



4-1-2012

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Recommended Citation

Studies, BYU (2012) "Full Issue," *BYU Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 51 : Iss. 2 , Article 1.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol51/iss2/1>

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BYU Studies Quarterly is dedicated to the conviction that the spiritual and the intellectual can be complementary and fundamentally harmonious. It strives to publish articles that reflect a faithful point of view, are relevant to subjects of interest to Latter-day Saints, and conform to high scholarly standards. *BYU Studies Quarterly* also includes poetry, personal essays, reviews, and never-before-published documents of significant historical value to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Contributions from all fields of learning are invited, and readers everywhere are welcomed.



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J. Kirk Richards, *The Baptism of Christ*, oil on canvas. Courtesy J. Kirk Richards.

Understanding Christian Baptism through the Book of Mormon

Noel B. Reynolds

Latter-day Saint discourse has long featured and benefited from two different New Testament metaphors in explaining and understanding water baptism. The first is the near universal insight used widely by Christians and pagans alike that washing in water can signify spiritual purification, a washing away of sin or contamination (see Acts 22:15–16, “For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou has seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord”). The second is the more specifically Christian insight of Paul that immersion in water can represent the burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ (see Rom. 6:4, “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life”). What seems to have gone largely unnoticed in LDS discourse is that discussions of baptism in the Book of Mormon offer instead a third understanding of baptism: that baptism is a witnessing to God of one’s repentance and commitment to follow Jesus Christ. All three of these distinct portrayals can be seen as consistent with each other, and together they invite faithful followers to think more deeply about Christian baptism.

The claim that the Book of Mormon provides a well-developed and distinctive understanding of water baptism may be surprising to some of its readers. Nevertheless, the Nephite writers consistently explain baptism as a convert’s witness to the Father and to the people that the convert covenants to always remember Christ and to keep his commandments, with the understanding that the remission of sins then comes by fire and the Holy Ghost. In this article, I will analyze Book of Mormon teachings about baptism, explore possible connections to covenant traditions in ancient Israel

Noel B. Reynolds

This study of baptism is part of my long-range project to understand how the Book of Mormon presents the gospel or doctrine of Jesus Christ. First from a scholarly perspective, and then as a mission president, I have come to appreciate the clarity and power with which the Book of Mormon teaches this essential ordinance of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I am fascinated that the New Testament embraces the essential importance of baptism, as when Jesus commanded the Apostles to go and teach all nations, “baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19). Yet the New Testament leaves much unanswered about the intended meaning and actual functions of baptism in the process of conversion. As a result, a wide variety of eclectic baptismal practices and explanations proliferated in the early centuries of Christianity. In my own life and in the lives of baptismal candidates with whom I have worked, it makes all the difference in the world that baptism is seen as a voluntary covenantal act by the convert required for the remission of sins, which forgiveness always comes through the agency of the Holy Ghost—when sins are washed away, it is the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost sent by the Father, and not the waters of baptism, that accomplishes this forgiveness. To the extent that popular Christian or LDS understandings of baptism miss these plain and precious truths, which are clearly and consistently articulated by Book of Mormon writers, they miss many great and marvelous things.



and the New Testament, and examine the meaning of “baptism for the remissions of sins.” Then, after reviewing the range of possible meanings of baptism found in the New Testament, which one may harmonize through the Book of Mormon, I will discuss how instead of achieving harmony, the understanding of baptism in the first five Christian centuries ran in many directions of disharmony and confusion.

THE BOOK OF MORMON ON BAPTISM

While phrases such as “baptism . . . for the remission of sins” (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; and elsewhere), as well as the ritual process of immersion in water, can suggest to the mind the idea of being washed clean in the water, the Book of Mormon consistently points to a different symbolism: the making of a covenant. At least two studies have noted the preeminence of covenant in Book of Mormon discussions of baptism. Richard L. Anderson has said, “The Book of Mormon brings us closer to God because no scripture more specifically ties the Christian ordinances of baptism and the sacrament to the covenant concept.” Craig J. Ostler has written:

The subject of baptism is a familiar one in the New Testament. This is especially true of the Gospel accounts, in which their first common topic is the ministry of John the Baptist (Matthew 3; Mark 1; Luke 3; John 1). However, the importance of baptism as an ordinance of the gospel of Jesus Christ and an understanding of why baptism is given such a place of importance are not generally as familiar. . . . The Book of Mormon clarifies the covenant nature of baptism.¹

As I have explained in earlier essays,² the Book of Mormon writers consistently include water baptism as one element of what they call the “gospel” or “doctrine of Christ,” the way “whereby men can be saved in the kingdom of God” (2 Ne. 31:21). Three definitional passages, all quoting Jesus Christ or the Father, spell out this specific way in a six-point formula, namely that all must (1) believe or trust in Christ, exhibiting faith in him; (2) repent of their sinful ways, turning to God and accepting his direction in all things; and (3) make a commitment to obey the commandments of God and witness that covenant to the Father publicly by water baptism. All who take these steps in full sincerity are promised that (4) they will receive the remission of sins by the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost. But this spiritual rebirth alone is not enough. Nephi quotes both the Father and the Son telling him (5) that only those who then “endure to the end” (6) will be saved in the kingdom of God (2 Ne. 31:14–15). This article builds on these previous studies by showing more specifically how the Book of Mormon describes baptism as a convert’s public witness to the Father and how this ordinance precedes the remission of sins through the baptism of fire, sanctification, and ultimately exaltation.

Baptism Is a Witness of Repentance unto the Father

The Book of Mormon makes it clear that baptism of water is the divinely prescribed symbolic act whereby repentant converts to Jesus Christ can witness to the Father that they have repented and covenanted to keep his

commandments. The root passage that lays out this concept is found in 2 Nephi 31, in which Nephi saw the baptism of Christ in vision and understood it as the model for all people. Explaining the baptism of Jesus, Nephi says, “He humbleth himself before the Father, and witnesseth unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments” (2 Ne. 31:7). In his own voice, and quoting the Son, Nephi twice emphasizes that baptism is a witness to the Father of both a commitment to keep his commandments and a willingness to take the name of Christ upon oneself (2 Ne. 31:7, 13–14). Though Christ was sinless, Nephi explains, it was necessary for him to humble himself like the repentant convert and to witness publicly his covenant to be obedient to the Father. In this sense, Jesus himself had to be baptized “to fulfill all righteousness” (2 Ne. 31:5–6; compare Matt. 3:15); his baptism was more than a means to show sinners the way back to the Father.

All Book of Mormon baptismal accounts follow this model. After setting forth a set of obligations assumed in baptism (Mosiah 18:8–9), Alma invited Helam to be “baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you” (Mosiah 18:10).³ Then, at the waters of Mormon, Alma included in the baptismal prayer itself the characterization of baptism “as a testimony that ye have entered into a covenant to serve him [the Almighty God] until you are dead as to the mortal body” (Mosiah 18:13). After their conversion following the preaching of Ammon, the people of King Limhi desired “to be baptized as a witness and a testimony that they were willing to serve God with all their hearts” (Mosiah 21:35). Teaching the people of Gideon, the younger Alma used identical language and describes “going into the waters of baptism” as the means by which his converts can witness to their God that they are “willing to repent” and to “enter into a covenant with him to keep his commandments” (Alma 7:15). Immediately prior to the Savior’s visit to the Nephites after his resurrection, a later Nephi described baptism not only as “a witness and a testimony before God” but also as a witness “unto the people, that they had repented and received a remission of their sins” (3 Ne. 7:25). In teaching and administering the bread and wine to the Nephites personally, Jesus told them it was to be given “to those who repent and are baptized in my name” as a witness “unto the Father that ye are willing to do that which I have commanded you” and “that ye do always remember me” (3 Ne. 18:10–11).

It becomes clear in these texts that the decision to be baptized is made by the new converts and that the act of baptism itself is characterized as the converts’ witnessing publicly to the Father and the people that they have

repented of their sins and have entered into a covenant to take the name of Christ upon them and to keep his commandments from that time forward.⁴ According to Book of Mormon teaching, the decision to remit their sins is made by the Father. Remission of sins is accomplished when repentant converts are baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost—an experience which is sometimes characterized, following King Benjamin (Mosiah 5:6–7), as being born of God and which can occur before or after baptism—again emphasizing that it occurs at the discretion of the Father.

Joseph Smith is also on record using similar imagery: “Baptism is a sign ordained of God, for the believer in Christ to take upon himself in order to enter into the kingdom of God,” and again more explicitly, “Baptism is a sign to God, to angels, and to heaven that we do the will of God.”⁵ This teaching captures much of the central symbolism in the Book of Mormon accounts of baptism in water and may very well have been inspired by that source.

A surprising implication of this Book of Mormon language is that the covenant the convert signals at baptism is actually made before baptism and is the central element of repentance. Genuine repentance always includes a deliberate commitment by the penitent person to turn to Christ and walk in his path—taking his name upon oneself and keeping his commandments. Baptism and repentance are thus linked together: baptism completes repentance.

Indeed, the concept of repentance in Book of Mormon discourse focuses on the idea of “turning away” from the ways of the flesh or our own paths in life and choosing to walk with Jesus Christ in the straight and narrow path defined by his commandments and communicated to us by his servants or by the Holy Ghost.⁶ This turning is a choice, an act of human agency. The ideas of turning and coming unto Christ point to the covenantal aspect of repentance. Not only must the repentant sinner leave off sinning, he must also make a positive commitment to the Savior to keep his commandments, to enter the strait gate, and then to walk the straight and narrow path, as he comes unto Christ (2 Ne. 31:17–18). This covenant—to remember Christ always, to take the name of Christ upon oneself, and to keep all Christ’s commandments—is part of this process of turning and coming and is therefore a crucial element of repentance.

This is the covenant that is witnessed to God and to the entire world by the convert through baptism of water. The choice to repent is a choice to burn bridges in every other direction, deciding to follow forever only one way, the one path that leads to eternal life.⁷ It is this privately made covenant that will be witnessed publicly at baptism and periodically thereafter through the taking of the sacrament. And it is referred to appropriately as the “baptismal” covenant.

Alma articulated this plainly to the Nephites in Gideon when he invited them to “lay aside every sin” and “show unto your God that ye are willing to repent of your sins and enter into a covenant with him to keep his commandments, and witness it unto him this day by going into the waters of baptism” (Alma 7:15; see also 2 Ne. 31:7, 13–14). It is in this simple sense that those who repent “are the covenant people of the Lord” (2 Ne. 30:2).

Soon thereafter, Alma taught Zeezrom and others at Ammonihah that God “has all power to save every man that believeth on his name and bringeth forth fruit meet for repentance” (Alma 12:15, 33; 13:13; see also 34:30), and Mormon wrote to his son Moroni that “the first fruits of repentance is baptism” (Moro. 8:25). Repentance is incomplete without baptism, and baptism is meaningless and ineffective without repentance.

So, according to the Book of Mormon, baptism is essential for salvation: not only must all men and women repent, they must publicly witness to the Father that they have repented and that they will keep the commandments and take Christ’s name upon them for the rest of their lives. Jacob affirmed that “the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel,” commands “all men that they must repent, and be baptized in his name . . . or they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God” (2 Ne. 9:23–24). This requirement may have been news to Lehi and Nephi when they were shown the baptism of Jesus in their vision at the first camp in the wilderness. Evidence from the Bible and other ancient sources suggests that their fellow Israelites in 600 BC probably did not share this understanding. But Nephi made it standard for his people, and it continued through the practice of Alma and the Nephite church down to the time of Christ, when it was prominently reemphasized by the Savior himself in his visit to the Nephites. Describing the missionary successes just prior to the Savior’s visit, the record emphasizes that “there were none who were brought unto repentance who were not baptized with water” (3 Ne. 7:24).

The Partaking of Bread and Wine Reenacts the Covenantal Witnessing of Baptism

The covenantal nature of baptism is reaffirmed in the Book of Mormon by its understanding of the sacrament of the bread and wine as a renewal of the baptismal covenant. After the resurrected Christ himself instructed the Nephite Christians, they understood that the bread and wine symbolize and remind participants of his body and blood, sacrificed for all mankind and especially for those who will repent and be baptized.

And this shall ye do in remembrance of my body, which I have shown unto you. And it shall be a *testimony unto the Father* that ye do always remember me. . . . And this shall ye always do to those who repent and are baptized

in my name; and ye shall do it in remembrance of my blood, which I have shed for you, that ye may *witness unto the Father* that ye do always remember me. And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you. (3 Ne. 18:7, 11, emphasis added)⁸

The prescribed sacrament prayers (Moro. 4:3; 5:2) precisely recapitulate the converts' witnessing to the Father, renewing their prior witness of the covenant they had made to take upon themselves the name of Christ, to keep his commandments, and to remember him always. The prayers also include a reminder of the promise from the Father that those who do these things will "have his Spirit to be with them"—to cleanse of sins, to witness of the Father and the Son, and to guide those who are striving to endure to the end, telling them "all things what [they] should do" (2 Ne. 32:5; see also 2 Ne. 31:18; 3 Ne. 11:35–36). While the Book of Mormon only speaks of covenanting in the process of conversion at one point in that process, namely at the time of repentance (Mosiah 5:2–9), the Nephites were commanded to bear witness of that covenant not only that one time through baptism but also repeatedly by participation in the sacrament (3 Ne. 18:7, 11, 12; Moro. 6:6). The regular recapitulation of the baptismal witnessing was apparently designed to strengthen participants in their continuing efforts to remember their Lord Jesus and to endure to the end.

The Remission of Sins—The Spiritual Rebirth

If the Book of Mormon prophets understood baptism as a witnessing to God and not a washing by God, how did they understand the remission of sins and its connection to baptism? The gospel or doctrine of Christ, as delineated most clearly in the Book of Mormon through the words of his prophets and of Christ himself, spells out the way in which fallen and sinful men in the world can find their way to holiness and eternal life with God.⁹ The Book of Mormon description of this process is emphatically dialogic in character,¹⁰ requiring a succession of actions and responses between the individual man or woman and the Father. One significant problem with seeing baptism as the event that cleanses the convert from sin is that it confuses the agency involved; it misconceives the convert's required action as God's. This can be clearly demonstrated by a consideration of the principal elements of the gospel message.

Men and women encounter the gospel first as a commandment or invitation to repent and come unto Christ. This message may come from a book of scripture, a missionary, or another follower of Christ, but ultimately the invitation comes from Christ and the Father themselves. One central purpose of this world is to provide an environment in which the spirit children of the Father can choose whether or not and to what extent they will respond to

this invitation. The hearer may choose to resist or ignore the call, or he can respond positively by implicitly trusting in Christ (exercising faith) and fully repenting (covenanting to follow him). This is all a very private dialogue in the heart and soul of the individual. But the covenant is witnessed publicly when the responsive individual submits to water baptism—“a witness and a testimony before God, and unto the people” (3 Ne. 7:25). The promised response from the Father, depending on the sincerity of the repentance, is the remission of sins that comes, at the discretion of the Father, through “the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost” (2 Ne. 31:17). But this is not the end of the dialogic interaction, for the person baptized has only entered the gate that leads to the straight and narrow way to eternal life. The convert must now “endure to the end,” an intensely dialogic process in which one must seek and receive the guidance of the Holy Ghost continuously, which will “show unto you all things what ye should do” to become holy and to fulfill the covenant made previously as part of one’s repentance (2 Ne. 32:5). The final step in this process comes at the judgment when the Lord bestows eternal life and celestial glory on those who have sought his guidance and endured to the end in this way. Jacob provides a succinct summary: “And he commandeth all men that they must repent, and be baptized in his name, having perfect faith in the Holy One of Israel, or they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God. And if they will not repent and believe in his name, and be baptized in his name, and endure to the end, they must be damned; for the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, has spoken it” (2 Ne. 9:23–24).

This dialogic process sorts out quite simply. The invitation or commandment to repent comes to one from God. The individual responds by resisting or accepting. Acceptance of the invitation is an act of faith that requires repentance, including a covenant to follow Christ and take his name upon oneself. Repentance is demonstrably completed when the convert enters the waters of baptism as a witness to God and all men that he or she has in fact made this covenant. The dialogue continues as the Father then responds to these acts of the repentant person by sending the promised remission of sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost, which also witnesses of the Father and the Son to the person baptized (2 Ne. 31:17–18, 3 Ne. 11:35–36). In the following and longest phase of the dialogue, the newly baptized member seeks daily guidance and receives it through the Holy Ghost in a continuing process until the end of his or her mortal life, after which the Lord completes the dialogue and welcomes the person into his presence and grants the long-promised celestial glory and eternal life. In contrast, the Protestant Reformation doctrine that men can do nothing essential to influence this process completely contradicts the crucial dialogic process described in the Book of Mormon. Similarly, the baptism of infants and

young children, who do not sin and are not required to repent, is forbidden in the Book of Mormon.¹¹

The frequently repeated command of the Lord to all people that they should “come unto me” strongly reinforces the Book of Mormon interpretation of baptism as the act of the person baptized, which may subsequently be rewarded in a reciprocal act of the Father, who sends the remission of sins. The most common elaborations of the phrase “come unto me” incorporate both repentance and baptism into that invitation. Nephi makes this clear: “The gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water; and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost” (2 Ne. 31:17). Mormon specifies, “As many as did come unto them [the church leaders], and did truly repent of their sins, were baptized in the name of Jesus, and they did also receive the Holy Ghost” (4 Ne. 1:1). In closing the book of 3 Nephi, Mormon quotes Christ’s invitation to the future Gentile nations to “repent . . . and come unto me, and be baptized in my name, that ye may receive a remission of your sins, and be filled with the Holy Ghost” (3 Ne. 30:2). When he first speaks from heaven to the Nephite survivors of the great destructions, Jesus twice teaches them that “whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost” (3 Ne. 9:20).¹²

In light of this dialogic sequence, it is clear that the Nephite prophets did not conflate the convert’s submission to baptism with the Father’s remission of sins. The baptism of water and the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost are intimately connected but are radically distinguished as separate events initiated by different agents.¹³ The distinction is crucial, as the following discussion of the remission of sins and how the Book of Mormon prophets distinguished it from water baptism will show.

With apparently the same idea that Christ can forgive our sins through his Atonement and the shedding of his own blood, Alma inquires of his straying flock in Zarahemla if they can say that their sin-stained “garments have been cleansed and made white through the blood of Christ” (Alma 5:27). But these scriptures do not identify baptism as an ordinance that would bring remission of sins. Rather, Alma specifies that he has been called to teach them “that they must repent and be born again” (Alma 5:49) like the humble and repentant converts who have previously been “sanctified by the Holy Spirit” (Alma 5:54). To all who would receive this message, Alma issues an invitation: “Come and be baptized unto repentance, that ye also may be partakers of the fruit of the tree of life” (Alma 5:62).

Nowhere in Alma’s teachings are the waters of baptism equated with the blood of Christ, which can cleanse the repentant sinner or his sin-stained garments. Book of Mormon writers consistently regard the Holy Spirit as the

cleansing agent. The principle of cleansing is set forth initially by Nephi as he recounts what he learned in his vision of the baptism of Jesus Christ, during which he was instructed in the basic principles of the gospel or doctrine of Christ by the voices of both the Father and the Son. He summarizes, “The gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water; *and then cometh a remission of your sins* by fire and by the Holy Ghost” (2 Ne. 31:17, emphasis added). A dramatic example of this reception of the Holy Ghost in purifying power is reported at the conclusion of King Benjamin’s sermon. Overcome by “the fear of the Lord” and viewing their own sinful state, the people cried:

O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified; for we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. . . . And it came to pass that after they had spoken these words the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they were filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins, and having peace of conscience, because of the exceeding faith which they had in Jesus Christ who should come. (Mosiah 4:1, 2–3; compare 11–12)

As Benjamin’s people respond, recognizing the “mighty change” in their hearts wrought by “the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent,” they profess a willingness “to enter into a covenant with [their] God to do his will, and to be obedient to his commandments in all things” (Mosiah 5:2, 5). Benjamin then explains to them that because of this experience and their righteous covenant, they will be “called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters,” for they have been “spiritually begotten” of him, for their “hearts are changed through faith on his name,” and they “are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters” (Mosiah 5:6–7). In this passage, they recognize the blood of Christ as the price paid for their sins, the Spirit as the cleansing agent, and the covenant as the means by which they become Christ’s children.¹⁴

Alma used Benjamin’s terminology of spiritual rebirth to describe his own conversion experience. The dramatic confrontation with the angel left the wicked young Alma helpless and unconscious for over two days. As he revived, following the fasting and prayers of his father and the other priests, he stood and announced that, after repenting of his sins, he had been redeemed and “born of the Spirit” (Mosiah 27:24). He then reported the Lord’s words to him while in his coma, where he was told that all mankind “must be born again” or “born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters” (Mosiah 27:25). In his later preaching, Alma would call upon others to “repent and be born again” (Alma 5:49) and be baptized that they “may be washed from [their] sins” (Alma 7:14).

Taken by itself Alma 7:14 has sometimes been read to indicate that baptism of water washes away sins, but the ensuing verse 15 makes it clear that for Alma baptism is a witness to God:

Now I say unto you that ye must repent, and be born again; for the Spirit saith if ye are not born again ye cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven; therefore come and be baptized unto repentance, that ye may be washed from your sins, that ye may have faith on the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world, who is mighty to save and to cleanse from all unrighteousness. Yea, I say unto you come and fear not, and lay aside every sin, which easily doth beset you, which doth bind you down to destruction, yea, come and go forth, and show unto your God that ye are willing to repent of your sins and enter into a covenant with him to keep his commandments, *and witness it unto him this day by going into the waters of baptism.* (Alma 7:14–15, emphasis added)

Baptism is a step that God requires of converts, but it is he who will wash away sins through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The agency is preserved here: Alma says “*be washed*”; the convert does not wash away his own sins by being baptized. The wording “come and be baptized unto repentance, that ye may be washed from your sins” can be read grammatically to mean that it is the repentance, not the baptism, that leads to being washed from sins. Further, the context of the language of spiritual rebirth used by Jesus, Nephi, and Alma in the Book of Mormon indicates clearly that it is the Spirit or Holy Ghost who brings the remission of sins. Alma also teaches that no man can be saved “except his garments are washed white, . . . purified, . . . [and] cleansed from all stain, through the blood” of the prophesied Redeemer (Alma 5:21).

One might reasonably wonder at this point about the dual imagery: On the one hand sinners must be washed clean in the blood of the Lamb. On the other, it is the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost that brings the remission of sins, purifying people in a remarkable personal experience that leaves them feeling clean and free of sin. The first image is particularly arresting because human experience shows that blood is one of the most difficult and filthy contaminants to remove from clothing. Rather than cleansing white things, it stains them permanently. No doubt, the prophets who employed this image in their writings intended to emphasize the miraculous effects of the sacrifice of his own blood by which Christ gained the power to remit our sins. But it is only a metaphor, and no blood is sprinkled on the convert or his clothes. Rather, the Holy Ghost is sent by the Father as the active agent that purges souls of sin, so that converts have no more desire to sin. The power of combining the two images is demonstrated in Alma’s account of the ancient order of high priests:

[And they] were sanctified, and their garments were washed white through the blood of the Lamb. Now they, after being sanctified by the Holy Ghost, having their garments made white, being pure and spotless before God, could not look upon sin save it were with abhorrence; and there were many, exceedingly great many, who were made pure and entered into the rest of the Lord their God. (Alma 13:11–12)

All of these passages understand that the cleansing is done by the Spirit and they conform to the Savior's final teaching to the Nephite disciples that "whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled" with the Holy Ghost (3 Ne. 27:16; see also 3 Ne. 12:6). All men are commanded to repent and come unto him and be baptized in his name, that they "may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost," that through the resurrection they may "stand spotless before [him] at the last day" (3 Ne. 27:20; see also Moro. 6:4). Moroni ends the Book of Mormon on this note, pointing to the fact that it is this purification from God alone that produces the perfection required of men by God. He then summarizes the full gospel message by inviting all men to "come unto Christ, and be perfected in him. . . . And again, if ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy, without spot" (Moro. 10:32–33). This would seem to have been Nephi's meaning almost a thousand years earlier when he said, "For we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do" (2 Ne. 25:23).

It may be useful at this point to refer briefly to the profound account of Adam's baptism preserved in the report of Enoch's preaching, as restored by Joseph Smith in his new translation of the Bible (Moses 6:51–68). Because this passage is fully compatible with the Nephite record, I consider here only its uniquely formulated conclusion: "For by the water ye keep the commandment; by the Spirit ye are justified, and by the blood ye are sanctified" (Moses 6:60). In other words, converts keep the commandment to repent and witness that repentance to the Father by going into the waters of baptism; the Father then justifies them, remits their sins, or enables their righteousness by cleansing them with his Spirit—by baptizing them with fire and with the Holy Ghost; and through the sanctifying power of Christ's atoning blood, all men and women who have thus entered in by the way can become sanctified as they endure to the end in obedience to Christ and his commandments, as guided by the Holy Ghost. While this exceptionally detailed and rich account given to Enoch to be taught to "all men, everywhere" (Moses 6:57) is fully compatible with the Book of Mormon prophets, it does not provide interpretive insights that extend beyond what is found

in the Nephite writings, and so I will not refer to it or explore it and related scriptures further.

Reconciling the Baptismal Symbols of Witnessing and Washing Away (or Remitting) Sins

It seems significant that Alma and subsequent Book of Mormon writers do not seem to claim originality for the symbols or metaphors they use in explaining baptism. Rather than taking literary license, they seem to see themselves as faithfully preserving a vocabulary that has come originally from the Father and the Son in direct speech as recorded by Nephi in his extended account of his vision of the baptism of Christ in 2 Nephi 31.¹⁵

The Book of Mormon understanding of baptism as a witness by the convert to the Father, combined with the understanding that remission of sins comes by fire and the Holy Ghost, sheds important light on a number of scriptures that could suggest that baptism washes away our sins. For example, when the Savior invites future Gentiles to “come unto me, and be baptized in my name, *that ye may* receive a remission of your sins, and be filled with the Holy Ghost” (3 Ne. 30:2, emphasis added), one can see that baptism is the culmination of the repentance process, all of which is necessary for the remission of sins, and that being filled with the Holy Ghost is the means by which that remission will come after the ordinance of baptism.

Phrases sequencing baptism as a precursor to the remission of sins are likewise seen in the Doctrine and Covenants and the Articles of Faith. For example, Martin Harris is told to “declare repentance and faith on the Savior, and remission of sins by baptism, and by fire, yea, even the Holy Ghost” (D&C 19:31). This conforms readily with the Book of Mormon pattern. The wording of a similar message given to Ezra Thayre and Northrop Sweet seems to articulate explicitly the same clarification: “repent and be baptized, every one of you, for a remission of your sins; yea, be baptized even by water, and then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost” (D&C 33:11). Similar language appears in Article of Faith 4: “baptism by immersion for the remission of sins.” And Doctrine and Covenants 20:5 and 55:1 make it clear that remission of sins is *received* from God, not taken or done by the convert.

INTERACTING WITH NEW TESTAMENT UNDERSTANDINGS OF BAPTISM

With the Book of Mormon understanding of baptism clearly in mind, one may compare and elucidate the meanings and metaphors of baptism found in the New Testament. The publication of Everett Ferguson’s monumental 900-page *Baptism in the Early Church* in 2009 makes this an opportune time

to draw such comparisons. While scholarly interest in Christian baptism was manifest through much of the last century, Ferguson's comprehensive work has brought discussions of all dimensions of the topic to a new level of clarity and documentation.¹⁶ In this exhaustive study, he brings together a careful reading and comparison of all relevant texts from the first five Christian centuries and the scholarly literature that has arisen from them, showing the variety of competing understandings and practices that sprang up. Ferguson reports baptismal practices as recorded in the New Testament, in the writings of early Christian Fathers, and in other Christian sources. These records give evidence of variant practices regarding issues such as the authority required to perform baptism; the required steps of baptism, such as instruction, repentance, confession, oaths, and renunciation of Satan; and the mode of baptism, such as the number of immersions, anointing, foot washing, the spoken ceremony, receiving the Holy Spirit, association with the Eucharist, and baptism of children. While Ferguson's efforts can help unravel baptism's symbolism and meaning and have identified a collection of unresolved issues, Ferguson cannot resolve all of them, and in fact this shows why the Bible and early Christian writings will probably never be sufficient to settle the debates over the practice of baptism as Jesus originally taught it or to answer the questions about how baptism should be understood or practiced today. For Latter-day Saints, the Book of Mormon provides coherent and attractive resolutions to many of these historical and theological disputes, as the following examples illustrate.

John's Baptism *unto (eis)* Repentance and Remission

All New Testament accounts of baptism derive directly or indirectly from Christian understandings of the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist.¹⁷ The similarities and differences between baptisms performed by John and the water baptism as instituted by Jesus and his disciples are never articulated in scripture, leaving it unclear how the baptisms performed by John and the disciples of Jesus should be understood. While numerous scholars have claimed to find precedents for Christian baptism in both Jewish and non-Jewish ritual washings and convert initiations, Ferguson's careful review of all these claims finds them wanting¹⁸ and vindicates the observation of Albrecht Oepke that the Christians' coinage of a new term (*baptisma*) for their singular ritual reflects their understanding that it was to be distinguished from all these earlier practices (*baptismos*).¹⁹

Three basic texts report that John the Baptist was "preaching the baptism of repentance *for (eis)* the remission of sins" (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; emphasis added) or that he was baptizing "with water *unto (eis)* repentance" (Matt. 3:11,

emphasis added). One of the questions arising from this language concerns the meaning of the Greek preposition *eis*, which is translated in these passage as “for” or “unto,” but which can also be translated as “with regard to” or “in order to,” thus giving us the translations “baptism with regard to repentance” and “baptism of repentance in order to bring about the remission of sins.” These alternate translations fit easily with the Book of Mormon teaching, which portrays baptism as an act of the convert that completes the repentance process—and often signals that meaning by use of the phrase “baptized unto repentance.”²⁰

The baptismal language of the synoptic Gospels echoes that of John the Baptist, who is quoted as saying that he baptized *with water* in contrast to the one following who would baptize *with fire and with the Holy Ghost* (Luke 3:16; see also Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:4). What is the role of water in baptism? The answer is far from settled. While traditional Christian interpretations of these passages often have assumed that water baptism itself brings the remission of sins, others understand that remission of sins is accomplished by the Holy Spirit—a view that finds support in writings from Qumran.²¹ Likewise, traditional translators and commentators—many of them nineteenth- and twentieth-century Protestant ministers—have commonly seen this phrase as indicating that water baptism completes repentance and is necessary for full repentance or as a testimony or external sign that one has repented,²² while in addition their references to John’s baptism usually include an indication that the baptism is “for the remission of sins,” or they refer to the “baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost” that will follow.

Illuminated by these examples of discrepancies, the New Testament baptismal language associated with John the Baptist, which seems to link the remission of sins directly to baptism, can be clarified. The root references (Mark 1:4 and Luke 3:3) stipulate that baptism is “*of repentance* for the remission of sins” (emphasis added). That qualification may well invoke the same point as the Book of Mormon, that baptism is the completion or fulfillment of repentance. The related formulation “baptize you with water unto repentance,” which occurs both in Matthew 3:11 and in the Book of Mormon, even more clearly portrays baptism as a completion of the repentance process.²³

The Agent of Remission

Several New Testament passages using this language go on to refer directly to the Spirit, suggesting that the Holy Ghost will be the means by which the resulting remission of sins can come. I suggest that “baptism for the remission of sins” can be read as a shortened version of “baptism completes

repentance, and remission of sins comes separately through the Holy Spirit.” This interpretation is strengthened by the fact that none of these passages²⁴ mentions both the remission of sins *and* the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost. Rather, they mention one or the other, suggesting that for John the Baptist and his hearers these may have been equivalent. Only later does Peter bring these two phrases together at Pentecost: “Repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for . . . all” (Acts 2:38, NIV), which still can be understood as a sequential process in which the purification of sin is brought about by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

The idea taught by Alma in the Book of Mormon, that fallen men could repent and be washed clean in the blood of Christ, was also taught, just that simply, in the New Testament. But in neither of these books of scripture does the washing in blood necessarily refer to water baptism. John the Revelator spoke of Christ as the one “who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood” (Rev. 1:5) and preached that “if we walk in the light . . . the blood of Jesus Christ . . . cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).²⁵ These scriptures do not identify baptism as an ordinance that would bring remission of sins.

Symbolic Meanings of Baptism

Baptism acquired a wide range of symbolic meanings in New Testament times, including burial and resurrection, entrance into the household of God, supersession of pagan ways, or Jewish circumcision. Not only was it seen as a recapitulation of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in the spiritual life of every convert (Rom. 6:4–6), it was also seen significantly as a symbol of his or her entry into the church, the community of believers (Acts 2:38–41). This seems to be Paul’s only meaning when he says “we [are] all baptized into one body” (1 Cor. 12:13) and when he says that converts have “been baptized into Christ” and, having “put on Christ,” are therefore “all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:27–28). Addressing the Colossians, Paul makes the related point that because Christ has triumphed over all other claimed spiritual principalities and powers, his followers need no longer worship or revere traditional ritual practices or shrines. Rather, their baptism is “the circumcision of Christ,” or a symbol of the new covenant, referring implicitly to the circumcision of the flesh that had long been the symbol for Israelites of the covenant of Abraham to be obedient to Jehovah and to be known as his people (Col. 2:8–20, especially 11).

While this variety of symbolic meanings enjoys a sense of richness and fullness, it should not be allowed to overshadow the essential role of baptism as a public witness of the convert's internal commitment. Interestingly, while Joseph Smith clearly saw the covenantal element of baptism, he still felt compelled to clarify the meaning of Colossians 2, by stating that "circumcision is not baptism," and that while circumcision was appropriate for infants under the law of Moses, baptism for the remission of sins cannot be rightly administered to sinless children under the gospel of Jesus Christ.²⁶ Paul presciently warned against false baptismal symbolisms that strayed off the path. Denying any latitude for multiple interpretations of the faith, he stressed the unity of the baptized community (Eph. 4:4–6). He forcefully reminded the Corinthians that in baptism, it is the name of Christ only that they have taken upon themselves, and not the name of the missionary who taught and baptized them (1 Cor. 1:12–13).

Immersion Witnesses the Making of a Covenant

The most thorough and recent historical scholarship identifies very early Christian teachings and practices that strongly suggest their earliest formulations may well have been identical with those found in the Book of Mormon. Ben Witherington, a leading Evangelical theologian, follows Augustine and sees in baptism as understood in the New Testament church what is essentially a symbol, "a sign of a covenant," or a pledge to live the Christian life, combined with an appeal to God to bless one to be able to keep that pledge.²⁷ This conclusion, reached after his exhaustive review of previous scholarly literature on the topic, is surprisingly close to the language of the Book of Mormon. It echoes earlier conclusions reached by François Bovon that, for the earliest Christians, baptism was a sign of the covenant.²⁸ This understanding of baptism reaches back into the New Testament. Ferguson includes 1 Peter 3:20–21 in his survey of New Testament texts and explains why he interprets this difficult passage to say that "baptism is a pledge of loyalty to God; it proceeds from a motive of inner purity and is not an act of external cleansing."²⁹ Ferguson relies on John H. Elliott's recent translation: "Baptism now saves you too—not [as] a removal of filth from the body, but [as] a *pledge* to God of a sound mindfulness of God's will" (emphasis added).³⁰ This single New Testament passage, seen by one prominent commentator as "the nearest approach to a definition [of baptism] that the New Testament affords,"³¹ suggests that the earliest Christians may have principally understood the symbolism of baptism in much the same way as did the Book of Mormon prophets.

In his comprehensive review and critique of original sources and scholarly interpretations, Ferguson emphasizes the role of baptism itself as a sign and finds that New Testament writers persistently associated baptism with a spiritual cleansing and the gift of the Holy Spirit, which Paul saw as a divine seal of the covenant and the equivalent of circumcision. So “those who brought spiritual circumcision into relation to baptism made the equation most often not of baptism itself with circumcision but saw baptism as the occasion for the inward circumcision by the Spirit.”³² This would explain why both baptism and the anointing and laying on of hands related to the Holy Spirit were referred to as seals (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13) and why the two ordinances were permanently conflated in Christian practices by the third century.

This leads directly to other unanswered questions: If baptism is not to be understood as a washing away of sin, what is the connection between witnessing a covenant and being immersed in water? In the same vein, why is it necessary in the weekly witnessing of the covenant that covenanters eat the bread and drink the wine/water? There are obviously two levels of symbolism here; the acts of submitting to baptism and of taking the sacrament each constitute a witnessing to the Father. But what then do the baptismal waters represent? And while we are told directly in scripture and in the sacrament prayers themselves that the bread and wine/water represent the body and blood (life) of Christ sacrificed for us, the scriptural accounts do not explain why we must ingest them.

While Paul’s attractive metaphor that immersion represents death, burial, and rebirth (Rom. 6:4) comes to mind immediately as symbolizing a type of ritual ordeal, I will focus first on the traditional practices more commonly associated with covenant making in ancient Israel, upon which, on first impression, Paul seems to build. Bible scholars have noticed a profound and detailed similarity between Israelite covenant practices and formulae and the treaty covenants of their ancient neighbors, an enduring pattern that is also reflected in the Book of Mormon. Understanding the ancient Israelite treaty-covenant pattern may cast some light on the scriptural accounts of baptism and sacrament. Key elements identified in those ancient traditions that might have explanatory value for our questions include witnesses and oaths, curses and blessings.

Witnesses and Oaths. The ancient treaty covenant was “essentially an elaborate oath” and required witnesses.³³ Local gods were commonly invoked in this role as they would be around a long time and could carry out punishments against covenant breakers. But heaven and earth and even rocks and hills in the locale could serve as witnesses as well, as is the case repeatedly in the biblical examples. The ceremonies used anciently for

swearing to a covenant took various forms. As Delbert Hillers documents, these could require eating together or drinking from a cup. More frequently, they involved cutting up an animal. Israelite covenanters would walk in single file between the cut parts, a practice that is preserved in the modern Samaritan Passover. Or the covenanter could make a sign, such as drawing his finger across his throat, indicating the consequences he would expect if he breaks the covenant. (On a related note, perhaps the sacrament prayers instruct recipients to remember Christ's sacrifice of blood and body as a reminder that if they do not remain faithful to their covenants, they will have to suffer for their own sins.)

Linking Christian baptism to these ancient antecedents shows a striking connection between immersion and drowning. The word the earliest Christians used for baptism, the Greek verb *baptizo*, carried the meaning of being overwhelmed by water or of sinking, as in the sinking of a ship.³⁴ Clearly, immersion could be used to signal how death or punishment could come to the potential covenant breaker. Mircea Eliade confirms that, universally, "immersion is the equivalent . . . of death."³⁵ Water baptism is obviously a different sort of covenant-making action than killing animals and signing violent consequences of broken oaths, and I have found no scriptural or historical explanations for that difference. It can, however, be noted that while the penalties indicated in those ancient treaties were literal dismemberment and physical death, the promised cursing for breakers of the baptismal covenant is spiritual death. Spiritual death would leave the body unmarked, and so would death by drowning. This interesting common aspect could explain the use of immersion in water for the baptismal witness or oath.

Cursings and blessings. The ancient covenant formulae also included lists of cursings and blessings that would come to the recipient according to whether he violated or observed the terms of the covenant. The oaths, as described above, implicitly or explicitly referred to these cursings, which often included a violent death. The eating and the drinking from the cup was one way that these curses could be infused "into the very body of the swearer."³⁶ This might explain why the tokens of the Savior's body and blood must be ingested (compare Num. 5:23–24). This speculation requires a strong link between baptism and the sacrament that is not recognized by modern scholars of the early church but is fundamental to LDS understanding of the sacrament as presented and explained to the Nephites in the Book of Mormon by the Savior himself.³⁷ Everett Ferguson, for example, explains the eventual association of the Eucharist with baptism as an accidental development from the fact that baptisms were often administered on the first day of the week—as was the Eucharist.³⁸

Applying this model to baptism and the sacrament suggests that the blessings could correspond to the promise that in this life the obedient recipient “may always have his Spirit to be with him” (Moro. 4:3, 5:2) and that he might receive eternal life in the life to come. The cursing that is not mentioned in the sacrament prayers but that is fully discussed in many other places is spiritual death, which is the direct opposite of the promised blessings—the withdrawal of his Spirit or being cut off from the presence of the Lord in this life, and the second death in the world to come. The spiritual nature of these cursings and blessings is emphasized in the Book of Mormon when the Savior warns against allowing the unworthy to partake of the bread and wine, for he “eateth and drinketh damnation to his soul” (3 Ne. 18:29), but the righteous partaker is promised that he will eat “of my body to his soul” and drink “of my blood to his soul; and his soul shall never hunger nor thirst, but shall be filled” (3 Ne. 20:8). Or, as the Savior puts it in his third major presentation of his gospel to the Nephites, “And he that endureth not unto the end, the same is he that is also hewn down and cast into the fire, from whence they can no more return, because of the justice of the Father” (3 Ne. 27:17). This also fits well with the New Testament account of spiritual birth or being born again, which is also emphasized by Alma, who was told by the Lord to “marvel not that all mankind . . . must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness,” thus becoming “new creatures” (Mosiah 27:25, 26). For that experience to have lasting value, the convert must be baptized and receive the Holy Ghost and endure to the end, obeying the commandments and the promptings of the Spirit. The failure to endure in this manner will result in spiritual death.

Baptism as a Symbol of Death, Burial, and Rebirth

Returning now to Paul’s metaphor that baptism reenacts the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 6:4), one likely explanation for Paul’s baptism-as-burial metaphor could be that it exactly captures the universal symbol of immersion in and coming up out of the water as a death and rebirth, a symbolism that would have been well known to Paul’s listeners in the religious world of the Mediterranean. According to Eliade:

In cosmogony, in myth, ritual and iconography, water fills the same function in whatever type of cultural pattern we find it; it *precedes* all forms and *upholds* all creation. Immersion in water symbolizes a return to the pre-formal, a total regeneration, a new birth, for immersion means a dissolution of forms, a reintegration into the formlessness of pre-existence; and emerging from the water is a repetition of the act of creation in which

form was first expressed. Every contact with water implies regeneration: first, because dissolution is succeeded by a “new birth”, and then because immersion fertilizes, increases the potential of life and of creation. In initiation rituals, water confers a “new birth”, in magic rituals it heals, and in funeral rites it assures rebirth after death. Because it incorporates in itself all potentiality, water becomes a symbol of life (“living water”).³⁹

It is easy to see why this universal symbolism of immersion would appeal to Paul as a powerful tool for making some of his points to Christian members, just as it has proven attractive and useful to so many early Christian theologians and to scripture interpreters of the Restoration. It vividly invokes the imagery of death and rebirth. “Water purifies and regenerates because it nullifies the past,” says Eliade.⁴⁰ This may be the context for Ezekiel’s prophecy of a future day of which Yahweh promises: “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you” (Ezek. 36:25; compare Zech. 13:1). As Eliade points out, this interpretation permeates numerous patristic writings and is eloquently developed in different centuries by such important Christian writers as Tertullian and John Chrysostom. Similarly, he finds plentiful examples in Greek and Roman literature. It is reflected in the ritual immersions of the statues of divinities, particularly of goddesses, and was “very common in the cults of Cretan and Phoenician goddesses, and among certain Germanic tribes. . . . This immemorial and oecumenical symbolism of immersion as an instrument of purification and regeneration was adopted by Christianity and given still richer religious meaning,” namely the redemption of the soul.⁴¹

As a ritual enactment of death, burial, and rebirth, baptism for Paul may have had some connection to the traditional covenant ceremonies of Israel, but this popular metaphor actually transforms the structure of those ceremonies, for he represents the “old man . . . of sin” (Rom. 6:6) as something we leave in the waters of baptism, to rise with new life as did Christ in the resurrection. Although this imagery is both beautiful and inspiring and has successfully captured the attention of many Latter-day Saints, it is also unique to Paul and does not seem to fit easily with the covenant language of the scriptures or Israelite tradition. While this idea of baptism can be equated with Alma’s being born again, which brings newness of life for the repentant sinner, the metaphor of rebirth does not overtly accommodate the threatened spiritual death or curse that is acknowledged by a covenanter as he swears to keep the covenant and promises not to fall back into his sinful ways. Nor does it recognize that the spiritual rebirth is usually expected to have followed repentance and thus to have preceded baptism

itself. As noted previously, many of the Nephite prophet-interpreters saw in baptism the witness of the person being baptized to the fact that they have repented sincerely and thus have already been born again.

While it is easy to appreciate the rhetorical power invoked by this universal symbolism in Christian and LDS discourse, Restoration scriptures point Latter-day Saints back to the covenant traditions of Adam, Abraham, and Moses as the more promising contexts for explicating baptismal and sacramental symbolism.

THE WIDE PROLIFERATION OF BAPTISMAL THEORIES AND PRACTICES

As has been shown, the Book of Mormon and the New Testament both employ a similar set of symbolic ways of understanding baptism. While the post-Apostolic Christian understanding and experience could have been that small set of explanations harmoniously embracing the doctrine that baptism was the witness of a covenant or pledge made by repentant believers, the early centuries of Christianity saw instead a wide proliferation of theories and practices concerning baptism. Were only adults to be baptized, or infants too? Were children to be baptized, and, if so, at what age? Was baptism to be performed after instruction and training, or was it enough for a baptismal candidate simply to confess belief in Jesus Christ? Was baptism to be performed by sprinkling, pouring, or full immersion, and by what authority? Did baptism have salvific value, or was it merely a public expression or token of admission into the community? Was the resultant purification brought about by God or by the convert's self-dedication? This is not the place to recapitulate the works of Ferguson and others who have explored in depth the variegated history of baptism. The point here is that Christianity wandered off in disarray in many direction and paths, but it did not need to have been that way. When the covenantal function of baptism is discarded, however, one must invent new answers to such questions as what is the purpose of baptism, and what does the ordinance of baptism mean or symbolize? The answers turn out to be wide ranging, precisely because everything is up for reinterpretation once the anchor is lost. As early as the second century, the covenantal core of the Christian ordinance of baptism had been set aside, along with other ordinances of priesthood ordination and marriage—as these would be understood through the lens of the Restoration—and had been replaced with the understanding of sacraments as blessings or infusions of grace in the recipient through the mediation of the priest, which consequently became standard in the Christian world.⁴² While there is not space here for a review of their various arguments, we

can note a few interesting connections and contrasts with the Book of Mormon view. Instead of these ordinances facilitating the acts of covenanting by their participants, they came to be seen as blessings from God to the recipients—a fundamental transformation.

