecture learning activities and that these benefits are reflected in student comments and feedback. There are times when learning activities work extremely well and other times when they do not. As educators continue to experiment and refine these activities, the successes become more frequent, and the time spent on these short activities becomes more effective. Additionally, as we have planned and integrated these activities into our methodology, we have experienced increased enjoyment and satisfaction with our teaching and interactions with our students.

The following statement serves as an appropriate summary of the benefits of active learning in the classroom: "What I hear, I forget. What I hear and see, I remember a little. What I hear, see, and ask questions about or discuss with someone else, I begin to understand. What I hear, see, discuss, and do, I acquire knowledge and skill. What I teach to another, I master."[50] RE

Notes

1. Diane Stark, "Professional Development Module on Active Learning," http://www.texascollaborative.org/activelearning.htm.

2. Khalil Gibran, "Khalil Gibran Quotes," http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/k/kahlilgibr108029.html.

3. Charles Bonwell and James Eison, *Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom*, in ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report no. 1 (Washington, DC: George Washington University, School of Education and Human Development, 1991), 1.

4. John Bean, *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom* (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), 149.

5. Bonwell and Eison, *Active Learning*, 3.

6. Tracey Sutherland and Charles Bonwell, *Using Active Learning in College Classes: A Range of Options for Faculty* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996), 32.

7. Melvin Silberman, *Active Learning: 101 Strategies to Teach Any Subject* (Needham, MA: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 2.

8. Wilbert McKeachie and Marilla Svinicki, *Teaching Tips: A Guidebook for the Beginning College Teacher* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2011), 66-70.

9. Jon Penner, *Why Many College Teachers Cannot Lecture* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1984), 126-31.

10. McKeachie and Svinicki, *McKeachie's Teaching Tips*, 58–59.

11. Elizabeth Spelke, William Hirst, and Ulric Neisser, "Skills of Divided Attention," *Cognition* 4 (1976): 215–30.

12. Nick Zepke and Linda Leach, *Active Learning in Higher Education: Improving Student Engagement: Ten Proposals for Action* (Palmerstown, New Zealand: School of Educational Studies, Massey University, 2010), http://alh.sagepub.com.

13. Alexander Astin, *Achieving Educational Excellence* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1985), 133–34.

14. John Bean, *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom* (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), 2.

15. Elder Richard G. Scott, for example, has stated, "Never, and I mean never, give a lecture where there is no student participation. A 'talking head' is the weakest form of class instruction. . . . Assure that there is abundant participation because that use of agency by a student authorizes the Holy Ghost to instruct. It also helps the student retain your message. As students verbalize truths, they are confirmed in their souls and strengthen their personal testimonies." Richard G. Scott, "To Understand and Live Truth," Church Educational System satellite broadcast, February 6, 2005.

Elder David A. Bednar has stated, "You and I are to act and be doers of the word and not simply hearers who are only acted upon. . . . Are you and I agents who act and seek learning by faith, or are we waiting to be taught and acted upon? . . . A learner exercising agency

by acting in accordance with correct principles opens his or her heart to the Holy Ghost and invites His teaching, testifying power, and confirming witness. Learning by faith requires spiritual, mental, and physical exertion and not just passive reception." David A. Bednar, "Seek Learning by Faith," Church Educational System broadcast, February 3, 2006.

Efforts by the Church to encourage active learning can be seen in the recently instituted youth Sunday School curriculum, "Come, Follow Me." Active learning methods can also be found in any teaching manual prepared by the Church. See, for example, the brief video segment entitled "Teach the Gospel," https://www.lds.org/service/leadership/teach-the-gospel?lang=eng#principles-of-teaching.

16. Seminaries and Institutes of Religion, "Fundamentals of Gospel Teaching and Learning" (Salt Lake City: Intellectual Reserve, 2012), http://www.lds.org/bc/content/lds-org/seminary-institute/PD50021993_000_121010.pdf?lang=eng.

17. Bonwell and Eison, *Active Learning*, 2.

18. University of Minnesota Center for Teaching and Learning, "What Is Active Learning?" University of Minnesota, http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/tutorials/active/what/.

19. Donald R. Paulson and Jennifer L. Faust, "Active Learning for the College Classroom," California State University, http://web.calstatela.edu/dept/chem/chem2/Active/.

20. Bonwell and Eison, *Active Learning*, 3.

21. Sutherland and Bonwell, *Using Active Learning in College Classes*, 33.

22. Dee Fink, *Creating Significant Learning Experiences: An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 106–7.

23. John Braxton, Willis Jones, Amy Hirschy, and Harold Hartley III, "The Role of Active Learning in College Student Persistence," *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, no. 115 (Fall 2008): 80.

24. Braxton, Jones, Hirschy, and Hartley, "The Role of Active Learning," 72.

25. Braxton, Jones, Hirschy, and Hartley, "The Role of Active Learning," 71–72.

26. Silberman, *Active Learning*, 6.

27. Glenn Bowen and others, "Listening to the Voices of Today's Undergraduates: Implications for Teaching and Learning," *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* 111, no. 3 (2011): 21–33.

28. Richard Felder and Rebecca Brent, "Navigating the Bumpy Road to Student-Centered Instruction" (North Carolina State University: 1996); http://www4.ncsu.edu/unity/lockers/users/f/felder/public/Papers/Resist.html.

29. Felder and Brent, "Navigating the Bumpy Road to Student-Centered Instruction," 44.

30. Sources for many of these activities are shown in the notes. Some activities were gathered from conversations with other religious educators and from personal experience. These activities can potentially be found in books on active learning, but will not show a reference since they were not obtained from those books.

31. Paulson and Faust, "Active Learning for the College Classroom," 7.

32. Paulson and Faust, "Active Learning for the College Classroom," 8.

33. Bean, *Engaging Ideas*, 183–89.

34. While teachers and researchers have referenced this activity, the authors have been using this strategy in their teaching for a number of years and feel like this approach is a product of their creativity.

35. Bean, *Engaging Ideas*, 183–89.

36. Bonwell and Eison, *Active Learning*, 13–14.

37. Donna Bowles, "Active Learning Strategies . . . Not for the Birds," *International Journal of Nursing Education Scholarship* 3, no. 1 (2006): 22.

38. One of the authors has used this strategy in his teaching for a number of years and does not consider the need to reference this activity to another person's work or research.

39. Bowles, *Active Learning Strategies*, 22.

40. Silberman, *Active Learning*, 152.

41. Richard Light, *Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds* (Cambridge: Harvard, 2001), 55.

42. Both authors have used this learning activity throughout their professional teaching careers. While others have referred to this methodology in their publications, the authors' use of this teaching approach is considered to be a product of their own creativity.

43. Bean, *Engaging Ideas*, 117.

44. Dee Fink, *Creating Significant Learning Experiences* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 118.

45. The authors have both used this strategy in their classrooms for years and do not consider the need to reference this approach as another teacher or researcher's work.

46. Paulson and Faust, "Active Learning for the College Classroom," 4.

47. Paulson and Faust, "Active Learning for the College Classroom," 2.

48. Sutherland and Bonwell, *Using Active Learning in College Classes* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996), 33.