This trajectory in the evolution of the Eucharist provides a good case in point.⁴³ Encouraged by the synoptic Gospels, many scholars have seen the Last Supper as a Passover meal, with Jesus himself as the sacrificial lamb who would spill his blood to redeem Israel. In this vein, Solomon Zeitlin concluded that “the institution of the Eucharist is really based on the Jewish custom . . . of giving thanks to God on the first night of Passover for their redemption, over unleavened bread and a cup of wine.”⁴⁴ But seeing the Eucharist merely as thanksgiving ignores its essential connection to baptism and to the covenant. Yet one of the earliest Christian texts on the subject (*Didache* 9:1–5) presents the sacrament only as an act of thanksgiving for “the life and knowledge” that had been revealed through Jesus, but curiously it also stipulated that only the baptized could participate: “Let no one eat or drink of your thanksgiving [meal] save those who have been baptized in the name of the Lord, since the Lord has said concerning this, ‘Do not give what is holy to the dogs,’”⁴⁵ evidently reflecting some early but soon lost understanding of baptism as a covenantal entrance requirement into the Christian community that was connected with the eating of the Eucharist. Eventually, the full divergence between Eucharist and baptism was theologically completed, as is exemplified in a recent statement by Ben Witherington: he wrote that the Lord’s Supper is “something one must be able to actively partake of,” requiring conscious reflection or remembrance, but “baptism is a passive sacrament, something done for the individual.”⁴⁶

A survey of reference works by Catholic and Protestant scholars shows that while they have tended to emphasize the baptismal symbolism of Romans 6, they also note other competing formulations that are thought to have influenced Christian understandings at different times and places. Many scholars have argued for a direct connection between Jewish purifications and washings and Christian baptisms; there is widespread acceptance of the idea that Christian baptism may derive from Jewish proselyte baptism, which H. H. Rowley has characterized as “not an act of ritual purification alone but an act of self-dedication to the God of Israel.”⁴⁷ Ferguson’s study of these long-standing claims, however, reexamines the evidence for and against these linkages in exhaustive detail and concludes that the repeated distinctions early Christians made between Jewish washings and Christian baptisms are well founded. While the Jewish washings were repeated endlessly to achieve ritual purity, the Christians saw themselves

following John and baptized the repentant for the remission of sins and to prepare a people to be ready to meet the returning Messiah.⁴⁸ Regarding Jewish proselyte baptisms, the evidence suggests this practice arose only after John and the Christians were baptizing. And “the heart of the rabbinic conversion ceremony was circumcision, not baptism. . . . Proselyte baptism was for Gentiles; Christians baptized Jews as well as Gentiles.”⁴⁹

The idea that baptism was a washing or purification has also been connected with pagan practices. “There is abundant evidence that lustral bathing was an important aspect of Greco-Roman religions, especially related to healing divinities such as Asklepius,”⁵⁰ and some scholars have thought this may have influenced Christian teachings and practices, though this is not so widely accepted. But it is clear that by the third and fourth centuries, Christian writers taught that “the sacrament of baptism cleansed the recipient of sin—a benefit primarily conveyed by the liturgical action of immersion in water.”⁵¹

But then, in all of this, if the purpose of baptism was to remove sin, why then was a sinless Jesus baptized? This “awkward question” attracted the attention of Christian theologians from Justin Martyr in the late second century down to the fifth century, when it became a central issue for the “controversies surrounding the person and work of Jesus as Savior.”⁵² In her new book on baptismal imagery, Robin Jensen documents a variety of theories that were advanced to patch this hole in the doctrine of baptism as a cleansing, none of which really solve the problem. Some of the principal proposals include Ignatius’s suggestion that Jesus’s baptism cleansed the water for others to follow, Justin Martyr’s assertion that the baptism of Jesus identified him publicly as the promised messiah, and Cyril’s teaching that the personal and physical descent of Jesus into the water began “the sanctification of all of human nature.”⁵³ Jensen goes on to list and describe a number of exotic ritual elements that accrued to Christian baptism during these early centuries that were designed to remove sin, to drive away evil, or to impart “health and strength to recipients.”⁵⁴ These included a number of preliminary acts such as “exorcism, offering salt to catechumens, blowing on them (exsufflation), and then a series of ascetical practices, . . . and a spoken renunciation of Satan.”⁵⁵ Because of the widespread belief in demons and demonic possession, “baptismal rites began with exorcism,” and by “the mid-fourth century, rituals of prebaptismal exorcism were practiced in most parts of the Christian world.”⁵⁶

After surveying the myriad detailed accounts of baptismal ceremonies in the first five Christian centuries, Ferguson notes how a number of the ideas originally “associated with baptism became increasingly differentiated according to the accompanying ceremonies.”⁵⁷ None of the elaborations of

the baptismal ritual demonstrate this more dramatically than the renunciations of the devil. Various versions of this ceremony are documented in different times and places, and some vestiges persisted into modern times. The writings of John Chrysostom (d. AD 407) preserve a detailed account that helps us understand how the meanings associated with baptism were developed into a collection of elaborations of the baptismal ritual itself. After ritualized instruction, a dramatic exorcism was administered to the catechumens to free their souls from the captivity of the devil. Stripped and kneeling, they were then led by the priest in stating, "I renounce thee, Satan, thy pomps, thy service, and thy works." Once this was finished, the priest again had them say, "And I enter into thy service, O Christ." Chrysostom saw this as a ritual in which one terminated his contract with the devil and entered into a new contract with Christ.⁵⁸

Ferguson also identifies a number of subsequent changes and developments in the early centuries of the Christian church in the practice and meaning of baptism. For example, because water was indispensable to baptism, baptism was naturally but incompletely seen as a cleansing. The original meaning of the very early practice of laying on hands following baptism has faded from view and has not found consensual explanation among scholars, who have interpreted it as a prayer of blessing, as a separate prayer for the imparting of the Holy Spirit, as a means of anointing with oil, or as some other thing or combination of these.⁵⁹ Clothing was often removed for the baptism and new clothing donned after the baptism as an elaboration of the symbolism of death and new birth. After the fourth century, white clothing was used as a symbol of purity for the person coming out of the water. The eventual abandonment of immersion and introduction of infant baptism were part of this evolution and stand as clear evidences of a loss of any essential understanding that may have been shared by the first generation of Christians.⁶⁰

The accumulating baptismal practices were not seen as competing symbols, but rather were collected together in a variety of eclectic wholes as determined by the head cleric in different jurisdictions. So even though some of these practices seemed to preserve aspects of the core idea of baptism as a witness of a covenant, this was easily overshadowed by a panoply of other symbolic elements drawn principally from scripture. Some of these accretions may also have derived from the conflation of postbaptismal ordinances into the expanding ritual complex of baptism.

This eclectic character of Christian baptism was fully developed by the fourth century, as can be best observed in the baptismal service that was standard in Milan at the time when Augustine came there to be baptized under the administration of Bishop Ambrose.⁶¹ Paul's connection of

baptism with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is suggested most prominently by the scheduling of all baptisms for one annual Easter-day service, and by the architecture of the small tower, dedicated to this single sacrament, that stood between the old and new basilicas. The octagonal shape of the building and of the font at its center was to remind people of the biblical seven-day creation account in which the unmentioned eighth day had come to be related to the eternity that follows and to Sunday, the day of Christ's resurrection (John 20:19). The building was also designed to look like a single-centered mausoleum of the time, emphasizing the death theme—but with a tower possibly suggesting resurrection and ascension. The following poem of eight elegiac distichs was inscribed on the tower's eight walls:

This eight-niched temple has risen to holy purpose,
And eight sides of the font perform their task.

That number befits a chamber for baptizing,
It towers so that people may be saved.

In the splendor of Christ's rising, to break the bars
Of death and bring life out of tombs.

Freeing from sin's stain repenting men,
Cleansed in the font's pure-running stream.

Here those shedding vile crimes of their past
May wash their hearts and take away pure breasts.

Here let them swiftly come. Here anyone who dares,
However darkened, will go off whiter than snow.

Let saints run here, since no one can be saintly
Without these waters, by God's reign and plan.

Here flares the right. What can be more God's work
Than removing sin in an eyeblink?⁶²

This poem begins with allusions to Paul's metaphor of death and resurrection and then quickly focuses on the the removal of sins: "freeing from sin's stain," "shedding vile crimes," "wash their hearts," "whiter than snow," and "removing sin in an eye blink." Interestingly, none of these can be derived easily from New Testament language but fit more comfortably with the universally recognized symbolism of washing with water to remove spiritual impurities.

The actual ceremony, as described by Ambrose and others and summarized here by Garry Wills, demonstrates even further how much Ambrose's elaboration of the fourth-century Easter baptism incorporates an eclectic assembly of symbols.

Before dawn in 387, Augustine and his fellows gathered at the entrance to the baptistry, where Ambrose performed a ceremony of opening (Effetha) by touching their ears and nostrils, so they would have a heightened spiritual awareness of what they were about to see and do. Then, just inside the baptistry, they faced west and renounced the devil, before facing east and welcoming the coming of Christ into their hearts. After this, they stripped off their clothes in one of the buildings's recesses, before being anointed with oil all over their bodies "like athletes." Then they stepped down into the baptismal pool, escorted by the bishop and his deacon, who ducked each person's head under the water three times as they professed belief in each member of the Trinity. As they came out of the pool, they were wrapped in a white garment signifying their innocence. They were anointed again, though this time only on the head. After that, the bishop washed their feet—a last gesture of exorcism, since the serpent in Eden had bitten Adam in the foot—then they received a "seal of the Spirit" and went to the New Basilica. For the first time, they heard the Lord's Prayer and participated in the Eucharist.⁶³

Clearly, by Ambrose's time, the baptismal ritual had evolved far beyond the New Testament model provided by John the Baptist and Jesus Christ in the river Jordan—both in form and function. The various historians who have collected and analyzed the wide variety of developments in Christian baptism during these early centuries generally recognize that the elaborations of the simple New Testament ritual seemed to evolve to provide a more concrete meaning for baptism than could be derived directly from the text itself.

CONCLUSIONS

The Book of Mormon prophets shared a clear and distinctive symbolism in their discourse on baptism, one which they derived directly from the words of Christ to them on various occasions. They nowhere define baptism as a washing away of sins. Baptism is inseparably connected to repentance, as water baptism is required as a witness to the Father that one has repented, has taken the name of Christ upon him, and has covenanted to endure to the end in obedience to his commandments. Baptism is the act that God has designated as a required and deliberate external sign of an internal changing of one's life—all in response to the invitation to come unto Christ: to trust in him, to turn back to God by repenting of one's sins, and to be baptized. The repentant convert submits himself to baptism. It is the required act and witness of what he has done to qualify for the promised remission of sins. Recognition of the necessary volition of the subject makes the dialogic character of the gospel process evident. There is an explicit covenant of repentance and future obedience witnessed in the baptismal ordinance. Jesus sought baptism because, even though sinless, he also needed

to humble himself before the Father and make that covenant and witness it publicly—to fulfill all righteousness. The sacrament or Eucharist is an explicit renewal of the same witness of the covenant represented in baptism. The remission of sins comes through the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, whom the Father sends in fulfillment of his promise to the individual who has repented in full sincerity. In this experience, the recipient is purged and forgiven of his prior sins and receives the powerful witness of one member of the Godhead of the reality of the other two—and this is a sampling or earnest down payment⁶⁴ of the fullness that awaits those who then faithfully endure to the end and enter into their presence in eternal life.

Bits and pieces of this understanding can be found in early Christian practices and theology, though they are never brought together with this kind of clarity or authority. The Book of Mormon approach strongly endorses and even provides an otherwise missing explanation for the persistent ideas of signs and covenants associated with baptism in the Christian tradition. Book of Mormon authors did not see baptism as an infusion of grace from God but rather as a convert's witness to God of a covenant or promise made during the process of repentance that he would always obey Christ, that he would take the name of Christ upon himself, and that he would always remember Christ.⁶⁵

As a final reflection, the Book of Mormon characterization of baptism as a covenant fits well with the best current thinking of philosophers, anthropologists, and others regarding the purpose and function of religious rituals generally. Louis Dupré's analysis is the classic work on this topic. He sees rites as "first among religious symbols." They symbolize important life occasions but do not recapitulate them. While the occasion symbolized may have been intensely emotional, the ritual is not. The ritual action does not repeat the action or event it symbolizes but rather bestows "meaning upon it by placing it in a higher perspective."⁶⁶ By dramatizing critical life moments, rituals "bring structure into life as a whole," relating the past and present to the future.⁶⁷ This would seem to be an apt description of the Book of Mormon baptismal ritual, which symbolizes an earlier event of personal repentance and covenanting and is projected into the future through the witnessing act of baptism, providing foundational meaning for the convert's future. This baptismal teaching reflects a fundamental feature of religious rituals in that it gives "the private events of life a public character." Baptism is understood as a public witnessing that creates a community, making the repentant "aware of their essential togetherness." The ritual thus constitutes "the cement of social life."⁶⁸ I have speculated that this understanding of baptism might also be correlated with ancient Israelite covenant practices to provide promising explanations for the requirements

of immersion and of sacramental ingestion of the bread and wine/water. While it is attractive to have a shared conceptualization of covenant practices in ancient Israel and in Christianity, this suggestion is only a hypothesis that calls for further research at this point in time.

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1. Richard L. Anderson, "Religious Validity: The Sacrament Covenant in Third Nephi," in *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley*, vol. 2, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 12; Craig J. Ostler, "Baptism," in *The Book of Mormon and the Message of the Four Gospels*, ed. Ray L. Huntington and Terry B. Ball (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2001), 144.

2. See Noel B. Reynolds, "The Gospel of Jesus Christ as Taught by the Nephite Prophets," *BYU Studies*, 31, no. 3 (1991): 31–50; and Noel B. Reynolds, "The True Points of My Doctrine," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5, no. 2 (1996): 26–56.

3. For more discussions of covenants in the Book of Mormon, see Thomas R. Valletta, "The Captain and the Covenant," in *The Book of Mormon: Alma, the Testimony of the Word*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1992), 223–48; Kenneth W. Anderson, "What Parents Should Teach Their Children from the Book of Mosiah," in *The Book of Mormon: Mosiah, Salvation Only through Christ*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1991), 31–33; Jennifer Clark Lane, "The Lord Will Redeem His People: Adoptive Covenant and Redemption in the Old Testament and Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2, no. 2 (1993): 39–62; Victor Ludlow, "Covenant Teachings of the Book of Mormon," in *The Disciple as Scholar: Essays on Scripture and the Ancient World in Honor of Richard L. Anderson* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2000), 67–93; Richard Dilworth Rust, *Feasting on the Word: The Literary Testimony of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 102–3.

4. On Book of Mormon teachings about the importance of being truly converted before baptism, see H. Donl Peterson, "Church Discipline in the Book of Mosiah," in Nyman and Tate, *Book of Mormon: Mosiah*, 213–14.

5. Wilford Woodruff, "Sabbath Scene in Nauvoo," *Times and Seasons* 3 (March 20, 1842): 751–52; Joseph Smith Jr., *The History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed. rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 4:554–55 (hereafter cited as *History of the Church*).

6. See the more detailed discussion of the Book of Mormon prophets' understanding of repentance in Reynolds, "True Points of My Doctrine," 33–42. For

Christ's teachings on repentance in 3 Nephi, see Mae Blanch, "Repentance: The Gift of Love," in *The Book of Mormon: 3 Nephi 9–30, This Is My Gospel*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1993), 73–87.

7. Reynolds, "True Points of My Doctrine," 35; see also D. Todd Christofferson, in "The Divine Gift of Repentance," *Ensign* 41 (November 2011): 40.

8. John W. Welch has shown that the basic elements of Moroni's sacrament prayers reflect the same covenant elements outlined for the Nephites by King Benjamin (Mosiah 5:1–4) and by Jesus (3 Ne. 17–25). "From Presence to Practice: Jesus, the Sacrament Prayers, the Priesthood, and Church Discipline in 3 Nephi 18 and Moroni 2–6," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5, no. 1 (1996): 119–39. Joseph Fielding McConkie discusses being "filled" by the sacrament in "The Doctrine of a Covenant People," in Nyman and Tate, *Book of Mormon: 3 Nephi 9–30*, 172–74. See also Monte S. Nyman, "The Sacrament: Building upon Christ's Rock," in Huntington and Ball, *Book of Mormon and the Message of the Four Gospels*, 125–37.

9. See the detailed development of this topic in Reynolds, "Gospel of Jesus Christ," 31–50.

10. See Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 208–9, 218–35, 239, for an account of the dialogic character of personal revelation as described by Book of Mormon prophets.

11. Benjamin teaches this principle (Mosiah 3:18), and Mormon expounds on the issue. Mormon teaches that "little children . . . are not capable of committing sin" and "cannot repent" (Moro. 8: 8, 19), so there is no need for baptism, which is a witness of repentance.

12. Many more passages command men and women to participate in this dialogic process: 2 Nephi 26:25; 28:32; Alma 5:34–35; 3 Nephi 9:14; 12:3, 19–20, 23–24; 18:32; 21:6, 20, 27; 27:20; Mormon 3:2; Ether 4:13–14, 18; 12:27; Moroni 7:34.

13. On the baptism of water and baptism of fire as taught in the Book of Mormon, see Larry E. Dahl, "The Doctrine of Christ: 2 Nephi 31–32," in *The Book of Mormon: Second Nephi, the Doctrinal Structure*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1989), 361–68.

14. On the role of faith in this repentance and change of heart as taught in the Book of Mormon, see Brent L. Top, "Faith unto Repentance," in *A Book of Mormon Treasury: Gospel Insights from General Authorities and Religious Educators* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2003), 295–315.

15. Reynolds, "Gospel of Jesus Christ," 43–47.

16. Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009). This work, a comprehensive study of early Christian sources, will be very useful for updating and expanding LDS scholarship on baptism and other Restoration practices. See my review of the book in *BYU Studies Quarterly* 51, no. 1 (2012): 187–90. Other recent studies are less comprehensive and offer alternate interpretations for some of the evidence. See Bryan D. Spinks, *Early and Medieval Rituals and Theologies of Baptism: From the New Testament to the Council of Trent* (London: Ashgate, 2006); and Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation: Their Evolution and Interpretation*, rev. and expanded ed. (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2007). A new and interesting approach featuring Christian art is Robin M. Jensen,

Baptismal Imagery in Early Christianity: Ritual, Visual, and Theological Dimensions (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2012). I thank the publisher for access to a prepublication version of this work.

17. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 83.

18. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 25–82, esp. 38.

19. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 83 n. 2, referencing Albrecht Oepke, “βάπτω, βαπτίζω (et al.),” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, tr. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1964), 1:545.

20. See Mosiah 26:22; Alma 5:62; 6:2; 7:14; 9:27; 48:19; 49:30; Helaman 3:24; 5:17–19; 3 Nephi 1:23; 7:26.

21. See the pair of articles by B. E. Thiering, “Inner and Outer Cleansing at Qumran as a Background to New Testament Baptism,” *New Testament Studies* 26, no. 2 (January 1980): 266–77; and “Qumran Initiation and New Testament Baptism,” *New Testament Studies* 27, no. 5 (October 1981): 615–31.

22. See, for example, Matthew Poole, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1962), 3:200; Leslie F. Church, ed., *Commentary on the Whole Bible by Matthew Henry* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1960), 163; *Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, n.d.), 1:290; Marcus Dods and others, *An Exposition of the Bible* (Hartford, Conn.: Scranton, 1904), 4:70.

23. See the references in note 20, as well as Moroni 8:11: “Baptism is unto repentance to the fulfilling of the commandments unto the remission of sins.”

24. Compare Mark 1:4 and Luke 3:3 with Matthew 3:11, 16; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; and Acts 1:5; 11:16.

25. Compare Matt. 26:28.

26. *History of the Church*, 5:499. On infant baptism as taught in the Book of Mormon, see Robert L. Millett, “The Mission of Jesus Christ—Ether 3 and 4,” in *The Book of Mormon: Fourth Nephi through Moroni, from Zion to Destruction*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1995), 19–29; and the review of that book by Bryan J. Thomas in *FARMS Review* 8, no. 1 (1996), 27–50.

27. Ben Witherington III, *Troubled Waters: The Real New Testament Theology of Baptism* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2007), 110.

28. François Bovon, “Baptism in the Ancient Church,” *Sewanee Theological Review* 42 (1999): 429–38, an English translation of his 1973 French original. This fits easily with a long line of pious Bible commentaries, for example, Joseph Benson, *Commentary on the New Testament*, 5 vols. (London: n.p., 1811–18), who understood John to be enjoining penitent persons to be baptized “as a testimony, on their part, of the sincerity of their repentance” or to be witnessing that they had received the forgiveness of sins, and so forth.

29. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 192.

30. Ferguson, Bovon, and Witherington all agree with the careful philological analysis of 1 Peter 3:18–22 published in John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 637, 678–81.

31. J. D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (London, SCM Press, 1970), 219.

32. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 854.

33. In the following discussion, I rely principally on Delbert R. Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969), which I find to be one of the most helpful presentations of this ancient material.

34. See the full etymological discussion in Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 47–48.

35. Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (rpt., Omaha: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 194. While Thomas Valletta draws a parallel between the Jaredites being “buried in the depths of the sea” and the baptismal covenant’s symbolism of death and rebirth, the comparison of death to baptism is not implied in the account in Ether 6. Thomas Valletta, “Jared and His Brother,” in Nyman and Tate, *Book of Mormon: Fourth Nephi through Moroni*, 303–22.

36. Hillers, *History of a Biblical Idea*, 40. John Tvedtnes suggests that “eating Christ’s flesh symbolically gives us his qualities,” just as in various cultures people eat certain animals to gain a characteristic of that animal. John A. Tvedtnes, “Olive Oil: Symbol of the Holy Ghost,” in *The Allegory of the Olive Tree: The Olive, the Bible, and Jacob 5*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 442.

37. See 3 Nephi 18:1–12, 28–29; and 20:3–9.

38. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 240.

39. Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, 188–89.

40. Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, 195.

41. Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, 194–96.

42. See Noel B. Reynolds, “The Decline of Covenant in Early Christian Thought,” in *Early Christians in Disarray: Contemporary LDS Perspectives on the Christian Apostasy*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2005), 295–324, for an explanation of how the covenant-based ordinances of early Christianity were transformed into blessings or sacraments featuring the reception of God’s grace.

43. A helpful recent survey of these arguments can be found in Paul F. Bradshaw, “The Evolution of Eucharistic Rites,” *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 118–43.

44. Solomon Zeitlin, “The Liturgy of the First Night of Passover,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 38, no. 4 (April 1948): 449. Zeitlin reminds us that the Passover lamb was to be completely consumed, which may well be related to the Christian partaking of bread in memory of the body of Christ. I will not pursue these issues in this paper.

45. Kurt Miederwimmer, *The Didache: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 144; see also Aaron Milavec, *The Didache: Text, Translation, Analysis, and Commentary* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2003), 23.

46. Ben Witherington III, *Making a Meal of It: Rethinking the Theology of the Lord’s Supper* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2007), 135.

47. W. F. Flemington, “Baptism,” in *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1962), 1:348–50.

48. See, for example, Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 82–85, 91–94, 112, 266–67, and 438–39.

49. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 82.

50. Daniel N. Schowalter, "Baptism," *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, ed. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 73.

51. Jensen, *Baptismal Imagery in Early Christianity*, 13.

52. Jensen, *Baptismal Imagery in Early Christianity*, 13.

53. Jensen, *Baptismal Imagery in Early Christianity*, 10–13.

54. Jensen, *Baptismal Imagery in Early Christianity*, 30.

55. Jensen, *Baptismal Imagery in Early Christianity*, 31.

56. Jensen, *Baptismal Imagery in Early Christianity*, 31, 32.

57. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 524.

58. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 537–39, citing Chrysostom, *Homilies on Colossians* 6.4. See the more detailed reportage in Jensen, *Baptismal Imagery in Early Christianity*, 37–38. For Chrysostom's full *Baptismal Homily 2* in English translation, see Thomas M. Finn, *Early Christian Baptism and the Catechumenate: West and East Syria*, rev. ed. (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2007), 70–81.

59. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 854–56.

60. Ferguson indicates that "the literary sources that have constituted the majority of the present study, when they describe the baptismal action, uniformly describe an immersion or imply it as the norm." Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 850. He devotes all of chapter 23 to the late emergence of infant baptism and the controversies that it generated. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 362–79.

61. Thanks to historian Garry Wills, we now have an integrated account of Augustine's baptism reconstructed from surviving writings of Ambrose and from the archaeological excavations of the famous fourth-century baptistery in Milan. See Garry Wills, *Font of Life: Ambrose, Augustine, and the Mystery of Baptism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). The following summary is drawn from Wills's book. Translations from Latin texts are also by Professor Wills.

62. Wills, *Font of Life*, 12–13.

63. Wills, *Font of Life*, 8. For Wills's much more detailed reconstruction of this ceremony, see his chapter 7, "Augustine at the Font," 105–22.

64. See Ephesians 1:13–14: "after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption." See also 2 Corinthians 1:22: "Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."

65. This same understanding seems to inform the statement on baptism in the revelation given at the organization of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1830: "All those who humble themselves before God, and desire to be baptized, and come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits, and *witness before the church* that they have truly repented of all their sins, and are willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end, and truly manifest by their works that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins, shall be received by baptism into his church" (D&C 20:37, emphasis added).

66. Louis Dupré, *Symbols of the Sacred* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000), 12–13. Dupré's core text was published first in 1972.

67. Dupré, *Symbols of the Sacred*, 17–18.

68. Dupré, *Symbols of the Sacred*, 18–19.

Spirit

At the worn yet polished pulpit,
in the contradiction of February's snowfall
and thaw, she adjusted her gypsy shawl,
gasped into the microphone, clutched the podium
with blotchy hands, those hands that scrubbed,
for years, what the rest of us left
under the pews, beside the trash cans,
our rings and watches next to the bathroom sinks
—and what left her lips was not a rocket's flare,

nor the jasper shock of bloodstone,
neither was it the pastoral turned diatribe
of a patriotic afternoon. It was the quiet
lift of the Samaritan, Rahab's offer
of protection for protection, the alabaster box
for head and feet, reins and heart,
and what kept coming, not quite reeling,
was unmeasured, almost obscure, and whatever
it was it unfolded like a leaflet,

unrolled like a Persian rug. It whirred
like the touch of a cardinal's wings.
It kept offering the altar of incense,
an evening's watch, forgotten psalms;
it unhinged the door of my traditions,
wiped away the veneer on my face,
dried up those hidden wells of anger,
brought myrrh to the corridors
of sickness. My sins arose in flame.

—Mark D. Bennion

This poem won second place in the BYU Studies 2012
poetry contest.

Textual Similarities in the Words of Abinadi and Alma's Counsel to Corianton

John Hilton III

The text of the Book of Mormon makes it clear that individuals who lived in later time periods had access to the teachings of earlier prophets. King Benjamin “caused that the words which he spake should be written and sent forth among those that were not under the sound of his voice, that they might also receive his words” (Mosiah 2:8). This instance was not the only sending forth of the written prophetic word. In Alma 63:12, Mormon tells us, “All those engravings which were in the possession of Helaman [these likely included the words of Alma, Amulek, Abinadi, Benjamin, and others] were written and sent forth among the children of men throughout all the land.”

When preaching to the people of Ammonihah, Alma alludes to King Benjamin's words, suggesting that, although apostate, the people of Ammonihah may have had access to the prophetic word of a previous generation (see Alma 13:28, compare Mosiah 3:19). In his address to the poor Zoramites, Alma clearly alludes to Zenos, Zenock, and Moses, leading the reader to believe that even these individuals with lower socioeconomic status were familiar with teachings from the brass plates (see Alma 33:3–20). Helaman's counsel to his sons Nephi and Lehi indicates that they had access to the works of previous prophets.¹ Later textual evidence suggests that words

1. He told them, “O remember, remember, my sons, the words which king Benjamin spake unto his people. . . . And remember also the words which Amulek spake unto Zeezrom, in the city of Ammonihah” (Hel. 5:9–10). “Nephi and Lehi likely used the precise words of King Benjamin in their preaching, just as their father had quoted to them some of the words of King Benjamin: ‘Remember that there is no other way nor means whereby man can be saved, only through the atoning blood

John Hilton III

Last year, one of my colleagues suggested that I read the Book of Mormon carefully and annotate each verse by the person speaking. As I did this, I started to notice some interesting patterns and themes in terms of how Book of Mormon prophets use, or do not use, certain phrases. I was also struck by Grant Hardy's suggestion in *Understanding the Book of Mormon*: "It would be interesting to track various phrases throughout the Book of Mormon to determine which Nephite prophets were particularly influenced by which of their predecessors" (134).



Many years ago, my grandfather created computer programs to analyze the text of the Book of Mormon. Since those programs are obsolete, I wondered if software was available that could help me find scriptural echoes from one prophet to another. Using the programs described in this article, I began researching connections between different prophets. I noticed a large cluster of textual connections between Abinadi's words and Alma 39–42, which led to the present paper.

Studying and finding intertextual patterns between prophets in the Book of Mormon has deepened my understanding and feelings about this great book. Currently, I am studying how later Book of Mormon prophets used Jacob's words in their teaching. I am also working on a paper that shows how Jesus Christ, in his ministry among the Nephites, quoted not only from biblical prophets but Nephite prophets as well.

from Alma, Amulek, and Zeezrom had been circulated among the people generally. When speaking to a group of Lamanites and apostate Nephites, Aminadab said, “You must repent, and cry unto the voice, even until ye shall have faith in Christ, who was taught unto you by Alma, and Amulek, and Zeezrom” (Hel. 5:41).²

The fact that later Nephite prophets had access to the words of earlier ones opens the possibility for intentional intertextual quotations and allusions within the Book of Mormon. Dubious readers may see repetitive words or phrases in the Book of Mormon as evidence of a stuttering problem. When looked at through an intertextual lens, however, the repetition may be most illuminating. Exploring intertextuality within the Book of Mormon is a fruitful area of study. As Kerry Muhlestein has pointed out, “Intertextual studies have become important in biblical scholarship as well as in the study of other sacred texts. In recent decades, biblical studies have been greatly enhanced by an understanding of how certain scriptural themes and ideas developed throughout Israelite history as evidenced by intertextual studies. Rarely has this type of work been applied to the Book of Mormon.”³

While much work remains to be accomplished, researchers have already found several instances of intertextual allusions in the Book of Mormon. For example, John W. Welch shows multiple examples of “internal textual consistency [that occur] within the Book of Mormon” such as Alma quoting verbatim twenty-one words from Lehi or Samuel the Lamanite’s twenty-word quotation from King Benjamin.⁴ Noel Reynolds points out a variety of

of Jesus Christ’ (Helaman 5:9, compare Mosiah 3:18; 4:8).” John W. Welch, “Textual Consistency,” in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS], 1992), 22–23.

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

3. Kerry Muhlestein, “Insights Available as We Approach the Original Text,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 15, no. 1 (2006): 61.

4. See Alma 36:22, compare 1 Nephi 1:8; and Helaman 14:12, compare Mosiah 3:8. These passages show that while citations were not always explicitly given, they are clearly evident. See Welch, “Textual Consistency,” 21–23.

ways in which Zenos's words are used across the Book of Mormon.⁵ Close parallels exist between King Benjamin's speech and many of Alma's words.⁶ Certain phrases (for example, *firm, steadfast, and immovable*) frequently appear together, demonstrating intertextuality throughout the book.⁷

One must exercise caution, however, when trying to find connections between the statements of different prophets. As Richard Hays observes: "Quotation, allusion, and echo may be seen as points along a spectrum of intertextual reference, moving from the explicit to the subliminal. As we move farther away from overt citation, the source recedes into the discursive distance, the intertextual relations become less determinate, and the demand placed on the reader's listening powers grows greater. As we near the vanishing point of the echo, it inevitably becomes difficult to decide whether we are really hearing an echo at all, or whether we are only conjuring things out of the murmurings of our own imaginations."⁸

This conjuring of echoes can be multiplied by the relatively recent use of electronic resources. Writing of the difficulty in determining true allusions, Lincoln Blumell stated, "With the aid of electronic databases and search engines where a word, root of a word, or even a short phrase, can be readily searched across a huge corpus, if one is willing to look hard enough, they can usually find numerous scriptural echoes and reminiscences. However, the obvious problem with this is that just because one can find a rare word or a distinct phrase . . . does not automatically guarantee the author . . . was necessarily echoing or reminiscing [another] passage."⁹

Thus, one of the challenges in uncovering intertextual connections within the Book of Mormon is discerning whether one prophet was in fact quoting from another or whether the apparent quotation could more feasibly be explained in a different way. For example, if Alma's words are similar to Benjamin's in a given passage, is it an intentional quote, a coincidence, a result

5. Noel B. Reynolds, "Nephite Uses and Interpretations of Zenos," in *The Allegory of the Olive Tree*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994).

6. John W. Welch, "Benjamin the Man: His Place in Nephite History," in *King Benjamin's Speech: "That Ye May Learn Wisdom,"* ed. John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1998), 44–45; and Grant Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader's Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 134.

7. John A. Tvedtnes and Kevin L. Barney, "Word Groups in the Book of Mormon," in *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon: The FARMS Updates of the 1990s*, ed. Melvin J. Thorne and John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1999), 213.

8. Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 23.

9. Lincoln H. Blumell, *Lettered Christians: Christians, Letters, and Late Antique Oxyrhynchus* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2012), 220.

of both Benjamin and Alma pointing to another unknown text, or both being similarly inspired by the same Spirit? Speaking specifically of intertextuality in the Book of Mormon, Grant Hardy wrote, “In the absence of explicit citations . . . we might wonder if verbal parallels indicate deliberate quotations and allusions, or whether they might best be explained as due to the common language and phrasing of Joseph Smith. . . . Yet there are many instances where the correspondence between phrases is unique, or nearly so.”¹⁰

How can one determine if similar passages demonstrate intentional quotations or allusions? In a study focusing on intertextuality between the Book of Mormon and the book of Moses, Reynolds used seven criteria to determine the likelihood that any two passages were textually dependent on each other. Six of these criteria are broad enough to be applied to intertextuality generally:

1. The greater the number of significant terms repeated in parallel phrasings in two texts, the less likely they are to be independent.
2. The more precise the similarities between parallel phrasings in two texts, the less likely they are to be independent.
3. The more deliberately shaped the repetition in parallel phrasings in two texts, the less likely they are to be independent.
4. The more similar the contexts in which parallel phrasings occur, the less likely they are to be independent.
5. Author awareness of [the earlier source] reduces the likelihood of independence.
6. The more distinctive the terminology repeated in parallel phrasings in two texts, the less likely they are to be independent.¹¹

When considering intertextuality in the Book of Mormon, some additional issues need to be considered. While a separate paper could be written addressing these items, I will consider them briefly here. First, the Book of Mormon is both an abridged and a translated work, thus it can be difficult to determine if minor textual similarities or differences are the result of the abridgement by Mormon, of the translation by Joseph Smith, or are part of the text from an original writer. Two phrases that appear to be slightly

10. Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 133.

11. Noel B. Reynolds, “The Brass Plates Version of Genesis,” in *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley on the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday*, 27 March 1990, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 2:138. Hays set forth similar criteria in *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 29–31.

different may have been, in fact, originally the same, with the slight variation occurring through the processes of abridging and translating.

Second, because we do not have a complete record of what was on the brass plates, apparent instances of intertextuality among Book of Mormon prophets may in fact represent their citing of works on the brass plates. For example, the words *carnal*, *sensual*, and *devilish* appear together in the Book of Mormon in only two places and never appear together in the Old Testament. However, they do appear together twice in the Pearl of Great Price. Thus, it is possible that these writings from the book of Moses were included in the brass plates, and, consequently, what appears to be an intertextual connection in the Book of Mormon could be two separate allusions to the brass plates.¹²

Third, some phrases in the Book of Mormon share strong connections with the New Testament. While one could argue that such phrases are anachronous, such an argument misses the point of intertextuality within the Book of Mormon. If a specific phrase is spoken or written in the Book of Mormon by only two individuals, this is important, regardless of a textual relationship to the New Testament. For example, if Alma and Abinadi both use a phrase that appears in the New Testament, the question remains, why does this phrase appear only in the words of Alma and Abinadi? Even if New Testament language somehow influenced the translation of the Book of Mormon, why is this phrase used by only these two individuals? The point would therefore remain that within the Book of Mormon there likely exists an intertextual relationship between the two passages.

With the foregoing considerations in mind, we can attempt to discern whether an allusion is intentional or coincidental. Such efforts to identify scriptural echoes can be beneficial. Elder Bruce R. McConkie said, “Our understanding of the prophetic word will be greatly expanded if we know how one prophet quotes another, usually without acknowledging his source.”¹³

The purpose of this article is to demonstrate and examine a series of textual similarities between the words of Abinadi and the words of Alma the Younger (herein simply referred to as Alma) as he speaks to his son Corianton. Before turning to a specific analysis of the parallel phrases in these passages, I will explain the methodology used to find and explore these connections.

12. Noel Reynolds suggests this may be the case in “The Brass Plates Version of Genesis,” 136–73.

13. Bruce R. McConkie, “The Doctrinal Restoration,” in *The Joseph Smith Translation*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Robert L. Millet (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1985), 17.

Methodology

One method of discovering allusions between two texts is to harness the computational power of the computer and let it find textual matches. This has the advantage of being able to quickly find every identical match between the two texts. Another method is to pore over the documents, searching for similarities between the two. This has the advantage of utilizing the power of the human mind to find connections that might not appear obvious at first glance. Both of these methods have merit, and I used both in this paper.

First, I created two text documents containing all the words spoken by Abinadi in Mosiah 12–17 and all of the words spoken by Alma in Alma 39–42. I next used two different computer programs to analyze these texts, the first of which was WordStat. WordStat can take two texts and find every two-to-seven-word phrase match in the two documents. Thus, one does not have to generate phrases and search electronically to see if they appear in another place; the software itself can generate the matching phrases. Running a WordStat analysis on these two documents yielded eighteen phrase matches. I analyzed each phrase to determine whether Alma appeared to be intentionally alluding to Abinadi. Some of these eighteen matching phrases were probably not allusions (for example, *kingdom of God*) as they are used frequently in the Book of Mormon by a variety of individuals. However, WordStat did find several direct connections (discussed at length in this paper).

One weakness of WordStat is that it found only exact phrase matches, in which the same words appeared in the same sequence. Similar phrases (such as *good tidings* and *glad tidings*) would not count as phrase matches. In addition, for reasons unknown, WordStat missed some exact phrase matches.¹⁴ Michael Bean (an undergraduate computer science major at Brigham Young University) created a Java-based program that was able to find textual matches that WordStat missed.¹⁵ Bean's program also analyzes both exact and nonexact phrase matches, such as instances in which three out of four words in any given phrase were the same. By searching for these relatively close matches, I found dozens of additional potential matches. Due to the fuzzier nature of this search, it captured many phrases that were not clear instances of Alma alluding to Abinadi. However, Bean's program did uncover several additional phrase matches that had been missed by WordStat. Thus, the power of the computer was harnessed to identify phrase matches, and human intelligence was used to determine which of

14. For example, Wordstat did not find the phrase *this immortal*, which is shared by both texts.

15. This program can be downloaded at <https://sites.google.com/site/beanmichael2/downloads>.

these phrase matches were most likely intentional allusions on the part of Alma; human intelligence also identified surrounding textual echoes missed by the computer.¹⁶

Intertextuality between Mosiah 12–17 and Alma 39–42

As stated previously, the purpose of this article is to highlight and examine a series of textual similarities between the words Abinadi spoke and Alma's counsel to Corianton. Searching for intertextuality between these two passages makes sense for a number of reasons. First, Alma appears to be a prophet who did not hesitate to quote from previous prophets. In addition to several pieces of textual evidence demonstrating that he did so (some of which are discussed in this paper), Alma explicitly said that he referenced the words of others (see Alma 40:15–16, 24).

Second, others have noted that Alma has a general tendency to quote Abinadi.¹⁷ This observation is reasonable, given that Abinadi taught Alma's father the gospel. In fact, because Alma the Elder "did write all the words which Abinadi had spoken" (Mosiah 17:4) his son may have had particular interest in this text.¹⁸ In addition, when speaking to the people of Zarahemla, Alma made it explicit that that he was familiar with the words of Abinadi (see Alma 5:11).

Third, Mormon plainly tells us that the text we have in Alma 39–42 comes from Alma's writing: "And we have an account of his [Alma's] commandments, which he gave unto them according to his own record" (Alma 35:16). Thus we can be reasonably confident that Alma had access to records of Abinadi's teachings and that what we read in Alma 39–42 are actually Alma's words, rather than a reconstruction of Alma's words by Mormon.

While Alma could have quoted many other prophets, in Alma 39–42 there are many more allusions to the words of Abinadi than to other prophets.¹⁹ Altogether, at least thirteen phrases in Alma 39–42 appear to be borrowed directly from Abinadi. Many of these phrases are used in

16. WordCruncher (<http://wordcruncher.byu.edu>) has recently added the capability of finding phrases that two texts have in common.

17. Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 134.

18. Because we have Abinadi's words as recorded by Alma₁, it may be that Alma₂ is not actually quoting the exact words of Abinadi but his father's recollection of those words.

19. Based on the records we have, Alma could have quoted extensively from Nephi, Jacob, or King Benjamin (as well as others from whom we do not have records); however, a computer-based comparison of the text of Alma 39–42 with the words of these individuals shows relatively fewer unique connections than those associated with

Table 1
Alma's Use of Abinadi When Speaking to Corianton
(Organized in the Order of Alma's References)

Case #	Alma's Words	Abinadi's Words	Allusion	Times Exact Phrase Is Used Elsewhere in Scripture*
Case 1	Alma 39:8	Mosiah 17:10	Stand as a testimony against you at the last day	0
Case 2	Alma 39:15–16, 18	Mosiah 15:10–11, 18	Salvation unto his people	1 (Luke 1:77)
Case 3	Alma 40:2	Mosiah 16:10	Put on immortality, . . . put on incorruption	1 (1 Corinthians 15:53–54)
Case 4	Alma 40:13	Mosiah 16:2	Gnashing of teeth	23 (but only once in the Book of Mormon)
Case 5	Alma 40:13	Mosiah 15:26	They have no part	0
Case 6	Alma 40:15–17	Mosiah 15:21–26	First resurrection	9 (Revelation 20:5, 6; Mosiah 18:9; D&C 45:54; 63:18; 76:64; 132:19 [twice], 26)
Case 7	Alma 40:16–20; 41:2	Mosiah 15:21	Resurrection of Christ	3 (Acts 2:31; Helaman 14:17; 3 Nephi 6:20)
Case 8	Alma 40:21	Mosiah 16:10	Brought to stand before God . . . be judged . . . according to their works	0
Case 9	Alma 40:21–23, 26	Mosiah 15:24, 26–27	Bringeth about the restoration	0 (but 2 Nephi 30:8 is nearly identical)
Case 10	Alma 42:9–11	Mosiah 16:4	Carnal, sensual, devilish	2 (Moses 5:13, 6:49)
Case 11	Alma 42:11	Mosiah 15:19	Were it not for the redemption	0
Case 12	Alma 42:15	Mosiah 15:9	Demands of justice	2 (Alma 34:16 [twice], and 2 Nephi 9:26 is nearly identical)
Case 13	Alma 42:26	Mosiah 15:19	Prepared from the foundation of the world	9 (Mosiah 4:6, 7; Mosiah 18:13; Alma 12:30; 13:3, 5; 18:39; 22:13; Ether 3:14)

* Information on how frequently certain variant phrases appear is included in the footnote for each individual case.

the Book of Mormon in only these two instances. Standing alone, each of these examples may appear insignificant, but taken together they indicate the extent to which Abinadi influenced Alma's words. I will discuss these textual similarities in the order in which Alma alludes to them in the text. I will first look at Abinadi's use of a given phrase and then examine how Alma quoted or alluded to it. Table 1 summarizes the thirteen allusions that will be discussed in this paper and illustrates how relatively infrequently these allusions appear outside of the teachings of Alma and Abinadi. While one could argue that these similarities are coincidental, the high number of parallel phrases appearing so closely together, along with their scarcity elsewhere, argues that an intertextual connection exists between Abinadi's speech and Alma's counsel to Corianton.

Textual Similarities between Specific Phrases

Case 1: *Stand as a testimony against you at the last day*

When faced with the flames, Abinadi declares, "If ye slay me ye will shed innocent blood, and this shall also *stand as a testimony against you at the last day*" (Mosiah 17:10). Abinadi teaches that serious sins cannot be hidden and will have to be accounted for at Judgment Day. As Alma begins to teach Corianton, he alludes to this phrase, saying, "Ye cannot hide your crimes from God; and except ye repent they will *stand as a testimony against you at the last day*" (Alma 39:8).²⁰ It may be that Alma is quoting Abinadi's words and hopes that his son will recognize that just as Abinadi's murderers will be held accountable for their crimes, so too will Corianton if he does not repent.

Case 2: *Salvation unto his people*

Speaking to those in King Noah's court, Abinadi says, "O how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that is the founder of peace, yea, even the Lord, who has redeemed his people; yea, him who has granted *salvation unto his people*" (Mosiah 15:18). Alma uses

Abinadi. However, it is important to note that Alma does make allusions to other prophets in these chapters.

20. This connection of sins standing "as a testimony" against people "at the last day" occurs only in these two verses. Nephi uses the phrase *stand as a testimony against you* in 2 Nephi 25:28, and Moroni uses this same phrase in Ether 5:4. Both Nephi and Moroni refer to the words they wrote standing as a testimony against others. King Benjamin and Mormon both use similar phrases regarding the words they had spoken or written standing as a testimony at the last day (see Mosiah 3:24, Moroni 8:21). Abinadi and Alma are the only ones who speak of actions standing as a testimony against us.

a similar phrase when he counsels Corianton, saying, “[Christ] cometh to declare glad tidings of *salvation unto his people*” (Alma 39:15).²¹

The probability that Alma is making a direct allusion to Abinadi’s words is strengthened by similar phrases that surround *salvation unto his people*. In connection with those who bring *salvation unto his people*, Abinadi talks of those who “[bring] good tidings” (Mosiah 15:18). Alma states that Christ will come to “declare glad tidings” and tells Corianton, “this was the ministry unto which ye were called, to *declare these glad tidings* unto this people” (Alma 39:16).²²

One of Abinadi’s overarching messages in this section is the importance of those who [*bring*] *good tidings of salvation unto his people*. It may be that Alma is directly quoting or paraphrasing these phrases to say in effect to Corianton, “You had the opportunity to be the person of whom Abinadi spoke, but you squandered it.”

Case 3: *This mortal . . . put on immortality, this corruption . . . put on incorruption*

Teaching about the resurrection, Abinadi explains, “Even *this mortal* shall *put on immortality*, and *this corruption* shall *put on incorruption*, and shall be brought to stand before the bar of God” (Mosiah 16:10). Alma tells Corianton, “There is no resurrection—or, I would say, in other words, that *this mortal* does not *put on immortality*, *this corruption* does not *put on incorruption*—until after the coming of Christ” (Alma 40:2).²³

Alma teaches Corianton about the resurrection because he perceives Corianton is worried about this doctrine (see Alma 40:1). Alma likely uses Abinadi’s words to address concerns about the resurrection because Abinadi talks about *resurrection* more than any known prophet Alma could

21. The phrase *salvation unto his people* is used only these two times in the Book of Mormon. It also occurs in Luke 1:77. A similar phrase, *bring my people unto salvation*, appears in 2 Nephi 3:15 and JST Genesis 50:33, raising the possibility that either Abinadi or Alma (or both) were drawing on one of these sources.

22. The connection to the “glad tidings” in these verses may be more connected to Abinadi’s paraphrase of Isaiah 52:7 than Alma’s allusion to Abinadi; however, given the matching phrase *salvation unto his people*, it may be that Alma was drawing on Abinadi’s expansion of Isaiah. The terms *salvation unto his people* and *tidings* appear only in Alma 39:15 and Mosiah 15:18.

23. *Put on immortality* and *put on incorruption* appear together only in these two places in the Book of Mormon. The phrase *put on immortality* is also found in Enos 1:27 and Mormon 6:21, and the phrases *put on incorruption* is also found in 2 Nephi 9:7. A connection with *put on immortality* and *put on incorruption* is also shared with 1 Corinthians 15:53–54.

turn to. Nephi and his father, Lehi, each use the word only once, and King Benjamin never uses it. In contrast, Abinadi uses *resurrection* sixteen times. Thus if Alma wants to turn to scripture to explain the resurrection, Abinadi is his best option.²⁴

Case 4: *Gnash their teeth / Gnashing of teeth*

The allusion just cited demonstrates a connection between Mosiah 16:1 and Alma 40:10. The case for a connection is strengthened by the close relationship between Mosiah 16:2 and Alma 40:13. After Abinadi explains that the day will come when all will confess before God, he says, “Then shall *the wicked be cast out*, and they shall have cause to howl, and *weep, and wail, and gnash their teeth*; and *this because* they would not hearken unto the voice of the Lord” (Mosiah 16:2). Alma echoes these words, saying, “And then shall it come to pass, that the spirits of *the wicked . . . [will] be cast out* into outer darkness; there shall be *weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, and this because* of their own iniquity” (Alma 40:13).²⁵

Case 5: *They have no part*

Another connection between Alma 40:13 and the words of Abinadi occurs in the phrase *they have no part*. Abinadi, speaking of those who willfully chose evil over good, says that “*they . . . have no part* in the first resurrection” (Mosiah 15:26). Likewise, Alma says, “The spirits of the wicked, yea, who are evil—for behold, *they have no part* nor portion of the Spirit of the Lord; for behold, they chose evil works rather than good” (Alma 40:13).²⁶

24. Alma could also have turned to Jacob, who uses *resurrection* nine times.

25. The phrase *cast out* is fairly common in the Book of Mormon; however, all forms of *teeth gnashing* appear only three times in the Book of Mormon. The third reference is found in Alma 14:21. The concepts of being *cast out* and *gnashing of teeth* appear together in the Book of Mormon exclusively in these two verses (see also Matt. 8:12). References to teeth gnashing occur relatively frequently in other scriptural texts (five times in the Old Testament, nine times in the New Testament, six times in the Doctrine and Covenants, and twice in the Pearl of Great Price). It is possible that both Alma and Abinadi are drawing on an earlier text in their use of these words (for example, Ps. 112:10 or Moses 1:22).

26. The phrases *they have no part*, as well as the shorter *have no part* are exclusive to Abinadi and Alma in the Book of Mormon. The phrase *have no part* appears five times in the Old Testament. The shorter *no part* is used only two additional times in the Book of Mormon. While *no part in* and *no part of* can be construed to have different meanings here, it is significant that these are the only two occurrences of *have no part* in the Book of Mormon.

Thus, both prophets teach that those who rebel against God will *have no part* in some of the fruits of the Atonement. As Alma's conversation with Corianton progresses, it becomes apparent that Corianton is confused about why the wicked are not saved. As will be discussed, this confusion may stem from Corianton's misunderstanding of Abinadi's words. Perhaps Alma uses Abinadi's teachings to clarify and emphasize what Abinadi taught: that the wicked are not partakers of the same blessings as the righteous.

Case 6: *First resurrection*

Abinadi teaches, "And there cometh a resurrection, even a *first resurrection*; yea, even a *resurrection of those that have been, and who are, and who shall be, even until the resurrection of Christ*—for so shall he be called" (Mosiah 15:21). The words italicized in the previous verse are all phrases of two words or more that appear in the following statement from Alma: "And behold, again it hath been spoken, that there is a *first resurrection, a resurrection of all those who have been, or who are, or who shall be, down to the resurrection of Christ from the dead*" (Alma 40:16).²⁷ Even many of the non-italicized words in these two verses show clear connections. In fact, Alma leaves no doubt that he is drawing on other words, stating, "It hath been spoken" (Alma 40:16, see also Alma 40:17, 22, 24). This statement provides additional credibility to the idea that Alma had a record of Abinadi's words and was so familiar with them that he could work them into his teachings.

Alma's usages of *first resurrection* follow his pattern of quoting from Abinadi to clarify doctrinal points. Abinadi had taught that those who kept the commandments would "come forth in the *first resurrection*," but those who "die in their sins . . . have no part in the *first resurrection*" (Mosiah 15:22, 26). While Abinadi's words may seem clear to many Latter-day Saints, apparently some Nephites had trouble understanding the concept of the *first resurrection*. Perhaps Corianton (and others generally) was confused about what was meant by the *first resurrection*. Alma acknowledges that some believed the first resurrection involved spirits going to paradise or darkness. He explains, "I admit it may be termed a resurrection, the raising of the spirit or the soul and their consignation to happiness or misery, according to the words which have been spoken. . . . Now we do not suppose that this *first resurrection*, which is spoken of in this manner, can be the resurrection of their souls and their consignation to happiness or misery. Ye cannot

27. The phrase *first resurrection* appears ten times in the Book of Mormon: six times in the words of Abinadi, once in the words of Alma the Elder, and three times in the words of Alma the Younger. The phrase *first resurrection* also appears twice in Revelation 20:5–6 and six times in the Doctrine and Covenants.

suppose that this is what it meaneth. Behold, I say unto you, Nay; but it meaneth the reuniting of the soul with the body, of those from the days of Adam down to the resurrection of Christ” (Alma 40:15–18). Thus Alma uses Abinadi’s words to clarify for Corianton the meaning of resurrection. This theme is further developed in the next section.

Case 7: *The Resurrection of Christ*

The allusion just mentioned, regarding the first resurrection, relates to another connection between the texts: the phrase *the resurrection of Christ*.²⁸ Abinadi defines the first resurrection as “a resurrection of those that have been, and who are, and who shall be, even until *the resurrection of Christ*” (Mosiah 15:21). Alma borrows this concept when he tells Corianton that the meaning of the first resurrection is “the reuniting of the soul with the body, of those from the days of Adam down to *the resurrection of Christ*” (Alma 40:18).

In Alma 40:17 (the verse preceding the use of the phrase *the resurrection of Christ*), Alma clearly states that he is alluding to others’ words, saying, “We do not suppose that this first resurrection, *which is spoken of in this manner*, can be the resurrection of the souls and their consignment to happiness or misery. Ye cannot suppose that this is what it meaneth.” Then in Alma 40:18, Alma proceeds to rework Mosiah 15:21. Thus Alma clarifies Abinadi’s words to alleviate Corianton’s misunderstandings regarding the resurrection.

Case 8: *Brought to stand before God . . . be judged . . . according to their works*

Abinadi teaches that men will “*be brought to stand before the bar of God, to be judged of him according to their works* whether they be good or whether they be evil” (Mosiah 16:10). Similarly, Alma testifies that there is a “time which is appointed of God that the dead shall come forth, and be reunited, both soul and body, and *be brought to stand before God, and be judged according to their works*” (Alma 40:21).²⁹

28. This phrase appears nine times in the Book of Mormon and also in Acts 2:31. The phrase *the resurrection of Christ* is first used by Abinadi and later used by Alma, Mormon, and Samuel the Lamanite. Each uses it one time, except for Alma who uses it five times in Alma 40:16–20. Alma and Abinadi are also the only people to discuss the resurrection of Christ in connection with the first resurrection. The phrase *resurrection of Jesus Christ* appears twice in the New Testament (1 Pet. 1:3; 3:21).

29. These phrases appear together only in the words of Abinadi and Alma. Nephi is the only other voice in the Book of Mormon to speak of people being “brought to stand before God” to be “judged” by their “works” (1 Ne. 15:33). He uses

It may be that when Alma clarifies Abinadi's teachings on the first resurrection and the resurrection of Christ, he wants Corianton to see the connection between resurrection and judgment. The context of Alma 39–42 indicates that Corianton is confused about the principle of accountability, and Alma uses Abinadi's words to illustrate how accountability relates to the concepts of resurrection, restoration, and the justice of God.

Case 9: *Bringeth about the restoration*

In speaking about the righteous and those who died in ignorance, Abinadi says, "And these are those who have part in the first resurrection. . . . And thus the Lord *bringeth about the restoration* of these; and they have a part in the first resurrection, or have eternal life, being redeemed by the Lord" (Mosiah 15:24). In contrast to the pleasant state of the righteous, Abinadi teaches that "the Lord redeemeth none such that rebel against him and die in their sins" (Mosiah 15:26).

Similarly, in Alma 40:22–23, Alma tells Corianton that after the resurrection all will be judged, and this "*bringeth about the restoration* of those things of which has been spoken by the mouths of the prophets" (Alma 40:22). Alma then speaks of the "awful death [that] cometh upon the wicked" (Alma 40:26).³⁰ The surrounding context of resurrection and punishment of the wicked adds context that suggests Alma bases his conversation with Corianton on these teachings from Abinadi.

Perhaps the most interesting connection between these verses is how Alma and Abinadi use the words *restoration* and *resurrection*. There appears to be some confusion in Corianton's mind concerning the meaning of the word *restoration*, and Alma states that "some have wrested the scriptures, and have gone far astray because of this thing" (Alma 41:1). The concepts of *restoration* and *resurrection* appear together in the words of Jacob, Abinadi, Amulek, and Alma, and all four individuals use these words in

the phrase *to be judged of their works*, a slight variant of the phrase used by Abinadi and Alma. The four-word phrase *brought to stand before* appears only seven times in scripture, exclusively in the Book of Mormon (see 1 Ne. 15:33; Mosiah 16:10; Alma 11:43; Alma 12:8; Alma 24:15; Alma 40:21; and Morm. 9:2). The four-word phrase *according to their works* and its variants is more common, appearing forty-one times in scripture: five times in the Old Testament, nine times in the New Testament, nineteen times in the Book of Mormon, and eight times in the Doctrine and Covenants.

30. The phrase *bringeth about the restoration* is used only by Abinadi and Alma. Nephi uses a nearly identical phrase (*bring about the restoration*) in 2 Nephi 30:8; however, Nephi is clearly referring to the gathering of Israel.

ways that could be interpreted as being interchangeable.³¹ This may have led to Corianton's confusion "concerning the restoration of which has been spoken" (Alma 41:1). Abinadi uses both *restoration* and *resurrection* in the context of those who die without knowing of Christ and teaches that those who die in ignorance will be restored to eternal life (see Mosiah 15:24).

Perhaps Corianton believed that those who feigned ignorance to God's commandments could "have a part in the first resurrection" (Mosiah 15:24). Or maybe he had tricked himself into believing in a universal restoration to good things, not realizing that while the resurrection is universal, a restoration to good is not. To provide clarification, Alma states that after the resurrection, all will "be brought to stand before God, and be judged according to their works. Yea, *this* [God's judgment at the last day] *bringeth about the restoration* of those things of which has been spoken by the mouths of the prophets" (Alma 40:21–22). It may be that Alma's use of the phrase *bringeth about the restoration* was intended to provide both an allusion and an amplification (continued throughout Alma 41) to Abinadi's words that would clarify a doctrinal misunderstanding about the meaning of the word *restoration*. The restoration spoken of by Alma and Abinadi is more than a universal resurrection. It also includes a restoration to the kind of being we were in mortality (see Alma 41:3–4).

Case 10: *Carnal, sensual, devilish*

Speaking of those who do not repent, Abinadi teaches that "the devil has power over them; yea, even that old serpent that did beguile our first parents, which was the cause of their fall; which was the cause of all mankind becoming *carnal, sensual, devilish*" (Mosiah 16:3). Similarly, in discussing the effects of the Fall, Alma explains that mankind have "become *carnal, sensual, and devilish*" (Alma 42:10).³²

The contexts surrounding these words are similar. In both instances, Alma and Abinadi teach about the Fall and point out that, because of God's redemption, these effects of the Fall can be overcome (discussed in the next allusion). The fallen state of man may have been part of the reason why Corianton felt that it was unjust for God to condemn sinners (see Alma 42:1). Alma acknowledges the results of the Fall but then provides Corianton with hope as to how he can overcome these consequences.

31. See 2 Nephi 9:12; Mosiah 15:24; Alma 11:43; and Alma 40:23.

32. The words *carnal, sensual, and devilish* appear together in the Book of Mormon only in the words of Alma and Abinadi. These words also appear together in Moses 5:13 and Moses 6:49. Thus, both Abinadi and Alma could potentially be referencing the brass plates. James 3:15 includes the phrase *earthly, sensual, devilish*.

Case 11: *Were it not for the redemption*

Abinadi says, “For *were it not for the redemption* which he hath made for his people, . . . all mankind must have perished” (Mosiah 15:19). In Alma 42:11, Alma also employs a similar phrase to highlight the supreme importance of Christ in the plan of redemption. He says, “And now remember, my son, *if it were not for the plan of redemption*, (laying it aside) as soon as they were dead their souls were miserable, being cut off from the presence of the Lord.”

While the exact wording is slightly different in the two passages,³³ in both cases Alma and Abinadi state that in absence of God’s plan for us, all mankind would perish. Christ provides hope for all mankind and supplies the means by which all who desire to repent can do so. Thus Alma uses Abinadi’s words to resolve Corianton’s concern regarding the justice of God in condemning the sinner (see Alma 42:1).

Case 12: *The demands of justice*

Abinadi teaches that Christ has power to make intercession for us, “having ascended into heaven, having the bowels of *mercy*; . . . having redeemed them, and satisfied *the demands of justice*” (Mosiah 15:9). Alma echoes this phrase in teaching Corianton that Christ “atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of *mercy*, to appease *the demands of justice*” (Alma 42:15).³⁴

Both Alma and Abinadi explain that Christ is able to exercise *mercy* and meet the *demands of justice* because of his atoning sacrifice. Once again we see how Alma draws on the words of Abinadi to clarify Corianton’s confusion (in this case regarding the justice of God). While God does require justice, he has also prepared a plan of mercy—mercy that can be extended to Corianton.

Case 13: *Prepared from the foundation of the world*

Abinadi teaches of the “redemption” that Christ “hath made for his people, which was *prepared from the foundation of the world*” (Mosiah 15:19). Near the end of his conversation with Corianton, Alma says, “And thus God bringeth about his great and eternal purposes, which were *prepared from*

33. In a previous sermon, Alma had clearly quoted Abinadi’s statement in Mosiah 15:19 while again substituting the phrase *plan of redemption* for *redemption*, increasing the possibility that Alma was alluding to Abinadi in this case. See Alma 12:25 compared with Mosiah 15:19.

34. The phrase *the demands of justice* is used only by Abinadi, Alma, and Amulek, increasing the likelihood that there is a connection between these two verses. Amulek uses the phrase *the demands of justice* twice in Alma 34:16.

the foundation of the world. And thus cometh about the salvation and the redemption of men, and also their destruction and misery” (Alma 42:26).³⁵ Alma uses Abinadi’s words to provide Corianton with encouragement. From the beginning, a plan had been put in place for Corianton and others to overcome the effects of the Fall, to be redeemed and stand in the presence of God.

Broader Themes

Stepping back to look at the larger picture reveals that Alma borrows phrases clustered around specific themes from Abinadi. First, Alma makes two allusions to Abinadi that may have helped Corianton connect his ministry with Abinadi’s (Alma 39:8, compare Mosiah 17:10; and Alma 39:15, compare Mosiah 15:18). All of Alma’s remaining quotations from Abinadi relate to Corianton’s major concerns, namely, the resurrection, the restoration, and the justice of God in punishing the sinner.

Three of Alma’s allusions to Abinadi relate to resurrection. Phrases such as *this mortal does not put on immortality* (Alma 40:2, compare Mosiah 16:10), *first resurrection* (Alma 40:15, compare Mosiah 15:21), and *the*

35. The connection between *redemption* and *prepared from the foundation of the world* rarely appears elsewhere in the Book of Mormon. The phrase *prepared from the foundation of the world* appears eleven times in scripture (all in the Book of Mormon). It is used twice by King Benjamin (Mosiah 4:6–7), once by Abinadi (Mosiah 15:9), once by Alma the Elder (Mosiah 18:13), four times by Alma the Younger (Alma 12:30; Alma 13:3, 5; Alma 42:26), twice by Mormon (Alma 18:39, Alma 22:13), and once by Jesus Christ (Ether 3:14). If we assume that Alma the Younger picked up the phrase from a previous prophet, the question is, was it King Benjamin or Abinadi? While Alma the Younger undoubtedly studied the words of both, it may be more likely that Abinadi is the source of this phrase. This is based on two pieces of textual evidence. First is the flow of the phrase from Abinadi to Alma the Elder. If Alma the Elder is borrowing the phrase, it most likely came from Abinadi. While Alma the Younger might not have been alive when his father was quoted as using the phrase, the fact that it is one of only four phrases that Alma the Elder directly quotes from Abinadi may indicate it was one Alma the Younger would have noticed. A second piece of textual evidence is the connection between the word *redemption* and the phrase *prepared from the foundation of the world*. Abinadi speaks of the “redemption” that Christ “hath made for his people, which was prepared from the foundation of the world” (Mosiah 15:19). Alma the Elder states that eternal life comes “through the redemption of Christ, whom he has prepared from the foundation of the world” (Mosiah 18:13). Three of the four times Alma the Younger uses *prepared from the foundation of the world*, he uses the word *redemption* in connection with the phrase (Alma 12:30; Alma 13:3; Alma 42:26). In contrast, King Benjamin does not use the word *redemption* in connection with *prepared from the foundation of the world*. Similar phrases also appear in Matthew 25:34; Ephesians 1:4; and 1 Peter 1:20.

resurrection of Christ (Alma 40:16, compare Mosiah 15:21) directly point to the resurrection.

Two of Alma's allusions concern the restoration. Both Abinadi and Alma discuss how Christ "bringeth about the restoration" (Alma 40:22, compare Mosiah 15:24), and Alma explains that restoration includes mankind being "brought to stand before" God and being "judged according to their works" (Alma 40:21, compare Mosiah 16:10).

The remaining six allusions address the issue of the justice of God in punishing the sinner. Alma and Abinadi are the only Book of Mormon prophets to speak of the wicked being "cast out" and "gnashing [their] teeth" (Alma 40:13, compare Mosiah 16:2). They alone say that the wicked who have become "carnal, sensual, and devilish" "have no part" in some of the fruits of the Atonement (Alma 42:10, compare Mosiah 16:3; and Alma 40:13, compare Mosiah 15:26). They both teach that "were [it] not for the plan of redemption" that had been "prepared from the foundation of the world," "the demands of justice" would take effect at the judgment day (Alma 42:11, compare Mosiah 15:19; Alma 42:26, compare Mosiah 15:19; and Alma 42:15, compare Mosiah 15:9).

In addition to common themes, the majority of Alma's quotations come from one section of Abinadi's words. Table 2 illustrates the order, in the words of Abinadi, for the thirteen passages quoted by Alma as he speaks to Corianton.

As demonstrated in table 2, Alma's quotations from Abinadi come almost exclusively from the thirty-three verses from Mosiah 15:9 to Mosiah 16:10. The tight clustering of these passages makes it seem more plausible that Alma intentionally uses a specific section of Abinadi's words when teaching Corianton.

Conclusion

After we examine these common phrases, a natural question to consider is, why does Alma quote so frequently from Abinadi? Any answers to this question must be at least a little speculative. Nevertheless, I believe there are several possible reasons why Alma would frequently quote Abinadi when speaking to Corianton.

First, perhaps Alma frequently quotes Abinadi because Abinadi is a recent prophet and one who addresses topics that are of concern to Corianton. Second, as stated previously, Alma could have had a special interest in the words of Abinadi because his father had recorded them (see Mosiah 17:4). This leads to a third reason why Alma would quote Abinadi's words to Corianton: Alma loves Corianton and wants to teach him doctrine that will bring him to repentance. It seems natural to turn to the prophetic words that once had this very effect on Corianton's grandfather—Alma the Elder. The family foundation of conversion to the gospel of Christ is Alma the

Table 2
Alma's Use of Abinadi's Words When Speaking to Corianton

Abinadi's Words	Alma's Words	Allusion
Mosiah 15:9	Alma 42:15	Demands of justice
Mosiah 15:10–11,18	Alma 39:15–16,18	Salvation unto his people
Mosiah 15:19	Alma 42:11	Were it not for the redemption
Mosiah 15:19	Alma 42:26	Prepared from the foundation of the world
Mosiah 15:21	Alma 40:16–20; 41:2	Resurrection of Christ
Mosiah 15:21–26	Alma 40:15–16	First resurrection
Mosiah 15:24, 26–27	Alma 40:21–23, 26	Bringeth about the restoration
Mosiah 15:26	Alma 40:13	They have no part
Mosiah 16:2	Alma 40:13	Gnashing of teeth
Mosiah 16:4	Alma 42:9–11	Carnal, sensual, and devilish
Mosiah 16:10	Alma 40:21	Brought to stand before God . . . be judged . . . according to their works
Mosiah 16:10	Alma 40:2	Put on immortality, . . . put on incorruption
Mosiah 17:10	Alma 39:8	Stand as a testimony against you at the last day

Elder's transcription of Abinadi's teachings. Perhaps Corianton has heard his grandfather speak glowingly of Abinadi and is particularly interested in the words of one who has deeply impacted his family's heritage. Alma may be thinking, "If the words of Abinadi sunk deep into my father's soul and provoked a mighty change within his heart, what better words to share with his wayward grandson?"

Another question we could ask at the conclusion of a study such as this is, so what? If Alma does intentionally use Abinadi's words, what relevance does that have for us today? I believe there are at least two important lessons that we can learn. First, Alma has clearly studied the scriptures. He has paid a price to be so conversant in Abinadi's words that he can weave them into a conversation as though they were his own. Because he has carefully studied Abinadi's words, when he is faced with a very difficult situation (a wayward son who has committed serious sin while serving a mission), Alma is able to help Corianton by explaining the words of recent prophets.³⁶

36. Similarly, it is evident from the text that Alma has deeply pondered the concept of a first resurrection. It is also clear that he has carefully studied what Abinadi

A second implication of this study is simply that the Book of Mormon is deep and rich, full of theological and textual connections that have yet to be tapped. The allusions described in this study shed light on Corianton's concerns and lead us to ponder on possibilities about where those concerns came from. Corianton appears to have bought into the Nehorite doctrine that "in the end, all men should have eternal life" (Alma 1:4). Perhaps Corianton has misconstrued Abinadi's words to justify his beliefs. It may be that Alma turns to Abinadi in order to explain to Corianton the true meaning of words that Corianton has misunderstood.

In addition, the repeated connections between Abinadi's discourse and Alma's conversation with Corianton demonstrate the textual integrity of the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon claims to be an ancient record authored by multiple individuals. The findings of this paper support this claim. By closely reading the text, we can picture a later prophet (Alma) poring over the words of his predecessor as he resolves his son's concerns. The consistent patterns of allusions in Alma 39–42 argue for textual intentionality. This was not something Joseph Smith made up.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell wrote, "The book [of Mormon] is like a vast mansion with gardens, towers, courtyards, and wings. There are rooms yet to be entered, with flaming fireplaces waiting to warm us. The rooms glimpsed so far contain further furnishings and rich detail yet to be savored."³⁷ This study may provide a glimpse into one small corner of such a room—a room focused on the textual allusions within the Book of Mormon. Much more work needs to be done with intertextuality in the Book of Mormon.³⁸ Does Alma allude to Abinadi as frequently in his other writings? Which other prophets does Alma most frequently quote? Whom do later prophets such as Nephi₂ and Samuel the Lamanite frequently draw upon?³⁹

taught on the subject. When we wrestle with doctrinal questions, we can likewise engage in a serious study of what modern prophets have taught on the subjects we ponder.

37. Neal A. Maxwell, *Not My Will, but Thine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), 33.

38. Even the chapters discussed in this paper have additional layers of intertextuality to uncover. Heather Hardy, in reviewing this paper, pointed to additional intertextual lenses with which Alma 39–42 could be examined. For example, she suggested connections can be found between Alma 39–42 and the other sermons Alma gave to his sons, Alma's teachings in Ammonihah, and Alma's teachings to the Zoramites.

39. Grant Hardy wrote, "It would be interesting to track various phrases throughout the Book of Mormon to determine which Nephite prophets were particularly influenced by which of their predecessors." Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, 134.

Over two decades ago, a group of researchers wrote, “Words and phrases may tell a great deal about such things as the meaning, history, peculiarity, and artistry of the Book of Mormon. Remarkable patterns of word distributions and phrase densities may indeed yield valuable results, although it is too early to tell what such findings may or may not ultimately mean. An enormous amount of research and reflection remains to be done before scholars can speak definitively about such matters.”⁴⁰

This statement still holds true today. However, two decades ago it was much harder to study intertextuality in the Book of Mormon than it is today. Research that took place in the 1980s and 1990s to identify phrase matches in the Book of Mormon was extremely difficult.⁴¹ At that time, it was difficult to use a computer to perform calculations to find the types of connections presented in this paper. Software now allows such calculations to be accomplished in seconds. This allows work to be done much more quickly in terms of finding intertextual allusions in the Book of Mormon. This present study is an attempt to add to what should be a fast-growing study of textual echoes in the Book of Mormon.

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He expresses appreciation to the many individuals who provided thoughtful feedback and suggestions to improve this paper, including Heather and Grant Hardy, Thomas Wayment, Lynne Wilson, Robert Millet, Robert Smith, Lee Hilton, John Welch, and other BYU Studies editors. Work done in collaboration with Shon Hopkin, Jennifer Brinkerhoff, Randal Wright, and Jana Johnson was an important foundation for this project. Finally, he gives special gratitude to his grandfather, John L. Hilton, whose textual studies inspired the desire to more carefully analyze the words of the Book of Mormon.

40. John W. Welch and others, “Words and Phrases,” in Welch, *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, 284.

41. For example, see John L. Hilton, “Listing of the Book of Mormon References for Passages of Major Authors and their Literary Forms, Plus Word Counts from the Text of the Printer’s Manuscript,” unpublished paper, September 23, 1982. Producing some of these calculations required Hilton to leave computers running all night to perform various calculations and analyses.

Rediscovering Provo's First Tabernacle with Ground-Penetrating Radar

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During the early morning hours of December 17, 2010, fire broke out in the Provo (Utah) Tabernacle, virtually gutting the historic building and leaving only the exterior walls standing in stable condition. On October 1, 2011, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints announced that the ruined tabernacle will be restored as the second temple of the Church in Provo (the Provo City Center Temple), giving a second life to the tabernacle. However, this building is not the first tabernacle in Provo. Many years before the present tabernacle was constructed, the “Old Tabernacle” (or “Old Meeting House”) stood immediately north of the tabernacle that burned (figures 1 and 2) (in this article, we will refer to the Old Tabernacle as the first tabernacle and the burned Provo Tabernacle as the second tabernacle).

The first tabernacle was razed in 1919. Over time, this building and all associated structures disappeared from the surface of the site, replaced by open landscaping north of the second tabernacle, and the exact location of the old building was forgotten. Prior to the excavation of the first tabernacle site, the roots of a great sycamore tree had spread beneath an area once occupied by the north entrance of the first tabernacle. Underneath the tree's towering branches, generations of picnickers have unfolded their blankets on the ground, little aware of the rich legacy buried there.

Because the area of the first tabernacle will undergo extensive modification in preparation for the new Provo City Center Temple, it was critical to understand the location and character of the buried nineteenth-century structures in order to provide information that could be used to help plan the development. As part of the preparation for the construction of the new temple, a three-dimensional (3D) ground-penetrating radar (GPR) study of



FIGURE 1. Photograph of the first tabernacle in Provo, Utah, located near what is now the intersection of University Avenue and Center Street, looking southwest. Photo © Utah State Historical Society.

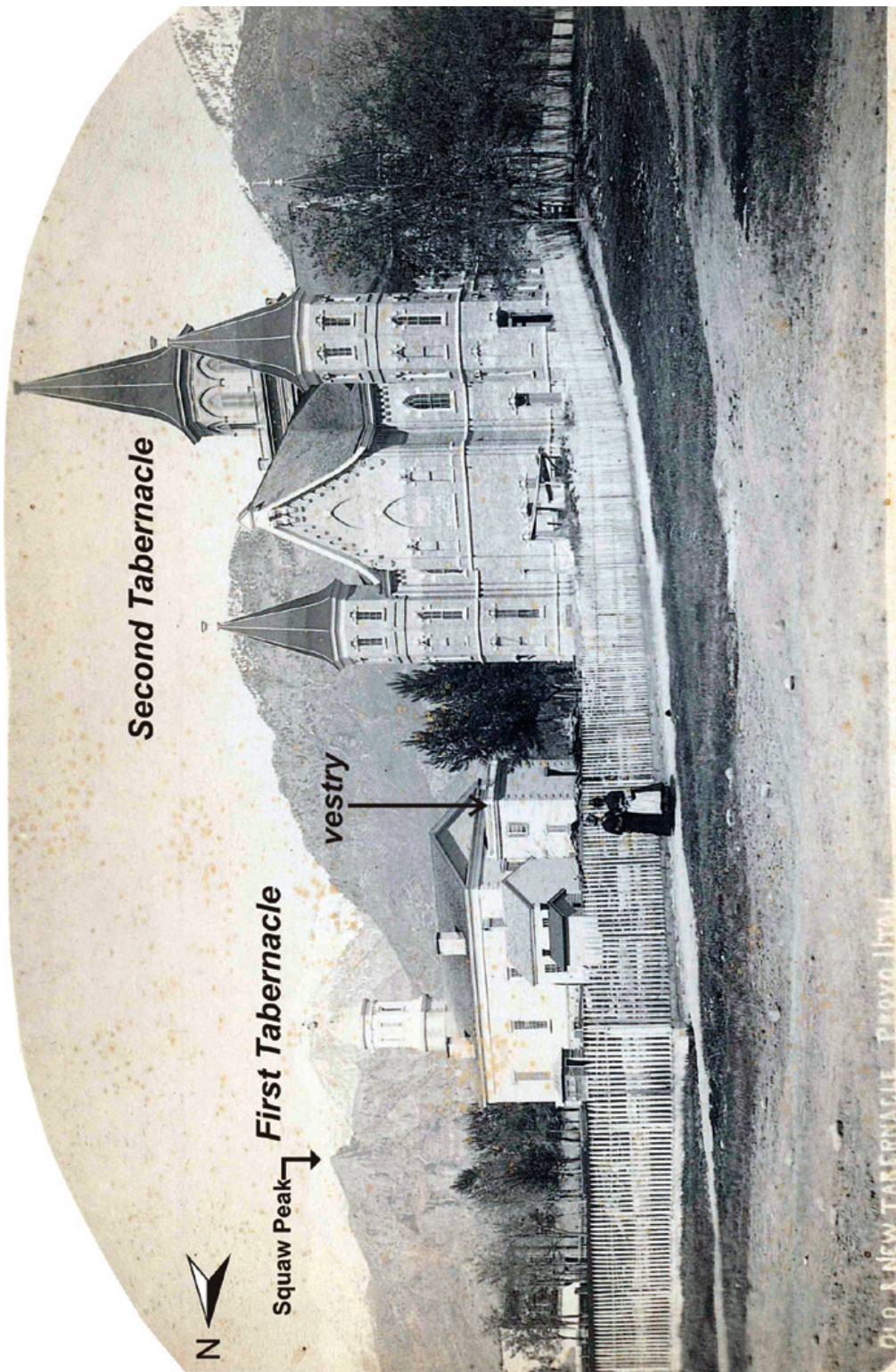


FIGURE 2. Photograph taken from near the intersection of present-day 100 South and 100 West in Provo, looking northeast. Photograph courtesy of the Church History Library.

the area north of the second tabernacle was undertaken in November 2011 to assess buried archaeological resources associated with the first tabernacle. Modern understanding of the first tabernacle has been based primarily on written and photographic sources. These sources, although excitingly rich, do not provide all of the necessary details about the building to plan a major development of the site. In this article, we report the results of this investigation to demonstrate the value of GPR for interpreting the foundations and interior structures of an important pioneer building.

As part of our study, we investigate how radar can noninvasively produce high-quality, interpretable images of buried nineteenth-century structures typical of historic sites in urbanized areas. The degree to which GPR can sharpen our knowledge about the location, dimensions, and physical interior of a nineteenth-century building site is also studied. Lastly, we show how the results reveal the location and nature of buried features, such as foundations, interior walls, interior and exterior entrances, and variations in the preservation of buried remains that could impact subsequent development of the site. To put it simply, we wished to see if any substantial foundation stone remained at the site. Such a question was brought home to us as we were working at the site when a passerby “warned” us that we would find nothing because the townspeople would have carted away all the stone to be used elsewhere.

Our interpretations of the GPR results were tested initially by excavating strategically placed pits in order to verify the existence and precise location of the buried foundation, followed by a full-scale excavation of the site by professional archaeologists from the Office of Public Archaeology at Brigham Young University. To the best of our knowledge, this study represents the first published 3D GPR study of a historic LDS Church building. In general, our study provides a good case study of how the 3D GPR technique can be used to assess buried historic architectural remains that are not expressed at the ground surface and for which physical documentation is incomplete or unavailable. Further, the subsequent archaeological excavations provided a rare opportunity to assess the effectiveness of GPR for detecting fine-scale features of the buried building.

Brief History of the Survey Site

Construction of the first tabernacle began in 1856 under the direction of Brigham Young. The building’s design likely came from Church architect Truman O. Angell. The building was apparently designed to preserve “among us a reminiscence of a Presbyterian meeting house, that the children of the Saints might see in what kind of an edifice many of their fathers worshipped before they heard the Gospel.”¹ Construction proceeded slowly with brief bursts of activity. The building was dedicated in 1867 by

John Taylor, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The hall was filled to overflowing with Church leaders and Provo residents.

The building was approximately 81 ft. by 47 ft. (24.7 m by 14.3 m) with a rough stone foundation and adobe walls. The exterior walls were stuccoed and incised to create the appearance of stone. The wood roof was capped on the north end with a large bell tower. The main entrance was on the north gable end of the building. Entrances on the east and west provided access to a full basement the same size as the upper hall (figure 1). A two-story vestry about 18 ft. by 18 ft. (5.5 m by 5.5 m) was constructed on the south gable end of the building (figure 2). This vestry probably did not have a basement. The tabernacle's main room included a balcony on the east, north, and west and had a large pulpit on the south wall. Structural support for these interior elements likely came from columns extending through the basement and main upper hall. There was some kind of vestibule inside the north entrance, but documentary sources are not clear about its overall dimensions. Interior finishes were made of plaster or painted wood.

At the time of dedication, the tabernacle was already deemed too small for the increasing Provo population. In 1882, construction began on the second tabernacle. The two tabernacles shared the same city block, with the new building facing east. The first tabernacle was subsequently used less frequently and eventually fell into disrepair. When the first tabernacle was demolished, adobes were removed for use in other buildings and the foundation was removed to a few feet below grade. With the demolition, precise information about the building's location, size, relationship to the new tabernacle, and exact footprint was lost.

Historical sources also reveal information about other structures on the tabernacle block. In the area west of the two tabernacles was a caretaker's brick cottage, a wood support structure of some kind, and an enclosed baptismal font. These structures appear in photographs (see figure 2), but little is known about construction dates, dimensions, or demolition.

Primer on GPR Surveying

GPR is a kind of radar, similar to that used at airports to safely guide airplanes to the ground, except GPR sends signals into the ground instead of through the air. GPR profiling uses an electromagnetic signal that is transmitted and received by the antenna unit. Radar images are derived from the "echoes" of the signal that reflect back from surfaces or objects buried in the ground and are recorded by a computer attached to the antenna. Stone or brick foundations, rubble from the demolition process, and interior walls are examples of buried building material that could produce such echoes. Buried surfaces or objects that strongly reflect (or scatter) radar energy back to the antenna

do so because their electrical properties contrast with the surrounding soil, meaning that they have different “reflectivity.” For example, a buried foundation stone that is composed mostly of quartz (a form of crystalline SiO_2) has a reflectivity that varies markedly from that of soil. This is partly because the stone possesses a lower porosity relative to soil (soil has more air space—more porosity—than the stone). Since the speed of electromagnetic signals in air is much greater than that in quartz,² radar energy is reflected back from the stone to the antenna. Moisture content of the site is also important; as moisture increases, electromagnetic signals slow down and become attenuated. GPR data are recorded as energy arriving at the antenna over time (a typical range of recording time is 100 nanoseconds [ns]), and so the images must be converted to depth using an assumed or derived signal velocity for the soil overlying the target.³

During a site survey, the GPR antenna and recording computer unit is moved by hand across the ground along a series of closely spaced parallel and perpendicular lines in order to produce a grid of data. In this case, lines were spaced 1 ft. (0.3 m) apart. The GPR data grid is processed using specialized software and can be viewed as maps at various depths below ground surface (“depth slices”) or as cross sections (“profiles”). The advantage of the 3D approach for imaging a buried building with GPR lies in the researcher’s ability to view the subsurface as a “volume” of data that can be sliced or cut at various depths in order to view individual rooms or stone walls, or to determine where entrances or walkways might have been.

One of the early uses of GPR was to locate buried foundations or other structures associated with archaeological remains.⁴ Brigham Young University researchers have previously applied GPR and other radar technology to the fields of archaeology, climate-change science, weather science, and geology.⁵ Archaeological applications of GPR to historic sites in Nauvoo, Illinois, sponsored in part by Brigham Young University, are currently ongoing.⁶

Design of GPR Survey over the First Tabernacle Site

Prior to conducting the GPR surveys, we began our sleuthing of the first tabernacle site by consulting late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Sanborn Fire Insurance maps for the state of Utah, which show an “adobe/fire-proof” building labeled “(Old) Tabernacle” situated north of the present Provo Tabernacle.⁷ The Sanborn maps are an indispensable resource used by historical archaeologists investigating urban areas because they not only show precisely where many old buildings were located but also track structural changes to these buildings that might affect their insured value.

For example, the Sanborn maps show a number of changes to the first tabernacle site, such as the removal of the front porch on its northern entrance sometime after 1888.

The likely location of the first tabernacle with respect to the northern wall of the second tabernacle was estimated from the Sanborn maps, and, from this information, an initial GPR grid was laid out (grid 1, figure 3). This initial grid was intended to locate most of the old building, but in fact it covered only its northeast quadrant as revealed by the first surveying efforts. Once we discovered this quadrant, we then were able to add two additional grids, which had to be positioned so as to avoid the large sycamore tree and the security fence that restricted access to the second tabernacle site. The ground surfaces for grids 1 and 2 (the landscaped area) and for 3 (the restricted area) were quite different, which impacted the quality of the GPR results. The smooth grassy surface of the landscaped area provided an excellent platform for data collection, whereas the restricted site was covered with an approximately 6-in. (15.2-cm) layer of coarse slag (used to stabilize the muddy site) that caused the antenna to bounce slightly as it was moved across the ground and impeded radar reflection, thus degrading the signal somewhat. With the survey areas precisely laid out, we began the tedious task of pushing the antenna back and forth across the ground, rather like meticulously mowing a large lawn. Fortunately, a small army of students volunteered to help.

Results and Interpretation

Once all three grids were surveyed by the GPR over several days, the data were loaded into a computer using specialized software, and three 3D “volumes” were created that could be cut up into vertical or horizontal slices. The horizontal slices, or maps, can be presented at various levels below the ground surface. For example, at a depth of 2 ft. (0.6 m), one can see linear anomalies (straight lines that clearly stand out, see figure 4) as well as oddly shaped dendritic patterns (sinuous, branching lines, see figure 4). The former are simply shallow buried utility lines, whereas the latter are roots emanating from the large sycamore tree that once commanded the site. The precise delineation of buried pipes and tree roots demonstrates the level of detail possible with GPR surveying with a fine 1-ft. (0.3-m) grid.

When the GPR maps are visualized at an optimal averaged depth of 2 ft. (0.6 m) below ground surface (figures 3 and 4), distinct rectilinear outlines of a building start to emerge. In grids 1 and 2, it is easy to see interior partitions within the northern part of the structure, related to a foyer or entrance hall. Also visible are remnants of a rectangular front porch structure (shown

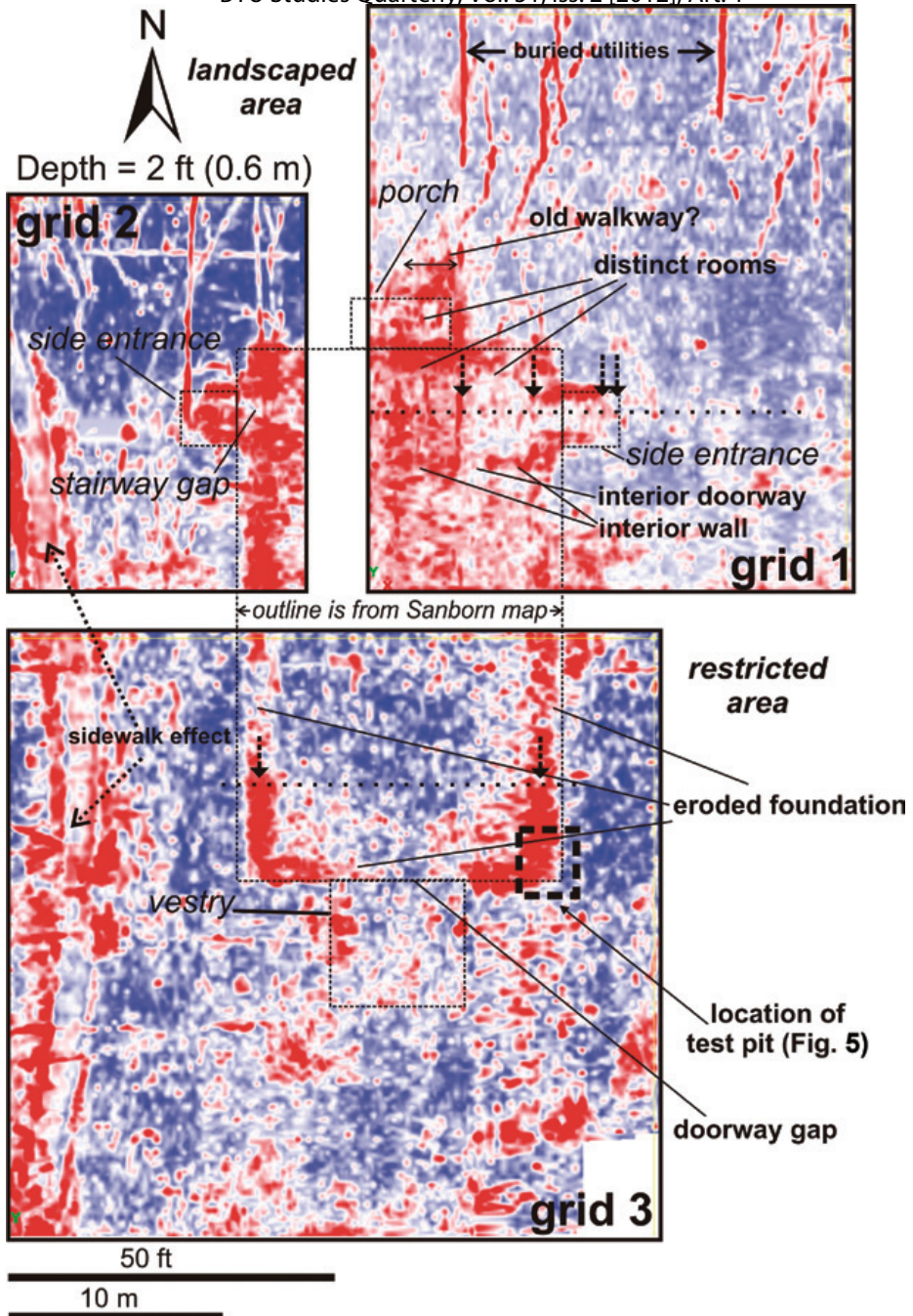


FIGURE 3. Depth “slice” (map) cut through the GPR volume at 2 ft. (0.6 m), averaged over an interval of 2 ft. (0.6 m), assuming a speed of light through the ground of about 0.3 ft./ns (0.09 m/ns). Locations of interpreted features are noted. Also shown is the outline of the first tabernacle as taken from the 1888 Sanborn Fire Insurance map. Horizontal dotted lines show the position of the profiles in figure 6, and vertical black arrows indicate divisions observed on the profiles.

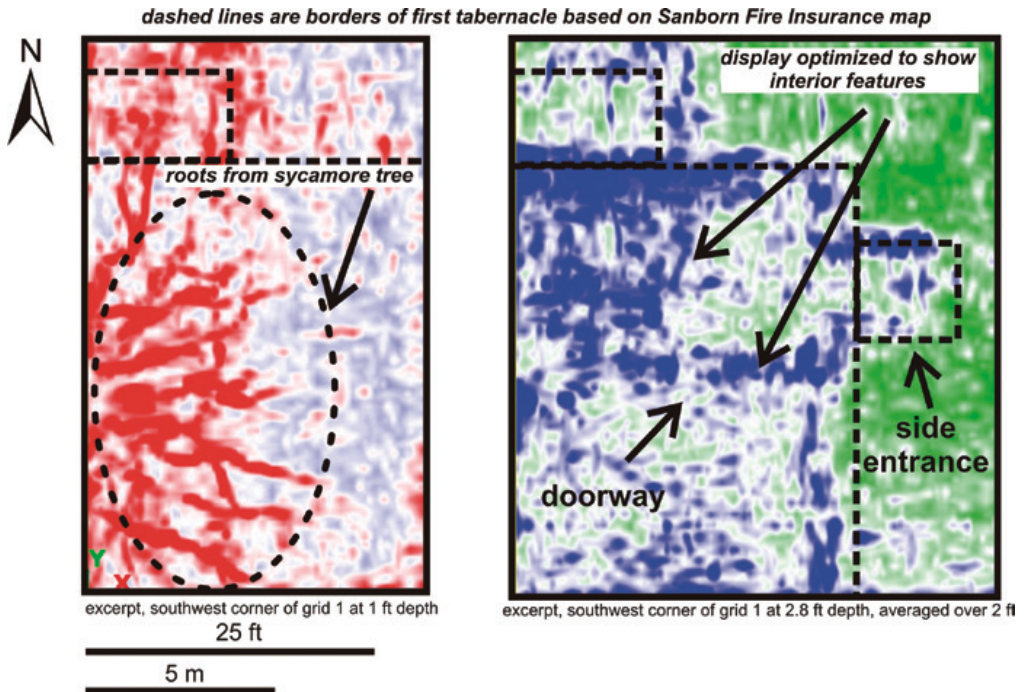


FIGURE 4. Map excerpts from grid 1 showing details (left) of shallow tree root patterns associated with a large sycamore tree and (right) of interior partitions.

as a frame structure on the 1888 Sanborn map) on the north side of the building, as well as small square stone basement entrances on the east and west sides of the building. Both of these features are evident on historical photographs (figures 1 and 2). The high reflectivity of the boundaries of the basement entrances, relative to the lower reflectivity of the porch, confirms that the former were composed of thick stone foundations, which remain intact. The porch likely had thinner foundations, which accords well with this being a frame substructure. Two parallel curved lines can be seen leading away from the north entrance that may be remnants of a walkway into the building (figure 3).

Differences in reflectivity between different partitions (see figure 4) point to varying types of materials that either originally existed within the partitions or that were dumped into the structure as part of the demolition process. Observing these changes in reflectivity is useful for guiding further archaeological study of the site or for planning further development. The origin of the internal reflectivity is likely to be collapsed and discarded building stone, rubble, or other material thrown into the interior as fill.

In addition to showing variations in the internal partitioning of the building, the GPR maps provide estimates of the thickness of the walls. For example, the north-south walls appear to be about 4 ft. (1.2 m) thick, which is confirmed by the test pit (figure 5) excavated by staff and volunteers of the Office of Public Archaeology at BYU. The data quality of the grid 3 survey appeared to suffer due to the slag layer and so does not show internal reflectivity as well, although the main foundation walls are well expressed. Interestingly, the grid 3 area demonstrates strong variations in the expression of the foundation walls. For example, there is a gap in the rear wall adjacent to the vestry, which is fixed to the southern end of the building (figure 3). Looking at the east and west walls in grid 3, one can also see gaps expressed as a weaker signal. Although the southern vestry area manifests some GPR signature, it clearly does not have the same strong structural outline as the rest of the building's footprint, which suggests that it may not have been built on as solid a foundation as the rest of the structure. This observation is consistent with the historical record, which indicates that the vestry probably did not have a basement, a fact that was confirmed by the BYU excavating team. The overall geometry of the GPR-derived structure agrees generally with the relative dimensions from the Sanborn maps.

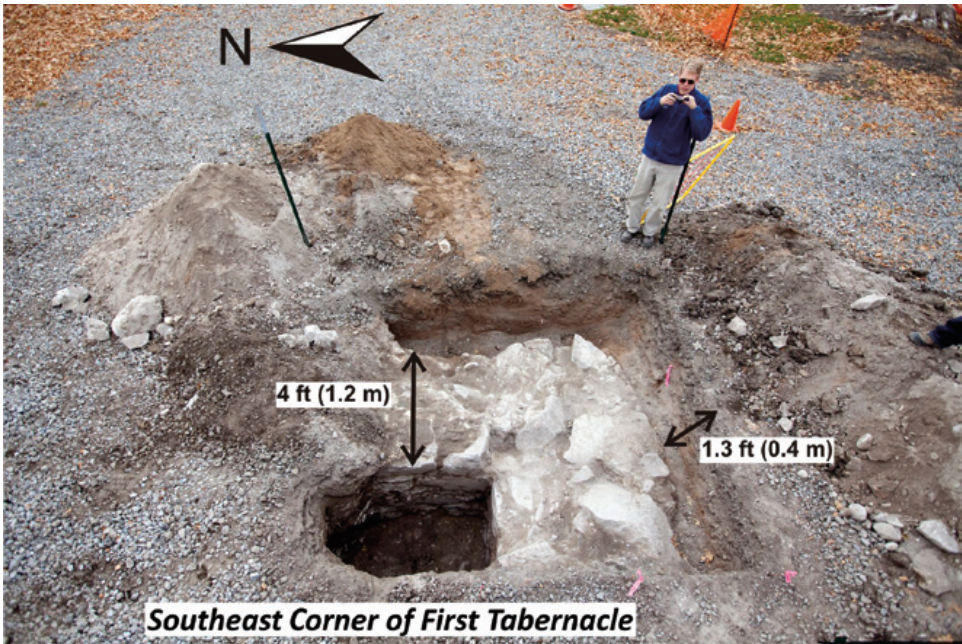


FIGURE 5. Test pit over the southeast corner of the first tabernacle foundation in grid 3 (see figure 3). Small rocks covering the ground are slag brought in to stabilize the muddy site. Person in photo is author Benjamin C. Pykles. Photo by Jaren Wilkey/Brigham Young University.

As we lower the investigation to deeper levels, the reflectivity dies out at 6–7 ft. (1.8–2.1 m) below the ground surface, the depth one might expect for the base of the interior structure. This can be visualized by slicing the 3D volume vertically in order to provide the interpreter with cross-sectional (or profile) views through the buried building. For example, a profile cutting across the grid 3 area shows the discrete locations of the buried walls and provides an estimate of their depth and thickness (figure 6). Also visible in profile view (figure 6) is the base of the interior structure in grid 3, as estimated by the cessation of reflectivity caused by stone rubble or other debris that was laid on top of natural geological deposits. Profiles over portions of grid 1 show the lateral variability of internal reflectivity of partitions or rooms within the northern part of the first tabernacle. This reflectivity variation indicates that these partitions were filled with a varying degree of stones, bricks, or other material during the demolition process. Test pits confirmed that the base of the foundation wall was indeed 4–5.5 ft. (1.2–1.7 m) deep below the tops of the existing foundation (or 6–7 ft. [1.8–2.1 m] below grade) and that the structure's basement floor consisted of undisturbed sand deposits underlying a thin layer of clay (in other words, a prepared surface) on which sat large amounts of stone rubble resulting from the demolition process.