49. Paulson and Faust, "Active Learning for the College Classroom," 3.

50. Silberman, *Active Learning*, 1.

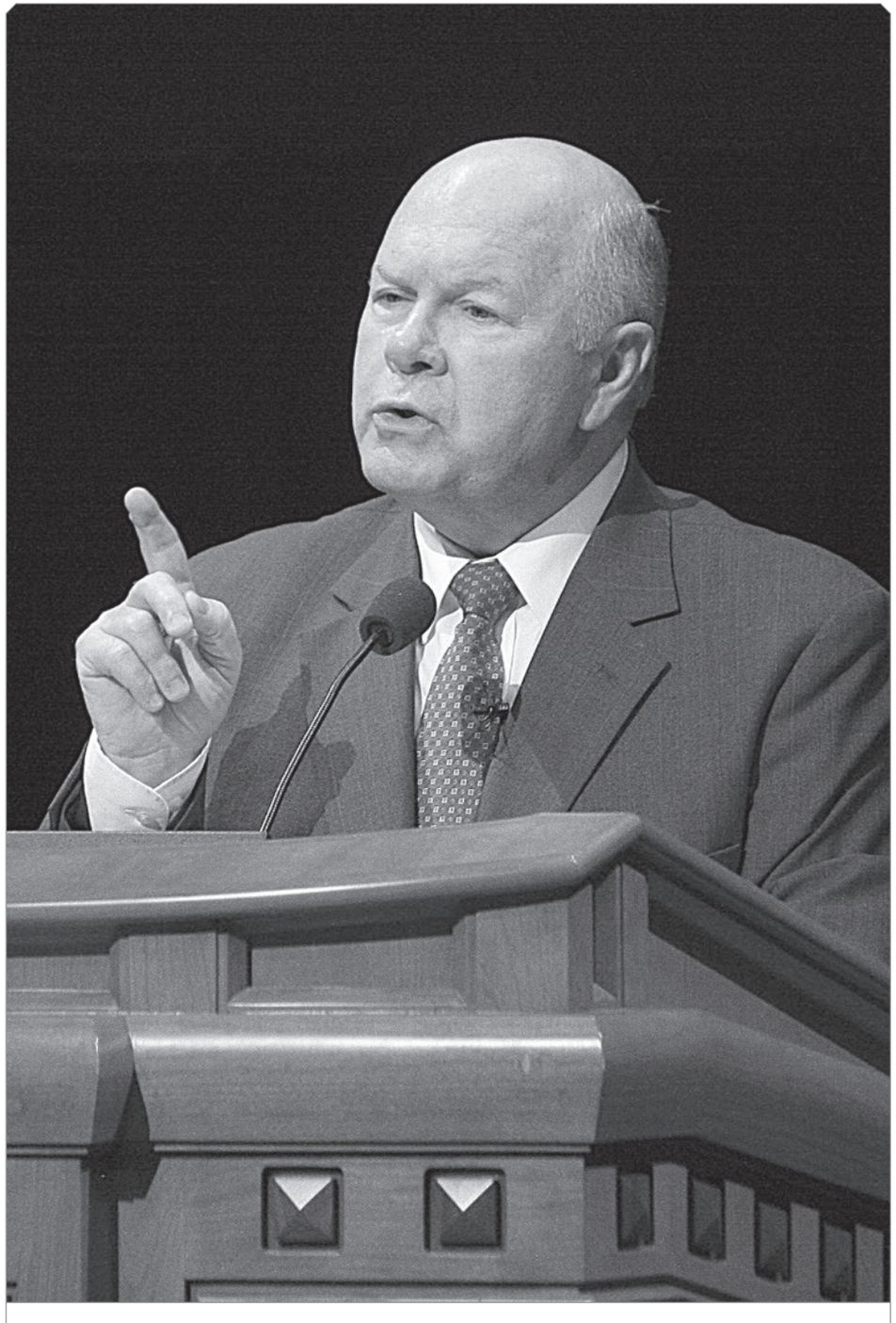


Photo by Brent R. Nordgren

Robert L. Millet has been engaged in religious education as a teacher, writer, and administrator for nearly four decades and is a good example of what it means to be a highly effective gospel scholar and educator.

Engaging Intellect and Feeding Faith: A Conversation with Robert L. Millet

INTERVIEW BY LLOYD D. NEWELL

Robert L. Millet *(robert_millet@byu.edu)* retired as Abraham O. Smoot University professor and professor of ancient scripture at BYU in January 2014.

Lloyd D. Newell is a professor of Church history and doctrine at BYU.

Robert L. Millet has been engaged in religious education as a teacher, writer, and administrator for nearly four decades. He has seen many changes in religious education over the years and is a good example of what it means to be a highly effective gospel scholar and educator. He is well known as a prolific writer and visionary leader, but is less well known as mentor and friend to countless students and faculty over the years. One BYU Religious Education faculty member told me that "Bob has certainly raised the bar in all aspects of what it means to be a religious educator—in good citizenship, in teaching and writing, and in caring about students and colleagues." This interview is intended to provide valuable insight and inspiration into what it means to be an effective religious educator and scholar.

Millet joined the BYU Religious Education faculty in 1983 after working for LDS Social Services and Seminaries and Institutes of Religion. He received his bachelor's and master's degrees in psychology from BYU and his PhD in religious studies from Florida State University. During his thirty years at BYU he has served as chair of the Department of Ancient Scripture, dean of Religious Education for ten years, Richard L. Evans Professor of Religious Understanding,

and publications director for the Religious Studies Center. He is the author or editor of more than seventy books and 180 articles and book chapters, dealing mostly with the doctrine and history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its relationship to other faiths. In the Church, Brother Millet has served as a Sunday School teacher, high councilor, bishop of two wards, stake president, temple ordinance worker, and member of the Church Materials Evaluation Committee. He and his wife, Shauna, are the parents of six children and twelve grandchildren and reside in Orem, Utah.

Newell: *I've noted that there are religious educators who either know the Bible really well, or they know the Book of Mormon or the Doctrine and Covenants. But something that has always impressed me about you is that you seem to know all the scriptures really well. How have you come to know the scriptures?*

Millet: People will often ask about my method for studying. It's kind of like my goal-setting program. I don't have a single method, but I'd have to say that the one thing that's probably made me more conversant with all of the scriptures than I might otherwise have been is that I do a great deal of cross-referencing. I was doing a tremendous amount of cross-referencing before we ever received the new editions of the scriptures in 1979 and 1981. Now many of those cross-references are in the notes, but many are not. There are connections and patterns and principles and precepts I have seen that aren't found in the footnotes. I've always felt that one of the best things I could do as a teacher was identify and focus briefly on scriptures beyond the scriptural text under study that semester—if I were teaching a New Testament class, let's say, and the principle we were discussing was really expanded upon in the Book of Mormon or the Doctrine and Covenants or the Pearl of Great Price, I needed to touch on that. I did this for two reasons: not just so that the students got everything that the scriptures taught on that topic, but also it seemed to me that the students needed to know that the scriptures all bear a united witness of Christ. Yes, if this is a New Testament class, we will focus 90 percent of our attention on the New Testament, but it was so much the better when I could draw upon other scriptures and demonstrate how they were connected to the New Testament. The phrase I stumbled across in the Book of Mormon (3 Nephi 23:14) and in the Gospel of Luke (24:27) is that the Savior "expounded all the scriptures in one." Now I think that means he opened all the scriptures and showed how they all bore a united testimony of

him. It was what the Master Teacher did and thus seemed to me to be a pattern for gospel teachers. Yes, it's a New Testament class, but in some ways it's only partially true to say this is a New Testament class. It's a class in the gospel of Jesus Christ with the New Testament as our guide through that study. And we're going to hit the text in the New Testament really heavy, but where another book of scripture bears witness of a principle—maybe even better than the New Testament does—we're going to turn to it. I never once had students complain about that in forty years of teaching the gospel, and I think they appreciated the connections.

Second, I never wanted to get stale in my teaching. I tried to teach different scriptural texts every year. As an illustration, I remember standing in the Maeser Building teaching an honors class, which was the third Book of Mormon class I had taught that day, all on the same things. I almost felt like I was saying, blah-blah-blah. I was just mouthing the material, the same ideas expressed the same way, and it frightened me. I left the building that afternoon, came back over to the Ancient Scripture department office, and I said I didn't want to teach Book of Mormon for a while. The secretary asked, "Have you had a bad experience?" I said, "No, no. I love the Book of Mormon. I just need some time to think." I spent the next year poring over the Book of Mormon in my personal study and came away at the end of the year with new eyes and new insights into the Nephite record. Because I never wanted to get stale, because I didn't want to sound staged or memorized, I always tried to teach a different preparation each year.

Newell: *What do you do for your personal scripture study—when you're not preparing for a class, when you're not writing a book, what do you do for personal scripture study?*

Millet: I generally read sequentially, but once in a while I read and study topically. I'll go to the Topical Guide on a given subject and read everything I can read, over and over. I finish that topic and go on to a new one. I don't want to get stale in my personal study either. I have tried to stay up with what the Church is studying in Gospel Doctrine. I've tried for the last thirty years to read through the standard works about every year and a half.

Newell: *What books outside of scriptures have been the most important to you and have shaped your understanding of the gospel and your theological framework?*

Millet: Good question. Beyond the scriptures, the most important book would be *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. After that, *Gospel*

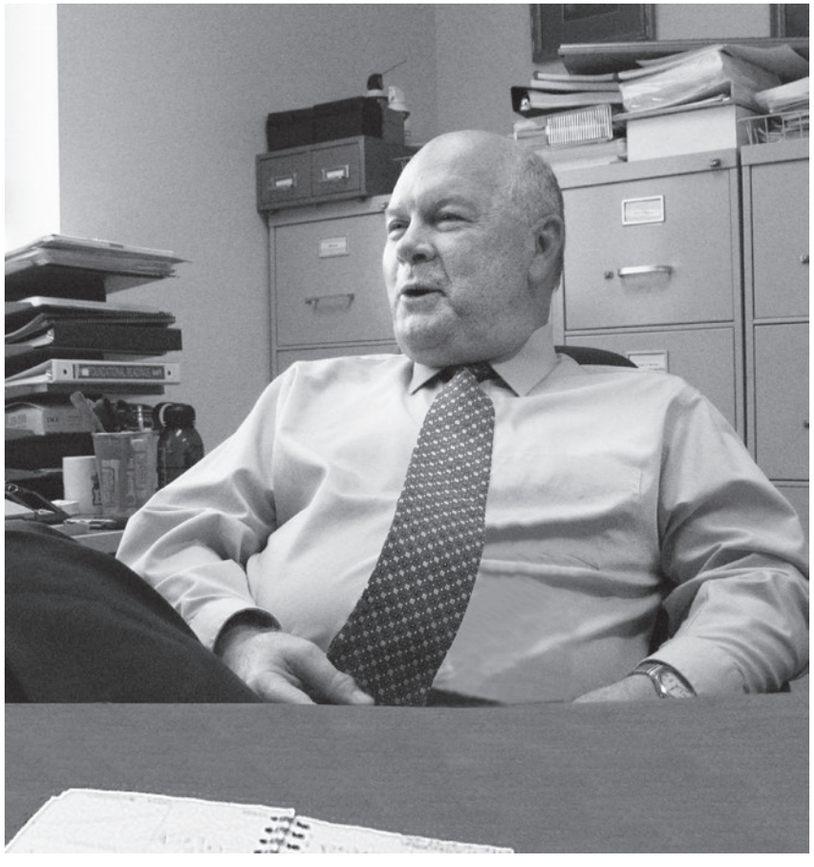


Photo by Brent R. Nordgren

I probably wish I'd been home a little more. It's like people say: "Very few people look back on their life and say, 'I wish I'd stayed at the office more.'"