Validation of GPR Results from Archaeological Excavation

Shortly after the GPR survey, archaeological excavation by BYU's Office of Public Archaeology commenced, under the supervision of Richard K. Talbot, director. The full-scale excavation of the first tabernacle site provides a unique opportunity to test the validity of the interpretation of the GPR results. Such an opportunity is particularly valuable since the usual purpose of a GPR survey is to avoid the necessity of a complete excavation. The exposure of the site thus allows us to benefit from hindsight and understand how particular characteristics of the buried remains are expressed in a radar image. Once the excavation was completed, the LDS Church History and Special Projects departments teamed up to engage a contractor to generate 3D laser scans of the exposed site using terrestrial-based LiDAR (Light Detection And Ranging) and digital photogrammetry, from which one can synthesize 3D views from any vantage point with up to 1-mm accuracy (figure 7). Images created in this way can also aid in validating and guiding the interpretation of the radar results.

One of the more obvious features of the radar map image (figure 3), other than the outer foundation walls, is an inner partition that cuts through the northern half of the structure. The excavations exposed this feature as an inner, east-west-trending wall along with the remnants of two equally spaced doorways, one of which is expressed as a subtle gap in reflectivity in the GPR

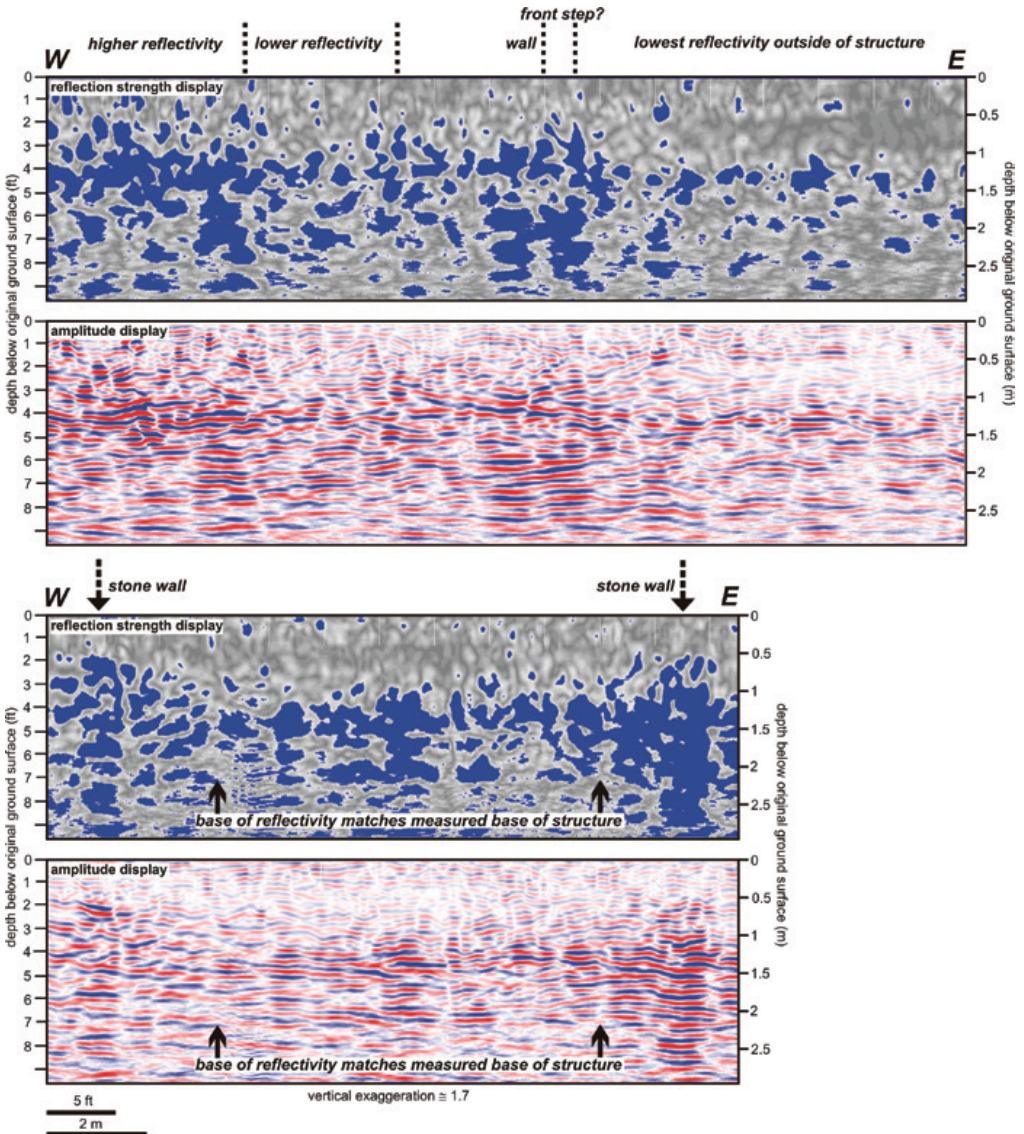


FIGURE 6. Cross sections through grid 1 (top), showing variation in reflectivity between two partitions, as well as individual foundation walls, and grid 3 (bottom), showing distinct foundation walls and the base of reflective zone, corresponding to a layer of rubble as verified in test pits. See vertical dashed lines in figure 3 for the location of the profiles.⁸

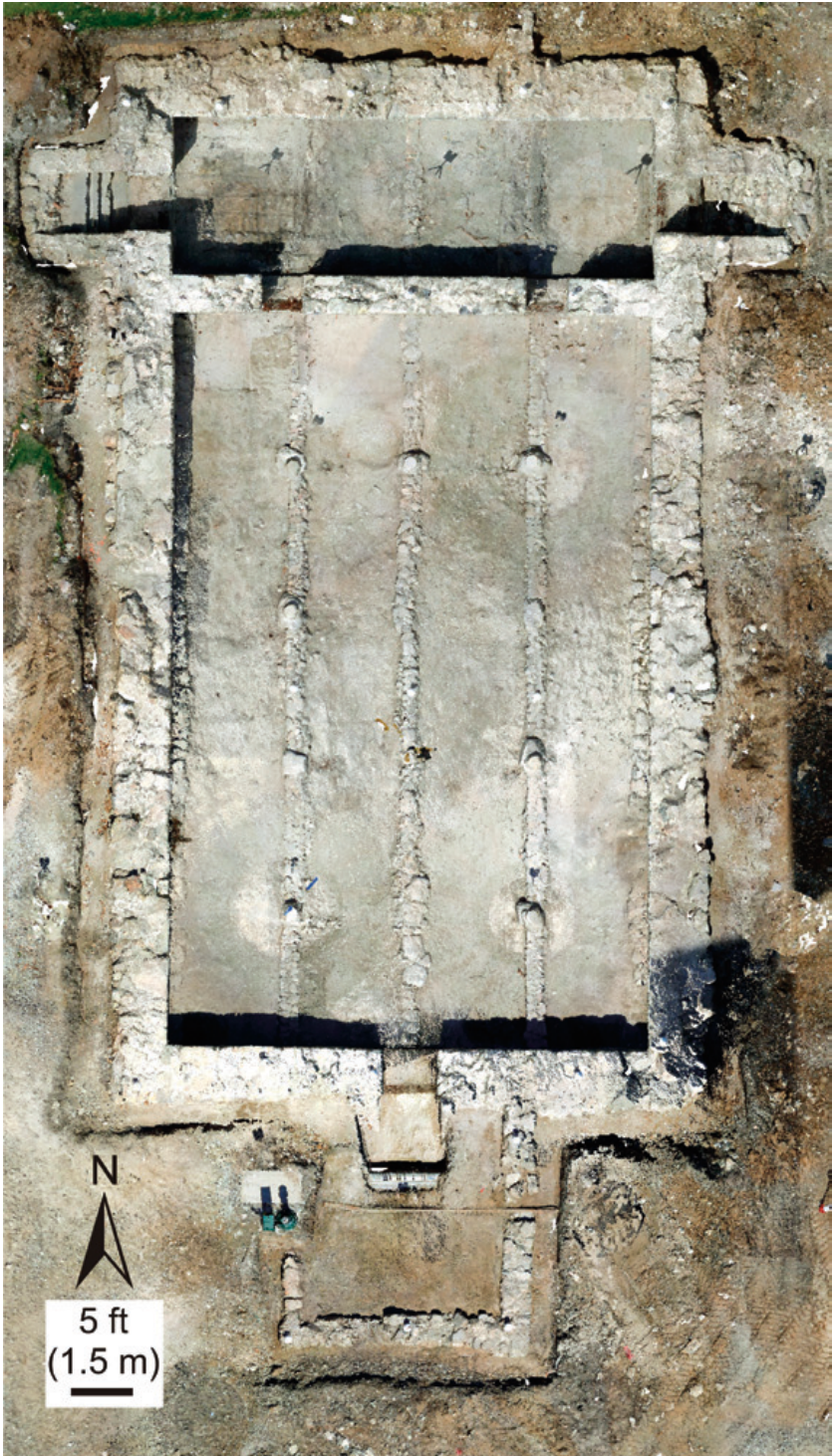


FIGURE 7. Aerial LiDAR view of the fully excavated site.

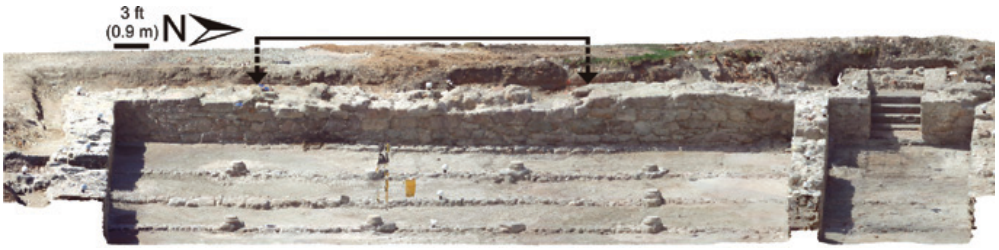


FIGURE 8. Oblique LiDAR view, looking west, showing the west wall of the first tabernacle. Vertical arrows indicate area of the west wall that is eroded. Note the variation in roughness and erosion of the wall, which is manifested as a weakened radar signal in figure 3 (western area of grid 3).

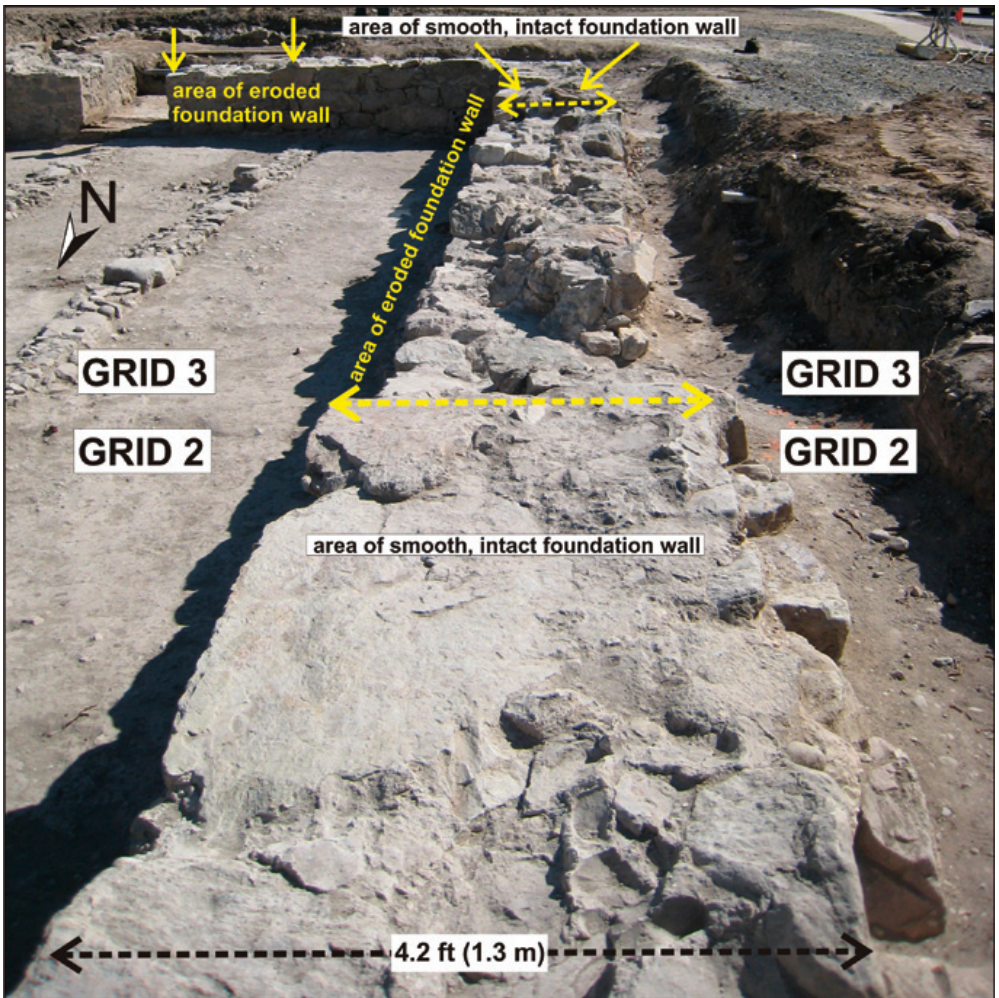


FIGURE 9. Oblique ground-based photograph (by J. H. McBride) taken along the western foundation wall looking south, showing variation in roughness of the wall.

data from the grid 1 survey (figure 4). Rectangular-shaped variations in reflectivity in this area (figure 4) turn out to be related to variations in the degree of rubble that had collapsed or been pushed into the interior of the structure. Over the southern part of the structure (beneath the “restricted area” in grid 3, figure 3), stark losses in the reflectivity of the main foundation walls were initially thought to be caused by an unexplained noise problem; however, the excavations revealed drops in reflectivity to be directly related to the increased roughness and erosion of the buried upper surface of the foundation walls in these areas (figures 8 and 9). The gap in the southern wall of the main foundation turned out to be a doorway into what was the vestry, which was attached to the southern wall. The poor expression of the vestry area (south of the main structure), a consequence of the much thinner foundations beneath it, can be seen in the view of the fully excavated site (figure 7).

Summary and Conclusions

Our study is “hypothesis-driven” in the sense that we knew more or less where to locate the geophysical survey beforehand. However, the clarity of the results aptly demonstrates that a “blind” approach (lacking prior knowledge about a site) would work well for a much larger area of historical interest involving buried nineteenth-century stone foundations, such as in Nauvoo, located along the Mississippi River flood plain in Illinois, or in Church historic sites near Kirtland, Ohio. Our study of Provo’s first tabernacle site demonstrates the utility of GPR for delineating both the basic outline as well as important geometrical details of the buried building. These include the thickness of the old stone walls, areas where a wall may be missing, locations of entrances, depth to the base of the structure, internal partitions or rooms, and information about materials (stone rubble, for example) that were more concentrated in some areas than others. The GPR maps also reveal the varying conditions of the remaining foundations—some areas have fully intact walls, whereas others show where stonework was removed or had eroded (see parts of structure depicted in grid 3). The ability to achieve such fine detail noninvasively provides developers with precise images that they may use to help decide the ultimate disposition of the archaeological remains. Determining the exact location of the first tabernacle helped the LDS Church make informed decisions concerning the construction of the new temple. In a general sense, knowing where areas of thick and deeply entrenched stone walls are located would guide construction efforts for any historic site undergoing development. The ultimate utility of the GPR results is to contribute to a lasting record of the 3D outline and internal structure of the site that will serve as a permanent resource for future archaeological and architectural study of this historic pioneer building.⁹

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We thank the staff and volunteers of the Office of Public Archaeology at Brigham Young University for their expert assistance in excavating and recording the entire site. Richard Talbot, Lane Richens, Deb Harris, Scott Ure, Sara Stauffer, Katie Richards, Ryan Saltzgeber, Karley Salinas, and others were instrumental in this effort. Special thanks is also due to Charmaine Thompson, archaeologist with the Manti-La Sal National Forest, for her assistance. We also extend our appreciation to students from Brigham Young University, the University of Utah, and local high schools who aided in the GPR field surveying, including Jonathan Burton, Eric Chambers, Mariah Chambers, Joshua Flores, Scott Greenhalgh, Tiffany Lloyd, Elizabeth McBride, Katherine Robertson, and Cari Ryan. We also wish to thank Brian Balls of Summit Engineering for his assistance in preparing the images from the 3D laser scan of the site. We express appreciation to David G. Long for reading a draft version of the article and providing useful comments.

1. "The Provo Meeting House," *Millennial Star* 29, October 19, 1867, 661.

2. J. Milsom, *Field Geophysics*, 3d ed. (Chichester, West Sussex, England: Wiley, 2003), 169.

3. Once a relatively shallow target, such as a buried stone foundation, is located on a GPR image, it is common practice to dig a small test pit exposing the target in order to compare its depth with its measured travel time to and from the antenna. This allows the geophysicist to readily compute the velocity of electromagnetic radiation, as well as the "dielectric constant" (an electrical property related to reflectivity) for the ground medium between the top of the target and the ground surface. For the test pit dug over the southwestern corner of the first tabernacle foundation, a depth below ground surface of 16 in. (40.6 cm) was observed. When we compare this depth with an observed travel time of 8–10 ns, we can obtain the velocity of

radiation in the medium by dividing depth by time (remembering to divide the “round-trip” travel time by two) and then obtain the dielectric constant from the simple formula: $V_m = c/\sqrt{\epsilon}$, where V_m is the speed of the radiation in the medium, c is the speed of light in a vacuum, and ϵ is the dielectric constant. This exercise provides a $V_m \approx 0.3$ ft./ns (0.09 m/ns) and $\epsilon \approx 11$, values typical for moist silty soils. Assuming that the ground conditions do not vary significantly across the survey area, we can now convert all GPR travel time observations to depth below ground surface. For further background information on GPR fundamentals, see A. P. Annan, “Electromagnetic Principles of Ground-Penetrating Radar,” in *Ground Penetrating Radar Theory and Applications*, ed. H. M. Jol (Amsterdam: Elsevier Science, 2009), 4–40.

4. Lawrence B. Conyers, *Ground-Penetrating Radar for Archaeology*, Geophysical Methods for Archaeology Series (Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press, 2004), 149–59.

5. D. W. Parry, D. V. Arnold, D. G. Long, and S. R. Woodward, “New Technological Advances: DNA, Electronic Databases, and Imaging Radar,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty Years*, vol. 1, ed. P. W. Flint and J. C. Vanderkam (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 496–516; J. H. McBride, R. W. Keach III, R. T. Macfarlane, G. F. De Simone, C. Scarpati, D. J. Johnson, J. R. Yaede, G. S. Macfarlane, and R. W. R. Weight, “Subsurface Visualization Using Ground-Penetrating Radar for Archaeological Site Preparation on the Northern Slope of Somma-Vesuvius: A Roman Site, Pollena Trocchia, Italy,” *Il Quaternario (Italian Journal of Quaternary Science)* 22, no. 1 (2009): 39–52; K. M. Stuart and D. G. Long, “Tracking Large Tabular Icebergs Using the Sea-Winds Ku-band Microwave Scatterometer,” *Deep-Sea Research Part II* 58 (2011): 1285–1300, doi:10.1016/j.dsr2.2010.11.004; F. Saïd and D. G. Long, “Effectiveness of QuikSCAT’s Ultra-High Resolution Images in Determining Tropical Cyclone Eye Location,” *Proceedings of the International Geoscience and Remote Sensing Symposium 1* (2008): 351–54; J. H. McBride, S. B. Rupper, S. M. Ritter, D. G. Tingey, A. M. Quick, A. P. McKean, and N. B. Jones, “Results of an Experimental Radar Survey on the Gornergletscher Glacier System (Zwillingsgletscher), Valais, Switzerland,” *Proceedings of 2010 13th International Conference on Ground Penetrating Radar* (2010): 1–6, doi:10.1109/ICGPR.2010.5550157; and J. H. McBride, W. S. Guthrie, D. L. Faust, and S. T. Nelson, “A Structural Study of Thermal Tufas Using Ground-Penetrating Radar,” *Journal of Applied Geophysics* (2012): doi:10.1016/j.jappgeo.2011.09.011.

6. C. L. Richard, B. C. Pykles, and J. H. McBride, “Applicability of Ground Penetrating Radar and Geographic Information Systems for Documenting and Visualizing Historic Mormon Nauvoo, Illinois,” paper presented at Annual Meeting of the Society for Historical Archaeology, 2010, Amelia Island, Florida.

7. 1888, sheet 4, Western Americana Division, Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City. Online documentation on the Sanborn Fire Insurance maps for Provo and other cities in Utah can be found at <http://www.lib.utah.edu/digital/sanborn/>.

8. For further reading on processing and display of reflection data, see R. E. Sheriff and L. P. Geldart, *Exploration Seismology*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

9. Digital maps and original data files will be housed at the Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.



Aerial view of Nihm mountains in Yemen. Courtesy Warren Aston.

A History of NaHoM

Warren P. Aston

A century or more before Lehi's 600 BC exodus from Jerusalem, a wealthy man in southern Arabia named Bi'athtar donated three limestone altars to a temple dedicated to Ilmaqah, the moon god. Inscribed on each altar was a text identifying him as the grandson of Naw'um of the Nihm tribe. The three altars were unearthed in 1988 by German archaeologists amid the ruins of the Bar'an temple near Marib, in modern-day Yemen. They provide the earliest known reference to the Nihm, which nearly three millennia later retains the name and is one of Yemen's largest tribes. The tribal territory today is extensive, centered in the mountains northeast of Sana'a, Yemen's capital, but may have been even larger anciently. Because the account of Lehi's Arabian journey mentions just such a place-name, the altar discovery highlights a most significant development: the possibility, even likelihood, that ancient evidence of the Book of Mormon site "Nahom" survives to the present day. This article surveys what has been published or reported and summarizes and updates what is known about this interesting place-name in the Book of Mormon.

NHM—The Name

As background to what follows, two underlying points should be noted regarding Nephi's statement in 1 Nephi 16:34, that Ishmael "was buried in the place *which was called Nahom*" (italics added). This wording makes it quite clear that Nahom was already known by that name. Lehi and his party saw no need to name or rename the place, as they regularly did on their desert odyssey, both before and after Ishmael's death (see "in the valley which he called Lemuel," 1 Nephi 16:6; "we did call the name of the place Shazer," 16:13);



Altar with insert showing NHM characters (the final three characters on the left).
Courtesy Warren Aston.

“the sea, which we called Irreantum,” 17:5; “we called the place Bountiful,” 17:6; “we did call it the promised land,” 18:23). Although the meaning of the name “Nahom” is not exactly clear, it may well have captured in Arabic or Hebrew the human aspects of sighing, moaning, sorrowing, or mourning, as well as the ideas of comforting or consoling, any or all of which meanings would have made Nephi’s mention of this name appropriately significant, given the fact that it was a place suitable for burial.

Second, *Nihm*, which is the name of both a tribe and the territory it occupies, may well have shared the same consonants, *N H M*, as the Book of Mormon name *Nahom*. This would hold true in any of the Semitic languages, whether in today’s Arabic or the ancient Epigraphic or Early South Arabian language of the altar inscriptions, depending on which Hebrew or Egyptian *H* Nephi used in this word on his small plates.

In other languages, including English, the name is transliterated with vowels added. This results in variants such as Nehem, Nihm, Nahm and Nehm, but the consonants—and therefore the essential name—remain the same. While many toponyms, or place-names, appear repeatedly in Arabia, NHM is unique, always with “a voiceless laryngeal,” a simple *h*. As

a toponym, NHM has not been found to appear anywhere else except in reference to one area.¹

NHM in Scripture and LDS Commentary

Beyond noting the rare name and exploring its meaning, most scholars have had little reason to pay particular attention to NHM.² LDS scholars have had a much greater interest in this singular place in Nephi's account and, examining it closely, have found a series of links that greatly increase the likelihood of a connection between it and Nihm in Yemen.

This process began in 1948 when Hugh Nibley, freshly returned from military service in Europe and fascinated with Arabic, commenced publishing details illustrating how Nephi's text demonstrated "insider" familiarity with Arabian customs.³ He noted the linguistic connections between the two possible Semitic roots of the NHM name (the Arabic root *NHM*, meaning "to sigh or moan with another," and the Hebrew *Nahum*, meaning "comfort") and what happened following Ishmael's death. Both possible roots for the name link to such meanings as "to comfort, console, a soft groan" and "to roar, complain, suffer from hunger."⁴

A conclusion reached forty years later by biblical scholar David Damrosch corroborates the connection between NHM and dying. He noted that the root for *Naham* appears twenty-five times in the narrative books of the Bible and how "in every case it is associated with death. In family settings, it is applied in instances involving the death of an immediate family member (parent, sibling, or child); in national settings, it has to do with the survival or impending extermination of an entire people. At heart, *naham* means 'to mourn,' to come to terms with a death."⁵ This closely mirrors Nephi's description of the mourning and the complaints about looming hunger following the death and burial of his father-in-law, Ishmael: "The daughters of Ishmael did mourn exceedingly, because of the loss of their father, and because of their afflictions in the wilderness; and they did murmur against my father . . . saying: Our father is dead; yea, and we have wandered much in the wilderness, and we have suffered much affliction, hunger, thirst, and fatigue; and after all these sufferings we must perish in the wilderness with hunger" (1 Ne. 16:35).

Stephen Ricks pointed out in 2011 that while these associations seemed appropriate to the Lehiters in view of what happened following Ishmael's death, the original place-name itself—the one we can document in ancient texts—may well have had a different origin in early Arabia.⁶ In other words, when Lehi's group heard the name *Nahom* vocalized, it recalled to them the mourning and complaining, despite it having a different *original* meaning. While this is linguistically probable, the material presented below gives

additional reasons to believe that the place Nahom also already had an association with death and burial.

In his later years, Nibley saw the Arabian links he identified as his “most important” contribution to Book of Mormon research.⁷ The characteristically broad sweep of his writing noted the appropriateness of the Nahom name but left it for others to probe more deeply. Following Nibley’s lead, other scholars have continued to find a veritable treasure trove of insights and evidences that support the Book of Mormon’s founding story in the Near East.

A major step forward in Old World studies of the Book of Mormon came in 1976, when Lynn and Hope Hilton visited Oman, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Israel on a Church assignment from the *Ensign* magazine. Their writings further focused LDS scholarly attention on the lands in which Nephi’s account unfolds. On the basis of that visit, the Hiltons tentatively proposed a location for Nahom in southern Saudi Arabia.⁸

In 1978, however, a BYU archaeologist raised the intriguing possibility that Nahom might still be known by that name *today*. In a short letter published in the *Ensign*, Ross T. Christensen noted the similarity of a place-name, *Nehhm*, on a 1763 map of Yemen to Nephi’s *Nahom*.⁹ He recommended research into the origins of the name and a search for other references to this name.¹⁰

Professor Christensen’s letter bore fruit, eventually setting in motion a train of events that resulted in fieldwork in Yemen by the present author and others from 1984 onward. In time, other maps and historical sources have been found that confirm the presence of the tribal name back almost two millennia, always in the same location. Present-day leaders of the Nihm tribe in Yemen proved an invaluable source of information. The physical setting of Nihm and the plateau to its east leading to the fertile coast of southern Oman have also been explored.¹¹

The resulting data were published in a series of reports by the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) from 1984 to 1991, documenting the presence of Nihm back to about AD 100, or to within roughly seven centuries of Nephi’s reference.¹² The essence of the findings was later published as “Lehi’s Trail and Nahom Revisited” in the 1992 book *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*.¹³

Textual studies continued in the meantime, including a 1988 study by Stephen Ricks entitled “Fasting in the Book of Mormon and the Bible,” taking a more focused look at the hunger and fasting connected with Ishmael’s death and the name of his burial place.¹⁴

In 1991, Alan Goff’s significant essay “Mourning, Consolation, and Repentance at Nahom” provided a holistic overview of Nephi’s narrative.

Goff explored the biblical milieu in which the Lehite narrative is presented, finding that the apparently linear account of Nahom is underlain with sophisticated Old Testament parallels.¹⁵

In 1994, the book *In the Footsteps of Lehi* encapsulated all the research findings into the Lehite journey, including Nahom, to that point in time.¹⁶ The following year, on July 22, 1995, I presented a paper titled “Some Notes on the Tribal Origins of NHM” at the annual Seminar for Arabian Studies at Cambridge University, England. Delivered before the altar discovery was known to LDS researchers, the paper proposed an initial chronology for the name, including the reference to it in the first book of Nephi.¹⁷

Summaries of the Book of Mormon’s Old World setting depicting Nahom, such as that published in 1997 by Noel B. Reynolds¹⁸ and the 1999 study aid *Charting the Book of Mormon*,¹⁹ continued to be expanded and deepened by scholars probing Nephi’s deceptively simple text. In 2002, two major pieces dealing with Nahom were published in a FARMS book, *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon*. In it, S. Kent Brown’s “New Light from Arabia on Lehi’s Trail” made new proposals concerning the length of the Lehite journey from Shazer to Nahom and then across Arabia to Bountiful. In Stephen Ricks’s “Converging Paths: Language and Cultural Notes on the Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Book of Mormon,” Ricks incorporated the altar discovery into his overview.²⁰

The year 2004 saw publication by FARMS of the seminal *Glimpses of Lehi’s Jerusalem*, the most comprehensive treatment to date of the setting in which Nephi’s account begins. The book concluded with “Jerusalem Connections to Arabia in 600 BC,” by S. Kent Brown, noting historical Jewish influences in Arabia and the implications of the Nahom account inadvertently confirming that Lehi’s group certainly had some contact with outsiders.²¹

In 2005, the documentary film *Journey of Faith* was released. Filmed on location, *Journey of Faith* showed views of the modern Nihm tribal area, as did the book by the same name the following year. Both showed the use of mummification in ancient South Arabian burials from one of several known burial sites in Nihm.²²

Nahom: A Place of Burial

Nahom was not necessarily where Ishmael died but was where he was *buried*. This insight ties in perfectly with other facts. Adjacent to modern Nihm is the largest known burial site on the Arabian peninsula, an ancient necropolis dating back into the Neolithic period of some four millennia ago. Thousands of burial cairns spread over the hills of ‘Alam, Ruwayk, and Jidran, near Marib, have been known to the outside world only since



The vast Ruwayk desert burial area dating to before Lehi's time, some 25 miles/40 km north of Marib. Courtesy Warren Aston.

their 1936 discovery.²³ Unstable security conditions—a perennial obstacle in Yemen—meant that the sites were not examined by archaeologists until some decades later, at about the same time the three altars were unearthed nearby.²⁴ Because Nihm in the ancient Early South Arabian language refers to “pecked masonry,” this may carry an echo of the name’s genesis: the construction of the extensive burial complex and perhaps other structures.²⁵

The Link to an Eastward Bountiful

There are other reasons for believing that the tribal name and Nephi’s Nahom are one and the same. After describing the impact of the death of Ishmael, Nephi specifies the first major change of direction since leaving Jerusalem. Instead of their southerly tending course, from Nahom onwards the Lehiters traveled “nearly eastward” (1 Ne. 17:1), until they arrived at their uniquely fertile “Bountiful.” Only recently has satellite-assisted mapping enabled us to appreciate that after traveling southward into Arabia, as the Lehiters did, people are prevented from easterly travel by the shifting, waterless dunes of the vast Empty Quarter, as much today as in the past. However, a narrow band of flat plateaus beginning in the Nihm area, marking the southern end of the Empty Quarter, presents the first opportunity for travel in an easterly direction.

While the terrain of this plateau makes easterly travel *possible*, the plateau is nonetheless waterless and forbidding. It is still avoided today. The difficulty of travel along this route seems to be reflected in Nephi’s account,

which mentions that the group ate their meat raw (1 Ne. 17:2), they did not use “much fire” (v. 12), and the afflictions and difficulties of the journey could not all be written (v. 6). The Book of Mormon later clarifies these afflictions as “hunger and thirst” (Alma 37:42).

Perhaps assisted by the Liahona, which arrived on the very morning the Lehite group departed into Arabia, Nephi makes it clear that he could distinguish quite precise cardinal directions, not merely southeast or a generic “southwards” for example. A route ENE or ESE from Nahom leads into the Empty Quarter or into the equally forbidding Ramlat Saba’tayn desert. Very significantly, the direction of travel from Nahom is specified by Nephi as *nearly eastward*, a direction that we now know is possible across the plateau.²⁶

Finally, only in recent decades has research shown that eastward from Nihm is the *only* fertile area in over a thousand miles of coastline, the few miles of coast in Oman touched by the annual monsoon rains. This small fertile region lies within just a degree or two (thus “nearly”) of being directly east of Nihm.²⁷

The Significance of the Bar’an Altars

Given the convergence of these facts, it is small wonder that the 1988 altar discovery documenting the name to before Lehi’s day was highly significant.

By 1997, the best preserved of the three altars formed part of an exhibition showcasing the ancient past of Yemen in museums across Europe. Noting the altar inscription published in one of the museum catalogs, S. Kent Brown of BYU published a short article in the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* in 1999. In it he concluded that the Nihm mentioned on the altar was “very probably” the same place as Nephi’s Nahom.²⁸ No images of the text itself were available for study, however, and because the altar was still touring Europe, it seemed unlikely that more could be learned.

In September 2000, I visited the Bar’an temple site at Marib with two colleagues, Lynn Hilton and Greg Witt. Unexpectedly, a *second* altar bearing an identical dedication text was located within the excavated temple. Two months later, with the permission of the German team completing the restoration of the site, I returned to document the site in detail. On this visit, a badly damaged *third* altar with the same text was also located and photographed. Other altars found at the site, numbering about twenty in total, had unrelated scripts carved upon them. The fact that not one but three altars had been offered to the temple by Bi’athtar is unusual and underscores his status and wealth.

With comprehensive images of the altars now available, a more accurate translation of the text was made by perhaps the foremost authority on ancient Arabian chronology, Kenneth Kitchen of Liverpool University.



The second of the three NiHM altars sits in the foreground in this view of the Bar'an site in Marib. Courtesy Warren Aston.

Kitchen was able to date several of the rulers mentioned in the Sabaean inscription, thus narrowing the date for Bi'athtar. The final dating of the three physical altars belongs to the 800–700 BC period, a century earlier than first thought.²⁹ But since Bi'athtar's grandfather Naw'um lived two generations earlier, the reference to the tribe actually refers to an earlier time, roughly 850–750 BC.

The altar find was briefly reported in the February 2001 *Ensign*, in the international *Liahona* magazine, and mentioned in a talk given in the April 2001 general conference.³⁰ In 2002, Terryl Givens's landmark study *By the Hand of Mormon*, published by Oxford University Press, included a full-page picture of one of the altars and endorsed this find as “the first actual archaeological evidence for the historicity of the Book of Mormon” and “the most impressive find to date corroborating Book of Mormon historicity.”³¹

A 2001 article entitled “Newly Found Altars from Nahom,” published in the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, updated readers concerning the two additional altars and their dating; it remains the fullest account of the altar discovery.³² The discovery continued to be seen as significant in encouraging non-Mormons to take the Book of Mormon seriously as an ancient text. The 2005 Library of Congress conference organized to mark the bicentennial of Joseph Smith's birth thus highlighted the altars as evidentiary support for Joseph Smith's prophetic calling,³³ as they have been since, including in historian Richard Bushman's 2007 biography *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*.³⁴ These evaluations of the significance of the altars, however, stand in stark contrast to the silence from both the cultural-Mormon and anti-Mormon communities about their discovery.³⁵

Further Documenting an Ancient Name

Many Latter-day Saints, however, remain unaware of still other ancient sources now known to mention NHM. These finds further inform our understanding of the tribe and its role in that region in early periods. They contribute toward an ever clearer picture of the setting in which Lehi and Sariah's odyssey played out.

Various categories of sources document the presence of Nihm in Arabia. Most prolific, unsurprisingly, are the maps made over recent centuries showing the tribal areas of Yemen. More than twenty such maps are now known. As noted earlier, it was a map that initiated LDS efforts to understand the history of the name. Interestingly, by highlighting the Western world's ignorance of Arabian geography, an earlier map (D'Anville's 1751 map) was a catalyst leading to the 1761–67 Danish expedition that produced the map Christensen noted.³⁶ D'Anville's map remains the earliest map



Jean Baptiste Bourguignon D'Anville, "Asia" (Paris, 1751), 30" x 40". Used by permission from James Gee.



Carsten Niebuhr, "Yemen" (Denmark, 1771), 15" x 23". Used by permission from James Gee.



Detail from John Cary, “New Map of Arabia” (London, 1804), 25” x 26” (top) and W. Darton, “Arabia” (London, 1811), 11.5” x 10”. Used by permission from James Gee.

located to date that shows NeHeM and, importantly, draws on much earlier sources that appear to be no longer extant.³⁷

It is worth noting that the name NHM is not especially prominent in any of these old maps; there is nothing that would draw particular attention to it. More significantly, the name itself on any of these maps does not reveal in any way that the only fertile area on the Arabian coast lay to its east. Indeed, knowledge of the Dhofar region’s unmatched abundance began to be reported to the outside world only some sixteen years after the publication of the Book of Mormon.³⁸

Written sources other than maps are fewer but no less valuable; these include several medieval travel accounts, some containing intriguing details about the Nihm tribe.³⁹ A singular written source is one of the very earliest texts, an AD 620 religious epistle from the prophet Muhammad himself, addressed to the tribes of Yemen, including the tribe of “Nahm.”⁴⁰ Earlier still are tribal listings documented by Arab geographers and historians.⁴¹ To these we can now add a final category: inscriptional texts. Usually carved into durable stone, they are proving to be the earliest of all. Indeed, some may predate Bi’athtar’s three altars.

Stone Inscriptional References to NHM

Several inscriptions now can be added to the altar texts after being recovered from recent archaeological work in Yemen, an activity that continues spasmodically in one of the world’s more difficult locations to conduct such work. These new inscriptional references to NHM come from three of the



Top to bottom: Sabaean text, BynM 217; Minaic text, DhM 386; Hadramitic text, BarCra 6. As highlighted, NHM appears in these inscriptions which were carved in ancient Yemen in the Sabaean, Minaic, and Hadramitic languages. Reproduced courtesy of the Corpus of South Arabian Inscriptions (CSAI) project of the University of Pisa, Italy.

four major south Arabian kingdoms (Saba, Ma'in, and Hadramaut). No texts referring to NHM are known from the fourth kingdom, Qataban.

The four kingdoms date from the early first millennium BC down to the third century AD, when a new kingdom, Himyar, united the whole region.⁴² Such widespread references to the name indicate the influence of the Nihm tribe over the millennia.

Palm Leaves: Another Inscriptional Medium

While stone and metal recorded the conquests and reigns of kings and a powerful elite, a further method developed in ancient Arabia—cursive inscriptions on dry palm-leaf stalks. Necessarily small because of the limited, curved writing surface, these texts have created a new writing category designated “Zabur,” or “minuscule texts.”



Writing on an ancient palm stick, YM 11748. It is one of two known that record the NHM tribal name in a cursive “minuscule” script known by historians as Zabur. Reproduced courtesy of CSAI.

The palm sticks were used primarily to record contracts, debts, lists of names, accounts, letters, and decrees—in short, the whole range of everyday life. They may also have been used by rulers as a “backup” copy of decrees carved in stone or cast in metal. In the desert climate, palm sticks have survived remarkably well and, being organic, are amenable to carbon dating. Some date back to the eleventh century B.C.⁴³ Thousands of palm sticks have been recovered (over three thousand are kept in the National Museum in Sana’a alone), and while study of them is still in its infancy, at least two palm sticks—still undated but epigraphically belonging “at least to the 4th century B.C.”—are known to document NHM.⁴⁴

Conclusions

Documenting a tribal name and location back some three thousand years is, of course, rare anywhere in the world; it is likely unprecedented in Arabian archaeology. It is noteworthy that, without exception, each of these maps and texts portray Nihm in its present location, although many scholars assume that the tribal influence was wider in the pre-Islamic period. Together, these sources form a consistent, amply documented tribal chronology, allowing reasonable conjecture that the origin of this name may

A History of NHM

Late Neolithic?	Possible origin of name in connection with construction of the huge desert burial site.
850–750 BC	Approximate date of Naw’um on Bar’an text.
800–700 BC	Bar’an altars inscribed with NiHM references.
700 BC	Monumental texts refer to NiHM in this period.
600 BC	1 Nephi 16:34 reference to “Nahom.”
AD 100	Hamdani infers NiHM is part of Bakil tribes.
AD 600	NiHM mentioned in prophet Muhammad’s epistle.
AD 800	al-Kalbi reference to NiHM.
AD 900	Hamdani’s references to NiHM in Iklil, Sifat.
AD 1300	Likely sources for Anville’s 1751 map.
AD 1751	Numerous maps and references to NHM.
AD 2000	Numerous maps showing modern tribe.
Present Day	NiHM tribe present in same geographical location after approximately 2,800 years.

reach back at least into late Neolithic times and would have been known to many ancient people familiar with that region.

Thus, it is significant that Nephi's account makes clear that "Nahom" was already the name of the area where his father-in-law, Ishmael, was buried. To this Hebrew-speaking group, it was natural and appropriate to mention the tribal place-name in recording and recalling the death and burial that took place there. At just the right location to link directionally to and access the place that they would call "Bountiful," the rare name of NHM still exists today and is now firmly documented back through the centuries to before Nephi's day.

This article by independent researcher Warren P. Aston (who can be reached via email at byustudies@byu.edu) is based on his research in Yemen and Oman since 1984. In addition to papers and articles published primarily by the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship at BYU, available at <http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu>, his research is reported in his forthcoming book, *Lehi and Sariah in Arabia: The Old World Setting of the Book of Mormon*.

1. NHM is listed in G. Lankester Harding, *An Index and Concordance of Pre-Islamic Arabian Names and Inscriptions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 602. However, in listings of pre-Islamic place-names in southern Arabia in Nigel Groom, *A Dictionary of Arabic Topography and Placenames* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban; London: Longman, 1983), and in the exhaustive tribal listings in 'Umar Ridā Kahhālāh, *Mu'jam Qabā'il al-'Arab* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1985), it does not appear.

2. See the valuable work of non-LDS scholars H. Van Dyke Parunak, "A Semantic Survey of NHM," *Biblica* 56, no. 4 (1975): 512-32; and Josef Scharbert, *Der Schmerz im Alten Testament*, *Bonner Biblische Beiträge* 8 (Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1955), 62-65.

3. Publication of Nibley's work began with his "The Book of Mormon as a Mirror of the East," *Improvement Era* 51 (April 1948): 202-4, 249-51 (reprinted November 1970, 115-20, 122-25). The article expanded into three essays, including "Lehi in the Desert," which appeared monthly in the *Improvement Era* from January to October 1950. The three essays appeared, slightly modified, as *Lehi in the Desert and the World of the Jaredites* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1952). Since 1988, the book has been available as *Lehi in the Desert; The World of the Jaredites; There Were Jaredites*, volume 5 of *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1988).

4. Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert; The World of the Jaredites; There Were Jaredites*, 79.

5. David Damrosch, *The Narrative Covenant: Transformations of Genre in the Growth of Biblical Literature* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), 128-30, also see 141.

6. Stephen D. Ricks, "On Lehi's Trail: Nahom, Ishmael's Burial Place," in *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 20, no. 1 (Provo, Utah: Maxwell Institute, 2011), 66-68.

7. See John W. Welch, “Hugh Nibley and the Book of Mormon,” *Ensign* 15 (April 1985): 52.

8. Lynn M. and Hope A. Hilton, “In Search of Lehi’s Trail,” *Ensign* 6 (September 1976): 32–54, (October 1976): 34–63. This was followed by Lynn M. Hilton and Hope A. Hilton, *Discovering Lehi: New Evidence of Lehi and Nephi in Arabia* (Springville, Utah: Cedar Fort, 1996).

9. The map drawn by surveyor Carsten Niebuhr, a meticulous chronicler, during the 1761–67 Danish expedition to the Near East, depicts the tribal area as “Nehhm.” Rather than being a typographical error, this spelling probably represents Niebuhr’s best attempt at recording the name as he heard it from locals; Nehhm does not appear in any other maps before or after his.

10. Ross T. Christensen, “The Place Called Nahom,” *Ensign* 8 (August 1978): 73. Christensen later mentioned the possible Nehhm connection to Nahom briefly in a Q&A following his paper, “Geography in Book-of-Mormon Archaeology,” at the 1981 Thirtieth Annual Symposium on the Archaeology of the Scriptures, held by the Society for Early Historic Archaeology (SEHA, formerly the UAS) at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. See *Newsletter and Proceedings of the S.E.H.A.*, no. 149 (June 1982): 11, available online at http://www.ancientamerica.org/library/display.php3?catalog_id=1048.

11. See the firsthand account “Beginnings” in Warren P. Aston and Michaela Knoth Aston, *In the Footsteps of Lehi: New Evidence for Lehi’s Journey across Arabia to Bountiful* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 5–10.

12. Warren P. Aston and Michaela J. Aston, *The Search for Nahom and the End of Lehi’s Trail*, AST-84 (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1984, updated 1986, 1988, 1989); and Warren P. Aston and Michaela J. Aston, *The Place Which Was Called Nahom: The Validation of an Ancient Reference to Southern Arabia*, AST-91a (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1991). Although the quasi-official *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992) and the Book of Mormon articles extracted in Daniel H. Ludlow, S. Kent Brown, and John W. Welch, eds., *To All the World* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2000), listed no entry for *Nahom*, the encyclopedia did include a map showing the possible route of Lehi in Arabia. This map in that encyclopedia, 1:144, and references to *In the Footsteps of Lehi* and other works along this line implied acceptance of the scholarship done concerning Nahom’s location to that point. This map has since then appeared in the CES Book of Mormon student guides and elsewhere.

13. John W. Welch, ed., *Reexploring the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1992), 47–52.

14. Stephen D. Ricks, “Fasting in the Book of Mormon and the Bible,” in *The Book of Mormon: The Keystone Scripture*, ed. Paul R. Cheesman (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1988), 127–36.

15. Alan Goff, “Mourning, Consolation, and Repentance at Nahom,” in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo, Utah: FARMS; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1991), 92–99.

16. Aston and Aston, *In the Footsteps of Lehi*, is now available through the *Deseret Book Online Library*, www.Gospelink.com. A year earlier, Scot and Maurine Proctor’s *Light from the Dust: A Photographic Exploration into the Ancient World of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993), 38–39, showed two images of modern Nihm.

17. Warren P. Aston, "Some Notes on the Tribal Origins of NHM," unpublished paper delivered at the annual Seminar for Arabian Studies, July 22, 1995, Cambridge University, England, also proposed that the NHM area extended over a larger region anciently.

18. See the summary by Noel B. Reynolds, "Lehi's Arabian Journey Updated," especially "The Place Which Was Called Nahom," in *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited: The Evidence for Ancient Origins*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1997), 379–89.

19. John W. Welch and J. Gregory Welch, *Charting the Book of Mormon* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1999), 147–48, available at <http://byustudies.byu.edu>.

20. S. Kent Brown, "New Light from Arabia on Lehi's Trail," in *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2002), 55–125; Stephen D. Ricks, "Converging Paths: Language and Cultural Notes on the Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Book of Mormon," in Parry, Peterson, and Welch, *Echoes and Evidences*, 389–419.

21. S. Kent Brown, "Jerusalem Connections to Arabia in 600 B.C.," in *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem*, ed. John W. Welch, David Rolph Seely, and Jo Ann H. Seely (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2004), 625–46. A generic desert image "near Nihm" appears on p. 77; for the Nahom comment see p. 641 n. 6.

22. See S. Kent Brown and Peter Johnson, eds., *Journey of Faith: From Jerusalem to the Promised Land* (Provo, Utah: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2006), 103; followed by pages 104–6 showing a burial mound and the Bar'an site; and page 119, showing a grave.

Not all LDS commentary concerning Nahom has been well informed, however. In George Potter and Richard Wellington, *Lehi in the Wilderness* (Springville, Utah: Cedar Fort, 2003), the claim is made that NHM is found in "a number of places in Yemen" (112–13). In their "Lehi's Trail: From the Valley of Lemuel to Nephi's Harbor," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 15, no. 2 (2006): 32–34, they discuss about five locations. This confusion arose from the various components of the Nihm tribal area (the mountains, hills, wadis, burial grounds, etc.) and varying transliterations; see Warren P. Aston, "Identifying Our Best Candidate for Nephi's Bountiful," *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Restoration Scripture* 17, no. 1–2 (2008): 59.

23. Harry St. J. Philby, *Sheba's Daughters* (London: Methuen, 1939), 370–81. *Nahm* is also mentioned by him on pages 381 and 398.