Doctrine by Joseph F. Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation* by Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Promised Messiah* and *The Millennial Messiah* and *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, all by Bruce R. McConkie. It seems to me that a doctrinal mind like Bruce R. McConkie's comes around about once per dispensation. I was always drawn to the speeches and writings of Boyd K. Packer—I still am. I think the first thing I read by Brother Packer was his book on teaching, *Teach Ye Diligently*. Interestingly I read it in 1975 when it came out because that's the year I started teaching seminary. I soon thereafter discovered *The Holy Temple* and have read it many times. At about that same time the first collection of his writings called *That All May be Edified* came out. I turn to

that book regularly. His sermons through the decades have been powerful, comforting, and very insightful. Then one after another, as Brother Packer's books came out, I have devoured them and continue to refer to his teachings frequently.

I did the same with Elder Neal A. Maxwell's works. I occasionally have people ask me, "Why do you spend so much time with Church books? You ought to spend more time with the scriptures." Well, I spend an appreciable amount of time with the scriptures, but I've always appreciated the commentary that great teachers and thinkers offer. Brother Maxwell represented an intellectual approach to the gospel coupled with deep faith and testimony that was distinctive. There was no one, as you know, no one, quite like Neal A. Maxwell when it came to turning a phrase and teaching a profound lesson. I have read all of Elder Maxwell's books more than once.

I remember when Dallin H. Oaks gave a BYU devotional talk entitled "Pure in Heart." I was stirred by it, and not too long thereafter the book *Pure in Heart* came out. Later his book *The Lord's Way* was published; again, I consumed it. Elder Oaks combines a wonderful doctrinal mind with a legal background and an apostolic mantle that make his words powerful and penetrating.

Another thing—beginning when I was department chair, I stumbled across a radio channel in Provo that was an evangelical Christian channel. I would listen to that channel as I drove to work in the mornings, and I would listen to it as I drove home in the afternoons. There would be times when I was so caught up in what the speaker/teacher/preacher was saying that I sat in my car for forty-five minutes to an hour once I got to campus, just listening to those sermons. I was introduced to a whole new group of thinkers, a group of religious minds outside the LDS faith. I would listen to Chuck Swindoll and John MacArthur on the way to work. I would listen to Haddon Robinson and James Dobson on the way home. I began reading their books and have broadened out into other Christian perspectives. I haven't always agreed with everything they say, but I was often fascinated with how they came up with what they did. This excursion into Christian history and Christian theology has been life-changing for a couple of reasons. One, I am fully aware that I can learn a lot from people of other faiths. Some Mormons don't know that. Second, the more you study another faith, the deeper becomes your understanding of your own faith. I often say, "I have learned a ton about Christian history and theology in the last twenty-five years, but I've learned half a ton

about Mormonism." So my whole entrance into the interfaith world I owe initially to some books I was reading and to some radio programs I was listening to. In looking back, I don't believe this endeavor was in any way coincidental. Today I subscribe to several magazines and journals that are religious in scope. It seemed to me early on that the greatest compliment I could pay to the person I'm having a dialogue with is to know about their faith, to know enough about them to speak intelligently, maybe even to know who the key players in the field are and what the hot topics are. I have to say that this particular reading program has opened a number of doors; just being able to say, "Yes I am aware of that work" demonstrates that we are not narrow-minded, self-absorbed, or parochial.

Newell: *Tell us about your administrative assignments in Religious Education, particularly your time as dean of Religious Education. In your judgment, what were some of the significant accomplishments during your tenure?*

Millet: I will mention a few, and they are somewhat related. First, I felt the need to try our best to reinstitute a graduate program in Religious Education for S&I men and women. We had S&I teachers who were earning degrees in fields they didn't really want to study, but they knew it would get them a bump in pay to have an advanced degree. My thought was, Why not provide a degree for them in something that's right up their alley, the gospel, the restored gospel? But that was not an easy path. There had been graduate programs in religion when I was here as a young student that I had thought seriously about entering. But there was a part of me that said, "Yes, but what would you do with that degree? What would you do with a master's or PhD in ancient scripture or Church history, with a clear LDS emphasis, unless you are working in the Church Educational System (S&I or one of the Church schools)?" It didn't seem the wisest course to pursue at the time. Then the Brethren discontinued graduate degrees in religion in the mid-1970s. After I became dean, I began to push a little. I'm really grateful that Stan Peterson was the head of S&I and that we were good friends. We spent a lot of time together—a lot of time on the phone. I convinced Stan that it would be a good thing for his people, that it wasn't necessary for them to take degrees in fields they weren't even interested in just to have a master's degree. Why not study something you like? Why not study something that had a direct bearing on your immediate work? After a lengthy period of study and investigation, and, I would add importantly, with Stan's strong recommendation, the Brethren approved a Master of Arts degree in Religious Education. This

proved to be a boon to the chaplain candidates, as well, because the government began to require more and more credit hours in theology.

The other development, of course, is the creation of the journal the *Religious Educator*, which was an outgrowth of our discussions about the master's program. I felt there needed to be an academic journal produced by the Religious Studies Center. The more Stan Peterson and I talked, the more we thought, "Why don't we do this jointly? Why don't we provide a journal for our people in Seminaries and Institutes and at BYU–Idaho, BYU–Hawaii, BYU–Provo, as well as Gospel Doctrine teachers throughout the Church? What about a journal whose whole focus is on teaching the gospel: including pedagogy and a study of the doctrines of the gospel and history of the Church?" I think that was an important move.

Another matter. We began to take a stronger academic thrust in the area of hiring new faculty—men and women who had excellent training in their fields, persons who taught the gospel well and knew the gospel thoroughly and at the same time had acquired the skills that would enable them to research and publish more often in serious academic venues. I don't think we overdid it; I think the mix was about right. It became clear after a few years as dean that the greatest single challenge the dean of Religious Education has is allowing the pendulum to swing, but not too far either direction. On the one hand, we insist that our classroom, principally and primarily, is an experience for the student that is spiritually strengthening. At the same time, the students ought to be learning things, ought to have their minds stretched, ought to be acquiring a religious education that is intellectually enlarging. This shouldn't just be a rehash of what they did in Sunday School or seminary; we should be helping them discover new intellectual insights into the scriptures and the history of the Church. Consequently we hired some amazing people during those years, professors who are still with us, men and women who have impacted the kingdom in important ways. Our administration didn't initiate that development, but we—my associate deans Larry Dahl, Don Cannon, Brent Top, and Paul Hoskisson—moved it forward a bit. I also learned some things about leadership during that decade. I learned that a wise leader surrounds himself or herself with people smarter than he or she is; persons more capable than he or she is; persons who often have different perspectives.

Newell: *Talk a little more about leadership. You've certainly been in leadership here at BYU, but you've also been a bishop twice, stake president, and had other responsibilities.*

Millet: Well, a leader is first and foremost a teacher. With that in mind, and I've believed that for a long time, during the years I was dean I made it a habit to speak regularly in the Friday Forum. I wanted to remind the faculty that one could be a very busy person and yet find time to think, research, write, and publish. I suppose I wanted to set an example. But it also was good for me because very often I would choose a topic, research and write on it, and deliver it in Friday Forum to receive the feedback of the faculty; I knew they would provide it. I can't tell you how many of my books began with a Friday faculty forum talk on a given subject. Everyone's administrative style is different, but I felt personally that as a dean I needed to try to be something of a visionary. For me that meant that I needed to spend a substantial amount of time thinking about where we're headed and how to get there. And so I spent a lot of time reflecting seriously on the purposes of Religious Education and a correspondingly significant period of time kneeling in the office beside the desk, praying for direction, for an elevated perspective, for insight beyond my own. The phrase that became almost a daily expression to the Lord was "Bring to pass thy purposes" and occasionally "Bring to naught every influence that would in any way hinder the accomplishment of thy purposes." I believe he did.

I think a leader, to be effective, at least in this church, has to be a "people person." Those you are charged to lead simply cannot feel you're either unavailable or unreachable. The people must be able to meet with you and feel you are one of them—that we're all in this together. The great leaders I've had through the years were men or women who could go to ball games with us, watch a good movie with us, have lunch with us—things like that. So I think an effective leader is a teacher, a visionary, someone who loves and enjoys regular association with people. In fact, they have to love the people more than the project, and that's not always easy.

Newell: *What, in your view, is the hallmark of a truly effective religious educator?*

Millet: I've always believed in both the academic and the spiritual legs of the stool, and that we need to both inspire and stretch the students. Having said that, I have never really been one who felt that the academic and the spiritual ought to be weighted equally. I believe both are vital, but I'm always going to favor effective, spiritually inspiring gospel instruction. To me, that has to be number one if Religious Education is to prepare a generation of excellence at Brigham Young University. Now, our challenge is this: we

don't want people hiding behind their spiritual competence to cover their lack of academic preparation. And we don't want people hiding behind their academic excellence to cover their lack of spiritual depth. In my mind, the most effective religious educator is someone who is not afraid of letting it be known that he or she believes what they're teaching. I don't think they have to formally bear their testimony at the end of each lesson or every class period, but I do think the students ought to know that they know. It only happened a few times through the years I was dean, but I've had students come and ask this haunting question about their professor: "Is this person a member of the Church?" That's a little discombobulating, don't you think? When I would speak to the professor about the concern, the response might be something like this: "Well, I try not to wear my testimony on my sleeve" or, "I'm not teaching a Sunday School class." There's a fallacy afloat, and the fallacy goes something like this: If you increase the spiritual atmosphere within the classroom, you by necessity will decrease the intellectual climate. That is a false dichotomy and reflects really shallow thinking. It just isn't so.