24. Tara Steimer-Herbet, "Jabal Ruwaik: Megaliths in Yemen," *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 29 (1999): 179–82, reports the first significant work done at the burial site and discusses C14 dating. Small numbers of tombs of a similar size, style, and dating are known in other locations in Arabia, including in the Sinai and Oman.

25. Joan Copeland Biella, *Dictionary of Old South Arabic: Sabaean Dialect*, Harvard Semitic Studies no. 25 (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1982), 296. Similarly, Stephen D. Ricks, *Lexicon of Inscriptional Qatabanian* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1989), 103, renders the root as "stone dressing."

26. Nephi had earlier recorded the direction of travel into the Arabian wilderness as "nearly a south-southeast direction" until Shazer was reached (1 Ne. 16:13), later noting that they had traveled for many days on "nearly the same course" (v. 33).

27. For a comparison of three sites in southern Oman proposed as Bountiful, see Aston, "Identifying Our Best Candidate," 58–64.

28. S. Kent Brown, “‘The Place That Was Called Nahom’: New Light from Ancient Yemen,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8, no. 1 (1999): 66–68.

29. Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Documentation for Ancient Arabia*, vol. 2 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), 744, presents the ruler chronology, while N. Nebes, “Zur Chronologie der Inschriften aus dem Bar’an-Tempel,” in the DAI journal *Archaologische Berichte aus dem Yemen* 10 (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2005), 115, discusses the altar dating.

30. “Book of Mormon Linked to Site in Yemen,” *Ensign* 31 (February 2001): 79. For the general conference address, see Elder John K. Carmack, “United in Love and Testimony,” *Ensign* 31 (May 2001): 76.

31. Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 120–21, 147.

32. Warren P. Aston, “Newly Found Altars from Nahom,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 10, no. 2 (2001): 56–61.

33. See presentations by John E. Clark, p. 89 n. 13, and by John W. Welch, p. 108 n. 18, in the conference proceedings, John W. Welch, ed., “The Worlds of Joseph Smith,” *BYU Studies* 44, no. 4 (2005), published also as *The Worlds of Joseph Smith: A Bicentennial Conference at the Library of Congress* (Provo: BYU Press, 2006).

34. See Richard L. Bushman with Jed Woodworth, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007), 93; and Richard L. Bushman, *Mormonism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 32.

35. The most serious response to date concerning “Nahom” is in F. Beckwith, C. Mosser, and P. Owens, eds., *The New Mormon Challenge* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2002), written before the altar find was known. Endnotes 107 and 108 (p. 498) deal with the subject, conceding that the evidence concerning Nahom is “impressive only if one assumes a trip through Arabia rather than Sinai.” Of course, Nephi’s account rules out any possibility that the Lehite journey crossed anywhere other than the Arabian Peninsula, nor has a Sinai setting ever been seriously proposed and developed by any LDS or other researcher.

36. J. B. B. D’Anville’s *Premier Partie de la Carte d’Asie* showing NEHEM on a two-page map with a 1:7,150,000 scale was published in Paris in 1751; his three-volume *Geographie Ancienne Abregee* was published in 1768 (Paris: Merlin). It was first published in English in John Horsley, trans., *Compendium of Ancient Geography*, 3d ed. (New York: R. M’Dermut and D. Arden, 1814); and in Robert Mayo, *An Epitome of Ancient Geography* (Philadelphia: A. Finley, 1818). As far as can be presently determined, none of these works were owned before 1830 by libraries in the areas where Joseph Smith resided.

37. Ten maps, including the D’Anville and Niebuhr maps, are beautifully depicted and identified in James Gee, “The Nahom Maps,” *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Restoration Scripture* 17, no. 1–2 (2008), 40–57.

38. The first report of a fertile location on the Arabian coast did not come to the outside world until 1846, following the visit of Dr. H. J. Carter to Salalah, “A Descriptive Account of the Ruins of El Balad,” *Oman Transactions of the Bombay Geographical Society* 12, no. 14 (December 1846): 25–27. Nothing in other accounts from the classical period onward suggested that a fertile area existed in southern Oman. See further Eugene England, “Through the Arabian Desert to a Bountiful Land: Could Joseph Smith Have Known the Way?” in *Book of Mormon Authorship*:

New Light on Ancient Origins, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1982), 145, and notes 2, 6–8.

39. One of the more interesting accounts concerns the visit by a French Jew to Nihm, found in S. D. Goitein, trans., *Travels in Yemen: An Account of Joseph Halevy's Journey to Najran in the Year 1870 Written in Sa'ani Arabic by His Guide Hayyim Habshush* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1941), 24–31. Habshush was also a Jew. Possibly significantly, these qualified observers note the unusual respect accorded to Jews by the tribe of “Nehm.”

40. Muhammad b. “Ali al-Akwa,” *al-Watha'iq as-Siyasiyya al-Yamaaniyya* (Baghdad: Dar al-Hurriya lil-Tiba'ah, 1976), 110. Other examples of such diplomatic letters from this period are extant; see Sultan Ahmed Qureshi, *Letters of the Holy Prophet* (India: Noor Publishing, 1983). Most are similar to the Nahm letter in style and content.

41. See al-Hamdani, *Sifat Jazirat al-'Arab*, ed. David H. Muller (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 49, 81, 83, 109–10, 126, 135, 167–68, listing NHM as a tribe or territory; and his *Al-Iklil*, ed. M. al-Khatib (Cairo: n.p., 1368 CE), which refers to *Nihm*, *Nuham*, and *Nuhm* as personal names belonging to the Hajur and Hashid tribes. More accessible is Oscar Lofgren, ed., *Suedarabisches Mustabih* (Uppsala: Almqvist, 1953), 46 (nos. 1019–22) or the reprinted *10th Book of al-Iklil* (Sana'a: Dar al-Yamania, 1987), 98.

Christian Robin, *Les Hautes-Terres du Nord-Yemen Avant L'Islam* (The Highlands of North Yemen before Islam), 2 vols. (Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut Te Istanbul, 1982), esp. 1:27, 73, discusses the origin of tribal names with scattered references to Nihm: 7, 20, 27, 45, 46, 68, 73, and notes 168, 186.

42. For an excellent and current summary of the ancient southern Arabian kingdoms, see the University of Pisa's Arabia Felix at <http://arabiafelix.humnet.unipi.it>.

43. See Jacques Ryckmans, “Inscribed Old South Arabian Sticks and Palm-Leaf Stalks: An Introduction and a Palaeological Approach,” *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 23 (1993): 127–40; and J. Ryckmans, “Origin and Evolution of South Arabian Minuscule Writing on Wood,” *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy* 12, no. 2 (2001): 223–35.

44. The tribal name (as *nhmyn*) is found in the National Museum of Yemen; see item YM 11748 under “Minuscule Texts.” A photograph also appears in Jacques Ryckmans, Walter W. Müller, and Yusuf M. Abdallah, *Textes du Yemen antique inscrits sur bois* (Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium: l'Institut Orientaliste de Université Catholique de Louvain, 1994), see esp. pp. 46–47 and plates 3a and b; the date of these palm sticks is mentioned on p. 13. Additionally, this name appears in a dual form as *nhmynhn* in document number RES 5095 (mentioned in the foregoing work, p. 46, commentary on column 1 line 3 of YM 11748). Also, a privately owned property agreement mentioning Nihm recorded on a palm-wood stick was shown to me by Sheikh Abdulrab Sinan Abuluhom of the Nihm tribe in Sana'a, November 1, 2000.

Why Things Move

A New Look at Helaman 12:15

David Grandy

In Helaman 12:15, Mormon offers what has appeared to many readers to be a heliocentric description of the solar system: “And thus, according to his word the earth goeth back, and it appeareth unto man that the sun standeth still; yea, and behold, this is so; for surely it is the earth that moveth and not the sun.”¹ For example, the *Book of Mormon Reference Companion* states that “they [the Nephites] apparently had a more accurate understanding of the earth’s movement than did their Greek contemporaries who at that time predominantly believed in a stationary earth.”² It was Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543) who first figured out how one could eliminate the planetary

1. The Book of Mormon Original Manuscript of Helaman 12:15 reads, “And thus according to his word, the earth goeth back and it appeareth unto man that the sun standeth still. Yea, and behold, this is so; for sure it is the earth that moveth and not the sun.” Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009), 548. The modern version will be used in this article.

2. Dennis L. Largey, ed., *Book of Mormon Reference Companion* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 77. Likewise, Erich Robert Paul, *Science, Religion, and Mormon Cosmology* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 100–101, states, “As early as 1830 Joseph Smith had already endorsed the notion of heliocentrism (Copernicanism). In the Book of Mormon . . . Copernicanism is presented explicitly,” and then quotes Helaman 12:15 and Alma 30:44. And in “Astronomy, Scriptural References to,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 82, Paul similarly asserts that, in contrast to the Bible, “the Book of Mormon affirms the sun-centered (heliocentric) view accepted by modern planetary physics.” To the same effect, see Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 3 (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991), 397; George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1960), 5:290; and

David Grandy

For four years I taught a Book of Mormon class at BYU as a transfer professor from the philosophy department. This opportunity allowed me to study and think about the Book of Mormon more deeply than before. Helaman 12:15 particularly intrigued me because I have long been interested in cosmology, both modern and ancient. While I was familiar with the claim that the verse implies a proto-Copernican understanding of the sun and earth, I also realized that Copernicanism, as developed by Kepler, Galileo, Newton, and others, issues up from a metaphysics that is not fully congenial to the scriptural thesis of a God-quickened, God-centered cosmos. What is more, I felt that it might be possible to locate Mormon, the author of the verse, in a much older, premodern stream of thought, one that would affirm his commonality with biblical prophets and, more generally, affirm the historical authenticity of the Book of Mormon.



retrogradations that marred the geocentric worldview by putting the earth in motion around the sun.³ A moving earth, thus, has been thought to be the common truth that connects Mormon with the modern and “more correct” Copernican heliocentric worldview.

I wish to argue in this article, however, that the attribution of motion to the earth, even with a concomitant recognition that the sun is stationary, should not be construed as evidence that the Nephites had adopted

Monte S. Nyman, *The Record of Helaman: A Teaching Commentary on the Book of Helaman* (Orem, Utah: Granite, 2004), 389.

3. For an engaging account of this complex mathematical and astronomical story, see Dava Sobel, *A More Perfect Heaven: How Copernicus Revolutionized the Cosmos* (New York: Walker, 2011). While a few ancient thinkers, such as Aristarchus of Samos; Seleucus, a Babylonian; and Aryabhata, a Hindu, believed in a moving earth (whether rotating on its axis or moving about the sun, or both), that view was lost in the West until the beginning of the sixteenth century. We should note, however, that Nicholas Oresme and Jean Buridan, living just two centuries before Copernicus, entertained the possibility of a moving earth but did not insist on it.

or understood a heliocentric model of the solar system. Put differently, Mormon's lament about the inconstancy of man is not evidence of the Nephites arriving at a scientifically correct understanding of the earth's motion before Copernicus. Rather, it is a case of the Nephites understanding the earth's motion differently from the way it is understood scientifically today. In brief, Mormon's attribution of motion to the earth, like Alma's in Alma 30:44, signifies a different attitude toward motion than that given by modern science. As a consequence, it is hard for modern readers to draw from these passages their originally intended thrust and meaning. Moreover, by limiting the interpretive possibilities to the right-or-wrong of heliocentrism versus geocentrism, we erect a false dichotomy⁴ that puts the Book of Mormon at risk of looking like an anachronistic text.⁵ For as far as we know, no pre-Columbian American culture espoused a heliocentric

4. One should not assume there are just two options. Philolaus, for instance, proposed that the earth and sun revolve about a central fire. Heraclides of Pontus believed that the earth spins on its axis while remaining at the center of the cosmos. Going back to earlier models, Thales imagined a flat earth floating in water, while Anaximander characterized the earth as a cylinder suspended in space. The flat-earth Hebrew model is described in the body of this article. Today we know that the earth, like most other astronomical bodies, is approximately round, but the problematic question taken up in this article concerns the earth's *motion*, not its shape. Fully correct understanding of the earth's shape does not imply fully correct understanding of its motion.

5. Chris Carroll Smith, "Michael Walton on Joseph Smith and Natural Theology (Notes from Sunstone)," April 10, 2008, *Mild-Mannered Musings* (blog), <http://chris-carrollsmith.blogspot.com/2008/04/michael-walton-on-joseph-smith-and.html> (accessed February 6, 2009). Michael Walton sees Alma's God-affirming appeal to nature as a product of nineteenth-century natural theology. What he overlooks, in my mind, is that natural theology was an attempt to hang onto a habit of thought that had once been reflexive among ancient and medieval thinkers. With the rise of the mechanical worldview, however, it became a deliberate and self-conscious pursuit, a way of mitigating the profound severity of a worldview that was not congenial to its fundamental principles. In his commentary on Helaman 12:15, Brant Gardner equivocates between Mormon possessing a Copernican understanding of the heavens and Joseph Smith altering the text to reflect a Copernican understanding. "How did Mormon know such information?" he asks. His tentative proposal: "Mesoamerican cultures were great sky-watchers, so this might have been information available to Mormon." He then adds: "However, I am unaware of any indication that Mesoamericans believed anything other than that the sun moved around the earth. Their typical conception of the sun was that it passed through the underworld after descending in the west so that it could rise in the east. It would seem more likely that Joseph Smith made this emendation." Brant A. Gardner, *Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 5 (Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2007), 169.

worldview, and not until about 1700 (with the publication of Isaac Newton's *Principia Mathematica*) was the worldview question of Aristotle versus Copernicus scientifically decided in Western Europe.

A more comprehensive view of things helps to show that Mormon was not a proto-Copernican, and that "modern science" (I will qualify my use of this term shortly) is not always superior to past understanding. Instead, my submission is that Mormon is thinking along a much older wavelength, one that is more consistent with gospel principles than the one provided by modern science. Thus, I will suggest that Mormon's statements are not anachronistic, but reflect a worldview that lost traction with the emergence of modern science.

My central concern in this article is *why* things move. I believe that this (the "why") is what Mormon is most concerned about. In Helaman 12, Mormon's concern is not about whether it is the sun *or* the earth that moves; or whether either body moves *around* the other, about which no mention is made. Instead, Mormon's concern is whether entities of any sort move in response to *God's will*. This view emerges from the context of the passage, and it is fully consistent with other scriptural descriptions of motion. But without a religious understanding of motion, readers have difficulty fully grasping Mormon's overriding point.

Someone may ask: which understanding is the more correct understanding, the scientific or the religious? Well, each is fitted to serve a different purpose, and each makes different assumptions about the nature of reality. In what follows, I briefly examine the scientific understanding of motion as it developed alongside Copernican astronomy. I then look at Mormon's explanation of the earth's motion. My intent in proceeding in this fashion is to throw into relief the vast divide that separates the two views of motion. Neither view can claim to be absolutely authoritative, but Mormon's outlook, I believe, is far more congenial to our spiritual sense that the universe is informed by God's purpose and presence.

More Options than One

At the outset, let me note that the "modern" science discussed below is not a product of recent decades or even of the last century. It is Newtonian physics, which is still a useful scientific theory in that it offers correct or nearly correct solutions to many problems. It has, nevertheless, been superseded by general relativity (inclusive of special relativity) and quantum mechanics. These latter theories not only improve upon the calculations of Newtonian physics, but, more importantly, they shatter many of its fundamental assumptions. Steven Weinberg, Nobel laureate of physics, writes: "Out of the fusion of relativity with quantum mechanics there has evolved

a new view of the world, one in which matter has lost its central role.”⁶ In developing his physics, Isaac Newton (1642–1727) gave pride of place to physical matter and mechanical force; but for Weinberg and other contemporary physicists, Newton’s matter-centered worldview is no longer viable as an *explanation* of reality, although, as noted, it is useful as a calculating instrument. I point this out to clear space for what follows; that is, to suggest that there is more than one option in thinking about physics and why things move.

Because many people do not realize that Newtonian physics (and its account of motion) has been eclipsed by other theories, they still adhere to Newtonian principles as they think about physical reality. And since the principles of gravitational force and Newton’s three laws of motion are vastly more intuitive than such esoteric concepts as light-speed constancy, curved space-time, wave-particle duality, and nonlocality, it is reflexive to defer to Newton when making scientific sense of the physical world. Put differently, the really “new physics,” as it is sometimes called, has yet to dent the everyday thinking of many people who may be otherwise scientifically informed, evidently because it is so arcane and so contrary to common sense. As Paul Davies observes: “The stunning success of this theory [quantum mechanics] . . . often obscures the fact that the theory itself is based on principles which are so astonishing that their full implications are often not appreciated, even by many professional scientists.”⁷

Surely, then, there are other accounts of motion to be explored than Newton’s, which is the default concept among modern thinkers. Mormon’s account is one of these other accounts, which gives priority to other metaphysical assumptions. To fully appreciate Mormon’s perspective, however, we must briefly sketch Newton’s account against the backdrop of earlier possibilities. Again, my intent is to clear space for what follows. It is not to decide against Newton in an absolute sense, nor is it to absolutely

6. Steven Weinberg, *Dreams of a Final Theory: The Scientist’s Search for the Ultimate Laws of Nature* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 3. Later (p. 12), Weinberg offers this judgment of Newtonian physics: “Newton’s great example gave rise especially in England to a characteristic style of scientific explanation: matter is conceived to consist of tiny immutable particles; the particles act on one another through ‘certain forces,’ of which gravitation is just one variety; knowing the positions and velocities of these particles at any one instant, and knowing how to calculate the forces among them, one can use the laws of motion to predict where they will be at any later time. Physics is often still taught to freshmen in this fashion. Regrettably, despite the further successes of physics in this Newtonian style, it was a dead end.”

7. Paul Davies, *Other Worlds: A Portrait of Nature in Rebellion* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980), 9.

affirm Mormon. Rather it is to recover Mormon's outlook and, within the framework of his religious beliefs, make it plausible to modern thinkers.

Newton's Account of Why Things Move

No idea is more foundational to our modern understanding of motion than Newton's first law of motion, also known as the principle of inertia. Newton defined inertia as the tendency of bodies to retain their states of motion, and he described this tendency as a "force of inactivity."⁸ At first blush, this sounds strange: how could inactivity be forceful? The answer to this question lies in Newton's assumption that physical bodies, being inert or lacking sentience, have no capacity to initiate changes of motion on their own (nonexistent) behalf. Or, to use Book of Mormon language, they cannot "act for themselves" but can only be "acted upon" (2 Ne. 2:26)—acted upon, that is, by outside forces. And once so acted upon, bodies, in virtue of their lifelessness or inertness, do the laziest possible thing by doing nothing—nothing, that is, that would alter their prevailing state of motion. In this way they "inactively" preserve states of motion produced by outside forces.

Note that "inactivity" here refers not so much to the physical activity of motion as to an inner blankness within moving (or stationary) bodies that turns them into lifeless, mechanical objects. As people began to grasp Newton's principle of inertia, the idea surfaced that "matter is indifferent to motion."⁹ Indeed, as Newton saw them, material objects are indifferent not only to their motion but also to their location in the cosmos. This indifference, of course, was the result of their inner blankness, their inertness, but it allowed for a vast streamlining of reality. By defining material bodies as inert objects, Newton and others produced "a conception of nature startling in its bleakness—but admirably contrived for the purposes of modern science."¹⁰ A universe consisting of nothing but inert objects would be a mechanical universe, and therefore one that Newtonian science might well be able to fully explain.

This "mechanization of the world picture,"¹¹ as one scholar has called it, began well before Newton, and it played into the scientific and religious

8. Issac Newton, *Principia*, ed. Stephen Hawking (Philadelphia: Running Press, 2002), 2.

9. Richard S. Westfall, *The Life of Isaac Newton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 168.

10. Richard S. Westfall, *The Construction of Modern Science: Mechanisms and Mechanics* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1971), 31.

11. E. J. Dijksterhuis, *The Mechanization of the World Picture: Pythagoras to Newton* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986).

resistance that Copernican astronomy encountered. The problem for pre-Copernican theology was not so much the proposition of a sun-centered cosmos; it was the idea, going back to late medieval thinkers and culminating with Galileo, of a universe in which “power need not continuously flow from God once nature became endowed with a uniform intrinsic necessity of its own.”¹² The motion of objects, in other words, became self-sustaining: they moved under the force of their own inactivity or lifelessness, not because of an innate responsiveness to God’s all-sustaining cosmic influence. For religious believers, this shift in thought relegated God to the role of a First Cause—he need only initiate motion at the moment of creation, not preserve it thereafter. Hence, to follow Louis Dupré, the motion of bodies was no longer seen as evidence of God’s continuing involvement in the universe: “The communication of motion [reaching back to God], which had played such an important role in the ancient worldview and on which major arguments for the existence of God had rested, lost its significance in a mechanistic order where bodies, once they moved, would continue to do so until stopped by an external cause.”¹³

One need not look far to find this older attitude toward motion. It is implicit in Aristotle’s concepts of natural place and natural motion, which assume a body’s inclination to move to places cognate with its being. And the ultimate source of this motion was Aristotle’s Unmoved Mover, for the motion of bodies, in Aristotle’s mind, could neither be self-originating nor self-sustaining: it had to be activated and preserved by some supreme or supramundane principle.¹⁴ Dante, a late medieval Christian with Aristotelian leanings, called God the “All-Mover” and equated God’s action in the cosmos with the motion of light-filled astronomical bodies.¹⁵ When Dante is astonished that he is drawn upward through the heavenly spheres, Beatrice, his guide, explains to him that this motion stems from his being caught up in the universe’s elemental inclination to draw near unto God.¹⁶

12. Louis Dupré, *Passage to Modernity: An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993), 68.

13. Dupré, *Passage to Modernity*, 68.

14. This is the standard interpretation of Aristotle, but it is not without its difficulties. The Unmoved Mover is posited to prevent an infinite regress of movers, but this original mover must in some sense not move while tripping the first domino, so to speak; that is, while initiating movement in the universe. For an extended discussion of the issues, see Aristotle, *Physics, Book VIII*, translated with a commentary by Daniel W. Graham (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1999).

15. Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. John Aitken Carlyle and Philip Henry Wicksteed (New York: The Modern Library, 1950), 403 (*Paradiso*, canto 1).

16. Dante, 405–6 (*Paradiso*, canto 1).

From this experience Dante learns that God's love "moves the sun and the other stars."¹⁷

Allowing for cultural differences, this pious attitude is akin to that of the Hebrews, at least insofar as they saw God's handiwork in the starry heavens and the contrapuntal alternation of day and night.¹⁸ There is no reason to suppose that Mormon did not share this outlook, particularly in light of his commentary on the earth's motion, which, I will argue, was motivated by an awareness of God's active involvement in nature and not from a need to make a scientific correction.

It is interesting to note that once motion lost its connection with God, it became, for better or worse, a philosophically problematic concept. The world lost its fixed center, the stationary point of reference from which one could, in an absolutely unequivocal way, gauge the motion of bodies in the universe. Whereas geocentric models of the universe assumed a fixed earth and therefore a motionless center, Copernicus's model quickly lost its sun-centeredness to become an uncentered cosmos in which no object possesses an absolute state of motion.¹⁹ Objects move relative to one another, and since no object can be assigned an unequivocal state of motion from all perspectives, each may have arbitrarily many relative velocities—but no absolute velocity.

This toppling of the idea of absolute motion further weakens whatever vestigial sense we might have that motion in the universe betokens God. For most moderns, this reverential outlook—that things move as they are quickened by God—is a nice poetic sentiment, but not something to invest religious faith in, for religion traditionally deals with absolutes, and motion,

17. Dante, 606 (*Paradiso*, canto 33).

18. Psalms 19:1–2. God's purpose and presence is seen not just in the starry heavens, but also in the weather (snow, rain, dew) that links the earth and heavens. See Hugh Nibley, "Treasures in the Heavens: Some Early Christian Insights into the Organizing of Worlds," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 8 (Autumn 1973): 76–98; also in *Old Testament and Related Studies*, eds. John W. Welch, Gary P. Gillum, Don E. Norton, Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, vol. 1 (Salt Lake: Deseret Book, 1986), 171–214.

19. Alexandre Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968). Not long after Copernicus set forth his revolutionary thesis, his followers realized that the sun has its own proper motion. Now we say that it moves about the center of the Milky Way galaxy, with its revolving planets in tow. But the Milky Way galaxy is gravitationally attached to other galaxies, which orbit about a common center. Where this hierarchy of motions ends—if indeed it does—no one can say. More fundamentally, relativity theory teaches us that there is no universal rest frame, only particular frames where motion and rest are keyed to particular, but relative, points of view.

as we now know it scientifically, is not absolute and therefore not indicative of God. And yet much of the drama of modern science has been caught up in the aspiration to detect absolute motion in a flat, mechanistic cosmos that offers no vantage point for the detection of such. This is a story that runs from Newton to Einstein, each man reaching for absolutes to affirm his belief that science trades in certitudes that originate with God.²⁰ I make this point to propose that the mechanistic ontology of modern science is too sparse to fully resolve the question of why things move. That question is still very much alive, and Mormon helps us answer it in a different way.

Thus, in what follows, I first outline Mormon's worldview by looking at some of the imagery of the passage from Helaman. I then build on this assessment by examining the passage's chiasmic structure. These aspects of the passage, I argue in the final sections of the article, combine to prompt the suggestion that this is an ancient text and that Mormon's sensibility with regard to motion coincides with attitudes found elsewhere in scripture.

Mormon's Worldview Reflected in Helaman 12

Living in the aftermath of the rise of modern science, we might wonder how premodern people could ever attribute sentience or life principle—or at least the capacity to respond to nonmechanistic influences—to things we “know” to be lifeless.²¹ Would it not be obvious to every thinking person,

20. Einstein's belief in what he called “Spinoza's God” is well known; that is, an impersonal God who embodies the laws of nature. If anything, Newton was more religious than Einstein, and his concepts of absolute space and absolute time may be understood as divine aspects that serve the scientific function of affording us absolute or near-absolute knowledge of motion in the universe—of helping us see things in a manner approximating God's experience. See Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe*, 221–34. I should note also that Newton had profound misgivings regarding the capacity of bodies to indefinitely conserve their motion, and this is why he wondered if God might intervene to recharge motion through the medium of a universal ether. See E. A. Burt, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science* (Amherst, N.Y.: Humanities Books, 1999), 264–82. Like other architects of modern science, Newton straddled the past and the future, often pondering issues that now strike us as unproblematic. It was only in Newton's wake that the mechanical worldview achieved its apotheosis, and this in part because later thinkers succeeded in giving us “Newton's physics without Newton's God.” Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, vol. 2 (New York: Knopf, 1969), 140.

21. Of course, LDS thought allows for the belief that things such as rocks are sentient or intelligent (and therefore responsive to God) in some rudimentary way. Brigham Young remarked that “there is not a particle of element which is not filled with life. . . . There is life in all matter, throughout the vast extent of all the eternities; it is in the rock, the sand, the dust, in water, air.” *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols.

regardless of background or era, that rocks are inert entities? In a word, no, for whatever stance we take on the question of a rock's inner experience (or lack thereof) may be traced back to metaphysical leaps of faith made by others before we begin to make sense of the world.²² With respect to the mechanical universe, it is easy to see the leaps. Probably the most dramatic case in point is Johannes Kepler's declaration that he had decided to quit thinking of the cosmos as a divine organism so that he could begin thinking of it as a mechanical clock—the most compelling machine of the era.²³ Preparing the way for Newton and living at a tipping point between two worldviews, Kepler appreciated the epistemic value of the clock metaphor: a mechanical universe would be much easier to explain than one informed by living powers, some of them divine.

This brings us directly to Mormon, who I believe would have been more comfortable with the metaphor Kepler abandoned. This is not to say that Mormon would have embraced that metaphor uncritically, just that it overlaps with his belief that nature is responsive to something other than brute mechanical force. In Christian scripture in general and latter-day scripture in particular, the motion of bodies signifies acquiescence to God's will, which in turn implies a capacity on the part of those bodies to sense or "know" their place in the cosmos and to move in ways that bespeak God's "majesty and power" (D&C 88:47). That this outlook informs Mormon's claim about the moving of the earth and its hills, mountains, bedrocks, and waters can be seen in Helaman 12.

(Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855–86), 3:277, March 23, 1856. See also David Grandy, "Heaven-Earth Wedges: The Mormon Experience," *Proteus: A Journal of Ideas* 15 (Fall 1998): 59–65.

22. Alfred North Whitehead has compellingly argued that the worldview of modern science—the clockwork universe composed of lifeless cogs—is not a palpable, self-evident fact of nature. It is, instead, an idea abstracted from an interpretation of nature that prizes mechanism and materialism. Not that this abstraction is wrong in all cases. When limited to its obvious function, that of grasping and exploiting nature's mechanistic aspects, the abstraction has demonstrated its utility and epistemic legitimacy many times over. As Whitehead says, "The narrow efficiency of the scheme was the very cause of its supreme methodological success." Nevertheless, "when we pass beyond the abstraction, either by more subtle employment of our senses, or by the request for meanings and for coherence of thoughts, the scheme breaks down at once." Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Free Press, 1967), 17. For anyone wishing to get back to a worldview more along the lines of Kepler's divine organism, Whitehead is an excellent option.

23. Johannes Kepler to Herwert von Hohenberg, Catholic Chancellor of Bavaria, February 10, 1605, quoted in Alfred W. Crosby, *The Measure of Reality: Quantification and Western Society, 1250–1600* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 84.

Mormon devoutly desires that humans should be subservient to their Creator and Benefactor, although often they are not—as Mormon knows from his own personal efforts to lead his unruly people. He writes that some humans “do not desire that the Lord their God, who hath created them, should rule and reign over them; notwithstanding his great goodness and his mercy towards them, they do set at naught his counsels, and they will not that he should be their guide.” Indeed, Mormon continues, such humans “are less than the dust of the earth,” for “the dust of the earth moveth hither and thither, to the dividing asunder, at the command of our great and everlasting God” (Hel. 12:6–8).²⁴ What is more, “the hills and the mountains tremble and quake,” and “by the power of his voice they are broken up, and become smooth, yea, even like unto a valley” (Hel. 12:9–10). Finally, “by the power of his voice doth the whole earth shake” and “the foundations rock, even to the very center” (Hel. 12:11–12). And so, Mormon concludes, with all this movement, this responsiveness on the earth’s part to God’s commands, it naturally follows that if God “say unto the earth—Move—it is moved” (Hel. 12:13). To follow the critical text version supplied by Royal Skousen:

Yea, and if he saith unto the earth: Move!
—and it is moved.

Yea, if he say unto the earth:
Thou shalt go back, that it lengthen out the day for many hours
—and it is done.²⁵

“If God say unto the earth: Move!—it is moved.” This is conditional language suggesting that the earth’s motion is, like that of dust storms and earthquakes, episodic or intermittent rather than constant and periodic. There is no hint here that the earth is moving under the force of mechanical necessity. Rather it moves *if and when* God commands it to move, or, like the calm that precedes and follows storms, it ceases to move *if and when* that is God’s will.

24. In response to this passage, Joseph Fielding Smith stated: “The point he is making is that the dust of the earth is obedient. . . . Everything in the universe obeys the law given unto it, so far as I know, except man. Everywhere you look you find law and order, the elements obeying the law given to them, true to their calling. But man rebels, and in this thing man is less than the dust of the earth because he rejects the counsels of the Lord.” Joseph Fielding Smith, in *Official Report of the Ninety-Ninth Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1929), 55, quoted in K. Douglas Bassett, *Latter-day Commentary on the Book of Mormon* (American Fork, Utah: Covenant Communications, 1999), 386.

25. Skousen, *Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*, 548.

The imagery of the passage is clearly biblical—dust of the earth, quaking mountains, and so on—and consequently evocative of biblical cosmology. While we cannot know for sure how Mormon or any ancient prophet would have drawn the cosmos, the cosmos as it is described in the Old Testament is often drawn as it is in figure 1.²⁶ In this view, there would be no allowance for either the sun or the earth to fully orbit the other body. This is because the earth was not imagined as a round body hanging freely in space—that possibility was not broached by pre-Socratic Greeks until a full century or more after Lehi’s departure from Jerusalem.²⁷ Instead the earth was thought to rest on subterranean waters, which God had separated at the creation from waters now situated above the firmament: “And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so” (Gen. 1:7).

To be sure, this picture of reality is unfamiliar—and scientifically implausible—to modern thinkers. We want to know what happens to the sun after sunset, or what supports the waters of the great deep. These are scientific questions, but typically ancient people were differently oriented. John H. Walton, a scholar of the Old Testament and its Near Eastern milieu, observes that when God revealed his truth to the Israelite prophets, he “did not think it important to revise their [cosmological] thinking.”²⁸ This,

26. The ancient prophets probably did not see the cosmos as did Galileo or Newton, but The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has made no official statement on ancient cosmology or the meaning of “firmament.” The manual currently used by the Church Educational System suggests that “the division of the waters under and above the firmament, or expanse, is explained simply as the natural phenomena of the earth” while also citing a source that suggests that, according to the Bible, rain comes from “above the vault which spans the earth.” *Old Testament Student Manual, Genesis to 2 Samuel* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2003), 30, citing C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 1, *The Pentateuch*, trans. James Martin (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1885), 53–54.

27. Parmenides (c. 515–450 BC) appears to have been the first person to propose a spherical earth. See Daniel W. Graham, trans. and ed., *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy: The Complete Fragments and Selected Testimonies of the Major Presocratics*, part 1 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 241. The extent to which Aristarchus of Samos, living in the late third century BC, understood the universe to be heliocentric is a fascinating question, but I see little reason to assume that the Nephites had developed a similar understanding on their own, having left Jerusalem more than three centuries earlier.

28. John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 16. As Bernhard Anderson puts it, “The biblical view of creation is not an effort at primitive science.” Bernhard W. Anderson, *From Creation to New Creation: Old Testament Perspectives* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1994), 1.

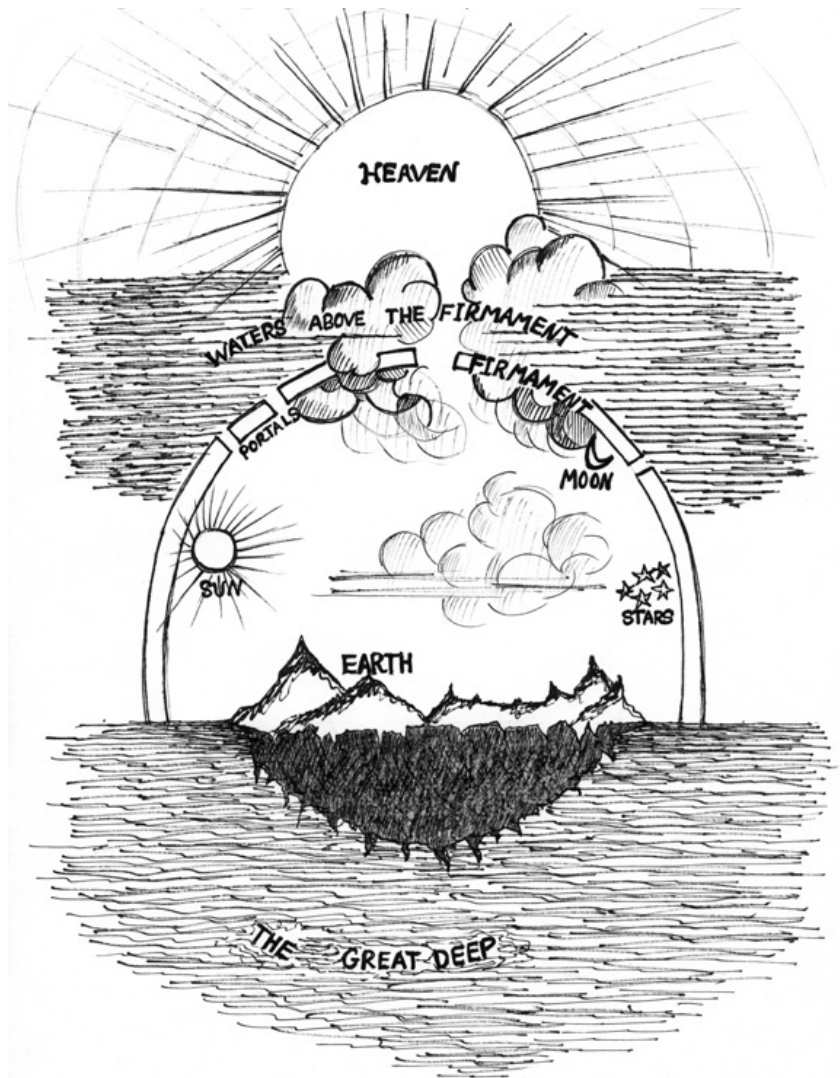


FIGURE 1. The ancient Hebrews saw the earth as roughly flat. Beneath were waters of the great deep, which sometimes seeped upward to the earth's surface. Above were waters held back by an overarching firmament, except when portals were opened to release rain or snow. This worldview was somewhat figurative, and it was neither heliocentric nor geocentric in a scientific sense, for it made no allowance for either the sun or the earth (which was not seen as a heavenly or astronomical body) to fully orbit the other. Drawing by Janet Grandy.

he goes on to argue, was because God was addressing *their* cosmological concerns, and those concerns centered on their role in the universe. For people of the Old Testament, things existed not in virtue of their material properties, but rather in virtue of their function within the cosmos. Each thing, says Walton, was felt to have its own “sphere of existence,”²⁹ a sphere that integrated purposefully into the larger sphere of God’s creation.³⁰

In its meaning, “sphere of existence” suggests “measure of creation,” a distinctively LDS phrase connoting a person’s calling in life. To fill the measure of one’s creation is to actualize possibilities beyond one’s material properties and the mundane needs that arise therefrom: the need for food, sleep, and so on. Interestingly, this ancient emphasis on purpose, order, and integration—rather than mere material existence—coincides with LDS thought in another way. Joseph Smith taught that creation occurred with the *organization* of previously unordered matter³¹—a view that lines up with Walton’s point that “unless something is integrated into a working, ordered system, it does not exist.”³² For example, one may think of a theatrical production, which does not exist until all its parts—lights, stage, props, actors, audience—combine in a meaningful, organized fashion. Likewise, a musical composition goes unrealized until tones are systemically and intelligently ordered. Each tone by itself fails to break the threshold we associate with musical creativity. Thus there is no display of creativity, no creation, until purposeful organization or arrangement occurs.³³

29. Walton, *Lost World of Genesis One*, 26.

30. Bernhard Anderson similarly insists that for ancient Israelites the creation primarily entailed cosmic order and purpose rather than cosmic origination: “It is not just that the cosmos originated in the creative will of God, but that God is the one who gives order to the vast cosmic whole in which everything from the least particle to the largest star has its proper place and function.” Anderson, *From Creation to New Creation*, 103.

31. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, selected and arranged by Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1970), 350–52.

32. Walton, *Lost World of Genesis One*, 27. Michael Welker argues that modern cosmologists dimly grasp the question of creation, at least as the question was taken up in antiquity. They think of creation as an “initial ignition,” not as an integrative event whose force is still felt in the way the universe is organized and held intact. Michael Welker, “Creation: Big Bang or the Work of Seven Days?” *Theology Today* 52 (July 1995): 173–87. Paul Tillich similarly wrote: “The doctrine of creation is not the story of an event which took place ‘once upon a time.’ It is the basic description of the relation between God and the world.” Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 1:252.

33. Terence Fretheim offers the earth as an example of this process whereby something is creatively ordered so that it comes into existence. In Genesis 1:2 the earth is described as “without form, and void.” Several verses later, after God has

Walton's broader point is that the ancient Hebrews attached cosmological significance to purpose and integration, whereas Newtonian science keys its analysis to material bodies and properties deemed void of purpose, at least at the elemental (atomic and molecular) levels. The starting point, the point at which creation is said to occur, is very different, and consequently the resulting cosmologies are very different. Mormon, I submit, is attuned to the understandings of Hebrew cosmology, all of which take purpose and organization as a starting point. Thus he is concerned with human disobedience; that is, the failure of humans, as creatures of God, to integrate into God's created order. For Mormon, this failure would have been particularly egregious in light of the fact that humankind, the only species created in God's image, was the very species to betray God by abandoning that image or stewardship. "The image [of God]," writes Bernhard W. Anderson, "refers, above all, to the God-given commission to 'image' God on earth, that is, to be the agents who represent and realize God's benevolent and peaceful sway on earth."³⁴

Like many others in the seventeenth century, Newton did not share Mormon's deep prophetic concern for humankind's tendency to abandon its *Imago Dei* commission. Although possessed of an "overbearing sense of a divine presence,"³⁵ Newton was intellectually responsive to the newly emerging mechanical philosophy that portrayed physical reality as a congeries of lifeless, self-contained particles whose interactions were blindly mechanistic but fully transparent to human reason. This outlook would have been foreign to Mormon. His mention of the "waters of the great deep" (Hel. 12:16) not only denotes his commitment to the ancient Hebrew worldview; it also alerts us to the nonmechanical aspect of that worldview. Water, of course, is a life principle, or element essential to life, and, as described in Genesis 1, the Spirit of God—another life principle—"moved upon" the primeval waters prior to their separation. By God's command, powers or principles come together and separate to facilitate the creation of a world in which plants, animals, and humans may grow and flourish. What is more, when brought into existence—when organized—nature possesses a creative, godlike impetus of its own. Hence we read: "And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, . . . and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was

arranged the elements, the earth "appears" as "dry land"; that is, as a new setting whereupon humankind can arise and flourish. Terence E. Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 2005), 5.

34. Anderson, *From Creation to New Creation*, 108.

35. John Hedley Brooke, *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 137.

in itself, after his kind” (Gen. 1:11–12). The double but not fully overlapping description signifies nature’s responsiveness to divine command. First God commands and then the earth, quickened by the command, fulfills it.

Why does nature have an impetus toward obedient goodness? Because (to echo the Psalmist and other biblical authors) the universe is “full of the glory of God.”³⁶ For ancient Hebrews, this statement was not a softly focused gloss on the beauty of the earth, but, given the Lord’s organization of the cosmos and his decision to dwell therein, literal fact. “The most central truth to the creation account,” writes Walton, “is that this world is a place for God’s presence.”³⁷ Accordingly, Walton deems Genesis 1 a temple text, calling the universe a “cosmos-sized temple” and noting that the divine “glory” that fills creation is the same glory—denoted by the same Hebrew word—that was said to fill the Israelite tabernacle and temple.³⁸ Jon Levenson similarly insists that “the Temple is a visible, tangible token of the act of creation, the point of origin of the world, the ‘focus’ of the universe.”³⁹ The same point is made by Jean Daniélou: “At the birth of mankind, the whole creation, issuing from the hands of God, is holy; the earthly paradise is nature in a state of grace. The House of God is the whole cosmos. . . . In the cosmic Temple, man is not living primarily in his own house, but in the house of God.”⁴⁰

36. See, for example, Psalm 8; Psalm 19:1–2; Psalm 72:19; Numbers 14:21; Isaiah 6:3; and Romans 1:20.

37. Walton, *Lost World of Genesis One*, 85. Fretheim writes that “these people [the Israelites] lived close to the ground, if you will, and the natural world filled their lives. Creation was a lively reality for them prior to the development of specific ideas about creation. It would seem likely in view of this experience that the God in whom they believed . . . was linked to creation as a matter of course. Given the fact that the texts often speak of such everyday realities as family and clan, the birth and growth of children, homes and fields, wild and domestic animals, and weather with its effects for good or ill, it may be that ‘blessing’ was a basic and early understanding of Israel’s God as Creator.” Fretheim, *God and World*, xv. In other words, creation was, for the Israelites, close at hand and regulative of the flow of everyday life. What is more, the divine goodness of the creation, as manifest in ongoing operation of nature, remained in effect to bless all who followed the Creator’s commands.

38. Walton, *Lost World of Genesis One*, 83. In the dedicatory prayer of Solomon’s temple, Solomon asks: “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?” (1 Kgs. 8:27). At first blush this question might appear to weigh against the thesis that God dwells in Israel’s temple, but the context marks Solomon’s question as a contrite expression of his hope that God will take up residence in the temple.

39. Jon D. Levenson, “The Temple and the World,” *The Journal of Religion* 64 (July 1984): 283.

40. Jean Daniélou, *The Presence of God*, trans. Walter Roberts (Baltimore, Md.: Helicon Press, 1959), 9, 11.

Among LDS thinkers, the image of the cosmos as a temple is a familiar idea that Hugh Nibley explored at great length.⁴¹ As a rule, however, modern readers of the Book of Mormon do not automatically bring the cosmos-as-temple understanding to the sacred text, even though they may be able to articulate it as an aspect of ancient biblical thought. Hence they generally do not think of God as residing in his cosmic temple and governing the world from that holy center. But that is how Israelites thought of God. “The world,” states Levenson while describing ancient Israel, “is the manifestation of God as he sits enthroned in his Temple.”⁴² These views are not to imply that God micromanaged nature, but that his glory was on full display and was fully evocative of the commands he uttered at the creation: plants brought forth seed after their kind, day followed night, stars moved in the heavens, and animals and humans reproductively multiplied. The glory of God could not be gainsaid because the ongoing cycles of nature were felt to reenact the primal rhythm of creation.

One may appreciate that within this worldview, little room exists for objects moving without reference to God. Dust, mountains, seas, even the foundations of the earth, Mormon says, move according to God’s commands. But these commands—and this point is foreign to modern thought—have as much to do with the regularities of nature as they do with human behavior. There are not two sets of laws, one natural and amoral that governs the operation of nature and the other moral that is meant to govern the actions of human beings; there is one set of laws or commands whose beneficent intent is to structure a world in which humankind can flourish.⁴³ “Israel was early impressed with the regularity of nature,” writes William Irwin, and this regularity

was an evidence of the grace of God: he chose so to order his world for the benefit of man. The promise was of divine grace that,

While the earth remaineth,
seedtime and harvest, cold and heat,

41. Hugh Nibley, *Temple and Cosmos: Beyond This Ignorant Present*, ed. Don E. Norton, Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, vol. 12 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992).

42. Levenson, “Temple and the World,” 290.

43. According to Bernhard Anderson, “The cosmos [for the ancient Israelites] is not an autonomous whole, governed by its own laws, but is completely dependent on the God who transcends it. Moment by moment it is held in being by the sovereign will of the Creator. Even the regularities of ‘nature’ are not iron-bound laws but are expressions of the Creator’s faithfulness and trustworthiness (cf. Gen. 8:22).” Bernhard W. Anderson, “Mythopoeic and Theological Dimensions of Biblical Creation Faith,” in *Creation in the Old Testament*, ed. Bernhard W. Anderson (Philadelphia, Penn.: Fortress Press, 1984), 13.

summer and winter, and day and night,
shall not cease [Gen. 8:22].⁴⁴

Put differently, so long as the earth endures, the creation commands that brought about its purpose and contrapuntal operation will continue to bless its inhabitants. All law is God-given and hence possesses moral import, all ultimately reaches back to the creation, and the lawful, orderly operation of nature manifests the glory and beneficence of God. Thus there is no natural law in the modern sense; that is, there are no explanatory principles that are indifferent to the question of God's existence and purpose. If indeed Mormon was attuned to this older outlook, and the biblical imagery of the passage suggests that he was, it is highly unlikely that he would have been trying to make a correction on behalf of an intellectual enterprise that does not explicitly acknowledge God.

The Chiastic Structure in Helaman 12:6–21

Further evidence of Mormon's premodern mind-set may be found in the possible chiastic structure of the passage under consideration.⁴⁵ In broad terms, its central structure can be seen as follows:

- A Men who *reject* God as ruler over them are less than the dust of the earth (12:6–7)
- B Dust of the earth moves and divides asunder [*opens*] at the command of God (8)
- C *Mountains* and hills tremble, break up, are made smooth at God's command (9–10)
- D The primordial *foundations* of the earth rock at the power of God's voice (11–12)
- E The *earth moves* as God so commands, whereby the day is lengthened (13–14)
- X "Thus, according to his word, the earth goeth back" (15)
- E' "For surely it is the *earth that moveth* and not the sun" (15)
- D' The waters of the *great deep* dry up if God so commands (16)
- C' *Mountains* move, are raised up, and bury cities at God's command (17)

44. William A. Irwin, "Man in the World," in *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*, ed. Henri Frankfort and others (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), 295.

45. I thank John Welch for pointing out this chiasm to me and encouraging me to discuss it in this article.

B' At the command of God the earth hides [*closes up*] treasure because
of iniquity (18–19)

A' God will *reject* and cast off men because of their iniquities (20–21)

While this text manifests several types of parallelism and repetition,⁴⁶ the most important point throughout this passage is that the various elements of nature (whether dust, mountains, earth, water, and so on) all move *according to God's word*, a theme made emphatically clear by this passage centering on this very point. Thus, in Mormon's perspective, it is the earth that moves and the sun not only appears to stand still, but indeed, says Mormon, the sun does stand still, all "according to his word." But Mormon is positing just one instance. At another time, God might conceivably have occasion or context in which to command the sun to move, and it would so move. Furthermore, the fact that God commands the earth (or the sun) to move implies that it was not previously moving, at least not in the way it thereafter moves, and so this is not a description of periodic motion, Copernican or otherwise.