Now, not every class will be that fifty-fifty. The percentages will change, often as a result of the specific content that day. But through the semester the students should have felt some things deeply from that professor, they should have learned some things, significant things, from that class. Our task is not to resolve the tension; it's to manage the tension. And that means there are times that I'll come to class, and I might spend the whole day informing them about some historical moments concerning the Joseph Smith Translation that they would not know on their own. I've got to lay out the facts first. And it may be that the next class period I'll spend a lot of time focusing on how the JST builds faith and testimony and sharing the testimony I have of it. Peter says that we're to give them a *reason* for the *hope* within them (see 1 Peter 3:15). A reason is largely intellectual, while hope will be largely spiritual. And that means we need to have class periods that are as stimulating to the mind as they are soothing and settling to the heart. That is not easy to find in a teacher, but we've been pretty successful through the years; God has been good to us.

If I have a concern, it would be that we tend to get out of balance. The balance that has to exist is in the life of the person we're considering hiring. If a person comes here to BYU as a professorial faculty member and supposes that it's somehow profane to have to research and publish, they don't understand what we're about. If a person comes here and somehow supposes that it is a compromise of their integrity to bear their testimony, I want to know why

they came here in the first place. So there can't be a sterile academic spirit in the classroom. They can't leave not feeling built up spiritually and have it be what the prophets and our leaders have expected it to be. On the other hand, our classroom cannot be a syrupy, sentimental occasion where we sit around and sing "Kumbaya." That just doesn't cut it. The students pay money to come here; they're paying money to sit in our classes. That means they need to leave knowing more than they knew when they came and feeling more than they felt before.

Newell: *What do you feel about the current state of Religious Education? Any concerns about the future?*

Millet: I feel confident that we're in good hands; we have strong leadership. As for the two departments, I think it's critical that every so often we stop what we're doing and check our bearings. That may come in the form of re-reading foundational documents—"The Charted Course of the Church in Education," the Second Century address by President Spencer W. Kimball, and reminding ourselves why we're here. If students don't get anything in our religion class any different than they would have gotten at Stanford, something's wrong. If they only rehearse what they received in their seminary classes, and they didn't leave knowing more about the cultural and historical background in the days of Jesus, for example, we have failed them. We've got to create classroom experiences that accomplish both objectives. The great fear I have is that we will forsake our mother tongue, that is, our responsibility to teach the gospel principally and primarily to the Saints. Do I believe we ought to be speaking to people of other faiths and entering into academic discussions on religious themes? Absolutely. Do I think we ought to find better, more powerful, more inspiring ways to teach the gospel through our articles and our books to the Latter-day Saints? Absolutely. If we get away from that, we've strayed from our moorings. And so we don't want to stray either way. It's going to take a good management of that tension. The last thing in the world we want to do as a college is to try to make everybody into one mold. What a mistake that would be. We need to let individuals, given their background, their training, their interests, their studies, do what they do best. We brought them here. Let's let them do what they do best. Now, if they need help with this or that, that's what the job of the senior faculty is—to mentor. But I don't think we have to make Bill into John, or to make Gloria into Rebecca. We don't need one kind of religious educator.

Newell: *What advice can you offer to young scholars to engage their intellect while feeding their faith?*

Millet: This is such an important question. My advice is to become involved early on with writing opportunities. The more you do, the better you become at it. Secondly, be willing—and this takes guts—be willing to throw your material out to people and take it when they chop it to pieces. Almost always they intend the criticism for the right reason. Occasionally someone who is wrestling with either arrogance or anger will criticize out of ignoble motives, but that is rare. Most people want to help. On many occasions I sought Larry Dahl out for a serious review of my work. It almost always came back covered in red ink. Now after I'd managed to re-paste my feelings of self-worth together again, I would look at that paper and realize, "You know what? He's right." So seek out people to review your work. Be aware of what areas of research the rest of the faculty are pursuing. That may simply entail going to their office and saying, "What are your areas of specialty? What are you working on? What are your projects?" I think it would be tragic to be here for very long and not know what your colleagues are working on. Part of this is practical: you want to be a good neighbor, a good citizen. But really the most important part of it is that you can know who to turn to for help with specific areas; we have people here who are the experts in the Church on certain matters. But it's possible, if you don't ever get out of your office or don't ever go visit anyone, that you wouldn't know that. So I would say, get yourself out of your office once in a while, walk the hall a little bit, meet new people, ask questions of people who have been doing this a long time.

There ought to be a growing edge in your life so that you are getting better at what you do. If your scores in your classes are average or fairly high, what do you need to make them even better? Why? So the students will feel like they're being fed, and so the students feel the kind of spiritual rapport between student and teacher that ought to exist in a religion class. We cannot afford to get lazy or stale, especially in the classroom. It's too easy to get in a rut and do things the same way over and over.

Newell: *What counsel would you give to those who seek to become effective gospel scholars? And what does it mean to be a gospel scholar?*

Millet: To me it means that you are pretty solid in your understanding of all the standard works. Now, agreed, you're going to know the Pearl of Great Price better than you know the Doctrine and Covenants because you've specialized in it. If the department chair says, "You know, I need you

to teach this class," and you've never taught it before, it shouldn't be a traumatic experience for you. I think you begin with becoming a serious student of scripture, in the sense of knowing even those things that are not in your particular department. Stephen Robinson found once he had mastered, as it were, the subjects in ancient scripture, that he wanted to know more about the Doctrine and Covenants. So he taught it until he eventually, with his colleague Dean Garrett, wrote an impressive four-volume commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants. So I think first we need to be better than we are.

Second, I think we need to know the teachings of the Presidents of the Church well, starting with the Prophet Joseph Smith. If I'm serious about gospel scholarship, my library ought to begin to cover most of the bases. That is, I really do need, eventually, to have a library that contains all the teachings of all the Presidents. There's really something valuable, when you're teaching a point in scripture, to be able to pause and say, "It reminds me of what President David O. McKay used to say about . . ." or "I remember President Harold B. Lee teaching that. . . ." This is so good for these young people to hear.

Now, third, I think we ought to know who the key thinkers in Mormonism have been. And that's why I say everybody will have their different favorites. I think it matters that we know who Orson Pratt was and what he taught. I think we ought to know what Parley P. Pratt taught. We can't know all the people through the history of the Church well, but we can know who the key thinkers were. What are and have been some of the difficult or sensitive doctrinal and historical issues? What is the doctrine of the Church and how do we know it? I think that such a background builds a sense of security, not just respect, but security in the minds of the students. They know their teacher is competent enough to know when he doesn't know something and he says so, but when he does know you can trust him, because he knows what the diamond-true facts are, and he knows where there are no diamonds.

Newell: *What projects and plans do you have for the future?*

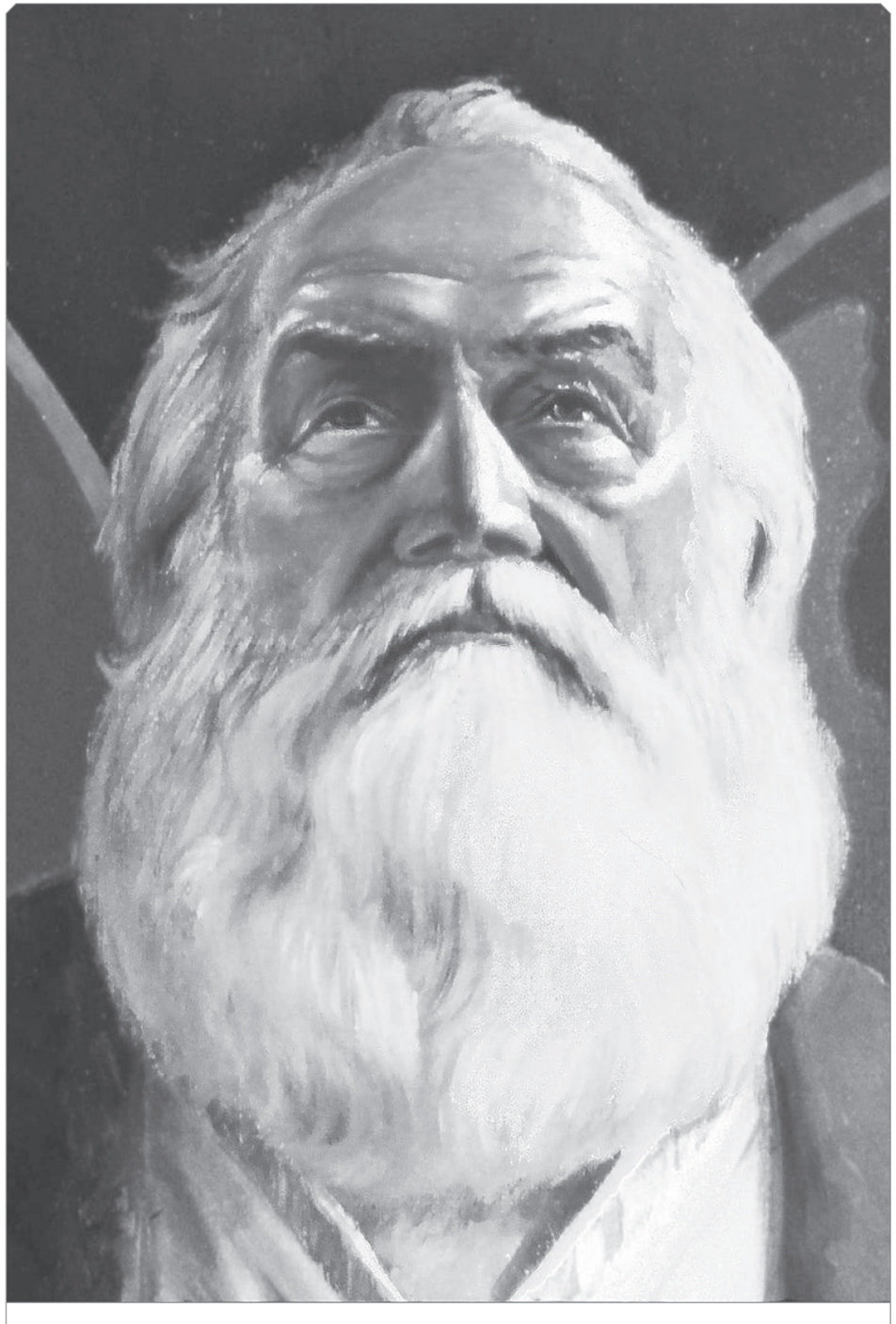
Millet: Well, I have two book projects where the publishers are pressing for completed manuscripts. Both of these books will be published by non-LDS companies, and both will be coauthored with colleagues. One is a part of a series called "Guide to the Perplexed," and I'm doing the book *Mormonism: A Guide to the Perplexed*. The other book is entitled