While Mormon knows that God has ordained the regularities of nature, he also knows that human disobedience runs counter to those regularities (A-A') and thereby necessitates corrective action on God's part. These corrective actions are also part of God's glory and are bound up, one may presume from numerous scriptural narratives, with earthquakes, floods, famines, and the kind of calamities now called "natural disasters." By "natural" one implies that their causes run back to blind forces of nature, not to God.⁴⁷ Mormon, however, is far removed from that sort of naturalistic

46. See further, for example, the repetition of synonymous terms in verses 3 and 4, the alternating juxtapositions of "quick" and "slow" in verses 4 and 5, the four-time use of "voice" in verses 9–12, the four-time use of "if he say" in verses 13–17, the four-time use of "shall say" in verses 18–21, the resumptions of "iniquity" from verse 5 in verses 21–22, and of "hearken" from verse 4 in verse 23, and the contrast between "sparing their lives" in verse 2 and being "eternal life" in verse 26.

47. When viewed through the lens of modern secularism, the ancient biblical attitude toward nature may appear unenlightened, but, as with any worldview, much depends on initial choices and assumptions. Victor Matthews and Donald Benjamin write, "In the world of the Bible . . . Yahweh was all powerful. Anything which happened, good or bad, happened only because Yahweh decreed it. Yahweh was the cause of everything, a world view called 'primary causality.' This world view is not the result of ignorance, but of choice. Villagers in early Israel knew that death was the result of accident, widespread disease, or epidemic, but they chose to attribute it to Yahweh." Victor H. Matthews and Donald C. Benjamin, *Social World of Ancient Israel: 1250–587 BCE* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993), 116. Put differently, ancient Israelites *chose* to see God in the everyday events of life. Moderns, on the other hand, generally *choose* to see natural processes in those same events.

outlook, just as he is far removed from the related deistic sensibility of a clockmaker God implementing at the creation scientific laws of nature which thereafter govern nature without his active involvement. This reality is elaborated throughout this passage, every aspect of which is suffused with religious significance and pitched toward singular events whereby God reminds disobedient humans that they indeed are less than the dust of the earth. God can use mountains (C) to bury cities (C'), when their inhabitants do not obey God. Humans cannot bury their instruments of sin from God (B'), for at his command, the dust of the earth "moveth hither and thither" and opens "asunder" (B) to hide or reveal those instruments as God wills. Even the great sources of human and earthly stability—those that undergird human achievement—are not immune to God's rearranging power. The earth's "foundations rock" at God's command (D). Perhaps Mormon is thinking here of the Shetiyyah stone, the foundation stone that was said to center and stabilize (normally) the cosmos and upon which the Jewish temple rested. Interestingly, this stone was associated with the life-giving primeval waters,⁴⁸ a link that coincides with Mormon's coupling of the earth's foundations with the waters of the great deep (D').

Neither choice can be shown, in any absolute sense, to trump the other, for each is a metaphysical leap of faith—that is, an outlook undetermined by the events that capture our interest. To follow Albert Einstein and Leo Infeld: "Physical concepts are free creations of the human mind, and are not, however it may seem, uniquely determined by the external world. In our endeavor to understand reality we are somewhat like a man trying to understand the mechanism of a closed watch. He sees the face and the moving hands, even hears its ticking, but he has no way of opening the case. If he is ingenious he may form some picture of a mechanism which could be responsible for all the things he observes, but he may never be quite sure his picture is the only one which could explain his observations." Albert Einstein and Leopold Infeld, *The Evolution of Physics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966), 31.

48. Raphael Patai writes, "Nor was the cosmic significance of the Temple exhausted with the light that emanated from it. In the middle of the Temple, and constituting the floor of the Holy of Holies, was a huge native rock which was adorned by Jewish legends with all the peculiar features of an *Omphalos*, a Navel of the Earth. This rock, called in Hebrew *Ebhen Shetiyyah*, the Stone of Foundation, was the first solid thing created, and was placed by God amidst the as yet boundless fluid of the primeval waters. Legend has it that just as the body of an embryo is built up in its mother's womb from its navel, so God built up the earth concentrically around this Stone, the Navel of the Earth. And just as the body of the embryo receives its nourishment from the navel, so the whole earth too receives the waters that nourish it from this Navel. The waters of the Deep crouch underneath the *Shetiyyah* stone at a depth of a thousand cubits, and down to them reach the *shitin*, the shafts, also created according to legend in the days of creation." Raphael Patai, *Man and Temple: In Ancient Jewish Myth and Ritual* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons,

In brief, the structure and logic of this passage instruct us that God's word is the true center of existence and the only absolutely secure reality. All else is at the mercy of God's command, and so all else moves or ceases to move accordingly. It is easy, however, to miss the central importance of verse 15, because, having only secondhand familiarity with Mormon's ancient worldview, contemporary readers reflexively fall back on the modernistic Newtonian understanding of motion.

An additional difficulty surfaces when we try to accommodate Mormon's description to Newtonian physics, believing there is only one correct account of motion. When we let Newton's account dominate, we do violence to Mormon's account, which is just as correct as Newton's, given the initial assumptions of either model. Mormon starts and ends with God; Newton starts and ends with material bodies and mechanical force. This is not to say that there is no final or absolute answer to the question of why things move, only that, within the modest scope of this article, these two accounts of motion represent divergent perspectives, each of which conveys correct information built upon different premises and oriented toward a different end. If we fail to understand Mormon's perspective because our thinking is colonized by Newton's, we also fail to understand Newton's perspective, for his—as he well realized—leaves important questions unanswered.⁴⁹

1947), 85–86. See also Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, vol. 4 (Philadelphia, Penn.: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1947), 96. A biblical reference to the stone and water may be found in Job 38:6–8. John Welch proposes that the Shettiyah stone, given its bedrock stability and association with water, whether life-saving or life-threatening, informs numerous biblical passages. For example, the parable of the wise and foolish builders wherein the wise man built his house upon *the* rock (not just any rock) that subsequently protected the home from wind, rain, and flood (Matt. 7:24–25), the story of Moses striking with his staff the rock at Meribah to produce life-preserving water (Num. 20:8–11), Paul's characterization of Christ as the Rock that supplies "spiritual drink" (1 Cor. 10:4), and many others. John W. Welch, *The Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple* (London: Ashgate, 2009), 179–82.

49. I have already observed (note 20, above) that Newton felt that the motion of astronomical bodies would "decay" unless somehow recharged. He was also much vexed by the idea of action-at-a-distance (noncontact) forces, the like of which his theory of universal gravity seemed to embody. How does the moon reach across 240,000 miles of apparently empty space to cause the tides on earth? Here again, the ether appeared to offer a possible solution to this problem, but Newton eventually concluded that a mechanical ether would bring planetary motion to a halt. After deciding that an immaterial ether was also unsatisfactory, Newton at one point proposed that God mediates force and that he also holds the stars and planets in their courses, not in a deistic fashion, but from moment to moment. At other times, he confessed that he did not know how force is transmitted across

The View Shared by Mormon, Joshua, Samuel the Lamanite, and Alma the Younger

Galileo famously insisted that, as it is expressed in scripture, “the intention of the Holy Ghost is to teach us how one goes to heaven, not how heaven goes.”⁵⁰ His point was that the Bible speaks to matters of salvation, not to the fully naturalistic concerns which he and others were then pioneering under the banner of science. Far from disparaging the Bible, Galileo saw it as a book whose saving efficacy transcends the cosmological understanding, or misunderstanding, of those who believe in it. Thus, it did not ultimately matter that people in Joshua’s day believed that the Lord stopped a moving sun to lengthen the day of Israel’s combat against the Amalekites, when Joshua spoke to the Lord and said “in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed” (Josh. 10:12–13). The absolutely central point—the turn of events that sparked saving faith—was the Lord’s power and miraculous intercession. This view was shared by Mormon, Samuel the Lamanite, and Alma the Younger.

Although we cannot say for sure, it is probable that Mormon, from his reading of the plates of brass, had the Joshua story specifically in mind when he wrote about the earth’s motion. If so, he seems to have invoked that episode in terms appropriate to his argument, which is not concerned with astronomical or scientific correctness but with “how slow [the children of men are] to remember the Lord their God” (Hel. 12:5). Thus, after describing the earth’s motion as a consequence of God’s command, Mormon writes: “And thus *according to his word*, the earth goeth back and it *appeareth* unto man that the sun standeth still. Yea, and behold, this is so; for surely it is the earth that moveth and not the sun” (Hel. 12:15; italics added).

Rather than confirming Copernican cosmology, this verse suggests that Mormon is invoking Joshua’s event, not because Joshua’s account is scientifically inaccurate and therefore in need of correction, but because it reinforces Mormon’s own admonition that humans, being indigenous to the earth (their bodies made of the dust of the earth), should follow the many examples of responsive obedience they witness among things with which they are intimate—dust, hills, mountains, the foundation of the earth, the great deep, and so on. Human beings are not exempt from this great pattern of earthly obedience, although, Mormon says, they often think they

empty space or how heavenly bodies conserve their motion. See Margaret Osler, *Reconfiguring the World: Nature, God, and Human Understanding from the Middle Ages to Early Modern Europe* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins Press, 2010), 154–64.

50. Galileo Galilei, “Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina,” in Stillman Drake, *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957), 186.

are. Seen in this light, Mormon's argument is significantly geocentric, albeit in a religious rather than scientific sense: he is reminding his readers of their place in the cosmos, of their earthly limitations, and of the need to be responsive or obedient to divine command.⁵¹ The earth's obedience, demonstrated by the motion of its constituent parts, makes it relevant to our own circumstance and place in the cosmos, given that we live on the earth and know it intimately. Mormon, wanting to impress upon earthbound humans the need for obedience and using the moving earth as an example of obedience, keeps the sun stationary and lets the earth do all the moving. Thus he drives home the point that it is contrary to our earth experience, to the witness of terrestrial nature, that humans should ever settle down into self-satisfied pride and thereby stop moving, obeying, repenting, and growing.

Still, for modern readers, two great sticking points remain to be addressed. The first has to do with Mormon's statement that when the earth "goeth back," it "appeareth unto man that the sun standeth still" (Hel. 12:15). Modern readers may interpret this to mean that when the earth stops its axial rotation, the sun appears to stand still in the sky. But, not only does the biblical imagery and Mormon's central point about the earth and all things moving as God commands not support this interpretation, neither does Copernican or Newtonian science, for even in such an interpretation God's powers would have to be somehow involved to mitigate the tremendously destructive dynamical effects that would necessarily accompany the cessation of the earth's axial rotation. Indeed, Mormon never describes the earth as going *around* the sun, nor does he talk as if the earth were spinning on its axis. Readers bring those elements of the Copernican picture of reality to the text and then, at Mormon's mention of the earth's backward motion, read that interpretation into the passage.

Several interlocking considerations work against this modernist interpretation. Recall the ancient Hebrew worldview depicted in figure 1, evidently known to the Israelites at the time of Joshua. The earth, in that cosmology, is not simply another astronomical body or sphere in the solar system. The earth is typologically different from the sun, moon, and stars, and thus we would expect that its motion would be different. Mormon reflects his understanding of this difference in his description of the movement of earthly matter, which is "hither and thither," beginning and ceasing as the Lord commands. This is

51. John Walton writes, "The Old World Science in the Bible offers the perspective of the earthbound observer. One could contend that there are some ways in which it is more true that the earth is the center of the cosmos. This does not mean to suggest that there are many truths, but that there are many possible different perspectives that can each offer truthful information." Walton, *Lost World of Genesis One*, 61.

not to say that celestial bodies, such as the sun, moon, and stars, are not also under God's sway, or that their motion might also define their nature in some way, but from the distant vantage point of the earth, all that Mormon can describe is the periodic motions of those heavenly bodies. Things are quite different, however, for Mormon at the ground level, so to speak. He knows, of course, the earth's diurnal and seasonal regularities, but other forms of episodic motion are also ubiquitous, and these are the kinds of motion that God employs to correct sinners: the intermittent movement of dust, the leveling or quaking of mountains, the drying up of seas, and so on. Indeed there are times, Mormon tells us, when God speaks so powerfully that "the *whole earth* shake[s]" and "the foundations rock, even to the very center" (Hel. 12:11–12, italics added). This is the kind of motion—episodic or start-stop motion—that Mormon attributes to the whole earth when he states that at the Lord's command, the earth moves. Said differently, the earth for Mormon is not a heavenly or astronomical body and consequently cannot orbit the sun. It can, however, episodically shake or move—go back and forth—as a single entity when God so decrees.

The second sticking point, related to the first, concerns Mormon's statement "for surely it is the earth that moveth and not the sun." Here it almost sounds as if Mormon grasps the distinctly modern concept of Galilean relativity. That is, by keeping the sun stationary so that the earth can do all the moving, he appears to anticipate the scientific idea that motion is a two-body affair—a relational coupling of bodies in which either body (take your pick) may do all the moving.⁵² But whether physical motion might occur this way or not, or whether Mormon thought of heavenly bodies moving in a Galilean way or not, he is not concerned on this occasion with that sort of thinking. His description of the earth's motion in this passage is merely what occurs as we shape language to different ends, emphasizing a particular perspective on one occasion while minimizing it on another occasion.

As a case in point, just two chapters after Mormon states that the sun does not move, he records Samuel the Lamanite's prophecy of extended daylight despite the sun's rising and setting: "for ye shall know of the rising of the sun and also of its setting; . . . nevertheless the night shall not be darkened" (Hel. 14:4). Why does Mormon let stand this description of a moving, rising and setting, sun shortly after he had stated in chapter 12 that the sun does not move? Perhaps because he knew full well that "at the going down of the sun" in 3 Nephi 1:15, light would indeed miraculously

52. Here I am thinking of the principle of relativity which asserts that the laws of physics are the same for all inertial bodies. Einstein's equivalence principle generalizes this claim to include noninertial bodies.

come from some other source. But more than that, Mormon in Helaman 12 is not concerned with what we would call scientific consistency; nor is he demonstrating a protomodern understanding of relative motion, which concept is completely unmindful of God's involvement in the universe. For Mormon, the overriding imperative is the elucidation of God's purposes in the everyday events of our lives, and each passage is shaped toward that end. The deep familiarity that all people have with the changing, moving earth makes it the perfect witness to the truth that obedience entails change and movement toward repentance—let the earth, therefore, be nature's great exemplar of change and motion. When, however, the obviously sun-related phenomena of day and night are given prophetic consideration, as they are with Joshua, Mormon, and Samuel the Lamanite, let the emphasis fall on that body and its evident motion—as Joshua, Mormon, and Samuel the Lamanite do—without worrying about whether that motion is real or apparent. Such worry comes naturally to people who do not link motion with God; but Mormon makes that link reflexively, and so for him all motion is real because it denotes God's reality.

Likewise, responding to Korihor's request for a sign, Alma the Younger makes a similar point, reasoning from the same assumption of God-related motion: "All things denote there is a God; yea, even the earth, and all things that are upon the face of it, yea, and its motion, yea, and also all the planets which move in their regular form do witness that there is a Supreme Creator" (Alma 30:44). Here Alma ascribes motion to both the earth and the planets, and he portrays the fact and form of that motion as evidences of God's involvement in the cosmos. He describes planetary motion as "regular," which is how it generally appears from earth.⁵³ This adjective, however, is not applied to the earth's motion, a point that might be taken to imply that Alma, like Mormon, reflexively thinks of the earth's motion as irregular or episodic.⁵⁴ More to the point at hand, Alma seems to imply that were there no God, there would be no motion, because there would be no stream of divine power flowing throughout the cosmos, and indeed, as Lehi said, "And if there

53. I say "generally" because planets (the word itself meaning "wanderers") are bodies distinguished from the so-called fixed stars by occasional irregular motions (stations and retrogradations), which were, however, reduced to rules by ancient observers and thereby predicted. Before Lehi's departure from Jerusalem, the Babylonians had developed some planetary understanding which may have diffused throughout the Near East. For the relevant chronology, see James Evans, *The History and Practice of Ancient Astronomy* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1998), 296–98.

54. Grammatically, I take the relative pronoun "which" in Alma 30:44 as referring only to "the planets" and not to "the earth" (a remote antecedent) or to "its motion" (which would yield a redundancy).

is no God we are not, neither the earth” (2 Ne. 2:13). Again, the concern is with motion as an expression of God’s involvement in a world that is responsive to that involvement, not with whether one body, rather than another, moves.

Final Considerations

Unlike the Greeks, the ancient Hebrews did not take up the question of motion in a formal and intellectually rigorous way.⁵⁵ We can surmise, nevertheless, a great deal about their attitude toward motion by their descriptions of moving objects and, more generally, by the way they describe nature. This is what I have tried to fathom by examining Mormon’s and Alma’s mention of a moving earth. When taken in context, Mormon’s and Alma’s mention of a moving earth is fully consistent with the biblical attitude that all of nature is mindful of God and quick to move or act in ways that glorify him. The Psalmist, for example, instructs us to praise the Lord, but then adds that our praise will be mingled with that of the angels and, further, with the praise of many things that we would probably regard as unmindful of the Lord and even lifeless:

Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light.
Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. . . .
Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps:
Fire, and hail; snow, and vapour; stormy wind fulfilling his word:
Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars:
Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl. (Ps. 148:3–4, 7–10)

As Jeanne Kay remarks while commenting on this passage, “In the Psalms, hills are girdled with joy, valleys shout for joy (65:13–14), floods clap their hands, the whole earth worships God and sings praises to His name (66:1–4; 89:6).”⁵⁶

55. Noah Efron states, “*Nature in the Bible is nowhere captured in theory. . . . There is no evidence that ancient Hebrews made detailed observations of the heavens, kept records, or calculated and predicted the motion of the stars. In this, they differed from the nearby Assyrians, for instance. There is no evidence that they constructed even rudimentary theories or models of how the heavens were structured, or hypothesized about what the objects they encountered were made of. Nor is there any evidence that Israelites mused about a possible relationship between number and nature. While ancient Hebrews believed that the workings of nature were, for the most part, lawful, they did not labor to articulate these laws.*” Noah J. Efron, *Judaism and Science: A Historical Introduction* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2007), 31, italics in original.

56. Jeanne Kay, “Concepts of Nature in the Hebrew Bible,” in *Judaism and Environmental Ethics*, ed. Martin D. Yaffe (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2001), 90. Here one is reminded of Mircea Eliade’s claim: “What we find as soon as we place ourselves in the perspective of religious man of the archaic societies is that *the world exists*

Although more widely scattered, similar passages may be found throughout all scripture.⁵⁷ In his address to the leading men of Athens, for example, the Apostle Paul stated: “For in [God] we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28). King Benjamin likewise recognized God as “preserving [us] from day to day, by lending [us] breath, that [we] may live and move and do according to [our] own will, and even supporting [us] from one moment to another” that we might serve, thank, and praise him (Mosiah 2:21).

With so many scriptural reminders of God’s moment-to-moment sustenance and mercy, why do modern believers find it difficult to embrace the scriptural premise that God is intimately involved in the operation of nature, and that stars, seas, mountains, and the like are quick to respond to his directives and no less quick to praise him? The problem, it seems to me, is not that we do not read the relevant passages of scripture, but that they do not register as literal truth. For anyone steeped in the metaphysics of Newton’s claim that objects move under the “force of inactivity” (that changes in motion, owing to an inner blankness, cannot be self-initiated), the idea of a star praising God can only be poetic sentiment—that is, a pleasant diversion from the hard work of learning the scientific truth about nature. But such scriptural declarations rang true for ancient Hebrews, Nephites, and early Christians because they accorded to nature the capacity to act on its own behalf while responding to its Creator: to sing, to praise, and to move in ways that reverence and glorify God. What is more, because nature was felt to be exquisitely responsive to God’s will, believers could discern his will in the jostlings and vicissitudes of everyday life. Note the beneficent (that is, human-correcting, human-blessing) action of God amid nature’s depths and elevations in the following biblical passage:

They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters;
 These see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep.
 For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the
 waves thereof.

because it was created by the gods, and that the existence of the world itself ‘means’ something, ‘wants to say’ something, that the world is neither mute nor opaque, that it is not an inert thing without purpose or significance. For religious man, the cosmos ‘lives’ and ‘speaks.’ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (San Diego: Harvest/HBJ, 1987), 165, italics in original.

57. One of the most compelling is Romans 8:19–21 (New International Version): “The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of god to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.” Paul seems to suggest that nature is mindful in some way of the drama of salvation being played out on its stage. See also Moses 7:48–49.

They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths; their soul is melted because of trouble.

They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end.

Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses.

He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.

Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven. (Ps. 107:23–30)

Moderns are not inclined to ascribe the “stormy wind” to God, supposing instead that it is blindly brought into existence by the laws of physics. But they might, in a moment of extremity, ask God to calm the storm by finessing or overriding the laws of physics. For us God works at the far side of nature; we tend to see him not in the immediate and ordinary circumstance of the world, but at the moment of his extraordinary intervention. For the ancients, however, nature had no autonomy apart from God’s purpose, and so the everyday operation of nature—the change or motion inherent in the weather, seasons, and so on—manifested that purpose. Not surprisingly, this ancient religious attitude toward motion carries over into modern revelation: “The earth rolls upon her wings, and the sun giveth his light by day, and the moon giveth her light by night, and the stars also give their light, as they roll upon their wings in their glory, in the midst of the power of God. . . . Behold, all these are kingdoms, and any man who hath seen any or the least of these hath seen God moving in his majesty and power” (D&C 88:45–47).

Passages such as this are easy to gloss over, for, as noted, they strike us as softly focused religious sentiment rather than hard-edged fact. Attuned as we are to the flat, matter-of-fact language of science and confident that the motion of astronomical bodies is merely the self-sustaining movement of lifeless objects, we discount scripture’s clear witness of divine action in the moving heavens. We also discount the everyday witness of terrestrial nature, a witness that for Mormon is bound up with the obedient, God-centered motion of the earth and its constituent parts. So oriented, we tend to read Helaman 12:15 with a scientific correction in mind, not realizing that Mormon’s concern is the correction of human disobedience.⁵⁸

58. Affirming Claus Westermann’s claim that “the [biblical] stories of origins are concerned with the subsistence of the world and of mankind, not with the intellectual question of the origin,” Bernhard Anderson ventures that it “may be time for biblical theologians, like Job, to ‘repent in dust and ashes’ in the face of the cosmological mysteries of creation.” Anderson is suggesting that our intellectual

What is more, we may fail to realize that Mormon offers us a world-view vastly more promising and expansive than Newton's mechanistic cosmos. Although motion is conserved in Newton's system, it is not conserved indefinitely: entropy, the irreversible tendency of closed systems toward disorder (what Paul calls creation's "bondage to decay"⁵⁹), has the final word, and so, to follow Bertrand Russell, "the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins."⁶⁰ Believers may counter this dark prospect by relying on the Atonement of Jesus Christ.⁶¹ This is Mormon's stance, but for him the saving power of the Atonement is already on offer: it is fully manifest in the everyday operation of nature, or, to use scriptural language, the glory of creation. Like Lehi, he understands that without a merciful, atoning God, "we are not, neither the earth; for there could have been no creation of things" (2 Ne. 2:13). That is, we would not exist to exercise agency and to take up such questions as why things move. For Mormon, God has already rescued humankind from oblivion, and the created universe is the living revelation of that rescue. "The heavens declare the glory of God," wrote the Psalmist, "and the firmament sheweth his handywork" (Ps. 19:1).

It is interesting that when Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo advanced the heliocentric worldview, each argued that the sun, owing to its God-like radiance, deserves to occupy the center of the cosmos.⁶² Thus each man was alive, at some level, to the older sensibility of a God-centered, God-quickenened universe. Mormon clearly shares that sensibility, but given the steep attrition of modernity, the full scope of his prophetic pleading is not easy for us to recover. Newtonian physics offers a very different sensibility or thought world, one that has gotten tremendous scientific and technological leverage on physical reality by characterizing the universe as a mechanistic system. Certainly this has not been a bad development—modern science

deliberations on scripture sometimes miss the mark. Anderson, *From Creation to New Creation*, 101.

59. Romans 8:21, New International Version.

60. Bertrand Russell, "A Free Man's Worship," *Mysticism and Logic* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1918), 45.

61. See Hugh Nibley, "The Meaning of the Atonement," in *Approaching Zion*, ed. Don E. Norton, Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, vol. 9 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 603.

62. For Copernicus, see Nicolaus Copernicus, *On the Revolution of the Heavenly Spheres*, ed. Stephen Hawking (Philadelphia: Running Press, 2002), 25–26. For Kepler, see E. A. Burt, *Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science*, 58–60. For Galileo, see "Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina," in Drake, *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo*, 212–13.

and technology have blessed our lives in many ways. But Newtonian physics need not be taken as absolutely authoritative in its explanation of why things move. Mormon's explanation, like Newton's, is rich, distinctive, and highly compelling.

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Tempering Of Tree Houses and Tragedies

Kylie Nielson Turley

The warm August twilight smells of garden-fresh tomatoes and yesterday's balmy summer rain. My son Caid is at a neighbor girl's birthday party eating pizza, while my other four children and their three little cousins spray each other with the garden hose and laugh. My sister, my husband, and I talk about news from home and the city pool waterslides, lounging in lawn chairs, lazily slapping a few lonely mosquitoes, and picking at the remains of dinner.

The kids want to try the zip-line again, so we tote the food back in the house, shove the table to the side, and get out the rock-climbing harnesses. The younger kids bicker about whose turn it is to go first, while the older ones trot through the garden patch and climb the wooden blocks nailed into the trunk of the big tree. My twelve-year-old son waits on the lower, walled-in tree house landing to help the little ones through the trapdoor, while my teenage daughter climbs to the zip-line platform where she can help clip safety harnesses onto the line. I watch the beehive of activity for a moment or two, then go inside to do dishes, make dessert, and return a friend's phone call.



I step outside with a bowl of cookie dough in one hand and a supply of spoons in the other. As I round the corner of the house, I hear the screaming: "He fell! He fell! Call 9-1-1!"

These thoughts I have in an instant:

"He" is mine.

One of mine.

The tree house.

Too high.

He's dead.

Dead.

Run to him.

My knee will collapse if I jump off the terraced garden ledge.

It's the last, stupid thought that shakes me.

I cry, "Who? Who?" but I don't know if I'm yelling or whispering as the sound rips my throat and rattles in my head.

Yelling, apparently. Because there is a pause, then someone—Kaitlyn?—shouts, "Caid. Caid. It's Caid. It's Caid," at the same time I arrive next to him. Months later, I wonder why everyone kept repeating words. I have no memory of dropping the cookie dough and spoons on the concrete driveway, sprinting across the lawn, hurdling the terraced garden ledge, and breaking through the small corn patch.

But I must have. Because suddenly I'm here. Frozen again. Staring down at my seven-year-old son lying on the ground.

He is moaning low-throated grunts like a strange, wounded animal and trying to curl up on his side like a potato bug. His eyes are closed, and he is bleeding profusely from somewhere on his head or face. His eye is swollen shut, but I feel a rush of relief.

He's alive.



I don't cry or scream. I take the cell phone from my husband and talk in what I remember as a calm voice to the emergency response personnel: giving our address, explaining what I see on the ground in front of me, repeating our address, saying "yes, he's breathing" four different times, and finally pushing the off button when the ambulance arrives. I remain stoic when I climb up into the ambulance, sit down, grasp the seat belt, click it, and hear the attendant in the back say, "That doesn't look good. He's going to crash."

A week later, a friend who happened to be driving by just as I was getting in tells me, "Oh, Kylie. The look on your face. . . . It was a look no mother . . ." I want to ask her what I looked like, but she starts crying too hard.



They say you can tell who a person really is in a crisis. If they are right, then I am small. I am a tiny, diamond-hard walnut of a person, obedient and docile, shocked. I lodge just below my breastbone, tight, curled inward, barely aware of my extremities.



The nurse I follow into the hospital says, "You can wait here," and I immediately stop, hovering in the doorway of the largest private space I have ever seen in an emergency room. My son is lifted onto the bed, strapped down,

and tied into monitors and machines by a dozen nurses and three doctors. My nurse is five steps into the room before she realizes I'm not behind her. She stops and pivots, and I can see the pity on her face.

"Oh," she says and unconsciously tugs a length of blond hair forward over her shoulder, partially covering her face. She gestures, "You can come in." I ghost inside, staying by the wall, well away from the purposeful doctors with their wires and tools. Sometimes I can see Caid between the chaos.

Minutes later in the CT Scan room, a doctor turns to me, "If we see what we think we'll see, we're going to stop the scan and LifeFlight him immediately to Salt Lake." I jerk my neck, nodding down then up, but my face is flat and expressionless. The nurse looks at me carefully and pats my back.

"Are you or your husband an EMT? You're handling this very well," she says.

"Thank you," I whisper mechanically, then think, *Thank you? It wasn't a compliment.* I glance down at my extra-large Idaho Falls Fire Department T-shirt and croak, "It's my sister's husband. My brother-in-law's shirt." It is the longest string of words I have initiated in the last half-hour. A lifetime. The whole world can change in a half-hour. I clear my throat before turning back to look at Caid through the glass windows.

The nurse keeps talking. Softly. She wants to get me a drink or a chair. She asks if I need anything, anything at all, water, perhaps, and she pats my back again.

"No," I say, but no sound comes out. "No, thank you," a bit louder.

Caid begins moaning and trying to curl into a fetal position. They let me go in and try to comfort my unconscious boy. I reach into the metal machine and gingerly stroke his naked shoulder like he is again a soft, premature newborn. His skin is warm, and I realize that I have not touched him. I did not hug him when he came home from the neighbor girl's birthday party; I did not even notice when he got home. When he was bleeding in the dirt at my feet, I was too afraid. Have I ever touched him? I feel like someone hits the back of my knees with a crowbar, and I teeter forward, almost collapsing onto his gurney beside him.

His skin is warm, I think. Still warm.

Step back, I tell myself. Step back.

The walk to my side of the glass window is a marathon of space and determination.

Behind the glass, I wrap my arms in front of me. My mouth presses together, and my forehead freezes in deep wrinkles, but my eyes move constantly, flicking between the doctors' faces and the computer screen, back and forth, faces then computer—searching, searching.



LifeFlight helicopters are tiny. A small seven-year-old boy strapped tightly on a child-sized stretcher must be shoved—hard—twice and clicked in like a puzzle piece. The patient’s feet are forward, mere inches from the pilot’s knees, and belted snug in their frame. The attendant’s arm can easily brush the patient’s face in the back, reach for life-saving medications, give an injection. The EMT can see heart and respiratory changes on the small traveling monitors and, if he sees changes, can instantly glance to see if the patient is bleeding from his ears.

It’s a fourteen-minute flight from Provo to Salt Lake.

“Drive carefully,” they tell the parents. A well-practiced line.

The drive takes an hour and ten minutes if one follows the speed limit and the traffic is light.



I have been upset before, but halfway to Primary Children’s Medical Center in Salt Lake City is the first time in my life that I completely lose control. After forty minutes of silence, my husband suddenly whispers, “You’ll find out soon enough. They were going triple down the zip-line.”

The words electrocute the shallow hold I have on myself. A small part of my brain knows even then that “triple” means carelessness to me, and the threatening hell of anger and blame ignites my panic.

“Oh, God,” I moan. “God, God, God.”

I suck in a breath and continue whimpering, “God. Oh, God. Oh, God.”

I do not know if I am swearing or praying. I only know that the words tear out of a part of me I have never known before. My eyes are dry, my voice is gritty, and I cannot stop retching, “God, God. Oh, God,” while we drive through the streetlight-pocked night. My husband says nothing.



There is another story, a parallel story. The first moments are the same. The screaming, the terror, the sheer unlivable reality. I see my son lying on the ground, and, as the relief of seeing him alive washes over me, the words of his baby blessing flood my mind, “He has a God-ordained mission to accomplish.” As I speak on the cell phone to 9-1-1, as I get in the ambulance, as I stand on the edge of the emergency room, the words echo over and over, “God-ordained mission, God-ordained mission, God-ordained mission.” In that small, tight part of me, I grasp the lifeline and cling mightily. This situation *will not* stop God’s plan for my son, however it turns out. The idea is a cushion, even while fear of what *might happen* suffocates, gags, smothers, overwhelms.



It turns out okay. Maybe I should have told you that in the introduction. Caid is okay. Multiple skull fractures, hemorrhaging brain tissue, and a traumatic brain injury take time to heal, but he is healing. His vision is poor

now, though he likely would have needed glasses sooner or later anyway with two near-sighted parents. Missing three weeks of school and having complications with memory will make anyone struggle in school. Two months after the accident, doctors declared that Caid's eyelid was drooping, rather than his eye sagging into his shattered eye socket. We decided Caid was not ready for another surgery or more pain, especially for something merely cosmetic. His droopy eyelid gives him a bored, sleepy look if you see him from his left side, but that's fine. He's okay.

Two months later is when I sit to write and remember, to somehow pull a string or two of sense from the tangled mess of the last sixty days. I stumble for words. My typical writing style is cheeky and slightly sarcastic, but poking humor has deserted me for obvious reasons. My words are either melodramatic or flat, sharp or empty; nothing is right. The essay unwrites more than it writes, and my slow paragraphs melt into weeks and months. I begin to realize that while I have moved on and continued living, part of me was left behind, camped out on the tiny calendar square of August 19, 2010—waiting. Waiting for the blow. Waiting for my fears to unfold. Waiting for my child to die.



The argument that my mother-fears are irrational holds no weight with me. I will show you a twenty-two-foot-high drop from a tree house onto a railroad tie that is rock hard, skull-shatteringly rational. My children might die. I might stand frozen beside, too scared to hold them in my arms as they bleed and moan and quit breathing. It could happen.



Time graciously blurs things. Six or eight months later, you do not think about death or *might have happened* on a daily basis, nor do your children. You think of carpool, lessons, homework, and dinner. You contemplate who needs good friends, whose turn it is to read scriptures, what to have for (another) dinner, and how to make the house payment. Your children talk, eat, sleep, work, and whine, and you do, too.

But there are moments.

They catch you.

One minute you are walking briskly to the car to go pick up your elementary school kids, the next you are standing rigid, staring across the frozen yard. The tree house rattles, vacant and icy in the winter wind, and you think, *Merciful God. It is so high. So very, very high.*

There is the now-familiar choking rush of revulsion, gratitude, pain, and fear.

Spring is coming. It will get warm, the grass will turn green, and your kids will play outside again. You will have to decide, to choose. Tear it

down? Climb up and conquer? Safety and protectiveness or openness and pain? The problem is that now you know you cannot avoid the pain.

You pivot, walk to the car, get in, and drive. When the kids ask for music, you turn it up loud. You belt out words, even when you do not know the right ones.

A month later, the home insurance company informs you that homes with tree houses are uninsurable.

“Sorry,” the agent says. “It looks like a nice tree house. You have until December to remove it or find a new company.”

Relieve. You do not have to choose. There will be no mature, wise decision-making process, and no responsibility for the choice. Supposedly humans yearn for freedom, but you feel relief. The choice is made—by someone else, for you. Rip it down.



We pass the one-year anniversary of Caid’s accident. I prepare myself for personal crisis, but we are busy buying first-day-of-school supplies and going camping—things we missed last August.

On a random day in September, the insurance company reminds us again that the home will not be insured next January. Tearing down the tree house turns into a family party with cheering and trivial photos as the lumber platform clings willfully to the tree long after numerous nails and support beams are pulled out, doubtless an absurd analogy in the making. My husband must resort to a chainsaw and a sledgehammer before the thing crashes to the ground. When two-by-fours and one-by-eights lie twisted and mangled in the spot where Caid fell, I have my prescribed moment—feeling nauseous and blinking fast to keep the tears down. I feel slightly silly: what happened to Caid was only a near miss. A could-have-been. An almost. Why the tidal wave of tragic emotions when there is no catastrophe? He is alive. Okay. Fine. We just had a horrific evening, a really bad week, and some months of recovery. *There is nothing to mourn*, I think, *nothing to grieve for. Nothing.*

Just the vain imaginings that faith means pain does not hurt.

Just the realization that God’s idea of “okay” might be my worst nightmare.

Merely the delusion that things going bad will shield me from things going even worse.

Simply the understanding that knowing any of this does not mean I am safe from learning it again in deeper, more excruciating ways.



I plan to make the kids haul the tree house to the dump, but a picnic on Squaw Peak comes up first—a “hot dog picnic,” the kids declare, so we need wood. Not one to waste, I send my sons out to the wreckage with screwdrivers, hammers, and instructions about rusty nails and watching where

they step. A few hours later I am looking over Utah Valley with the smell of smoke seeping into my clothes and hair and a sunset smearing the sky in pinks and reds.

My husband and children are engaged in the ritual tanning of marshmallows, but I sit on a hard rock and stare, watching the flames waver and dance, feeling the warmth on my cheeks and palms. The tree house wreckage burns well. My husband pitches three more chunks on the fire. He will stack it too high, and the marshmallows will burn, just like always. It usually annoys me, but tonight I feel contemplative.

I am afraid I live too defensively now, arms braced in front to protect me from the blows. It is because I know the secret: the immediacy of death, of pain. Maybe tomorrow or next week. Maybe next door or in my backyard. Maybe my kids, my mom, my husband, me. Caid's accident—it was too big, too life-changing, but, if I am honest, not really; most days run pretty much the same as before. The fire is blazing, and Caid's marshmallow flames red then blackens. He starts whining, and I think, *God-ordained mission? Really?* Kaitlyn throws him a new marshmallow, but he continues to whine, then kicks the dirt. They say traumatic brain injuries can exacerbate aggression, even years later.

I feel vaguely guilty about wallowing in my feelings. Since it worked out, maybe I'm faithful. Or maybe I just kept breathing through a shallow, choiceless endurance. The smoke breezes my way, and I cough, swiping my hands vigorously as if to stir an air current counter to nature's will. I know I can live through impossible moments by the grace of God. But I do not want to. I fan the shadowy air again before the smoke drifts lazily in another direction and the sun finishes tucking behind the mountains across the valley. The night air will chill shortly, and we are not dressed to stay.

"Start packing up," I say. All five children immediately start bickering about who gets to make the flames hiss away under streams of water. I press my hands against the ragged surface of the rock to push myself up and suck in a breath of mountain air, preparing to sort out the fight. Then I pause.

I am different now. I know this moment for what it is: there are five. Five bickering, beautiful children. The miracle wafts around me like campfire smoke, hazy and indistinct, but strong and pungent enough to sting my eyes. I will smell it for years.

This essay by Kylie Nielson Turley won first place in the *BYU Studies* 2012 personal essay contest.

The Right Place

*But believing that it might become a healthy place
by the blessing of heaven to the Saints,
and no more eligible place presenting itself,
I considered it wisdom to make an attempt to build up a city.
—Joseph Smith*

Not one has made it.
Trout launch out of Snake Creek,
flipping through the air,
vaulting up the waterfall
falling back into the foam.
I've been watching them for an hour.
It's November and the leaves
are dissolving on the ground.

Late tonight, one will make it.
She'll burst out of the water,
the moonlight trickling through the trees
catching her in the air, a flash of silvery skin.
She'll struggle up to the right place.
To clear water, gravel, and oxygen.
Dig a pocket and drop her eggs,
a spill of glowing beads.

—Sally Stratford

Reprinted by permission from Tyler Chadwick, ed., *Fire in the Pasture: Twenty-First Century Mormon Poets* (El Cerrito, Calif.: Peculiar Pages, 2011), 403. Quote from "History of Joseph Smith," *Millennial Star* 17 (May 5, 1855): 276.

Surviving by Faith

German Latter-day Saints and World War II

Lynn M. Hansen and Faith D. Hansen

*Editor's Note: There were more than ten thousand Latter-day Saints in Germany before World War II. Lynn M. Hansen and Faith D. Hansen were sent in 2008 as missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to gather oral histories of Saints who had lived through World War II. They interviewed Church members in Germany, Switzerland, Austria, and the United States. They published 314 accounts in German in *Der Glaube unserer Vorväter: Mormonen, die das Ende des Krieges Erlebten*. A selection of forty-three accounts were translated and printed as *German Latter-day Saints and World War II: Their Personal Stories of Survival (BYU Studies, 2012)*. Presented here is a small sample that conveys the devastation of the war, difficult years behind the Iron Curtain, and the faith that sustained these people.*



I am Wilford Zdunkowski. I was born in 1929 in Driesen [now Drezdenko in Poland] (Neumark), Friedeberg County, Pomerania. This small, peaceful town, formerly of 5,000 inhabitants, is located about 180 kilometers east of Berlin and has belonged to Poland since 1945. There we had a small but very active branch of the Church. I was baptized at the age of eight on May 26, 1937, along with Sister Rosemarie Jeske, in the Netze River. Since it was a long walk to the baptism site, only a few members were present. We had to walk so far to avoid being disturbed by fishermen and people taking walks.

My mother and my grandmother were baptized in 1924, and my father about two years later. Despite all our efforts, we have not succeeded in bringing more of our family into the Church to this day. But my father was very active in genealogical research. In later years, I helped with and

partially took over this part of his work. We learned to endure the biting sarcasm of our relatives because of our religion. In my class, I was always the only member of the Church. My membership has carried with it no apparent disadvantages for me other than scorn and ridicule.

My first calling in the Church came at the age of eight. With no knowledge of music, I became the Primary chorister. At the age of ten, I was called to be an assistant secretary in the Sunday school. The monthly reports, which always had to be prepared on Church premises, were an abomination to me. I had to calculate the percentage figures long before percentages were discussed in school.

My family moved to Stettin, Pomerania, in 1941. In Driesen, it took just over five minutes to get to the Church meeting rooms. It was much more burdensome to attend the meetings in Stettin. First, we needed forty-five minutes on foot to reach the train station in Stettin-Alt-damm. Then it was a fifteen-minute train ride and finally a twenty-minute walk to the church. There was no bus service from home to the station in Alt-damm. Nonetheless, we attended our meetings regularly. At a district conference in 1941, I was sustained to be a deacon and was at the time the youngest priesthood holder of the East German Mission.

After a heavy bombing attack on the city of Stettin, many were homeless, so the party seized our beautiful church meeting rooms. The furnishings of bombing victims were stored there to protect them from the weather. Another Christian denomination then shared their meeting rooms with us so that we and they could hold worship services at different times. We also had to hold our meetings in a member's apartment often.

My father worked in a plant called Pomeranian Motor Works that was critical to the war effort; several other branch members worked there as well. Because of this employment, he was exempted from military service. Many of our other brethren had to wear the uniform and defend the fatherland. The brothers who were not drafted carried extraordinary loads in the Church so that the different meetings and other activities could be properly implemented. One must also remember that the workweek was often more than fifty hours. My father was branch president in the town of Stargard, Pomerania. It was more than thirty kilometers from our apartment to the Stargard Branch. Father covered this distance using a combination of bicycle and train each Sunday. However, there were times when he sent his assistant because of his other obligations in connection with his work and the Church in Stettin. In our branch, an old brother blessed the sacrament, I passed it, and then I had to give a talk. When there were no other options, I also conducted the meeting.

The war intruded more and more into our lives. My grandmother, a war widow from the First World War, lived with us. However, for her safety and that of my brother, who was four years younger than I was, they were evacuated to Driesen. At that time, bombing attacks were still virtually unknown there, while we had to suffer many air raids in Stettin. My father was then called to be district president in Stettin. He had me do most of the paperwork, so I had very little free time. The typewriter we used from the Church was ready for the trash heap and practically unusable, so I had to borrow a typewriter from somewhere else.

Then, as the Eastern Front approached the borders of the former Reich, my mother was forced to dig trenches as part of the so-called East Wall. After several unsuccessful attempts, I finally had the good fortune to obtain a place in glider school in Neumühlenkamp in Eastern Pomerania. There, I learned the rudiments of gliding in the training glider SG 38. Shortly after returning home from the glider school, American bombers completely destroyed the Pomeranian Motor Works in a violent daylight raid. Even though the factory was located in a forest and heavily camouflaged, it was discovered by enemy reconnaissance flights. My father and some other brethren survived the attack. The fact that my father escaped with his life borders on a miracle. Regrettably, the former district president, Brother Erich Berndt, lost his life in this attack. He was a wonderful brother, and his family missed him greatly.

The Pomeranian Motor Works assigned my father to remote outsourcing work, so he asked to be released from his position in the East German Mission as district president in Stettin. At the final district conference of the Stettin District, Brother Ernst Winter was called to be Father's successor. He directed the district during the difficult period just before the front reached Stettin. Members of the Church east of the Oder River had already fled to the West, hoping to find refuge in what remained of the Reich. Many people had the false hope that the lost territories in the East would be reconquered soon.

The government appealed to the German youth to volunteer for the armed service and defend our country. Neither the military nor the party in my home district attempted to compel anyone in my peer group (born in 1929) to join up, but we who were already fifteen years old created our own peer pressure. Anyone our age who was not prepared to join the army was branded a cowardly dog. So my family was not terribly surprised when, just before my family fled Stettin, I stood in front of them wearing my uniform as an army volunteer. I was really proud of my uniform and secretly hoped to be awarded the Iron Cross for the defense of the fatherland. This dream

did not come true. It was not until long after the war that I learned that I probably owe my life to the former head of the German General Staff, Colonel General Heinz Guderian. He had forbidden the use of soldiers born in 1929 at the focal point of defensive battles. Poorly trained and poorly armed, we would not have been able to prevail against the Russian veterans, change the course of the war, and prevent the destruction of Germany. We were, however, allowed to participate in our own self-defense.

The tank battle east of Stettin was won by the Soviets due to their greatly superior numbers, and the German front retreated westward beyond the Oder River. The German troops west of Stettin were eventually pushed further westward toward the Elbe. I was able to survive a large number of low-level aircraft attacks with the help of the Lord.

On May 3, 1945, one day before my sixteenth birthday, terrifying screeching noises woke me from a deep sleep. One of my friends, some other soldiers, and I had entered a barn to grab a few hours of sleep and rest from the rigors of the day. The sound of Russian tank treads were fast approaching our barn. We had hoped to make our escape with lightning speed but were forced by machine-gun fire to raise our hands. To my surprise, the Russian soldiers searched us only very briefly for weapons, but then very carefully for watches and rings. Only after those searches were finished were we thoroughly disarmed. Our captors then herded us with a larger group of German prisoners to an assembly point. There we were exposed to Russian uncouthness. To our horror, we had to observe what was done to the German women and girls without being able to intervene. I hoped that the Russian women officers would stop the wild goings-on, but I was disappointed.

My prayers to escape to the West without falling into Russian captivity were not answered. In my mind's eye, I could already see my birch cross in Siberia. As the prophet Enos, but softly and not in a loud voice, I prayed day and night. My prayers had only one main thought: "Father, show me how I can escape." Many Russian guards on foot and on horseback guarded us very effectively, and there was no apparent way to escape. Although I was desperate, I could still feel the Lord's protecting hand over me. In retrospect, it is quite clear to me that the Lord was very close, even if I sometimes believed him far away.

The daily hardships were terrible. The long marches with little or nothing to eat or drink had drained my strength considerably. I will be very brief. What I experienced is really true, not an adventure novel. After several days of exhausting marching and several nights of sleeping in wet meadows, we were housed in the former concentration camp at Neubrandenburg. The Russians cut my hair so I was quickly recognizable as a prisoner of war. Due to lack of nutrition, we shivered miserably in the cold nights of May.

Suddenly some soldiers from the overcrowded barracks dragged out the bug-infested beds and made a huge fire. The Russians did not stop them. For a few minutes, many of us were able to warm at the fire after a long wait. I was lucky enough to stand there with my back to the fire. Total exhaustion caused me to lose consciousness. If an unknown soldier hadn't seen me as I was beginning to falter, I would have fallen backward into the fire. He caught me at the last moment, said something, and disappeared. I am sure that the Lord had his hand over me. My own prayers and those of my relatives drew the attention of the Lord to me.

After some time in the Neubrandenburg prison camp, we continued our eastward march. A few days later, we crossed the Oder River near Greifenhagen [now Gryfino], where a temporary bridge was built. I was not very far away from my former home in Altdamm near Stettin, where my family had planned to meet after the end of the war. When we parted, we did not anticipate that this would not be possible. Our former home was given to the Poles, who in turn had to cede part of their eastern territories to Russia.

The march to the east continued. My escape plans collapsed because of the effectiveness of the Russian guards. Still I prayed day and night very fervently and promised the Lord I would serve him the rest of my life if he would enable me to escape. However, this had to happen while we were still in what was then Germany. I was, of course, very much aware that with the Lord nothing is impossible. Whenever our route took us close to a section of forest, it seemed that we were particularly carefully watched. My strength was already severely depleted due to far too little food and water. Other prisoners fared similarly, and some collapsed at the roadside. Despite the pace the Russians tried to set, the march slowed the farther eastward we got. One evening the Russians could not avoid herding the long columns of German prisoners through a wooded area. The road was uncommonly wide, and we prisoners were allowed to use only the middle of the road so as to reduce the possibility of escape. During this particular night march, we were unexpectedly overtaken by a convoy of trucks loaded with Russian soldiers. Apparently returning from a victory celebration, the half-drunken Russians were singing army songs, and they shouted at us, "Gitler kaputt!" (Hitler is dead!) The monotony of our marching was interrupted, and we all looked up at the Russians. Where the trucks drove, the prisoners were forced closer to the edge of the roadside. I was marching on the far right edge, watching the Russian truck; because of my weakness, I gave no thought to escaping.

Then a miracle happened that I cannot explain, even today. I felt as if someone pushed me in the back. With no further thought whatsoever, I immediately ran into the woods. No shouts resounded behind me, and there was not even a shot! All of a sudden I realized I was escaping. After a

while, I stopped to just breathe. I saw no pursuers, just heard faint sounds, as I was by then far removed from the highway. Then I kept running into the woods, stumbling over roots. I picked myself up and ran on until I fell down from exhaustion and fell into an unconscious-like sleep. This had to have lasted several hours. It was very early the following morning when I was awakened by a barking dog. I saw a Russian soldier on a bicycle just a few steps away from me on a forest path. My heart stood still with fear. The dog had certainly seen me; with its leash, it pulled the bike with the lurching, drunken Russian toward me. He must have thought the dog had caught the scent of a rabbit or a deer and wanted to chase whatever it smelled. The Russian just yelled at the dog, jerked at its leash, and drove on.

Finally, my mind began to work again. I had to get out of there! I soon found a hiding place in a heavy spot of woods. The sleep that I desperately sought would not come. Slowly I began to mull over what had happened. I poured out my heart to the Lord and thanked him for my escape. I will never know what really happened at the edge of the forest when I found the sudden courage and strength to escape. The fact that the Lord had his hand in the game was evident to me. But it was not clear why I deserved to have the Lord intercede on my behalf. Without his intervention, I would have missed the opportune moment to flee. Only much later did I realize that because I was able to escape, I was able to avoid long and painful captivity somewhere in Russia. Years later, I read stories of many prisoners of war who returned home, and I realized how good the Lord was to me. Then, I return and thank the Lord again!

Now I had to find my way home to where my family and I had planned to meet. Under normal circumstances, the walk would have taken just two days; but I had to avoid being seen by anyone and consequently arrested. Many times I had to take the long way around. To regain strength, I certainly needed something to eat and drink. Also, I had to exchange my tell-tale uniform for civilian clothes. But how could I do that? At that time of year, there were no berries or mushrooms in the forest, so I continued to go hungry. After the sun had crept a bit higher in the sky and I had warmed up a little in a small clearing within my hiding place, I crept to the edge of the forest on all fours like an Indian, being as silent as possible, and tried to orient myself. The trees on the edge of the forest were pretty sparse, so I might easily have been seen there. As far as I can remember after sixty-three years, I did not dare to leave my hiding place during the day. The event with the half-drunken Russian and his dog that early morning indicated that Russian troops were nearby.

I prayed very seriously for divine guidance, and I felt myself being told not to leave my hiding place until darkness had set in. On a forest path,

which was probably used occasionally by farmers with teams of horses, I caught a glimpse of an old wagon that had been used by refugees. After making sure no one was around, I approached it and found that it had been completely plundered; however, I found an old tattered jacket that was too big for me. I traded it for my uniform jacket. Finally, I was ready to leave the forest. In the moonlight, I saw a large clearing and some peasant farms, but they were very dark. I wanted to see if I could find something to eat but did not dare look further. I decided to bypass all the farms and to keep moving. I returned to the forest and found the walking very tiring. Every cracking twig made my hair stand on end. In the distance, I saw an occasional campfire. Because I did not know who might be there, I avoided them totally.

When crossing a field in the dark, I tripped over a half-filled pail without a lid. I tasted the contents and found to my great joy that it contained syrup. With two fingers, I got more and more of the harsh but tasty liquid and carried the bucket with me until dawn. When in the light I realized that the top layer was composed of dead flies that had been attracted by the sweetness, I threw the bucket away. But the nauseating meal had a positive impact. My diarrhea-like problems were cured almost immediately. After days of marching at night, sleeping in hiding places, drinking from streams, and washing without soap, I finally arrived at the house in which my family had lived.

Accustomed to being very careful, I took time to watch the house and the entire area while lying on my stomach like an Indian. Our house was less than fifty meters from the edge of the forest, so I was able to get a good view. The two-family houses were only slightly damaged by gunfire, and the remains of curtains fluttered from the windows. Though I could see no one, I did not dare approach the house before dawn. Not a soul was in sight. The doors had been removed and probably used by German soldiers as fortification material. The only edible items in the house were the winter potatoes, which had already begun to sprout. I ate some of them raw because I did not dare to make a fire. The smoke from the chimney would have attracted unwanted visitors rather quickly. I dragged some mattresses into a closet, where I hoped to rest quietly.

In the morning, I watched from the woods as Russian soldiers and Polish civilians ransacked all the houses to search for useful things. At night, it was again quiet, so I returned to the house to make fire in the stove and cook some potatoes. I had found salt the previous evening, as well as some old clothes. An old straw hat hid my closely shorn head. This unpleasant life of hiding and living on potatoes went on for a number of days. I became aware that I could not always count on my luck. Eventually I would be caught, and what then? My prayers had only one request: "Show me, Lord, what I should do next." Again, the Lord did not fail me.

One day, from my hiding place behind the trees and bushes, I saw two people at some distance whom I recognized as two schoolmates a little younger than I was. From a distance, they thought I was a Pole, but I shouted at them and told them who I was. They told me that all the Germans had to move to a less damaged part of Altdamm. All able-bodied persons were registered under Polish control and put to work. I was able to blend into the populace and work like the others. No one was paid for the work done, because there was no currency; but we received a bread card, which we could exchange for a small amount of bread. The first work I had to do was eliminating tank traps and repairing roofs.

More and more Poles moved to Altdamm. In vain, we waited for friends and relatives, but they did not return. Since we had no newspaper or radio, we knew nothing of the new political realities.

One day the call came for all Germans to leave their apartments within minutes. I quickly stuck my few belongings into a potato sack and smeared my shoes with dirt from the road so they would not appear attractive and awaken any envy. Then I was ready to leave. I had only my bread card as identification; everything else had been lost when I was captured by the Russians. We were forced to walk in a southwesterly direction. The German refugees from the East were to some extent free booty. Every Pole or Russian could seize German property with impunity. Eventually we arrived in Greifenhagen, where we were sent to a specified area to be assigned a place to stay. Most accommodation was composed of empty apartments. We lay on the bare floorboards and rested from the fatigue of the long forced march. Nobody gave us anything to eat, but we could get water from wells along the way. If we had not taken some bread and cold boiled potatoes with us, we would have starved. That would not have bothered our liberators a bit.

Then came the word that all young men had to report for work in the mines in Silesia. All would be well there, we were told. Being suspicious from the experiences I had gone through, I hid myself with my few belongings to avoid once again being a captive.

What happened next is to me an even greater miracle than my escape from the Russians. Without valid documentation, it was virtually impossible to cross the bridge over the Oder River to the West. From the attic of an inoperative railroad guard shack, I saw that everyone, no matter in which direction he crossed the Oder Bridge, was carefully checked for valid documents. Any attempt for me to cross the bridge with a bread card would have necessarily led to my arrest. To try to swim across the Oder at night was a reckless idea, since the river was mined. In addition, the eastern side of the river was carefully guarded by Polish guards. From the upper window

of the crossing guard shack, I saw a large group consisting of several thousand German prisoners of war being herded eastward. The half-starved characters looked pathetic. For me there was only one vital question. How would I cross the river? Should I try taking advantage of the darkness of night to cross the bridge? The numerous lamps made it clear, however, that at night the bridge was lighted, so a secret crossing was hopeless. I suddenly became very restless in the rail guard shack. If someone entered the place, there was no way out; so I stealthily left the shack and hid in the high weeds that surrounded it. I felt that the Spirit was leading me, and I said the most fervent prayer I had ever spoken. I cannot remember all the words, but I again promised the Lord I would try to serve him all my life if he would show me the way out of my predicament.

Then something happened that I will never understand as long as I live. A feeling of calm and peace came over me that I had never felt before. It was almost as if I were walking in my sleep. I left my hiding place. Without really knowing what I was doing, I crossed the bridge at an unhurried pace without being stopped by the guards. They looked at me but paid no real attention. After I had German ground under my feet and looked back, a terrible feeling of fear suddenly came over me. In a few moments, my clothes were soaked with sweat.

After overcoming some additional difficulties, I visited my relatives in Babelsberg near Berlin. There I learned that my family had found refuge in the British sector of Berlin and that they shared a tiny basement apartment with another family.

We belonged to the Berlin-North Branch, where I performed my duties as a deacon. It was difficult for me at that time to partake of the sacrament. For a long time, because of the war, we had no small drinking glasses. Before the war, each member would receive a sacrament cup filled with water that was passed in a carrier. But at that time in the war, two large drinking glasses were passed around, from which the members each took a sip of water. The two deacons were the last to receive the sacrament, when half of the ward had drunk out of the glasses and they were almost empty. It took a lot of self-control for me to drink out of that almost-empty glass.

At that time, the Church in Salt Lake City still had no official contact with the mission office in Berlin. Occasionally, however, members of the Church in American military uniform came to the branch in order to gain an impression of the state of the Church. They probably wrote reports. I can still remember a high-ranking American officer who was driven to the meetings in a jeep. He observed how our sacrament meeting progressed. When I passed him the sacrament in a half-full glass, he declined with thanks. A few weeks later, he came back carrying a case with small

sacrament glasses. From that time onward, we were once again able to partake of the sacrament from small glasses. We were very grateful to this brother for his help.

The time in Berlin and elsewhere after the war was very difficult. In the cold winter of 1945–46, we shivered miserably in church and at home because there was no fuel for heat. Members of the Church, like almost all others, suffered terribly from hunger. Because of the cold and the poor food, many people did not survive. My grandmother did not survive this terrible time. I found this very unfair, because she had been very committed to the Church and the missionaries, and deserved a better end.

I would like to relate another event. When an old sister in the branch died, the branch president asked me to act as his assistant at the cemetery. There were at the time no coffins, and the dead were buried in paper bags in mass graves. Besides me, only the Relief Society president was there; the branch president, who was to speak, was missing. Since there were only five to ten minutes available for a funeral, we could not wait for him. So I, as a sixteen-year-old deacon who was quite unprepared, gave my first graveside talk. The Relief Society president said a prayer. It was not the branch president's fault that he was not there. At that time, because of the lack of fuel, there were numerous power outages, and he was stuck in the U-Bahn [subway].

Brother Günther Waldhaus, another deacon in the Berlin-North Branch, and I received a tough assignment from the mission. We were to take a small wagon all the way across Berlin from Moabit to Karlshorst to a Russian butcher shop. The mission leadership had somehow arranged to get two bags of bones from the Russians, which we had to transport to the mission office. The bones were distributed to members of the Church, who could then boil a broth from the bones. The broth helped people to survive. After the long journey on foot with the cart, we were completely exhausted. The early pioneers must have felt the same. During a special meeting in the spring of 1946, Elder Benson announced that members of the Church would receive food, clothing, and shoes from the Church's welfare plan. It did not stop at the announcement. Faster than expected, but too late for some, the goods were actually delivered. This alleviated the plight of many members, for which everyone was extremely grateful.

After I graduated from high school with the Abitur exam, I was surprised to receive a call to go on a mission in the Eastern Zone. At about the same time, Sister Inge Benicke from our branch was called to the same mission. Many people, including members of the Church, fled from the East to the West to seek a fresh start under better conditions. But we were to leave the western sector of Berlin to perform missionary work in the

Eastern Zone. This meant giving up our much-appreciated Western documentation for an Eastern document. No one had ever indicated that I would one day be expected to go on a mission. Therefore, the call came unexpectedly and at a very inopportune time. I wanted to prepare for my future career, but that was sidelined by my mission call. How much better it is today, where every young man in Primary starts to prepare for a mission. He then knows exactly what is expected of him. At that time, I thought of my promise to serve the Lord all my life if he would lead me out of captivity. I knew that I would fulfill this promise. Now, many years have passed, and I have realized that my account with the Lord is far from balanced. The Lord has done much more for me than I can ever return.¹



My name is Karl Heinz Zepp. I was born on June 6, 1924, in Mannheim. My mother was Barbara Zepp. She did not marry until after I was born, so I was in the care of foster parents for many years. At age nine, I went to live with my mother and enrolled in school. We were Evangelical Protestants [Lutheran]. When I was confirmed, I was not yet aware of other churches. That changed over time.

When the war broke out, I was drafted and then wounded. At the time, I was between the ages of eighteen and twenty. I was taken to a hospital in Seesen near Hannover. There I regained my health to some extent and was sent by the army to Russia. I had been there before. When the retreat began, we were in Tilsit in East Prussia, which was then part of Germany. We moved west to the city of Königsberg [Kaliningrad], where I was severely wounded again and almost buried. Fortunately, my comrades did not have time to fill in the grave in which they had put me. I woke up in a circumstance that could almost be described as a resurrection.

As I lay in the grave, I was in the spirit world. Everything around me was the same beautiful green color. When I looked down, I could see the ground under my feet. Others came to me, but I saw them only when they turned their faces toward me. Everything was bright and different colors—but only when they faced me. They were glad I was conscious. I did not know all of them, but I think I had a connection with some. Then two of them approached me; they had a very bright white light about them. I saw them, and they explained that I had to go back. I was not able to argue with them; the way they looked at me and how they spoke told me I had no choice.

1. Brother Zdunkowski passed away on October 2, 2009.

When I awoke, I was still lying in the hole. There was a sergeant lying next to me whose skull had been shot off. I thought to myself, "I'm lucky that the grave was not filled in." My comrades were retreating and didn't have time to do that.

Summoning all my strength, I got out of the grave. I turned around with my back against the wall and fell backward over it. There was something there that I used to help raise myself up and out of the grave; I do not know what it was. Then I began to move as quickly as I could. As I ran, I had the feeling that someone had taken me under each arm and was helping me. As I walked over the bridge that the Russians had built, the Russian soldiers just looked at me. I was covered with blood, and I wondered why they did not do anything. When I reached the German lines, I learned why. There was a lieutenant in the trenches who said, "Man, where did you come from?" I answered, "You saw where I came from." He said, "Man, that whole area is full of mines." I knew then that the Russians had wanted to see the spectacle of me being blown up. Obviously I wasn't.

When I reached the German lines and asked for the paramedics, I was told that if I went a little further I would find Schönstrasse number ten. When I got there, everything suddenly went black, and I fell down the basement stairs. When I awoke, the doctors had already operated on me.

When I came to, I thought a lot about what had happened earlier. I am certain I was in the spirit world, for when I fell into unconsciousness in the basement, I had no memory of anything. This knowledge, however, remained in my head. I thought a lot about that but did not really delve into it. The truth only dawned on me after I was at home and my mother-in-law spoke to me about the Church and the gospel. This truth confirmed the experiences I had. For a time, the experience occupied my mind. Her wish was that I should be baptized. I intended to be baptized anyway, because the gospel had somehow seized my soul.

Now I can say that I am not afraid of death, because I know what it is. I would only be afraid if I were to get a disease that would be very painful or one that would cause mental illness. Death is normal, something like a transformation. Sometimes I have the feeling that those who listen to me tell about my experience in the spirit world think I am fantasizing. Nevertheless, it really happened, and for me it is definitive. That is why I changed my life. It was hard and has taken many years.

The war was almost over when I became a prisoner, and I went through a period of near starvation. We were taken to Marienburg [Malbork], where there was a castle also called Marienburg. Approximately two hundred thousand prisoners of war were held there. The majority of them died of starvation. Once again, I was lucky that I survived. As prisoners of war, we

were treated poorly; eventually we were taken to five different cities, where we were forced to clean bricks from buildings that had been destroyed and to do other heavy work. I was sick again and had nutritional edema caused by a long period of hunger. The swelling started in my feet. Medical treatment helped a bit, but not much. After a while, the swelling began at the top of my body. Often we heard rumors that we would be sent home. That was, of course, what we hoped for, but it took much longer than I thought it would. I was a prisoner for three years.

When I got home, I came down with nutritional edema for the third time. For the third time I got over it, while most of the others who had this illness died. The fact that I survived has always caused me much introspection. I was 100 percent disabled and had to receive medical attention again. Before the war, I had apprenticed to be a baker and had earned my apprenticeship diploma, but now that all came to naught. I could not work at baking anymore because I could not stand the heat. Nevertheless, I took almost any job I could find. At that time, I was paid seven marks a week. One could not live on this paltry sum. As a disabled war veteran, I received a small pension, but I still had to work. After I got work, I had to travel to Heidelberg to be evaluated. I was classified as being only 50 percent capable of working.

Then I met my wife. We agreed that we wanted to get married—but only if I were willing to join the Church. So I did. I was baptized. Over time, I realized how important it is to know the commandments and the laws of the Church. I have grown to appreciate them and have kept them. I quit smoking and never drank alcohol, so my health gradually improved. However, I have never been very healthy. When I became acquainted with the Church, I really tried to be a caring human being again. In captivity one never felt like a man—the distrust I felt toward other people was so great. I had to change completely. My wife has helped me, supported me, and been very patient with me. I have also tried my best to live the gospel. I have learned a lot, and I try to do what is right. Today we are a happy couple at peace with the world, and that is what counts.

Lynn M. Hansen earned a PhD in German at the University of Utah. He served twenty-three years in the U.S. Air Force, retiring as a full colonel. Subsequently, he fulfilled many appointments, including arms control negotiating ambassador in the Reagan and Bush administrations and serving six years in the CIA. While raising seven children, Faith found time to serve as ward Relief Society president four times. Brother and Sister Hansen presided over the Germany Hamburg Mission from 2001 to 2004.

Rabbi, Where Dweldest Thou?

John 1:38

Beyond the far hill, past the ridge of light,
approaching the silvered clip of bird song
and the repose of olive trees at night,
close to the moth-eaten, a few furlongs
from the line of common wares and chatter,
the mired janglings, the trumpeting fasts,
swelling wine vats, winds of sweet savour,
by the stuttering and stolen, the grass-
hoppers and calves, frankincense and frontlets,
between the gum and thorn of acacia,
among branch and root, torment and regret,
in the command and cloak of Elisha,
facing the wilderness and Galilee.
Gird yourself as we go, come and see.

—Mark D. Bennion

This poem won third place in the BYU Studies 2012 poetry contest.

Robin Scott Jensen, Robert J. Woodford, and Steven C. Harper, eds. *Manuscript Revelation Books*. Facsimile edition of the Revelations and Translations series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman. Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2009.

Reviewed by James B. Allen

Who does not feel a special thrill when given the opportunity actually to see and handle an original document related to some vitally important piece of history—or, at least, something vitally important to them? What scholar does not feel a sense of disappointment when he or she asks an archivist for permission to see a particular important document but is told that it is so fragile that it cannot be seen and handled but, rather, must be studied via microfilm or digital copy? The material is there, but the scholar wants to examine it more closely, looking for nuances that may not be immediately apparent in the less-than-ideal copy. In America, many of our most sacred documents, such as the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, can be viewed at the National Archives only under glass, in specially protected vaults, and virtually no one can ever touch them. That is how seriously we revere our founding documents.

In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, our most precious founding documents are the handwritten manuscripts of the revelations that constitute the scriptures. However, like so many old manuscripts, those that are still extant are not available for public scrutiny, as constant handling could damage and perhaps even destroy them. The next best thing would be a near-perfect, full-size, full-color facsimile that could be examined at will by anyone. That is what the Church Historian's Press has provided with the publication of two manuscript revelation books dating from 1828 to 1834; these books were the basis for the publication of the 1833 Book of Commandments as well as the 1835 and 1844 editions of the Doctrine and Covenants.

The Church Historian's Press continues its highly important Joseph Smith Papers Project with this volume, *Revelations and Translations: Manuscript Revelation Books*. This is a unique and momentous publication, done in a way unlikely to be duplicated. It is also one that every scholar seriously interested in the founding documents of the Church must inevitably examine. Editors Robin Jensen, Robert Woodford, and Steven Harper, along

with numerous others involved in this project, are to be warmly congratulated on a job extremely well done.

Researchers on the project anticipate that when complete, the multi-volume *Joseph Smith Papers* will include six different series: Documents, Journals, Administrative Records, Revelations and Translations, Histories, and Legal and Business records. The reader is encouraged to visit the Papers website, <http://www.JosephSmithPapers.org>, for a full explanation and description. This book is part of the first volume of the Revelations and Translations series. Volume 1 of the Journals series was published first; this book appeared next as a two-part edition—volume 1 and the facsimile edition—and the second volumes of both the Journals series and the Revelations and Translations series have since appeared, as well as the first volume of the Histories series.

However, this volume is different from anything else likely to be produced. The first thing an observer may notice is the size of the book. At 705 pages, it measures 12.3 x 9.5 x 2 inches and weighs 7.5 pounds. Its pages present, in the exact size as the originals, facsimile reproductions of Joseph Smith's manuscript revelation books: the "Book of Commandments and Revelations" and the "Kirtland Revelation Book." In the publication they are referred to as Revelation Book 1 and Revelation Book 2. Also included are meticulously accurate transcriptions.

These elegant facsimile reproductions are pure primary sources. They are presented without individual historical introductions or contextual annotations. Such trappings will be added in the ongoing Documents series, which will present all of Joseph Smith's revelations in chronological order, along with other contemporary documents, a myriad of supplementary resources to aid in understanding, and an index.¹

This is not a volume intended for casual reading. In fact, most Church members will probably never see it, and many of those who do will consider it interesting but not something they want to spend much time with. On the other hand, scholars and other serious students of LDS history will look at these documents with excitement as they hold in their hands and are able to analyze in detail the next best thing to the originals.

1. Volume 2 of the Revelations and Translations series, published in March 2011, includes high-quality photographs of all pages in the Book of Commandments, the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, and sections 101–7 of the 1844 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. Its two important appendices include a reconstruction of what the final thirty-two pages of the Book of Commandments would have included if the press had not been destroyed by a mob. It also includes some photographs of Oliver Cowdery's copy of the Book of Commandments, marked up in preparation for the publication of the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants.

The value of this publication for scholars is enhanced by the presentation of the documents. As noted, they are the pure primary sources, where the reader can see the original manuscripts with all their misspellings, mispunctuation, corrections, crossings-out, and erasures. As you turn each page you will see on the left sheet a full-size photo of one of the pages of the revelation book. On the right sheet is a meticulously accurate transcription as well as some important transcription notations. Line breaks in the original document are precisely repeated in the transcript, so that each line of transcript is directly across from its original manuscript position. The editors have identified the handwriting of each person who wrote in the manuscript. Each is color coded, so the reader can immediately tell who wrote what originally, and who made what emendations. In addition, the right page identifies which section of the current Doctrine and Covenants, if any, the revelation belongs to.

As explained in the volume introduction, in the summer of 1830 Joseph Smith and John Whitmer began the process of copying and arranging the Prophet's revelations into a manuscript book that was taken from Ohio to Missouri in 1831. There it was continually updated as more revelations were received and sent from Ohio. This became the basis for the first publications of the early revelations, first in the *Evening and Morning Star* (1832–33) and then in the Book of Commandments. Meanwhile, in Ohio, other revelations were received and recorded in a second revelation book, along with copies of some of those that were also in Revelation Book 1. These two books became the basis for the publication of the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants.

However, it must be noted that these books do not contain the very first transcriptions made of the revelations. The material here was copied from earlier transcripts, most of which no longer exist. With few exceptions, this publication provides the earliest copies of these revelations extant. For example, what we now know as section 3 of the Doctrine and Covenants was originally given to Joseph Smith in 1828. Clearly, however, the transcription in Revelation Book 1 is of a much later date, for the book was not even in existence until after the Church was founded in 1830. The editors of the volume make the following very important observation:

Preparing the revelation texts for publication was no simple matter. Joseph Smith dictated the words of these texts to a scribe, who committed them to paper. A scribe then copied them into the manuscript books, portions of which were eventually typeset and published as scripture. Sometimes the process was more complicated. For example, Joseph Smith dictated a revelation on 6 December 1832 as Sidney Rigdon wrote it. Frederick G. Williams then made a copy of the text. Orson Hyde copied that copy, and John Whitmer then recorded Hyde's copy into Revelation Book 1, from which it was edited for publication. It is unknown how many

of the revelations in Revelation Books 1 and 2 made such an arduous textual journey, but it appears that few, if any, of the revelations are originals in pristine form. Changes both intentional and inadvertent were made throughout the process. (xxviii–xxix)

The volume begins with a series introduction that provides a brief discussion of Joseph Smith's various activities as a revelator and translator. Then follows a volume introduction that discusses the two manuscript revelation books—their origin, how they were compiled, and how Joseph and his associates prepared them for publication. This is followed by an explanation of the careful editorial method used.

Scholars will be grateful for the editors' rigorous editorial work, described at length in the next six pages of introductory material. They note that aging and sometimes damaged texts as well as imprecise penmanship and sometimes hurried writing presented problems for transcription and verification. Ultimately their transcripts were verified three times, each by a different set of eyes. They used a variety of methods, including ink analysis, to identify handwriting. Anyone making a serious study of the volume should read this section carefully, for it clarifies the various kinds of notations and symbols used in the transcription. Illegible words, letters that have been written over (changed from lower case to upper case, for example), and many other anomalies in the manuscript all had to be dealt with in order to make the transcription as true to the original as possible.

Editing the revelation books was a major challenge, but photographing these old, deteriorating pages and then preparing the photos for publication was another. A description of how this was done constitutes the final section of the introductory material. Weldon C. Anderson did a masterful job of photography, including some careful digital editing. Charles M. Baird prepared the images for printing. As you look at the facsimiles, you will see no evidence at all that they were photographed while resting on a table or that some pages had to be held in place by a microspatula while being photographed. This is because Baird used photo-editing software to remove the image of the tabletop from the background and also to add a thin shadow at the bottom of each image. He did the same with the image of the microspatula as well as with a certain page that presented special problems because of a slip of paper attached to it.² As a result, the viewer looks at each page in the most realistic sense possible.

2. See pages 104–7. The photograph of the manuscript shows where a slip is attached and cannot be removed. But on page 106, that slip has been digitally photographed and the transcription appears on page 107. See pages xxxix–xl for a full description of how this was accomplished.

Though no introduction accompanies each separate revelation, the editors have provided some valuable introductory material that includes a source note and a historical introduction for each revelation book. Each source note offers a detailed description of the book in its current state, indicating which leaves are missing, the general condition of the book, any special markings or notations on or in the book, the nature and state of the binding, and a note on the custodial history. In the historical introduction, the editors tell us when, how, and by whom the book was created, in addition to other kinds of information. For example, they explain the pinholes and adhesive wafers, where pins or wafers once attached notes that were used as the manuscripts were prepared for publication. In the body of the book, the editors make specific comments whenever such pinholes or wafers appear. If the original slips are extant, they are transcribed as separate leaves at the point where they appear in the manuscript book.

Sometimes the revelations as published are amalgams of a series of commandments recorded separately in the manuscript revelation books. For example, the manuscript contains five separate commandments, recorded one after the other in April 1830, to Oliver Cowdery, Hyrum Smith, Samuel Smith, Joseph Smith Sr., and Joseph Knight. In the Doctrine and Covenants these are amalgamated into section 23.

The two revelation books also include nine revelations that have not been canonized by the Church and therefore are not included in the Doctrine and Covenants. One of them, for example, was recorded sometime in early 1830 and is reproduced and transcribed on pages 30–33. It is a commandment given to Oliver Cowdery, Hiram Page, Josiah Stowell, and Joseph Knight, commending them for assisting Joseph Smith and commanding them to secure a copyright of his work.³

It is intriguing to examine these revelation manuscripts with an eye toward discovering who wrote them, who made editorial changes, what changes were made, and how they compare with the current edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. Some aspects of what is now section 20 provide interesting examples.

In the early years of the Church, section 20, together with section 22, was called the “Articles and Covenants” of the Church, and because of its importance, it is still sometimes called the Church’s “constitution.” It is in the handwriting of John Whitmer, with a few minor word and punctuation changes inserted by Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, and William W. Phelps. The

3. See Stephen Kent Ehat, “‘Securing’ the Prophet’s Copyright in the Book of Mormon: Historical and Legal Context for the So-called Canadian Copyright Revelation,” *BYU Studies* 50, no. 2 (2011): 4–70.

manuscript includes a title, “Church Articles and Covenants,” followed by a heading, in the writing of John Whitmer, that says “Received in Fayette Seneca County New York April 10th 1830[.] Given to Joseph the seer by the gift & power of God &c;” then a phrase was crossed out by Whitmer. Inserted above the line, after the word “seer,” are the words “& Oliver an Apostle,” in the handwriting of Oliver Cowdery. He actually prepared an early draft, called “Articles of the Church of Christ,”⁴ which may account for his insertion of his own name in the manuscript. When the revelation appeared as chapter XXIV in the Book of Commandments, the heading simply read “The Articles and Covenants of the church of Christ, given in Fayette, New York, June, 1830.” The specific date, April 10, was deleted, probably because this revelation actually came on more than one date but was amalgamated before it was presented to the Church for a sustaining vote on June 9, 1830. When it appeared as section II of the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, there was no heading. In the current edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, the heading reads, “Revelation on Church organization and government, given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, April 1830.”

In the manuscript, the revelation was not divided into verses; these divisions were added in the Book of Commandments. The divisions are much different in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, while the current Doctrine and Covenants uses divisions somewhat similar to the Book of Commandments, except that there are eighty-five verses instead of the earlier sixty-five. The substance remains the same.

There were several other minor changes inserted into the manuscript of this revelation before it was published in the Book of Commandments. Examples: the word “which,” now at the beginning of verse 2, was inserted by Oliver Cowdery; the word “were” now in verse 8 was changed from “was” by Oliver Cowdery. Several such grammatical changes occur, which only shows how careful these men were to make their printed work as accurate and readable as possible. In addition, between the time the revelation was first printed and when it appeared in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, several more changes were made, and these remain in the current edition. Of particular interest to historians is the fact that in verses 2 and 3 of the current section 20 in the Doctrine and Covenants, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery are referred to as the “first elder” and “second elder of this church,” respectively. The comparable passage in the 1835 edition reads the same, but in the original manuscript and in the Book of Commandments,

4. See Scott H. Faulring, “An Examination of the 1829 ‘Articles of the Church of Christ’ in Relation to Section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants,” *BYU Studies* 43, no. 4 (2004): 57–91.

they are each referred to simply as “an Elder of this Church.” The insertion of the phrases “first elder” and “second elder” reflected what these two leaders were actually called in the earliest days of the Church.

All these are relatively minor changes. A more substantive change is seen in the fact that what now constitutes verses 65–67 of section 20 was not included in the manuscript revelation or in the Book of Commandments. This material was incorporated into the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants. It refers to presiding elders, traveling bishops, high councilors, and high priests, none of which existed in the Church the day it was organized. The editors of this volume do not discuss any of this, but it is mentioned here because many students will inevitably make such comparisons. This is only evidence that Joseph Smith was not averse to improving transcriptions of his own revelations as well as updating them according to changing circumstances.

A few additional examples should suffice to show how interesting a careful perusal of these documents can be. In Doctrine and Covenants 3:10, relating to Joseph Smith’s loss of his first Book of Mormon transcripts, the Lord says, “thou art still chosen, and art again called to the work.” The original (and the Book of Commandments) reads “will again be” instead of “art again.” A more extensive change is found in connection with what is now section 102, which is the same as section V of the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants. Verses 30–32 (verse 13 in 1835) are not in the revelation book. However, there is an asterisk in the manuscript at that point, presumably indicating where that material should be inserted. One cannot help but wonder when it was written and what happened to the original.

In most cases the revelation manuscripts do not give any indication of a division into verses for publication purposes, though there are numerous exceptions. The first one comes in connection with what is now section 10 of the Doctrine and Covenants. At that point there are several pages missing in the book of manuscripts, so what is there begins with what is now the fourth word in verse 42. The revelation was transcribed by John Whitmer, but William W. Phelps inserted numerals indicating division into nineteen verses. That division was reflected in the Book of Commandments (chapter IX). The same revelation was divided into eighteen verses in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants but was subdivided further at a later date so that it constitutes seventy verses in the current edition.

At the end of this volume, the editors have provided some worthwhile additional material. A scribal directory gives a brief biographical sketch of each of the seven men whose handwriting appears in the revelation books along with a description of his handwriting characteristics. This is followed by a bibliography and then a very useful correspondence table that lists

each revelation in order; the page numbers where it appears in the revelation books (note that a few are included in both books); the date it was published in the *Evening and Morning Star*; the relevant chapter numbers in the Book of Commandments; and the relevant section numbers in the 1835, 1844, and 1981 editions of the Doctrine and Covenants and the Community of Christ's 2004 Doctrine and Covenants.

Those who may not have thought deeply about the process of recording and then preparing revelations for publication may, at first, be a bit discomfited or confused when they hear that original revelation manuscripts were altered in any way. Hopefully they will soon realize that Joseph Smith was well aware that in the process of dictating, recording, copying, and often recopying his words all kinds of errors could creep in. Further, one should not assume that the revelations were always dictated in some kind of pure divine language. Rather, in section 1 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord reminds the Saints that “these commandments are of me, and were given unto my servants in their weakness, after the manner of their language, that they might come to understanding” (D&C 1:24). The need for editing was recognized at a special conference in Hiram, Ohio, on November 8, 1831. There it was resolved that “Br Joseph Smith Jr correct those errors or mistakes which he may discover by the holy Spirit while . . . reviewing the revelations & commandments.” It was also resolved that Oliver Cowdery should copy, correct, and select those writings that should be published.⁵

Joseph himself, then, was well aware that the recorded revelations were not perfect. All he had to do was look at them in order to detect errors of grammar, punctuation, and spelling, and also, at times, substantive errors. In addition, as he received further revelation, “line upon line,” he could see the need for modifications in what was written earlier. The additions to section 20, noted above, are good examples. As Elder Marlin K. Jensen, Church Historian at the time this volume appeared, wrote:

Joseph knew from experience that the human process of writing down revelations, copying them into manuscript books, and then passing them through various hands in preparation for publication inevitably introduced unintentional errors. Sometimes changes were required to clarify wording. . . .

Joseph seemed to regard the manuscript revelations as his best efforts to capture the voice of the Lord condescending to communicate in what

5. Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record: Minutes of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 1830–1844* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 29.

Joseph called the “crooked, broken, scattered, and imperfect language” of men.⁶

There is an oft-quoted statement by Parley P. Pratt that may affect how some Saints perceive the process of recording Joseph Smith’s revelations. Elder Pratt was present when section 50 of the Doctrine and Covenants was received, on May 9, 1831. As he prepared his autobiography several years later, he wrote:

Each sentence was uttered slowly and very distinctly, and with a pause between each, sufficiently long for it to be recorded, by an ordinary writer, in long hand.

This was the manner in which all his written revelations were dictated and written. There was never any hesitation, reviewing, or reading back, in order to keep the run of the subject; neither did any of these communications undergo revisions, interlinings, or corrections. As he dictated them so they stood, so far as I have witnessed; and I was present to witness the dictation of several communications of several pages each.⁷

While Elder Pratt was probably correct in his report of how Joseph spoke, without hesitation or repetition, he was not fully aware of what happened as a scribe put the words down on paper. Section 50, as recorded in Revelation Book 1, flows nicely and contains some beautiful and powerful admonitions. But there is virtually no punctuation (which, of course, reflects the scribe, not Joseph Smith), and there are several interlines as well as word corrections, though not as many as in most of the other revelations. There is no indication of who the original scribe was, but John Whitmer copied it into the revelation book and the minimal corrections were made by him, Sidney Rigdon, William W. Phelps, and Joseph Smith. None of the corrections, however, detracts from the power and importance of the revelation. They only make the revelation more readable. With all this in mind, the faithful Latter-day Saint should feel comforted, not concerned, with the knowledge that Joseph and his associates carefully edited and refined the revelations before they were published.

The scholarly excellence and importance of this volume is self-evident. But its significance lies partly in the fact that it is only one of a projected thirty volumes that will come from the press in the ongoing Joseph Smith

6. Marlin K. Jensen, “The Joseph Smith Papers: The Manuscript Revelation Books,” *Ensign* 39 (July 2009): 49. The quotation is from Joseph Smith to William W. Phelps, November 27, 1832, in *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, ed. and comp. Dean C. Jessee, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 287.

7. Parley P. Pratt Jr., ed. *The Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1938), 62.

Papers Project. The Church History Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, along with the leaders of the Church itself, must be commended for their recognition of how important it is that these founding documents, including all the papers of Joseph Smith, be made available to the public. It is to be expected that as more documents become available, many questions will be raised about things that were heretofore not known. There is no question in my mind, however, that the documents will have only a positive effect on the image of the Church and upon Joseph Smith's reputation as one of the great religious leaders of nineteenth-century America.

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Terryl L. Givens and Matthew J. Grow. *Parley P. Pratt: The Apostle Paul of Mormonism*.
New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Gregory K. Armstrong, Matthew J. Grow, and Dennis J. Siler, eds. *Parley P. Pratt and the Making of Mormonism*.
Norman, Okla.: Arthur H. Clarke, 2011.

Reviewed by Edward A. Geary

Parley Parker Pratt (1807–1857) was among the most talented and influential figures in the formative period of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Apostle, missionary, theologian, poet, polemicist, prisoner, explorer, polygamist, and finally, in the view of many, martyr. Pratt was born in central New York State to Jared Pratt—a weaver thrown out of employment in his trade by the Industrial Revolution—and his wife, Charity. Like the Prophet Joseph Smith, who was two years his senior, Parley P. Pratt grew up in a family on the margins of the rural economy. Jared Pratt moved from place to place as a landless itinerant laborer whose “means to educate his children were very limited,” although they did have access to what Parley later termed an “excellent system of common school education.”¹ Notwithstanding their limited opportunities, two of Jared and Charity Pratt’s five sons, Parley and his younger brother Orson, would become distinguished among the first generation of Latter-day Saints for their intellectual and rhetorical powers. Parley compensated for the deficiencies in his formal education through an early and avid appetite for reading: “I always loved a book; . . . a book at every leisure moment of my life.”² Prominent among these readings was the Bible, which Pratt began to study at the age of seven under the direction of his mother.³ From this literary self-education, Pratt derived a broad and ready general knowledge and an uncommon facility in writing and public speaking.

Following his 1830 conversion to the Latter-day Saint faith (characteristically, through reading the Book of Mormon), Pratt devoted the remainder of his life to Church service. Although he was frequently absent from Church headquarters on numerous missions in the United States, Canada, Britain, and Chile, he still managed to play a prominent role in many of the key events of early Latter-day Saint history: the establishment of a body of Church members in the neighborhood of Kirtland, Ohio, in 1830; the settlement of Jackson County, Missouri, in 1832, and the forced expulsion the

following year; the Zion's Camp relief expedition; the crisis attending the collapse of the Kirtland real-estate bubble and the failure of the Kirtland Safety Society in 1837; the Missouri troubles of 1838–39 (as a consequence of which Pratt was imprisoned for eight months, a longer period than any other Church leader); the leadership crisis following the assassination of Joseph Smith in 1844; the expulsion from Nauvoo in 1846; and the westward migration to the Great Salt Lake Valley in 1847. Most importantly, Pratt's active pen generated a series of books and pamphlets that included the first and most influential systematic statement of Latter-day Saint beliefs (*A Voice of Warning*, 1837), the defining Mormon persecution narrative (*History of the Late Persecution Inflicted by the State of Missouri upon the Mormons*, 1839), and the foremost nineteenth-century theological treatise (*Key to the Science of Theology*, 1855).

Even though Pratt's missionary and theological works have fallen out of common use among the Latter-day Saints, his influence continues. His restorationist and devotional hymns hold a prominent place in the current Church hymnal, which opens with his ringing declaration, "The morning breaks, the shadows flee." His posthumously published *Autobiography* (1874) has remained in print almost continuously, and numerous books and articles treat aspects of his remarkable career. Perhaps most significantly, Latter-day Saints today frequently employ concepts and language derived from Pratt without being aware of their source.

Two recently published books offer substantial additions to our understanding and appreciation of Parley P. Pratt the man, his career, and his continuing influence. One is a collection of new essays, *Parley P. Pratt and the Making of Mormonism*, edited by Gregory K. Armstrong, Matthew J. Grow, and Dennis J. Siler. This book grew out of a conference held in Fort Smith, Arkansas, in 2007 to commemorate the bicentennial of Pratt's birth and the sesquicentennial of his death. Four of the eleven essays in the volume deal with Pratt's murder in Arkansas and its aftermath, including an examination by Patrick Q. Mason of the actions and motives of Pratt's killer, Hector McLean, in the context of an overriding concern with personal honor and a frequent recourse to extralegal violence in the antebellum South; a survey by Matthew J. Grow of responses to Pratt's murder among the Mormons and in the national press; a refutation by Assistant Church Historian Richard E. Turley Jr. of Will Bagley's claim that Pratt's murder had a significant influence on the massacre of a company of mostly Arkansan emigrants in southern Utah the following year; and an account of (unsuccessful) efforts by Pratt's descendants to exhume his remains and move them to Utah in keeping with his dying request.

The other seven articles address more directly the topic announced in the volume's title: Pratt's contributions to "The Making of Mormonism." Worthy of special note among this group are David J. Whittaker's analysis of Pratt's central role in the development of a Mormon print culture, David W. Grua's examination of Pratt's influence on the Latter-day Saint "memory of persecution" (169), and Jordan Watkins's exploration of Pratt's contributions to the development of the doctrine of theosis (human divinization).

With the publication of *Parley P. Pratt: The Apostle Paul of Mormonism*, we now have a comprehensive scholarly biography that does justice to the stature of its subject: a man who was, as the authors declare, "after Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, the most influential figure in shaping early Mormon history, culture, and theology" (4). The authors, Terryl L. Givens and Matthew J. Grow, are well qualified by scholarly background, personal interest, and literary skill to deal with the multifaceted Pratt. Givens is a widely recognized intellectual and cultural historian whose previous books include *When Souls Had Wings: The Idea of Pre-Mortal Existence in Western Thought* (Oxford, 2010) and *People of Paradox: A History of Mormon Culture* (Oxford, 2007). Matthew J. Grow, in addition to his contributions to the other volume under review here, is the author of the award-winning biography "*Liberty to the Downtrodden*": *Thomas L. Kane, Romantic Reformer* (Yale, 2009).

The Givens and Grow biography goes beyond Pratt's *Autobiography* most importantly by providing an intellectual and historical context for his activities and by incisively analyzing the substance and implications of his writings. And so, while the *Autobiography* gives a succinct and entertaining account of Pratt's youthful quest for religious truth and personal salvation, Givens and Grow unfold the historical background of religious ferment in the early decades of the nineteenth century, a time when numerous "seekers" kept themselves apart from established churches while they sought for a restoration of the forms and practices of New Testament Christianity.

The Book of Mormon served as a powerful instrument in Parley P. Pratt's conversion because it answered questions that had persisted despite his acceptance of the "Reformed Baptist" beliefs of the Campbellites. He found in the Book of Mormon both a fulfillment of biblical prophecies and a source of additional prophecies pertaining to the latter days, including a restoration of apostolic authority and spiritual gifts, culminating in a literal Millennium. It also confirmed his belief that the American Indians were a remnant of the House of Israel. Pratt's devotion to the Book of Mormon was a hallmark of his ministry. Givens and Grow point out that he regularly "preached from its pages" (91) at a time when few other Church leaders did

so. Furthermore, he edited and published the second edition, to which he affixed his own testimony in addition to those of the original witnesses.

Givens and Grow note that in the first few years of the Church's existence, "little besides the Book of Mormon existed to ground Mormon theology or expound doctrine" (114). Early adherents were attracted by the personal influence of Joseph Smith, by the testimony of a missionary, or, like Pratt, by reading the Book of Mormon. But even after these believers were converted, there was no comprehensive statement of beliefs or first principles to which they could refer. Joseph Smith's ongoing revelations, as compiled in the Book of Commandments and the Doctrine and Covenants, tended to be topical rather than systematic in nature. Sensing the need for a concise doctrinal statement while he was serving a mission in New York City in 1837, Pratt in two months composed a slender volume entitled *A Voice of Warning and Instruction to All People, Containing a Declaration of the Faith and Doctrine of the Church of the Latter-day Saints, Commonly Called Mormons*. Givens and Grow declare, "Next to the Book of Mormon itself, Pratt's book soon became the principal vehicle presenting Mormonism to the Latter-day Saint faithful and the general public alike, and it was elevated by both to near-canonical status" (103-4). The popularity of *A Voice of Warning* continued throughout the nineteenth century as it went through numerous editions, was translated into several languages, and sold tens of thousands of copies.

Noting that this book, once so popular, "seems to modern readers remote in its worldview, emphases, and style" (104), Givens and Grow propose three contexts for understanding the style and content of *A Voice of Warning*. The first they term "Baconianism," referring to the rise of scientific thought with its "focus on experimentation, facts, and the rule of experience" (104), with the added influence of "Scottish commonsense philosophy" (105). In "Pratt's appropriation of biblical literalism to a scientific age," revelation "is as real . . . as any other process subject to natural laws and empirical verification." Pratt, therefore, "framed his presentation as a 'positive demonstration' of such irresistible logic that none would be able to 'gainsay nor resist'" (105). He began the demonstration with "forty pages of prophecy already fulfilled" before moving on to "prophecy yet future" (106).

The second context is the "rampant millennialism" (106) of the time. Some religious thinkers had adopted a "spiritualized," rather than literal, understanding of the Millennium. Others were "post-millennialists," believing that the Millennium would develop gradually through an improvement of human society, with the Savior appearing only at the end. Pratt, by contrast, was a firm "premillennialist," insisting that the Millennium is a literal future event that will be dramatically initiated by the Second Coming.

Through the lens of millennial expectations, Pratt “interpreted the past, made sense of the present, and planned for the future” (106). While noting that Mormons were millennialists from the beginning, with Joseph Smith’s first visions, Givens and Grow claim that “Pratt’s *Voice of Warning* proved the more influential and enduring testament to this principle” (108) and that Pratt “initiated a scheme of world history that Mormons embrace to the present day, one in which political and religious developments alike are both providential and preparatory to the gospel’s restoration” (109).

The third context is the rhetorical influence of antebellum American oratorical culture. The quest to develop a suitable “Democratic Eloquence” (113) for the nation produced a style that vacillated between simplicity and extravagancy. Pratt had absorbed these stylistic influences, and “*Voice of Warning*, as in all his works to follow, contains a peculiar admixture of blunt, common idiom, with eruptions of Ciceronian ornateness and Gibbonesque grandiosity” (114).

For a second edition of *A Voice of Warning* in 1840, Pratt wrote an introduction “enumerating the first principles of the Restored Gospel in language that would later find a close echo in several of Joseph Smith’s 1842 Articles of Faith” (172). This instance of Joseph Smith freely incorporating Pratt’s doctrinal formulations is an example of a process that Givens and Grow trace throughout the biography: a kind of cross-fertilization wherein Pratt would take ideas from Joseph’s revelations, discourses, and private conversations and elaborate them into a more fully developed form that the Prophet would later adopt or modify. “No Mormon thinker, Pratt included, would exceed Joseph Smith’s own audacity as a Christian iconoclast. Positing heavenly councils, preembodied spirits, Gods who were once human, and humans who could attain to godhood—these and other doctrines blasted asunder the creedal conceptions of God and humans alike.” However, “if Smith instigated Mormonism’s essential beliefs, Pratt organized, elaborated, and defended them in a manner that gave them the enduring life and complexion they have in the church to this day. Pratt was, in this sense, the first theologian of Mormonism” (169).

Givens and Grow trace this process in substantial detail. In a tract published in 1838, Pratt articulated the doctrines of human perfectability and literal theosis later preached by Joseph Smith in the King Follett Discourse. These writings “represent in embryo the collapse of the ontological distinction between God and man that would result in Pratt’s later succinct declaration [in *Key to the Science of Theology*] that ‘God, angels and men are all of one species’” (127). In his “Treatise on the Regeneration and Eternal Duration of Matter,” written in a Missouri jail and published in 1840, Pratt explicitly rejected creation *ex nihilo*, declaring, “Matter and spirit are of

equal duration; both are self-existent,—they never began to exist, and they can never be annihilated” (169). God’s creative power derives from his mastery of eternal laws that govern both spirit and matter. “For Pratt, God’s perfect compliance with eternal law both constitutes his own supreme power and indicates the path whereby humans can become his full heirs and genuine ‘partakers of the divine nature’” (170).