Mainstreaming Mormonism? The subtitle is "The Journey from Suspicion to Relative Acceptance." I want to do a book down the road for members of the Church on the eternal quest to become like God. I want to deal with deification, what we know about it and what we do not know. What have the prophets taught? What does this mean? What do the scriptures teach? And of course one of the most important projects before me is a biography of Robert J. Matthews. I've been collecting materials now for a few years, and I had a wonderful research assistant, Andrew Bateman, who has done a marvelous job of systematizing everything. Following retirement, one of my major tasks in the next two to three years is to get the Matthews biography done. He's too important to be forgotten. I also plan to continue working, at least to some extent, in outreach, in interfaith relations.

Newell: *Is there anything you would do differently if you could start your professional career over again?*

Millet: You know, I've thought about this. I wouldn't change too many things. I've had such a wonderful life. Although I enjoyed my study of psychology, I've often wished I had done a bachelor's and a master's degree in history. I've done so much work in the study of Christianity, and so I wish I had a better background in history; I've had to teach myself quite a bit.

Brother Matthews told me a story several times, and I don't think it was because he was losing his memory. He told me the story of Sidney Sperry and of meeting with Brother Sperry not long before Brother Sperry died. Bob asked him, "Brother Sperry, if you had it all to do over, what would you do differently?" Brother Sperry paused a moment and then said, "I think I'd write fewer books and go fishing with my boys more." I've loved my work, but I probably would have stayed home a little more. It's a horrible thing to wonder while you're out trying to save souls how your family is doing. My wife has been angelic and absolutely supportive, but in looking back, I probably wish I'd been home a little more. It's like people say: "Very few people look back on their life and say, 'I wish I'd stayed at the office more.'" RE



Lyle Beddes, *The Prophet Ezekiel*, © 1977 Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

Knowing how some prophets' names can be related to their teachings is one way we can better understand, appreciate, and remember their messages.

Notes: What Is in a Name? Lessons from the Names of Old Testament Prophets

TERRY B. BALL

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Over the years, as I have taught the messages of the Old Testament prophets, I have found that many of their names contain answers, information, and perspectives to issues and questions posed in their writings. Helping students see how some prophets' names can be related to their teachings is one way we can help them understand, appreciate, and remember their messages. Here are some worth considering.

Habakkuk: What Should Be Our Reaction to God's Will?

Many understand the name Habakkuk to be derived from the Hebrew root *châbaq*, meaning to clasp or embrace. The name can be translated to mean one who embraces or one who is embraced.[1] The meanings seem to fit the message of Habakkuk well.

In Habakkuk, we are allowed to listen in on a conversation the prophet had with the Lord. As the conversation begins, Habakkuk appears to be frustrated and upset with God; for it seems to him that the Lord is not doing anything to stop the rampant iniquity among the covenant people (see

Habakkuk 1:2–4). In response the Lord explains that he indeed has a plan to chastise the wicked, for he will "raise up the Chaldeans" to invade the land and take captives (1:5–11). The Lord's reply shocks Habakkuk and adds to his distress because, he complains, it seems unjust for God to use a more wicked nation to punish the wicked of his own people (1:12–17). God corrects Habakkuk's somewhat proud and whining attitude by reminding the prophet that the "soul *which* is lifted up is not upright" and that "the just shall live by his faith" (2:4). He promises Habakkuk that the Chaldeans would in turn be punished for their wickedness (2:8) and pronounces woe to them for their drunkenness, spoiling, coveting, violence, and idolatry (2:5–19). The Lord appears to further assure the prophet that God is in control and that he should quietly trust in him as he declares, "the Lord *is* in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him" (2:20).

Habakkuk seems to have understood and eventually "embraced" the Lord's counsel, the Lord's plans, and the Lord's will. In the closing chapter, Habbakuk confesses that he had been afraid (3:2), but that fear and distrust of God appear to dissipate in understanding as he bears testimony of God's wonderful power and works (3:3–16). The prophet's change of heart is finally manifest in his declaration that even if terrible things happen to the people, he would still "rejoice in the Lord," his "strength," and his "salvation" (3:17–19). Thus, through his careful praying, listening, and humbling, the prophet came to truly "embrace" the will of God—an embrace that was surely returned.[2] Habakkuk's message and name inform the question "What should be our reaction to God's will?" The answer: "embrace it."

Zephaniah: What May Be the Blessings of Righteous Living in a Wicked and Violent World?

The name Zephaniah can be understood to be derived from the Hebrew root *tsâphan*, meaning to hide, protect, cover, or treasure up. Accordingly, the name Zephaniah can be translated as one who is protected or hidden by the Lord.[3] The name seems to summarize the prophet's message.

Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of King Josiah (Zephaniah 1:1). The covenant people were in a state of deep apostasy when Josiah began his reign as an eight-year-old child. However, as King Josiah grew into a man, he learned of the "book of the law" and subsequently labored to bring his people back into obedience to the Lord's commandments (2 Kings 22–23).

Zephaniah's prophecy opens with a rebuke of the people for their sins and a warning of the destruction that will come because of their iniquity (1:2–18). He adds an element of reality to the warning by describing how a plundering army will invade successive quarters of the city, searching with candles for any who may be hiding (1:10–12). He then speaks of the destruction that is to fall upon Judah's enemies as well: the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, and Ethiopians (2:4–15). In the closing chapter, the prophet adds another warning and rebuke of the covenant people (3:1–7), but then he finishes with a glorious description of the gathering, salvation, and joy that the Lord will bring about for those who "wait" upon him, "call" upon him, "serve" him, and "trust" him (3:8–20).

The overall message of the prophecy is summarized well in the first verses of the second chapter. There Zephaniah promises that before the day of destruction, if the people will "seek" the Lord, live in "righteousness" and "meekness," then perhaps they will be "hid in the day of the Lord's anger" (2:2–3). The Hebrew term translated as "hid" in this passage is derived from the root *çâthar*, and like the root of Zephaniah's name, *tsâphan*, means to hide or cover up. The use of the two roots forms a clever wordplay that offers hope for deliverance to the people—a hope that was realized. It appears that because of righteous Josiah's efforts to convince the people to repent, the plundering army Zephaniah described (1:10–12) never materialized in Jerusalem in Josiah's day. Though warring and plundering armies like the Scythians, Assyrians, and Egyptians were rampant and invading many neighboring nations, Jerusalem was "hidden of the Lord" during Josiah's reign.[4] Zephaniah's message and name answers the question "What may be the blessings of righteous living in a wicked and violent world?" The prophet's answer: we may be protected or "hidden by the Lord."

Haggai: Why Should We Build Temples?

The name Haggai is thought to be derived from the Hebrew root *châgag*, likely meaning to make a pilgrimage or keep a pilgrim feast. Haggai is typically understood to mean one who is "festal" or celebrates.[5]

Haggai was a sixth-century-BC prophet who ministered during a time when the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem following the return of Jews from Babylon had come to a standstill, thanks to the political machinations and intrigue of the offended Samaritans. When Darius came to the throne in Persia, the Jews were given permission to complete the temple building, but

Statue of Nahum, sculpted by Aleijadinho, in Minas Gerais, Brazil. Photo by Luis Rizo, Wiki Commons.

The name Nahum is derived from the Hebrew root *nâcham*, which means to pity, to be sorry, to comfort, or to be comforted. Nahum is typically understood to mean a comforter or consoler.

apparently had not undertaken to do so. Haggai came forth to remedy the problem (see Ezra 4–5).

In the opening chapter, Haggai reproves the people for their failure to build the temple, indicating that their agricultural and financial troubles were divine punishment for their lethargy in the task (see Haggai 1:2–11). To their credit, the leaders and people heed Haggai's admonition and go to work on the temple (1:12–15). Through Haggai the Lord then assures the people that though the temple they have just built does not match the glory of their first temple destroyed by the Babylonians, in due time the "desire of all nations would come" and fill their new temple with his glory, making it greater than the first (2:1–9). Using a series of questions, the Lord next teaches Haggai and the people of the importance of becoming clean to sanctify the temple and be restored to prosperity, promising that from that day forth he would bless them (2:10–19). The prophecy closes with the Lord's assurance that he would intervene to overthrow their enemies and give their leader, Zerubbabel, authority over the chosen people (2:20–23). Zerubbabel can be understood as a type for the Messiah, and this prophecy can be understood as a promise that through temple worship, we come unto the Christ.

Latter-day Saints can see in this prophecy and in the prophet's name an answer to the question "Why should we build temples?" The answer: to be "ones who celebrate" as we "make our pilgrimage" to the house of the Lord and therein "feast" upon the blessings, knowledge, covenants, power, and authority offered through temple worship.

Nahum: What Can Faith Offer Us in Times of Distress and Adversity?

The name Nahum is derived from the Hebrew root *nâcham*, which means to pity, to be sorry, to comfort, or to be comforted. Nahum is typically understood to mean a comforter or consoler.[6]

The book of Nahum is a prophecy of the destruction of Assyria, which by Nahum's day had a long history of plundering and oppressing the covenant people (see 2 Kings 15–20). The prophet begins by testifying of the power, goodness, and justice of the Lord (see Nahum 1:2–7) and then proceeds to describe in chilling detail how the fury of the Lord will be turned upon Assyria to destroy it forever (1:8–3:19).

Nahum's contemporaries would have indeed found some hope and comfort in the prophet's assurance that their oppressors would eventually be destroyed. You may have experienced something similar if you have ever

watched a rebroadcast of an athletic competition, such as a football or baseball game in which you knew ahead of time that your favorite team won. Knowing that your team was ultimately victorious, perhaps you noticed that as you watched the rebroadcast, you were not too distressed over a dropped ball, poor officiating, or missed scoring opportunities. Even though the contest might have been fierce and close, you found comfort in your assurance that your team would triumph in the end.

What comfort and perspective Nahum's prophecy must have given the faithful of his people during their struggles with Assyria to know that ultimately, God would deliver them. What comfort and perspective we can find in our struggles and trials today if we have faith that in the end, God will triumph over the adversary. What can faith offer us in times of distress and adversity? An answer we find is "Nahum," or a comforter and consoler.

Conclusion

These four examples are meant to be illustrative rather than exhaustive. Other Old Testament prophets' names have special meaning as well. Consider these common translations:

Isaiah: Jehovah has saved[7]
Jeremiah: Jehovah will rise[8]
Ezekiel: God will strengthen[9]
Hosea: Deliverer[10]
Obadiah: Serving Jehovah[11]
Micah: Who is like Jehovah[12]
Zechariah: Jehovah has remembered[13]
Malachi: My messenger[14]

Identifying questions that can be answered by both the teachings and the names of each of these prophets can be an insightful and inspirational study activity for students and teachers alike. RE

Notes

1. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 10(2): 49; Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1994), 1:287.

2. Habakkuk's experience can be understood as a theodicy, a reconciliation of the problem of evil in the world with the omnipotence, omniscience, and omnibenevolence of God.

Joseph Smith's letters from the Liberty Jail (see D&C 121–22) and the book of Job likewise contain such theodicies. Joseph and Job too came to understand and embrace the will of God through their experiences.

3. Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 3:1049; Keil and Delitzsch, *Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament*, 10(2):117.

4. It should be noted that while Jerusalem was "hidden" or spared from the destruction Zephaniah described during Josiah's reign, the king himself was not. Josiah lost his life at the city of Megiddo in an ill-advised attempt to thwart an Egyptian march through Judah to Assyria (see 2 Kings 23:29–30). Sadly, Zephaniah's warnings concerning Jerusalem were later realized during the reigns of Josiah's wicked successors. Because of their sins and rebellion the people and their leaders were first conquered, plundered, and ruled by the Egyptians, then the Babylonians. Ultimately they were carried away captive to Babylon (see 2 Kings 23:31–25:21).

5. Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 1:290; Keil and Delitzsch, *Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament*, 10(2):167.

6. Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 2:685; Keil and Delitzsch, *Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament*, 10(2):1.

7. Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 2:449.

8. Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 2:440.

9. Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 2:406.

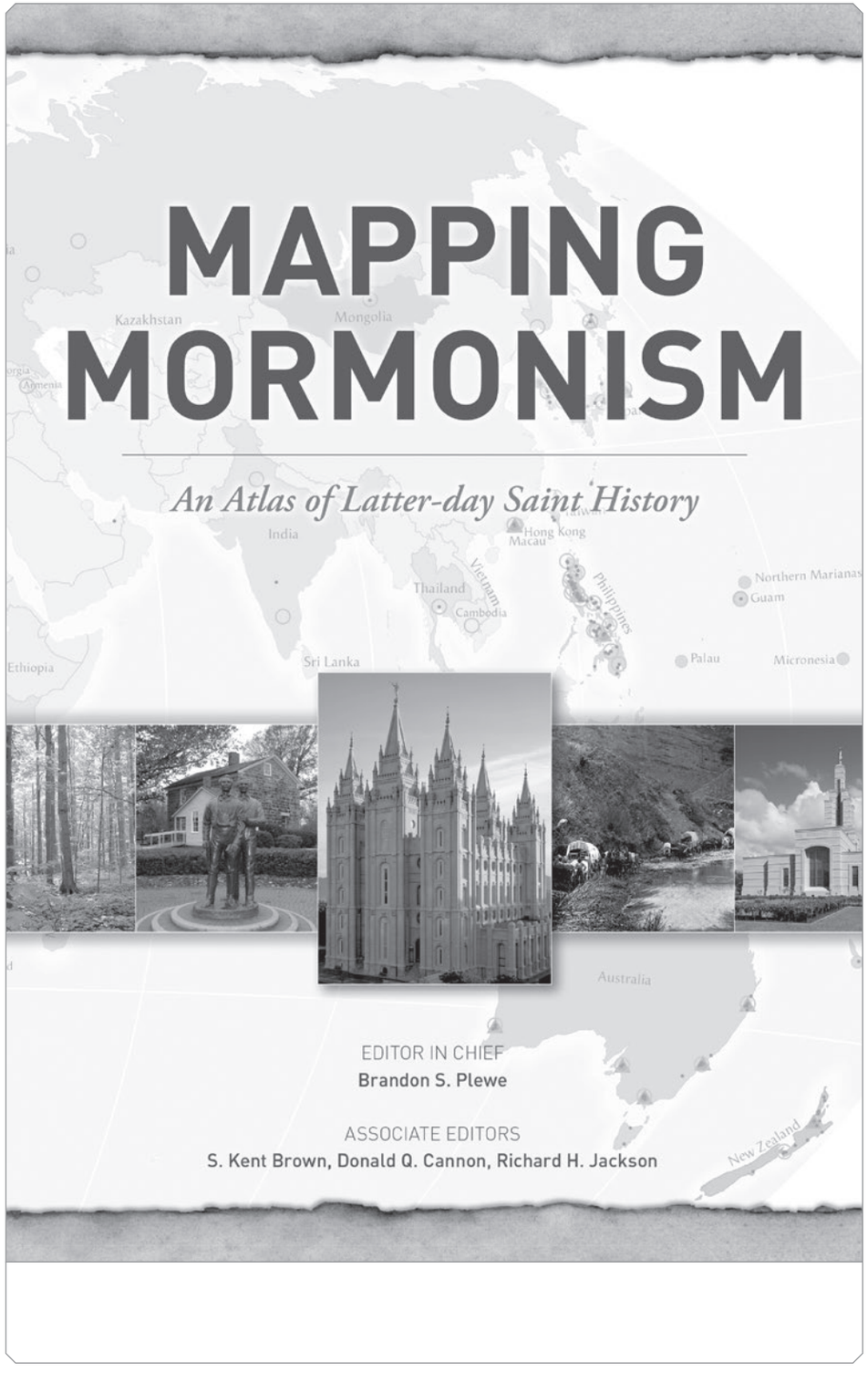
10. Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 1:242–43.

11. Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 2:777.

12. Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 2:576.

13. Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 1:271–72.

14. Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 2:586.



Courtesy of BYU Studies

Book Review: Mapping Mormonism: An Atlas of Latter-day Saint History

DEVAN JENSEN

Brandon S. Plewe, editor in chief. Associate editors: S. Kent Brown, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard H. Jackson. *Mapping Mormonism: An Atlas of Latter-day Saint History*. Provo, UT: BYU Press, 2012. Foreword by Richard Lyman Bushman. Introduction, glossary, notes, color illustrations, bibliography, index. 272 pp. ISBN 978-0-8425-2825-2, US $39.95.

Brandon Plewe and his team of talented writers and designers have done an excellent job on this ambitious and expansive atlas. The team includes sixty experts in fields ranging from political science to geography to Church history and doctrine. Several scholars of other faiths are included—namely, Barbara Bernauer, William Russell, Steven Shields, and Gary Topping. This atlas would be extremely helpful to all readers interested in learning the history of Mormonism, regardless of their religious affiliation.

This book replaces *The Historical Atlas of Mormonism*. What sets *Mapping Mormonism* above its predecessor is the quality of the detailed graphics. They are easily accessible yet also yield detailed information upon study and reflection. The introduction makes a bold assertion: "The average Mormon's understanding of Church history is often fraught with error, myth, and incompleteness" (p. 8). This is true. And, as Richard Bushman asserts in his foreword, "Even Latter-day Saints with a detailed knowledge of Church history will learn something on nearly every page" (p. 7). I agree.

The book traces Mormonism from its humble roots into an expansive global religion. The book is organized into four sections of about equal

length: "The Restoration," "The Empire of Deseret," "The Expanding Church," and "Regional History." Each section begins with a historical overview and timeline showing the entries along with their page numbers. This well-thought-out approach serves as a creative table of contents for each section, showing how the entries fit into the historical context. The entries are usually two to four pages in length. The overviews are fairly general, but the entries are both readable and informative.