Pratt first encountered Joseph Smith’s teachings on the eternal potential of the family relationship during several days they spent together in Philadelphia in January 1840, when Joseph “lifted a corner of the veil”⁴ and “taught him ‘the heavenly order of eternity. It was at this time that I received from him the first idea of eternal family organization, and the eternal union of the sexes’” (174). These teachings were a prelude to Pratt’s embrace, three years later, of “Mormonism’s most radical social doctrine, plural marriage” (198). After some initial resistance, Pratt would become one of the most zealous and vocal defenders of polygamy, not only in voice and pen but through ultimately marrying twelve wives.

According to Givens and Grow, Pratt’s 1844 essay titled “Intelligence and Affection” is “the fullest flowering of Mormonism’s celebration of divine physicality” (213). While his essay sometimes went beyond what Joseph strictly taught, Pratt’s theological reasoning was so convincing that Latter-day Saints generally accepted his doctrine, which is still true today. Here Pratt rejected entirely the Platonic dualism of body and spirit, mind and desires, and insisted that “the direction and cultivation of the passions, not their repression, is God’s intention for humans. And foremost among these human affections is the reciprocal sexual desire of a man and his wife” (213). Pratt thus envisioned a “domestic heaven” in which eternally united husbands and wives will be “capable of exercising all those pure emotions . . . which fill our hearts with such inexpressible delight in this world” (213) as they advance to “their eternal destiny to participate in ‘the organization of new systems of worlds . . . over which we may reign as kings’” (213).

In addition to Pratt’s theological contributions, Givens and Grow emphasize his influence on Latter-day Saint worship beginning with his contribution of fifty hymn texts for a hymnal published in 1840 in Manchester, England, for the use of British Saints. While the Nauvoo hymnal compiled under the direction of Emma Smith “retreated to a more conventional Protestant hymnody,” the “Manchester Hymnal, inspired by Pratt’s millennialism and restorationist fervor, was redolent with themes more calculated to resonate with a Mormon congregation, such as gathering, priesthood, and the Book of Mormon” (181).

It is all the more remarkable that Parley P. Pratt produced his most important intellectual works under the severe duress of persecution,

dislocation, imprisonment, and an unremitting, grinding poverty. He was constantly in debt, frequently compelled to depend on gifts and loans for housing, clothing, travel expenses, and even food for his growing family. His poverty was not the product of any incapacity or reluctance to engage in physical labor. Pratt's wife Agatha called him "one of the busiest and hardest working men I ever knew" (267). In similar terms, John Pulsipher described him as "a strong healthy man and a very hard working man, one of the best men I ever worked with" (280). Pratt's best opportunity to set his financial house in order came in 1849 when he was granted the right to construct and operate a toll road through Parley's Canyon and Parley's Park (now the Snyderville Basin) at a time when the California gold rush was bringing many travelers through Salt Lake City. This route, which today continues to be the main eastern gateway to the Salt Lake Valley, could have become a profitable franchise, but early in 1851 Pratt was called on a mission that took him to California and eventually Chile. He left five wives (four of them pregnant) and thirteen children "in an unfinished home and in a precarious financial position—as usual" (293). Upon his return in late 1852, he managed to complete a two-story adobe house but still subsisted close to the bone, complaining in a letter to his brother Orson that he "lacked money to buy bread" (324). On one occasion, a visitor who had been converted through the instrumentality of Pratt's *A Voice of Warning* discovered his gospel mentor "threshing beans before his door . . . barefooted, in shirt sleeves, and a home made straw hat." Pratt paused in his mundane labors to deliver to his visitor a message that led him to marvel, "Never in all my life had I heard such a discourse so full of inspiration and prophecy concerning the great work of the Lord in the latter days" (324). En route to another mission in California in 1855, Pratt lamented that "he was 'far below the youngest members of the quorum [of the Twelve] in point of means, and of houses, lands, Cattle, food, and Clothing'" (342).

The book's subtitle labels Pratt as "the Apostle Paul of Mormonism." Givens and Grow argue that Pratt, like the ancient Apostle, "was called at the dawn of a new dispensation, when the fertile core of a revolutionary gospel awaited the hand of a master missionary, who could expand its doctrine, expound its meaning, and extend its reach" (393). In further points of similarity, both Paul and Pratt had "a deep sense of the divine importance" of the apostolic calling (5), reveled "in opposition and persecution" (8), and preached and wrote in "a bold, blunt, outspoken style that led to frequent controversies" (5). It is possible to grant the validity of these parallels between the ancient and modern Apostles but still find the similarities somewhat strained and unsatisfactory. It is also possible that Oxford, with a national audience in mind, recommended a subtitle that would give those

unfamiliar with Pratt some frame of reference. My own feeling is that such a comparison diminishes rather than enhances the distinctive contributions of Parley Pratt to the Latter-day Saint faith and the unique qualities of his mind and personality. I would have preferred an earlier working subtitle that appeared on Givens's website: "A Cultural and Intellectual Biography." This, I believe, is a more accurate representation of the true character of this study. Still, *Parley P. Pratt: The Apostle Paul of Mormonism* deserves a place among the finest Latter-day Saint biographies.

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1. Parley P. Pratt Jr., ed., *The Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt: One of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Embracing His Life, Ministry, and Travels, with Extracts, in Prose and Verse, from His Miscellaneous Writings*, 1874, reprinted with a foreword by Richard Lloyd Dewey (Arlington, Va.: Stratford Books, 2005), 1.

2. Pratt, *Autobiography*, 2.

3. Pratt, *Autobiography*, 2.

4. Pratt, *Autobiography*, 262.

C. E. Hill. *Who Chose the Gospels?
Probing the Great Gospel Conspiracy.*

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Reviewed by Lincoln H. Blumell

In *Who Chose the Gospels? Probing the Great Gospel Conspiracy*, C. E. Hill, professor of New Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, challenges the seemingly pervasive view in scholarship that it was not until the fourth century, when Christian “orthodoxy” began to be firmly entrenched, that the four canonical Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were selected by the church and raised to a status above all other competing Gospels. Hill argues that while this paradigm has become increasingly widespread in scholarship and is often propagated by the media or in popular culture (as in Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code*) because it presupposes conspiracies and cover-ups by the early church, it is flawed and belies the actual evidence. Hill argues that when one looks at the evidence for the use of the four Gospels, it is clear that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John had already achieved an unrivaled position of prominence among early Christian texts prior to the fourth century. Consequently, their inclusion in the New Testament canon was not the result of ecclesiastical politics or the imposition of emerging Christian orthodoxy but simply the natural end of a process.

To establish this claim, Hill systematically marshals a diverse array of evidence that ranges from the use of various Gospels as they are borne out in the papyri from the second and third centuries to the evidence supplied by different Christian authors for the use of the four canonical Gospels in the same period. Throughout his investigation, Hill engages contemporary scholarship, and it is clear from the start that he is addressing (and trying to refute) scholarship from the likes of Bart Ehrman, James M. Robinson, Robert W. Funk, Elaine Pagels, and Helmut Koester, who have all argued in various forms that the four canonical Gospels did not attain a status of supremacy until the fourth century. Though the book is primarily written for a general audience and is not overly technical, it is neither superficial nor sensational

and makes some genuine contributions to the ongoing debate over the status of the four canonical Gospels in the period before the fourth century.

In chapter 1, “The Proof Is in the Papyri,” Hill surveys the extant papyrological remains from the second and third centuries to determine what they might reveal about which Gospels Christians were reading. This investigation is prompted in part by a statement of James M. Robinson (quoted on page 10), who asserts that in the second century, “Gospels that were later to lose out, as non-canonical, were about as common as Gospels that were later to win out, as canonical.” Through a detailed examination of the papyri, Hill contests this claim by showing that the extant papyrological remains reveal that, in the second century, fragments belonging to canonical Gospels currently outnumber those belonging to noncanonical Gospels by a ratio of 7 to 2. While admitting that precise dating of manuscripts is difficult and allowing for the possibility that some dates may be off, Hill also includes fragments currently dated to the early third century; however, the evidence is still markedly in favor of the canonical Gospels by a ratio of 13 to 5. Raw counting of manuscripts is not necessarily sensitive to the breadth or depth of meaning placed on various texts by early Christians. Yet Hill points out (23–25) that these numbers are especially significant because Egypt, where all these fragments were found, was noted for its heterodoxy in the second century, so it is possible that if fragments from a broader geographic region could be surveyed, then the ratio in favor of the use of canonical to noncanonical Gospels might be even larger in the second century.

Here Hill creates a useful analogy that will certainly catch the attention of any LDS reader. To graphically articulate the significance of these statistics for the nonspecialist, Hill asks the reader to imagine that at some point in the future, the United States is completely wiped out by a disaster and the only archaeological remains available for analysis are in Salt Lake City. If these archaeologists believe that Salt Lake City is normative for the rest of the United States and find a number of fragments of the Book of Mormon, they would conclude that the Book of Mormon was just as popular as the Bible in the United States as a whole. Hill argues that we would certainly be right to question their conclusion. The point of this analogy is to show that Egypt (apparently like Salt Lake City) represents somewhat of an aberration—the evidence produced by it cannot be generalized and automatically applied to other regions. Hill is not trying to overtly attack either Mormonism or the Book of Mormon, but it is difficult not to interpret this analogy as a subtle jab at Mormonism since Hill implicitly associates “heterodox” forms of Christianity in the second century with Mormonism and heterodox Gospels with the Book of Mormon.

In chapters 2 and 3, Hill examines the role that Irenaeus (circa AD 130–200), an early church father from Lugdunum (Roman city in Gaul, modern-day Lyon), played in promoting the canonical Gospels in the second century since he is the first Christian author to unambiguously refer to the fourfold Gospel collection (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). For Irenaeus, there were only four authoritative Gospels, and Hill convincingly shows that on this point Irenaeus was no innovator but was merely transmitting an established tradition that preceded him. Hill also argues, against any would-be conspiracy theorist, that no second-century church father like Irenaeus had the power to impose his fourfold Gospel collection widely and would have hardly had the power to seek out and burn different Gospels (58–62). Additionally, Hill argues that Irenaeus was not alone in adhering to the four canonical Gospels. Later Christian writers like Hippolytus (circa AD 170–236), Origen (circa AD 185–254), Dionysius (died circa AD 264), and Cyprian (died AD 258) also adhered to the four-Gospel canon to the exclusion of other Gospels.

In chapter 4, wittily titled “Irenaeus’ ‘Co-Conspirators’: A Teacher, a Preacher, and a Canon-List Maker,” Hill examines the evidence provided by Clement of Alexandria (circa AD 150–215), Serapion (died circa AD 211), and the Muratorian Canon (late second century AD) to see what they collectively reveal about the status of the four canonical Gospels at the end of the second century. During his survey of Clement, Hill points out that while Clement makes reference to noncanonical Gospels, such as the Gospel of the Egyptians, he never refers to the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Peter, or the Gospel of Judas. Also, Clement overwhelmingly prefers the canonical Gospels, as is evidenced by the number of times he references them in his writings: Matthew, 757 references; Mark, 182 references; Luke, 402 references; John, 331 references; and noncanonical Gospels (total), 14 references. Furthermore, Hill notes that when Clement discusses the Gospels “that have been handed down to us” (73), he mentions only Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. In his examination of Serapion, Hill makes the point that Serapion, and a number of other early Christians, believed that the Gospel of Peter was a forgery that lacked apostolic authority and was not one of the Gospels that was “received by tradition,” as the four canonical Gospels had been (89). At the end of the chapter, Hill briefly discusses the Muratorian Canon because it seems to list the four canonical Gospels as the ones preferred by at least one early church.

In chapter 5, “Packaging the Gospels,” Hill makes the argument that in the second and third centuries, the four Gospels were often seen as four parts composing a whole and that select papyrus codices even contained

all four Gospels. Likewise, Tatian's second-century harmony of the four Gospels, known as the Diatessaron, was never intended to supersede the four Gospels but actually reflects the preeminence these texts had already obtained in the second century. In chapters 6 and 7, Hill moves on to the writings of Justin Martyr (circa AD 100–165) and others in an attempt to show that early in the second century the four Gospels had already achieved a preeminent status among Christian texts. Hill argues that Justin definitely knew of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and probably John (136–40), and that he believed these Gospels were composed by “the apostles of Jesus and their followers” (Justin, *Dial.* 103.8 cited on page 132). Hill also makes the point that because Trypho and Celsus, two non-Christians from the second century, knew about Christianity primarily from reading these four Gospels, the four accounts must have carried a certain authority as “the” Christian texts even outside the church.

In chapter 8, various other sources such as the Apocryphon of James, the *Epistula Apostolorum*, the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, Marcion, and Aristides are surveyed to see what they might reveal about the four Gospels. Hill notes that all of these sources were aware of the four Gospels and that this is significant because it presupposes the normative status of the four Gospels “both inside and outside of the mainstream church” (182).

In chapters 9 and 10, Hill looks at evidence from the writings known together as the Apostolic Fathers (*Epistle to Diognetus*, Barnabas, Polycarp, Ignatius, the *Didache*, Clement of Rome, and Papias). Hill concludes that the authors of all the texts that make up the Apostolic Fathers knew of at least one of the four Gospels, and there is no indication that they were aware of or relied on any other Gospels. Furthermore, Papias definitely knew the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, as he mentions them by name, and connects these two directly to the Apostles (Mark via Peter). Given the very early date of Papias's testimony, Hill imbues this evidence with significance.

Overall, Hill makes a convincing case that the fourfold Gospel canon of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John was neither the result of fourth-century ecclesiastical politics nor the result of some conspiracy among the church's hierarchy to suppress alternative Gospels that did not conform to emerging orthodoxy. From Hill's study, it is apparent that at least some of these Gospels had clearly attained an authoritative status among Christians as early as the second century and that by the middle of the second century all four Gospels were very widely regarded as the authoritative texts on the life of Christ. This position of ascendancy was natural, according to Hill, because whatever one thinks about the dates of the four Gospels, there is

solid evidence that they were the earliest Gospels produced and there was a widespread feeling among early Christians that these Gospels were directly connected to either the Apostles of Jesus (Matthew and John) or to early disciples of the Apostles (Mark and Luke).

While Hill's general argument is cogent and his case is compelling, there are some definite problems with the work. While these do not undermine his central thesis, they do detract from certain arguments, causing the overall credibility of the work to diminish slightly. There is a tendency in Hill, just as there is in the scholarship he is seeking to refute, to push the evidence too far in one direction to the dismissal of contrary evidence and to make significant claims on the slightest piece of evidence. On page 8, for example, Hill notes that besides the four canonical Gospels, there were nine other known Gospels in circulation in the second century. He then makes the following statement: "It is not unlikely that more Gospels might have circulated before 175. But if they once existed they have left no record, even in later lists of books to be avoided." This statement is not entirely accurate as there are later lists of noncanonical Gospels that contain many more than just nine Gospels. In fact, if one were to count them all up, then one would be dealing with thirty or forty texts. While this does not undermine Hill's overall argument, this count should have been noted. Likewise, in Hill's general discussion of second-century sources, he has a predisposition to read them in such a way that he can usually find some evidence for the use of one or all of the four canonical Gospels. However, at times the evidence is so slight that it seems almost nonexistent, and Hill is relying on special pleading to make his case. In chapter 7, Crescens and "The Emperor and the Senate" can hardly be used as evidence, even indirectly, for the popularity of the four Gospels in the second century. Similarly, in chapter 10, despite Hill's claims, there is no convincing evidence in the extant fragments of Papias that he knew the Gospels of either Luke or John.

Notwithstanding Hill's implicit comparison of heterodox forms of Christianity with modern Mormonism, and the fact that Hill's evangelical biases at times color his conclusions, LDS readers will find much in this book both interesting and appealing. Keep in mind, however, that when difficulty arises between evangelical and LDS scholars, it is often because the latter are generally more welcoming of the idea that other gospels are important, beneficial, and even scriptural in various passages.

In conclusion, Hill's presentation of early Christian sources is informative, easy to follow for the layman, and offers a much needed counterbalance in scholarship. It cogently argues for the early ascendancy of the

four canonical Gospels and lacks the sensationalism that pervades many recent studies of early Christianity. While Latter-day Saints might not see the development of the Christian canon in the first few centuries as providentially as Hill presents it, there may be some general agreement on a number of fronts.

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Patrick Q. Mason. *The Mormon Menace: Violence and Anti-Mormonism in the Postbellum South*.

New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Reviewed by Heather M. Seferovich

Relatively few stories in late nineteenth-century Mormon history are more riveting than those from missionaries serving in the American South. A handful of legendary Mormon personalities served there, such as J. Golden Kimball, B. H. Roberts, and John Morgan. There are countless inflammatory threats of violence, hundreds of instances of physical assault, and even a few murders. Although tragic on many levels, such violent elements are often the foundation of successful films, plays, and books.

Patrick Mason is the most recent in a line of Mormon historians to examine the experience of missionaries in the late nineteenth-century South,¹ and he is among the first to have his research focusing on this area published by such a highly reputable publisher. *Mormon Menace* makes several contributions to this field of study.

Mason began researching the southerners' encounters with Mormonism in graduate school, and his 2005 dissertation at the University of Notre Dame examined southerners' persecution of Mormons, Catholics, and Jews in the late nineteenth century. A portion of that dissertation became the basis for *Mormon Menace*. From the perspective of historiography, Mason

1. Some of the broader studies done on Mormonism in the South include Ted S. Anderson, "The Southern States Mission and the Administration of Ben E. Rich, 1898–1908" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1976); Leonard J. Arrington, "Mormon Beginnings in the American South," *Task Papers in LDS History*, no. 9 (Salt Lake City: Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1976); LaMar C. Berrett, "History of the Southern States Mission, 1831–1860" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1960); William Whitridge Hatch, *There Is No Law . . . : A History of Mormon Civil Relations in the Southern States, 1865–1905* (New York: Vantage, 1968); John Nicholson, *The Martyrdom of Joseph Standing; or, The Murder of a "Mormon" Missionary* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1886); and Heather M. Seferovich, "History of the LDS Southern States Mission, 1875–1898" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1996).

came of age professionally with the current Mormon historians who write contextual and comparative studies. His approach is instrumental in helping to mainstream Mormon history into scholarly studies.

Mormon Menace explores “how southerners, in the generation after Parley Pratt’s murder, encountered and then countered the perceived Mormon menace in their midst” (9). The book “is concerned primarily with the attitudes and actions of southerners as they perceived and then responded to Mormon proselytizing in their region and to the challenges that Mormonism—particularly polygamy—posed for their homes and communities, the republic, and Christian civilization” (11). Mason goes on to write, “*The Mormon Menace* thus bridges the historical literatures on anti-Mormonism, the experience of religious outsiders in America, extralegal violence, and postbellum southern religion, politics, and culture, and contributes to the evolving scholarship exploring the complicated relationship of religion and violence” (19). Consequently, it is an ambitious study for a book under three hundred pages.

The first three chapters feature thorough investigations of Mormons who were murdered in the South. The main victims are Joseph Standing (Georgia, 1879) and William Berry, John Gibbs, and Martin Condor (Tennessee, 1884). The murders have been examined by numerous authors over the last century,² but Mason offers a solid, comprehensive account of all the sources, and these stories get readers’ attention quickly while introducing points that are explored in detail in later chapters.

In chapters 4 and 5, Mason breaks new ground. First, he boldly asserts that the federal antipolygamy movement was at the heart of southern anti-Mormonism. This antipolygamy sentiment had the added benefit of bringing southerners into the good graces of northerners following the Civil War, producing a cultural reconciliation against a common enemy. Whether antipolygamy sentiment actually had such a disproportionate influence on Mormon persecution in the South will surely be debated by scholars in the years to come; however, Mason makes the case that from a

2. Some of the better-known publications include Ken Driggs, “Murder in Georgia: The Joseph Standing Murder Case,” *Mormon Heritage Magazine* 1 (September/October 1994): 28–36; Ken Driggs, “‘There Is No Law in Georgia for Mormons’: The Joseph Standing Murder Case of 1879,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 73 (Winter 1989): 745–72; Hatch, *There Is No Law*; Nicholson, *Martyrdom of Joseph Standing*; and Devon H. Nish, “A Brief History of the Southern States Mission for One-Hundred Years, 1830–1930,” L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. There are also numerous articles about the murders that have been published in periodicals such as the *Deseret News*, *Salt Lake Tribune*, *Millennial Star*, *Southern Star*, and *Elders’ Journal*.

postbellum southern perspective, “[the Mormon missionary invasion] was an epic contest between competing civilizations, one monogamous and the other polygamous, one Christian and the other idolatrous, one dedicated to defending the purity and virtue of southern womanhood and the other intent on debasing it” (77). In these chapters, Mason also grapples with the ways polygamy engaged issues of religious freedom and federalism. Of particular note is the author’s masterful discussion that succinctly summarizes social, theological, and legal points of southern mob violence against Mormons (93–95).

In chapter 6, Mason tells how southerners reacted to Mormon theocracy and explores the boundaries of nineteenth-century religious tolerance: “With increased access to and representation in Washington, Mormons would exercise greater influence over federal policy, which would in turn not only allow them to protect their own interests but also potentially push their agenda on the rest of the nation.” This did not set well with mainstream southern Christians: “Particularly in the 1880s, southerners thus joined with voices from around the country in exposing Mormonism as a political—as well as moral—threat to the nation and American civilization” (108). To some extent, similar debates in the South are continuing into the twenty-first century with Mormon presidential candidates.

Chapter 7 adds substantial new information to the quantitative knowledge of southern violence against Mormons. Here, Mason identifies over three hundred violent incidents against Mormons and then interprets the data, discovering a correlation between anti-Mormonism and the national antipolygamy campaign (131); this correlation supports his assertions in chapters 4 and 5. While organizing violent acts into a hierarchy, Mason takes the opportunity to illustrate these various tragedies with fascinating stories. The chapter ends with a thought-provoking discussion of southern vigilantism and Mormonism’s place in that framework. In Mason’s words, “American society was founded on the guarantee, protection, and exercise of individual rights. As an inevitable result of pluralism, however, the rights of various segments of the population were bound to clash at some point. Mormonism confronted nineteenth-century Americans, including southerners, with profound challenges to their identity and conception of good society” (148).

Chapter 8 examines the impact of southern anti-Mormonism on Mormons’ identity in the West: “The violent persecution of Mormons in the postbellum South, punctuated by Joseph Standing’s murder and the massacre at Cane Creek [Tennessee], played a crucial role in constructing and reinforcing a persecution narrative that sustained, and was sustained by, the dualistic millennialism inherent in nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint

faith” (162–63). Mormons’ experiences of persecution profoundly shaped their self-identity.

Chapter 9 compares the persecution received by Mormons to that received by Catholics and Jews in the postbellum South. Of these three religious minorities, Catholics had the dubious distinction of receiving the most lynchings. Unexpectedly, most of these victims, “comprised largely of Irish and Italian” heritage, were lynched by other Catholics (181). Of course, none of the persecution of any of these groups compares to that received by African Americans in the South.

Besides placing these Mormon stories in their proper historical context—socially, culturally, religiously, and legally—this information is also enhanced by the author’s delightful writing style, which keeps pace with the intriguing stories. Furthermore, Mason is to be applauded for his extensive research, especially in southern newspapers. Although the anti-Mormon sentiment ran high and newspaper editors were among those who actively and consistently persecuted the missionaries, his research of these papers should not be minimized—I imagine it was somewhat akin to finding needles in haystacks. Readers will appreciate Mason’s undertaking when they consider the vast amount of primary sources that exist on the Southern States Mission. A simple search of “Southern States Mission” in the catalog at the Church History Library lists over fourteen hundred sources, while the L. Tom Perry Special Collections at Brigham Young University’s Harold B. Lee Library catalogs more than one hundred. Granted, some of these documents are from years other than the late nineteenth century, but it should be remembered that the Southern States Mission was the largest domestic mission during this era, and it is adequately represented in the proportion of documents from this time. The sheer volume of records is both a blessing and a curse to researchers; on the one hand there is a lot of information, but on the other it is challenging to consult a substantial percentage of them. Needless to say, because of all these resources, I predict *Mormon Menace* will not be the last book-length study on this topic.

After reading this book, readers may come away wondering why Church leaders continued to send missionaries to a region with so much hostility and violence. Based on my reading of dozens of diaries and countless editions of a half dozen or so Mormon newspapers, I know that elders in the Southern States Mission encountered the full spectrum of hospitality and hostility, the pendulum swinging wide on both ends. And apparently, Church leaders must have ultimately felt the success rates in the South offset the violence the missionaries encountered. My own research revealed

that in the latter quarter of the nineteenth century, 3,839 baptisms were performed by more than 1,760 missionaries who served in the region.³

In my view, Mason missed an opportunity to explore the impact the Book of Mormon had on southerners and how this new scripture may have contributed to the persecution missionaries received. Mormons' use of additional scripture was not acceptable to the majority of southerners, many of whom strongly believed that the biblical passage about not adding to or taking away from "this book" applied to the entire Bible and not just the Revelation of St. John the Divine (Rev. 22:18–19). They perceived the Mormons' use of scripture other than the Bible to be heretical and contrary to the foundation of Christianity. In one case, a well-meaning southerner advised a missionary to omit his testimony of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon from his sermon. The missionary, Elder Nathan Tanner, recorded in his journal: "He intimated that I did not know how much danger I was in and said there were men who were willing to 'gore' me through for my testimony." However, Elder Tanner recorded that his testimony of these things was the reason he was preaching—otherwise he would go home. He then explained that he feared God's judgments more than those of a mob.⁴ As Samuel Hill put it, "Claims of orthodoxy have functioned to maintain group identity and solidarity."⁵ Thus, the Latter-day Saint faith and use of additional scripture challenged the dominant religious culture in the region, and this surely influenced the persecution the Mormons received.

Stories of persecution and anti-Mormonism grab readers' attention, and this creates a risk of voyeurism. Perhaps there is something in human nature—and the Mormon psyche that has been fed a steady diet of persecution stories—that draws us toward violent stories. Though it is unfortunate that the stories of hospitality were not emphasized in Mason's book, he does make a passing remark about this reality: "LDS elders frequently recorded shows of hospitality from southerners, often in the same communities where they encountered violent opposition. Any full account of the Mormon experience in the South would detail this broad range of relations and not focus so exclusively on conflict as I do here" (12). While these stories of hospitality do not negate the persecution Mormons encountered, they

3. Seferovich, "History of the Southern States Mission," 52.

4. Nathan Tanner, Diaries, August 19, 1884, Church History Library.

5. Samuel S. Hill, ed., *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture, Volume 1: Religion*, ed. Charles Reagan Wilson, James G. Thomas Jr., and Ann J. Abadie (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 154.

do offer a more complete understanding of why Latter-day Saint leaders continued to send so many elders to the region, even after the murders, and give some balance and perspective to the missionaries' experiences during their southern sojourns.

The lasting significance of *Mormon Menace*, I believe, will be in the timeless issues that Mason has identified as being at the heart of southern persecution against Mormons: the limits of religious freedom, the definition of culturally acceptable marriage and how this relates to questions of federal versus states' rights, and the interplay of popular sovereignty with the rule of law. For one reason or another, these same issues continue to be debated, albeit in slightly different forms, in the twenty-first century.

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Karel van der Toorn. *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible*.
Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007.

Reviewed by Robert L. Maxwell

Karel van der Toorn, president of the University of Amsterdam and author of numerous books dealing with aspects of the Bible and ancient Israel, claims to have been writing an introduction to the Bible when he discovered that he was writing an altogether different book—an exploration of scribal culture in the Near East as a means to better understand the making of the Hebrew Bible. The developments he studies will be particularly interesting to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, since he explores the generations surrounding the Babylonian exile, including the time of the migration of Lehi and his family from Jerusalem.

Van der Toorn's general hypothesis is that a scribal elite connected with the Jerusalem temple formed and in many cases composed the text of the books now known as the Hebrew Bible several centuries before the Common Era. He concludes that, although the canon was not settled at this time, the "notion of the closure of the prophetic era" (262) did solidify during this period. In other words, the heavens had closed as far as those in control of the literature of ancient Israel were concerned, so the only authoritative writings would be those that could be demonstrated to have come from an earlier period when God was still communicating with humans. As Van der Toorn points out, having strict criteria for authoritativeness, one of which was the antiquity of the writing, is not the same thing as closing the canon; but it certainly led the way to this eventuality.

The work begins with a chapter titled "Books That Are Not Books," a discussion of books and writing in the ancient Near East. Van der Toorn claims that "the notion of the Bible as a series of books" (9) is misleading because the books of the Bible were not books in the modern sense; rather, the "books" were written versions of oral compositions; they were not linear (again because of their oral origin) and were not designed to be read as unities. The chapter likewise includes a lengthy argument that the scrolls on which these texts were written weren't books in the modern sense because

of their physical form. This argument may seem unnecessarily pedantic. Reflection on the behavior of readers of the Bible today will show that the books of the Bible are not treated as unities even in the current era—most readers read selectively, dipping in and excerpting stories or proof texts. Few attempt to read the Old Testament, or even single books within it, in a linear fashion.

In the same chapter, Van der Toorn makes the point that previous to the Hellenistic era, around the third century BC, private possession of a copy of the Torah by individual Jews was exceedingly rare. There was simply no trade in books before that time. Written texts were indeed copied and preserved, but at least in Israel this practice served more of an archival function: the preservation of records for temple and palace libraries and archives. This information may have considerable bearing on the questions of why Lehi's family did not have copies of the scriptures, why Nephi and his brothers had to go to such lengths to get a copy (and indeed why Laban might have resisted the idea of parting with his copy—housed in a vault), and why those other migrants to the New World, the Mulekites, evidently emigrated without any writings at all even though they were of royal descent.

The second chapter deals with authorship in antiquity. Van der Toorn claims that modern notions of authorship do not hold for antiquity, particularly in the ancient Near East. With respect to the Bible in particular, the people involved were looked on, he says, as “mere channels for a heavenly voice” (29). An author was not viewed as a creative genius as is common today. Therefore, previous to the Hellenistic era, anonymity prevailed in the world of literature. Authors almost never “signed” their work. Van der Toorn points out that none of the historical books of the Old Testament contain any reference within the text to the author (the prophetic books are discussed below in his seventh chapter). Here, in chapter 2, he discusses the common ancient practice of authors remaining anonymous by writing under a name other than his own, either ascribing authorship of a text to his patron or pretending to be a famous figure from the past. As examples of the former, he examines the Mesopotamian law collections, which are said to be the work of the king (for example, the Laws of Hammurabi). As examples of the latter he cites pseudepigraphical texts from the Hellenistic period claiming authorship by ancient figures such as Enoch, Noah, Baruch, and so on. Leading into his next chapters, Van der Toorn builds a case that the “authors” of books in ancient Israel, that is, those who wrote down, edited, and even composed certain parts of the texts, were scribes, a professional class.

Chapters 3 and 4 discuss the evidence describing scribes and their milieu in the ancient Near East. Van der Toorn first discusses the vast amount of evidence we have concerning scribes from Mesopotamia and Egypt. We happen to know quite a bit about scribal practices and education in these two cultures because the scribes left behind numerous writings that survived in the context of whole libraries. Van der Toorn must build on this comparative evidence because, in the case of the biblical scribes, there is almost no evidence at all; aside from the Bible itself, few Israelite texts and no libraries have survived from the period (Qumran notwithstanding). The texts of the Bible (including the Apocrypha) are essentially the only evidence we have, and these texts say precious little about their own composition. That little evidence, however, Van der Toorn mines to the core, and he concludes that the scribes behind the Bible were attached to the temple (rather than the royal palace, which also employed scribes) and belonged to the clergy. He associates these scribes with the Levites, who by this period were separate from the priests (the descendants of Zadok). He also posits that these Levite scribes were the forebears of the “scribes” of the New Testament.

The main thrust of chapter 5, “Making Books,” is that “the involvement of scribes in the process of literary production exceeded that of mere copyists. They had an active part in the formation and the transformation of the tradition” (110). Taking as evidence the relationship of the scribe Baruch to the prophet Jeremiah, he notes that in almost no cases do we see prophets themselves writing down texts, and he somewhat facetiously admits that “the phenomenon of a prophet dictating to a scribe is not pure fantasy” (111). Anyone who thinks of the practices of Joseph Smith and his use of many scribes and clerks can agree.

However, Van der Toorn points out that scribes did more than transcribe the words they heard: they also transformed the text to a greater or lesser degree. To explore this concept he examines texts (both biblical and extrabiblical) that exist in different versions but all claim to be the same text. Scribes were also compilers of disparate texts, and they sometimes expanded those texts. Van der Toorn demonstrates this concept of expanding texts by an examination of the two extant versions of Jeremiah. The Greek (Septuagint) translation, which is older than the Hebrew version represented in the Masoretic text, is one-seventh shorter than the Hebrew. The older Qumran texts of Jeremiah correspond to the Septuagint, not the Masoretic version, showing that the Masoretic text has been added upon. As examples of scribal adaptations of existing texts, Van der Toorn cites some fairly convincing studies asserting that certain sections of Proverbs and Psalms are adaptations of existing Egyptian wisdom texts.

Chapter 6 is a close analysis of the book of Deuteronomy, which Van der Toorn shows to contain plausible evidence of three separate editions, each expanding on the earlier edition over the two hundred years following the discovery of the book during the remodeling of the temple during the reign of Josiah. Van der Toorn suggests that—given the reverence and respect this text would have commanded—the revisions that these editions entailed corresponded with the need to write out new scrolls when the old wore out. The motive would have been a wish to make the text reflect the ideas and insights that had developed over time, and the warrant would have come from the fact that the scribes worked under priestly authority (following Van der Toorn's belief that these scribes worked within the culture of the temple). Because of the need to carefully control the text, Van der Toorn believes, there was only one master copy containing the authentic text, which was kept at the temple. When this copy wore out, an opportunity existed to make minor or major changes to the text. This evidence, together with the internal evidence in Deuteronomy cited by Van der Toorn, makes a plausible case for the development of Deuteronomy over several editions. The idea that changes may have been made over time to biblical texts and that different versions of texts existed, such as the creation accounts, is not foreign to Latter-day Saints.

Chapter 7 turns again to the book of Jeremiah, which contains some of the best evidence for the scribal work of the Bible, since Jeremiah's scribe, Baruch, and his activities are explicitly mentioned. Van der Toorn demonstrates that preexilic prophetic books were of a composite nature; that is, they consisted of disparate sayings of prophets collected together by scribes. This practice is demonstrated in the Bible by the frequent juxtaposition, often without transition, of prophecies about different subjects from different periods. Such a manner of collection will seem familiar to Latter-day Saints, given the similar process of recording and gathering the revelations found in the main book containing Joseph Smith's prophecies, the Doctrine and Covenants. Using Baruch and his relationship to Jeremiah as a test case, Van der Toorn shows evidence of the procedure: the composer of the collection of Jeremiah's prophecies was a professional scribe in the entourage of the prophet; what he wrote down were recollections of the oral sayings of Jeremiah; and the final version was a recollection from a later period, since the original scroll was destroyed (Jer. 36:20–23) and the work had to be rewritten.

The final two chapters of the book develop Van der Toorn's proposition that, after the exile, notions of revelation changed among the Israelites: direct revelation became a thing of the past and communication from God would henceforth come from study of the inspired and authoritative

texts of earlier generations. He believes that this change in point of view occurred when Israel was transitioning from an oral to a written culture and that it was complete by the Hellenistic age. By the second century BC, books had taken the place of the prophets.

The very interesting and in many ways plausible notions proposed in this book are marred by the scant evidence on the subject, as well as some of the treatments of that evidence. In chapter 4, for example, during his discussion of scribal culture and education in ancient Israel, Van der Toorn admits, “Our knowledge about the scribal curriculum in Israel is almost nil. . . . Any reconstruction involves a certain amount of speculation” (98). He then suggests that Psalms 25 and 119 were possibly used in this curriculum because they are acrostics. A page later, he states, “The use of psalms as teaching material for beginners supports the view that the scribal school was connected to the temple” (99). Although this may be possible, he presents no evidence that the Psalms were employed in this specific way, and yet he uses such a view to support his theory explored elsewhere that the scribes were connected to the temple rather than the palace.

Readers might also be interested in seeing the evidence behind Van der Toorn’s assertions that Deuteronomy and Daniel are pseudonymous works written at a later time under the names of famous national heroes (34–35). Evidence for these assertions exists, and it would have been a scholarly courtesy to present enough of that evidence and allow readers to approach these theories and analyses themselves. Readers not familiar with this extensive literature must accept or reject the claim on Van der Toorn’s word alone.

The presentation of evidence, along with the limited evidence available, may be seen as a weakness throughout this book; nevertheless, many of Van der Toorn’s insights seem plausible and are worth considering by any reader interested in gaining better understanding about the development of the Hebrew Bible and the reasons why revelation seems to have ground to a halt in the centuries immediately preceding the time of Christ.

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Brady Udall. *The Lonely Polygamist*.

New York: W.W. Norton, 2010.

Reviewed by Angela Hallstrom

Brady Udall's *The Lonely Polygamist*, published in 2010, arrived amid a wave of pop-culture interest in the polygamist lifestyle: HBO's *Big Love* was gearing up for its finale; TLC's reality show *Sister Wives* had just hit the airwaves; and real-life stories of Warren Jeffs, child brides, and FLDS compounds were common tabloid fare. Although Udall had been at work on his novel for many years before polygamy became a hot cultural topic, some skeptical readers—Mormon and non-Mormon alike—wondered if the novel's intentions were more sensational than literary.¹ Once reviews began rolling in, however, it became clear that *The Lonely Polygamist* was more than a fictional exposé of “alternative lifestyles” and was instead a serious work of art.

The novel tells the tale of Golden Richards, a 1970s-era polygamist living in southern Utah with his four wives and twenty-eight children. Golden is at heart a good man, but he has fumbled his way toward middle age and now finds himself overwhelmed by the chaos his choices have wrought. While his children cyclone through the house and his wives alternately chastise and ignore him, Golden struggles to deal with his grief over a daughter's death, maintain his grip on a struggling construction business, and keep an adulterous attraction at bay.

Within a year of its publication, *The Lonely Polygamist* had become the most critically acclaimed work of literary fiction ever written by a Mormon author. Named one of the best books of 2010 by critics and newspaper columnists across the country, the novel was hailed as “a potential classic” by the Associated Press, and *Publisher's Weekly* proclaimed it “a serious contender for Great American Novel status.” *Entertainment Weekly* celebrated

1. Christian A. Winn, “Telling Tales Out of School: Brady Udall Prepares to Let Loose *The Lonely Polygamist*,” *Boise Weekly*, May 27, 2009.

the novel as the best work of fiction published in 2010, noting that “this tale of Golden Richards and his four wives is packed with more heart, more humor, more tragedy, and ultimately more hope than any other novel published this year.”²

Although *The Lonely Polygamist* has garnered a great deal of national attention, some Latter-day Saints have been reluctant to embrace the book. While many Mormon readers enthusiastically support novels by Orson Scott Card, Stephenie Meyer, and Brandon Sanderson—LDS authors who have found great mainstream success writing in the science fiction, fantasy, and young-adult genres—*The Lonely Polygamist* has received a cooler response within our community, which many LDS readers would claim is justified. Not only does the novel contain instances of coarse language and deal frankly with sex, but its story centers around contemporary polygamy, a practice nearly all twenty-first-century Mormons would prefer to distance themselves from.

Brady Udall himself was prepared for a wary reception by LDS readers. Udall hails from a large Mormon family, better known in political circles than literary ones (Arizona politicians Stewart Udall and Morris Udall are his great-uncles). He served a mission, graduated with a degree in English from BYU, and attended the Iowa Writers’ Workshop, considered by many to be the top creative writing program in the country. His first published book, a collection of stories called *Letting Loose the Hounds*, was critically well received, but it wasn’t until his first novel, *The Miracle Life of Edgar Mint*, published in 2001, that he began to find popular success.

Although Udall does not consider himself a very religious person, he says he’s “proud to be a Mormon,” and his LDS upbringing and continued association with the Church leave an indelible mark on his fiction.³ Both of Udall’s novels not only explore religious culture (with a decidedly Mormon flavor), but they are peopled with devout believers and spiritual seekers, an anomaly in contemporary literary fiction—a genre that often demonizes religious characters or, more commonly, ignores them altogether. And while it is clear that Udall is not writing with Mormons in mind as his primary audience, LDS readers were enough of a concern that his publisher requested he write a letter aimed at explaining the novel to Mormons uncomfortable with its focus on polygamy. In the letter, he explains, in part,

2. Karen Valby, “Best Books of 2010: Fiction,” *Entertainment Weekly*, December 22, 2010, online at http://www.ew.com/ew/gallery/0,,20326356_20451849_20890146,00.html#20890145.

3. Kristine Haglund, “The Best Place to Deal with Questions: An Interview with Brady Udall,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 43, no. 4 (Winter 2010): 195.

his personal perspective: “The church has struggled to distance itself from polygamy, claiming that it no longer has a connection to the practice. And yet I don’t think we can sweep polygamy under the rug so easily. . . . When we see a polygamist family among us, we must remember we are looking in the mirror; we are looking at ourselves.”⁴

As a Mormon, my experience reading *The Lonely Polygamist* was like looking in a mirror, albeit a funhouse version, that stretches, twists, and amplifies what would otherwise be a familiar reflection. The novel rarely involves modern Mormons in its narrative, focusing instead on the small community of polygamists who are clear about their separation from the contemporary LDS faith. But the cultural and spiritual practices of the novel’s characters still strike a very familiar chord. The Richards clan holds Family Home Evening; they read the Book of Mormon; they get baptized at eight; and the boys receive the priesthood at twelve. In fact, Rusty, the “family terrorist” and most compelling character in the novel, looks forward with great anticipation to his twelfth birthday, a particularly momentous occasion when “you received the priesthood, when you became a deacon in the church and were supposed to do things like pass the sacrament on Sunday, paint the houses of the less fortunate, and start being a man” (290). Sentiments like these mirror the feelings of many mainstream Mormon boys today. The difference is that Rusty has a set of birthday wishes particular to a polygamist preteen: he wants to have a party at the Skate Palace and invite nonfamily members (“kids . . . who wouldn’t normally be caught dead around him, mostly because he was a plyg kid”); and, even more heart wrenching, he wants to move back to the Big House with his mother, from whom he’s been separated in an attempt to straighten him out. Neither of these wishes comes true.

The Lonely Polygamist is a sprawling novel: 599 pages long, alternating between four different points of view, and bursting at the seams with characters, themes, and emotional extremes. The narrative expertly ricochets from comedy to tragedy, diving headlong into emotionality in a way that few contemporary novels will, focused as they are so often on irony, detachment, and cool emotional distance. Reading the novel is an immersive experience: the Richards clan—Golden; his fourth wife, Trish; and the misunderstood Rusty in particular—lift themselves off the page as fully realized human beings. In this way, *The Lonely Polygamist* truly is a “big” novel: more than just a polygamy story or a tale of the American West with

4. Angela Hallstrom, “A Great Mormon Novelist: An Interview with Brady Udall,” *Irreantum* 12, no. 1 (July 2010): 108.

a sensational religious twist. The novel is simpler, and grander, than that. It is the story of a peculiar American family—outsized and exaggerated, to be sure—but lovingly rendered by one of the most talented American novelists writing today.

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BOOK NOTICES

World Trade and Biological Exchanges before 1492, by John L. Sorenson and Carl L. Johannessen (Bloomington, Ind.: iUniverse, 2009).

This book by John L. Sorenson (emeritus professor of anthropology at Brigham Young University) and Carl L. Johannessen (emeritus professor of geography at the University of Oregon) presents a comprehensive, well-referenced, and intriguing overview of historical and archeological evidence for pre-Columbian exchange of plants, microfauna, and animals between the Old and New Worlds. Its style is more encyclopedic than narrative, resembling an expanded, annotated bibliography. I read with interest the sections dealing with the crops that I have researched genetically—*Amaranthus* and *Chenopodium*—as well as several other crops that I am very familiar with, such as cotton.

Since I and my colleagues at Brigham Young University will soon be publishing genetic data that identify the presence of Old and New World genomes in the crop quinoa (*C. quinoa*), this area of research on ancient transoceanic crop dispersal is one in which I think I have some expertise—at least in terms of genetics. The historical, archeological, and linguistic data referenced in this book in support of the pre-Columbian exchange hypothesis represent, cumulatively, a compelling body of work that, in my view, questions the wisdom of dogmatically accepting the existing paradigm of no pre-Columbian exchange (the null hypothesis).

The biological data in support of this hypothesis, however, are notably weak or absent. In my experience, however, this is likely the result of biologists not realizing the extent of the historical, archeological, and linguistic evidence in its favor; because of this oversight,

many biologists may have not seriously considered designing experiments to question the null hypothesis of no pre-Columbian crop and animal dispersal. In the case of researchers here at BYU, we do not have access to germplasm of “quinoa-like” domesticated *Chenopodium* plants native to the remote Ladakh region of the Himalayas, though samples of weedy specimens from this region have shown greater genetic affinity to the Old World *C. album* than to Andean *C. quinoa*.

Sorenson and Johannessen therefore rate the likelihood of quinoa’s pre-Columbian dispersal as a “C”—correctly in my estimation, based on currently available data. As for amaranths, BYU researchers have demonstrated in the lab that Asian-cultivated amaranth samples originated from the New World germplasm pool—though whether this dispersal occurred before or after Columbus remains a mystery. Overall, this book is a valuable addition to the body of secondary literature on pre-Columbian biological exchange.

—Eric N. Jellen

To the Peripheries of Mormondom: The Apostolic Around-the-World Journey of David O. McKay, 1920–1921, by Hugh J. Cannon, edited by Reid L. Neilson (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2011).

An around-the-world journey made by an Apostle may not be something extraordinary today, but in 1920 it was monumental. Hugh J. Cannon’s *To the Peripheries of Mormondom* details the historic trip of Elder David O. McKay—the first Apostle to make a journey of this magnitude and to visit most of the places he did. He and Hugh J. Cannon were called on a one-year fact-finding mission to visit the Church’s non-North

American congregations and to study the customs and needs of the people at each place. This mission was the beginning of a major push toward the globalization of the Church.

Though this is not the first time Cannon's manuscript has been published, editor Reid L. Neilson's additions and annotations have greatly increased the book's value. The editor's preface introduces the memoir by describing another journey—the journey of the manuscript itself. Cannon's family worked hard to get this book to press; it was first published in 2005, almost a century after the mission itself.

Researchers interested in McKay's travels and the globalization of the Church should take notice especially of the introduction and appendices that Neilson added. The introduction presents a possible background of the decision to undertake the mission in the first place. The appendices include information about the missions visited and lists of documents important to the story.

But Neilson has made Cannon's memoir accessible to more than just researchers. Neilson's careful annotations clarify names, terms, and places

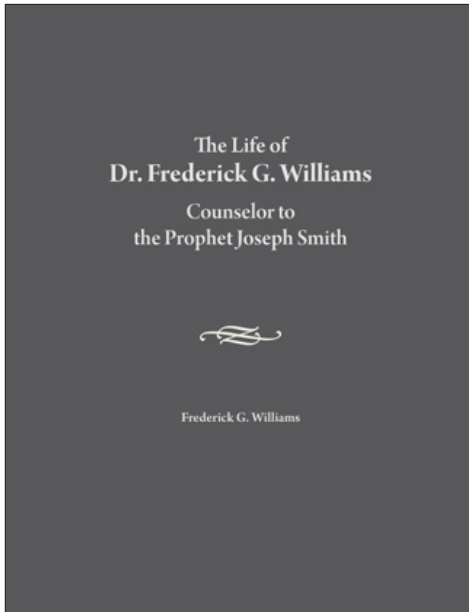
along the journey, making the story easy for any reader to follow. Neilson further enriches the McKay-Cannon journey by including a photographic essay consisting of fifty-four images, both photographs and postcards, that visually document the journey. The photographs, particularly those of McKay and Cannon on their journey, make the places, people, and customs even more vivid and palpable than the text alone can.

A highlight of Cannon's record is the anecdotes, sometimes humorous and other times sobering, of encounters with foreign cultures and traditions. McKay and Cannon at times are awed by the beauty of places or humbled by unfamiliar customs but are always welcomed by devoted members with love and celebrations. President David O. McKay's efforts in transforming the Church into a global organization was one of his greatest accomplishments, and it began with this special mission.

Cannon's narrative exudes a mystical aura of discovery, and Cannon entices any reader with his invitation, "Come with us, therefore, on our trip around the world" (1).

—Kaitlyn S. Hedges

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Published by
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illustrations, subject index
848 pages, 6" x 9"

\$29.95 hardcover

ISBN-0-8425-2814-6

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