The first section offers valuable insights into the Restoration. Noteworthy are a map and related charts of the Palmyra area showing the growth of churches in the "Burned-Over District" (p. 19). Another interesting display is the travels of Joseph Smith on pp. 26–27, which indicates his back-and-forth journeys during those early years.

The maps of the Western Reserve, Ohio, and Kirtland are quite detailed and identify the relative locations of many sites important to early Church history, along with a great discussion of these maps by Karl Ricks Anderson. The information on the Church in Missouri is also excellent, with useful entries by Max H Parkin and Alexander L. Baugh and detailed maps showing early settlements (see p. 35). Missouri's history is more complicated than many members realize.

The book directly addresses some misperceptions. Joseph Smith had sent a town plat to Church leaders in Missouri that became known as the City of Zion Plat. The Utah pioneers later adopted many concepts from the plan in their new communities. One common misperception of members today, however, is that the street numbering system common to Utah (100 South, 200 South, etc.) was part of the City of Zion Plat. In reality, that numbering system was not part of the original plan but was adopted in the 1940s (p. 44).

The second section, "The Empire of Deseret," is particularly valuable in correcting many misunderstandings, including a great piece on the succession crisis by Steven Shields. Most Church members have a fairly simplistic view that Brigham spoke and the people all believed he was the next prophet, but in actuality many splinter groups arose after the death of Joseph Smith (see pp. 64–67). At one time, James J. Strang may have drawn as many as half of the US members, though that number dropped dramatically after he made doctrinal changes, declared himself king, and was murdered (p. 64). This information is supplemented by entries on the Community of Christ and the "Restored Church(es)" (pp. 192–97). For more on this topic, see Steven L. Shields, *Divergent Paths of the Restoration: A History of the Latter Day Saint Movement*, 4th ed. rev. (Independence, MO: Herald House, 2001), and Newell G. Bringhurst and John C. Hamer, eds., *Scattering of the Saints: Schism within Mormonism* (Independence, MO: John Whitmer Books, 2007).

William G. Hartley covers the plans of the pioneer exodus to Utah thoroughly and well. In his essay he outlines the deliberations that the Twelve made over the route west and shows the resources that they used, including a John C. Fremont map. Hartley identifies that after discussion they clearly agreed on settling in "the valleys at the base of the Wasatch Mountains" (pp. 68–69).

Another noteworthy example of myth busting is Lowell C. Bennion's article on plural marriage, showing that a much higher percentage engaged in this practice than previously assumed (see pp. 122–25). Some surprising assertions emerge. With the Church facing intense national prosecution, the First Presidency wrote an epistle on April 4, 1885, claiming that "the male members of our Church who practice plural marriage are estimated as not exceeding but little, if any, two per cent, of the entire membership." Following their lead, many members erroneously think the number was that low, but the actual percentage appears to be much higher, as many articles have demonstrated. Of course, the actual incidence of plural marriage fluctuated considerably over time and from community to community, as the detailed chart on p. 123 indicates.[1]

In the next section, "The Expanding Church," several entries cover new ground very well. There are very fine entries written about intermountain colonization and prominent prophets such as David O. McKay, Spencer W. Kimball, and Gordon B. Hinckley.

A truly fascinating entry on "Political Affiliation" demonstrates that Mormons as a whole used to vote toward the Democratic Party in the early to mid-1900s but shifted dramatically toward the Republican Party in 1980s. Currently, Salt Lake City leans toward the Democratic Party (pp. 189–90). These trends demonstrate great historical fluidity over time.

Another informative entry, "Three American Churches," compares the growth of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with that of the Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh-day Adventists. All have fairly assertive missionary forces and are comparable in size. Each church counts its active members differently. For example, the Jehovah's Witnesses count only those who actively proselyte. Author Daniel Reeves asserts that "the LDS Church is probably the least conservative of the three in the membership it reports"

Map created by Brandon S. Plewe. Courtesy of BYU Studies.

LDS membership statistics by state and province in the eastern United States and Canada.

(p. 198). The implication is that the Church is a rapidly growing American religion, but not the only one.

The third portion of the book, transitioning into the "Regional History" section, covers worldwide Church growth and expansion as units put down roots outside North America. These facts and figures offer helpful insights into the growth of the Church in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. Membership in Latin America has expanded rapidly since the 1960s. About 85 percent of the Church's worldwide population now lives in North and South America (p. 174). Church growth in Asia is relatively level. Church growth in Africa is among the most rapid but beginning to level out. A helpful article projecting future growth is offered on pp. 202–3.

A work of this complexity is not without flaws. Several errors crept into print—none serious, though a little distracting. For example, the front cover shows a dot where Micronesia is located, as if it were a specific island and not a vast region (like Polynesia). As far as more substantive issues, some might feel that the entry on Book of Mormon geographies is unnecessary because it covers speculative material.

There are minor quibbles about content that could be resolved in a future edition. Ronald K. Esplin has an excellent essay on Brigham Young that features an ingenious chart showing Brigham's frequent trips south and north (p. 91). The article might better be titled "Travels of Brigham Young" rather than "President Brigham Young" (which implies an overview of his ministry). Furthermore, many prophets have no entry at all. Noteworthy omissions are Lorenzo Snow, Wilford Woodruff, Thomas S. Monson, and others. Readers would benefit from more entries on the prophets of this dispensation.

The planned new edition of the book might also address significant events that occurred after the first edition was in progress. Examples include lowering of the missionary age and the resulting increase of both male and female missionaries. The new edition might cover the impact of those additional missionaries and the globalization of the Relief Society, Young Men, and Young Woman general boards.

Regardless of what shape the next edition takes, the book will likely continue to be a valuable reference tool by historians, by libraries, by the general membership of the Church, and by Church history teachers in particular. RE

Note

1. The Church has released an official statement on plural marriage at https://www.lds.org/topics/plural-marriage-and-families-in-early-utah?lang=eng. For a detailed assessment, see *Early Mormon Polygamy: Articles and Reviews by BYU Studies*, available at https://byustudies.byu.edu/showTitle.aspx?title=9244.

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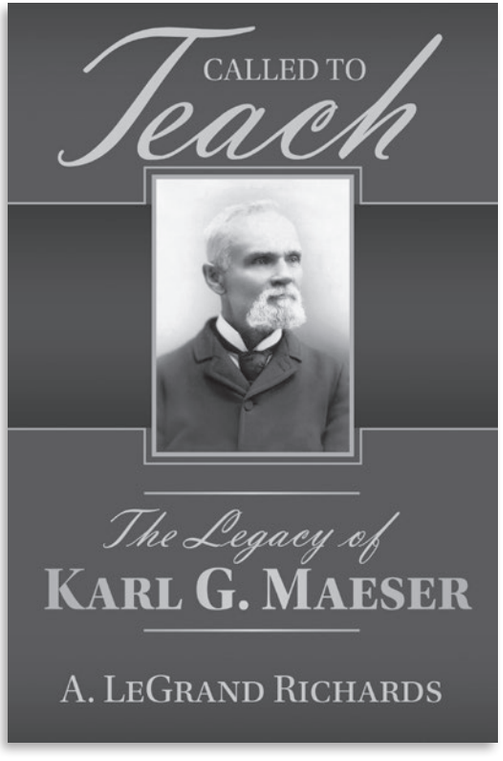
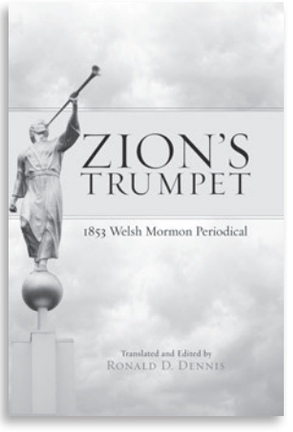


Called to Teach: The Legacy of Karl G. Maeser

A. LeGrand Richards

Karl G. Maeser has rightfully been called the spiritual architect not only of Brigham Young University but also of the Church Educational System. As the first superintendent of Church Schools, he helped found and maintain over fifty academies and schools from Canada to Mexico. He helped develop the public education system in Utah and helped establish the Utah Teachers' Association. The students he taught personally included future United States senators and members of the House of Representatives, a United States Supreme Court justice, university presidents, and many General Authorities.

ISBN: 978-0-8425-2842-9, Retail: $32.99

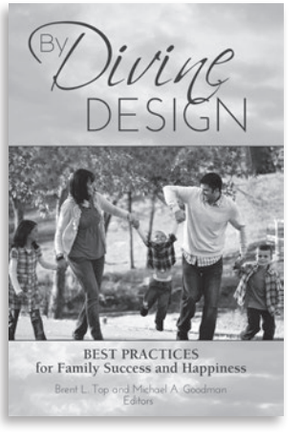


Zion's Trumpet: 1853 Welsh Mormon Periodical

Edited by Ronald D. Dennis

It was two days after Christmas in 1852 that Dan Jones arrived back in Wales to serve his second mission, and in a year's time he would be called as leader of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Wales in place of William S. Phillips and as editor of *Zion's Trumpet* in place of John S. Davis. Something even more impactful in 1853 was the issue of polygamy. This practice among Latter-day Saints was publicly acknowledged on August 28, 1852, in Salt Lake City. The acknowledgment in Britain, however, came three and a half months later in the January 1, 1853, issues of *Zion's Trumpet* and the *Millennial Star*. Because of the anticipated impact the announcement of polygamy would likely have on Mormons in Wales, John Davis used the translated writings of Orson Pratt in its defense—these would occupy over 20 percent of the pages of the two *Zion's Trumpet* 1853 volumes.

ISBN: 978-0-8425-2852-8, Retail: $34.99

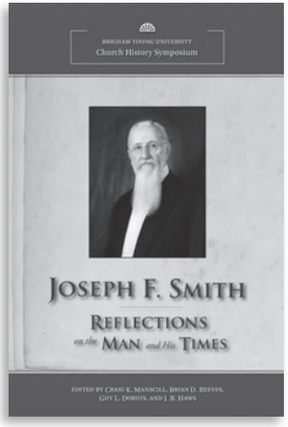


By Divine Design: Best Practicies for Family Success and Happiness

Edited by Brent L. Top and Michael A. Goodman

The prophets of God continually raise their warning voices and lovingly give counsel to strengthen our families and heighten the spirituality of our children. This is a gospel-centered "best practices" book for husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, that is founded on prophetic teachings and substantiated by good science. This book will help readers gain new and important insights about our most important responsibilities in time and eternity—our families.

ISBN: 978-0-8425-2850-4, Retail: $27.99

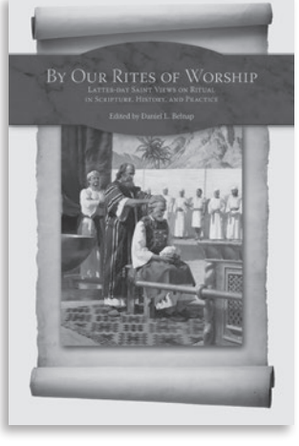


Joseph F. Smith: Reflections on the Man and His Times

Edited by Craig K. Manscill, Brian D. Reeves, Guy L. Dorius, and J. B. Haws

This book is a compilation of presentations from a BYU Church History Symposium. It features more than twenty messages about the life of Joseph F. Smith, including chapters by Elder M. Russell Ballard and Joseph Fielding McConkie. Elder Ballard, great-grandson of Joseph F. Smith, describes how the Lord prepared President Smith to lead the Church. Several scholars, historians, educators, and researchers highlight aspects of President Smith's life, including his boyhood and adolescence, his family and personal relationships, his doctrinal contributions, Church government, and initiatives taken during his presidency in education, building construction, building the Laie Hawaii Temple, creating the seminary program, and public outreach.

ISBN: 978-0-8425-2847-4, Retail: $31.99

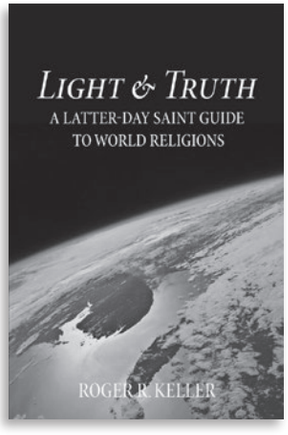


By Our Rites of Worship: Latter-day Saint Views on Ritual in History, Scripture, and Practice

Edited by Daniel L. Belnap

While negative meanings are often attached to the words *rite* and *ritual*, these terms simply mean "with correct religious procedure; in the manner required, properly, duly, correctly, rightly, fittingly." Thus the term perfectly describes an array of practices within our church, including baptism, the laying on of hands, and temple ordinances. This book explores the relationship between the performance of priesthood ordinances (or rituals) and the power of godliness that is mentioned in Doctrine and Covenants 84. Just as in biblical and Book of Mormon times, rites are an essential part of God's plan for his children. The messages in this book help us understand ritual and its profound role within the Church so that we are able to recognize the transforming power of our rites of worship.

ISBN: 978-0-8425-2841-2, Retail: $27.99

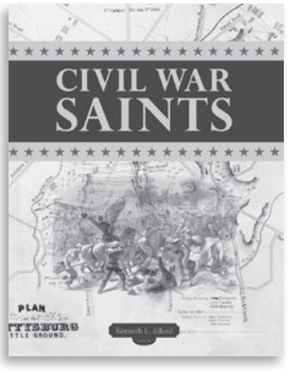


Light and Truth: A Latter-day Saint Guide to World Religions

Roger R. Keller

Do we as Latter-day Saint Christians really need to know about other faiths? Do we not know all we need to know? Sometimes we create our own skewed version of other faiths. If we are to be a world church, it is helpful to understand and appreciate all the good that God has given to persons beyond the Latter-day Saint pale and to represent it accurately. President George Albert Smith said to persons of other faiths: "We have come here as your brethren . . . and to say to you: 'Keep all the good that you have, and let us bring to you more good, in order that you may be happier and in order that you may be prepared to enter into the presence of our Heavenly Father.'"

ISBN: 978-0-8425-2817-7, Retail: $28.99



Civil War Saints

Edited by Kenneth L. Alford

This book was written for the sesquicentennial of the Civil War, especially the 150th anniversary of the active federal service of Captain Lot Smith's Utah cavalry company, an active-duty military unit that served for ninety days of federal service guarding a portion of the Overland Trail. Although Utah Territory was physically removed from the Civil War battlefields and the resulting devastation, the war had a deep impact on the territory and its inhabitants.

ISBN: 978-0-8425-2816-0, Retail: $31.99 RE

Upcoming Events

Sidney B. Sperry Symposium

Friday and Saturday, October 24–25, 2014

The title of this year's symposium is "The Ministry of Peter, the Chief Apostle." The symposium will shed important light on the mission of the man whom Jesus himself referred to as "the rock." Presentations will explore Peter's cultural background, his role in the apostolic church, many of his noted teachings, and his important legacy in early Christianity and the Restoration. Peter is one who overcame his own weaknesses to become one of the most powerful witnesses of the divinity, mission, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The keynote speaker will be Elder Bruce C. Hafen. For updated information, please visit rsc.byu.edu/symposia/sperry.

BYU Church History Symposium

Thursday and Friday, March 5 and 6, 2015 (tentatively)

Throughout the history of this symposium, presenters have included notable General Authorities of the Church, historians, scholars, educators, and authors. This symposium was established to annually explore a topic of special interest in the history of the Church. Historians and scholars meet to share the fruits of their research with each other and a general audience of interested Latter-day Saints and friends. Selected papers from previous symposia have been printed in books copublished by the Religious Studies Center and Deseret Book. For details and updated information about this symposium, visit rsc.byu.edu/conferences.

These events are free of charge, and registration is not required. Some event details are subject to change. For more details, please visit us online at rsc.byu.edu/conferences *or contact Brent Nordgren at 801-422-3293.* RE

Staff Spotlight

Director

Dean Brent L. Top received his degrees from BYU—a BA in history, a master's degree in instructional media, and a PhD in instructional science and technology. He held the Moral Education Professorship for two years prior to his call as president of the Illinois Peoria Mission (2004–7). He was appointed chair of the Department of Church History and Doctrine in June 2009. He married Wendy Cope, and they are the parents of four children and reside in Pleasant Grove, Utah, where he currently serves as the president of the Pleasant Grove Utah East Stake.

Student Editing Intern

Rebecca Hamson is a senior from Kennewick, Washington, studying English language with a minor in editing. She has been working at the Religious Studies Center since January of 2014 and has loved the time she has spent editing there. Following graduation, Rebecca plans to pursue a career in editing. When she is not at school or work, Rebecca spends her free time involved with various programs on campus: she is an executive director with the Brigham Young University Student Association, a peer buddy with the Best Buddies program, and a managing editor for the magazine *Stance for the Family*.

Student Design Intern

Alex Masterson is a senior at BYU from Dallas, Texas. He is majoring in communications and minoring in editing, and he is passionate about design, technical writing, and children's literature. Right now he is interning with The Dream Press, a start-up children's publisher, and Coding Campus, a local developer school. In his spare time, Alex enjoys playing piano and writing short stories. RE

Religious Studies Center

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

RELIGIOUS EDUCATOR

PERSPECTIVES ON THE RESTORED GOSPEL

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The *Religious Educator* serves the needs and interests of those who study and teach the restored gospel of Jesus Christ on a regular basis. The distinct focuses are on teaching the gospel; publishing studies on scripture, doctrine, and Church history; and sharing outstanding devotional essays. The beliefs of the respective authors do not necessarily reflect the views of the Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, or The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Complete author guidelines are provided at **rsc.byu.edu/RSCStyleGuide.pdf.** All manuscripts should be submitted electronically to **rsc@byu**.edu. Hard-copy submissions are accepted only if an electronic copy is included.

Manuscripts should be double-spaced, including quotations. Authors should follow style conventions of *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th edition, and the *Style Guide for Publications of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 3rd edition, as reflected in a recent issue of the *Religious Educator*.

Manuscripts will be evaluated by the following questions:

1. Does the manuscript address a clear *thesis*? Does the argument proceed *cautiously* and *logically*? Is the writing *clear*? Is it *engaging* and *interesting*? If not, why?

2. To what degree is the author *knowledgeable* on the topic as a whole, as shown, for example, by content, phrasing, contextualizing, thorough use of the best sources, and bibliography? Does the author adequately acknowledge and deal with opposing views? If not, why?

3. Does the manuscript present significant *new* data or *new* perspectives? What is its main contribution? Will people want to read this ten years from now? Does it make a contribution without resorting to sensationalism or controversy?

4. Does the author follow *the canons of responsible scholarship* (uses sound and fair methodology; documents arguable facts)? If not, why?

5. Is the manuscript faith-promoting? Is the piece in harmony with the established doctrine of the Church?

If a manuscript is accepted, authors will be notified and asked to provide photocopies of all source materials cited, arranged in order, numbered to match the endnotes, and highlighted to show the quotations or paraphrases. Photocopies of source material must include title page and source page with the highlighted quotations.

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