

BOOK OF MORMON

REFLECTIONS
"TRUTH IN PERSPECTIVE"

By V. JAMES LOVALVO

Book of Mormon Reflections
“Truth in Perspective”

by
V. James Lovaivo

Edited and
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James Van Treese



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DEDICATED TO . . .

Mary, my wife of fifty-five years,
to whom I am deeply grateful for her continual love,
devotion, and friendship; for her daily encouragement
which has infused inspiration and motivation
in my literary endeavor.

To my children, Dr. Leonard J. and Vera Lovalvo,
and Priscilla Marie Carneval, whom I love very dearly.

To my grandchildren, Barry R. and Susan E. Lovalvo,
and Beth K. and Scott J. Carneval, who are
a constant source of joy.

Also in memory of my beloved son-in-law; Del Carneval
and my grand-daughter, Lisa Marie Carneval,
who have gone to their eternal rest.

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I am grateful to many members of my church who volunteered to read my manuscript, but who, regrettably, were asked to halt their work as circumstances dictated that I engage a professional editor.

I thank the scholars, both living and dead, whose works were a rich and rewarding contribution on the writing of this book.

I made every effort to trace the ownership of all copyright material. Should any infringement have been inadvertently made, I express my regrets. I will be only too glad, upon notification, to make proper acknowledgements in future editions of this book.

Disclaimer

Personal opinions, expressed in this book, on scripture or otherwise, are those of the author, and not necessarily those of The Church of Jesus Christ (Bickertonites).

About The Author

V. James Lovalvo is one of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ (Bickertonites), which has its headquarters in Monongahela, Pennsylvania.

The above church was organized July 7, 1862, at Greenrock, Pennsylvania. It is a distinct and independent entity without affiliation to any other church in the world.

At a very early age, Brother Lovalvo aspired to an operatic career. He studied voice culture and pedagogy at the Institute of Musical Arts in Detroit, Michigan, under the tutorship of Dr. William Howland, a world-renowned voice teacher and coach. Prior to going to Europe to continue his musical studies with some of the great voice teachers, he was introduced to The Church of Jesus Christ. After a short period of investigating the church's principals and beliefs regarding the Apostasy and Restoration of the Gospel, he became a member of said church [by baptism] on July 16, 1933.

Nine months later, much to the chagrin of his voice teacher, and his parents, he gave up his career and cast his lot with the people of God completely. He was ordained into the Ministry when he was twenty-three years old. Four years later, he was ordained and Evangelist, and two years afterwards, he was ordained an Apostle, making him one of the youngest men to ever be ordained in that office.

In 1963, he was married to Mary Randazzo, whom he says, has been an inspiration in his religious endeavors, and an indispensable help in the Ministry. "Without her," he reiterates, "I could

never have accomplished the things I have for the Lord and his church.” From this union, were born two children: Leonard James who became a medical doctor, and Priscilla Marie Carneval who is a medical transcriber. They have four beautiful children: Barry and Susan Lovalvo, and Beth and Scott Carneval.

Brother Lovalvo spent many years doing missionary work among the Seed of Joseph (American Indians), and also among the Gentiles. He has written several hymns to the glory of God, and continues to use his God-given voice in singing His praises everywhere he can.

In 1989, Brother Lovalvo received his Master’s Degree in Theology from the Mennonite Brethren Bible Seminary at Fresno, California. He has written many religious articles for the church’s monthly paper, ‘The Gospel News’, under the caption, ‘It is Written’. He has also written four books, namely; ‘It is Written: Truth Shall Spring out of the Earth’, ‘A Dissertation on the Faith and Doctrine of The Church of Jesus Christ’, ‘Baptism: Its History, Past and Present’, and ‘In Defense of the Book of Mormon’.

Brother Lovalvo testifies to the world that he is a witness to the Restoration of the Gospel, and to the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon and the Bible, the ‘Two Sticks’ spoken of in the 37th chapter of ezeziel. He wishes all who read this book the rich blessings of the Lord.

Introduction

In this book, I explore events leading to the publication of the Book of Mormon Reflections, with the hope that you are granted insights that will encourage you to seek God in prayer for understanding their truthfulness. My goals are to (1) inform you how the book came into existence, (2) report how Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon by God's gift from plates given him by the Angel Moroni, (3) summarize and describe much interesting contemporary research that identifies ancient literary elements in the text, and (4) share some of the book's thrilling and inspirational narratives.

I firmly feel that the Book of Mormon is an ancient record of spiritual and temporal matters, kept by ancient men of God, including prophets of great spiritual stature.

The Book of Mormon follows the spiritual and temporal history of two groups of people who left Jerusalem, circa 600 B.C. Rather than being a political or a social history, however, it is an account of the relations of the Lord with these peoples. One colony was composed primarily of descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh, who were the sons of Joseph, who was one of the twelve sons of Jacob, who was a grandson of Abraham. This group was led by Lehi, a prophet of the Lord. The other group was made up of refugees who escaped from Jerusalem at approximately 589 B.C., when Zedekiah, king of Judah, was carried away captive into Babylon. Mulek, one of the sons of Zedekiah, was with this colony; the other sons of Zedekiah were killed by the Babylonians (2 Kings 25:7).

Years after the first group arrived upon this continent, they split into two factions: one called Nephites, named after Nephi, the third son of Lehi, and the other group, called Lamanites, after the first son of Lehi.

The second colony, known as Mulekites, also reached the New World in a miraculous way. However, unlike the Nephites, they brought no scriptures with them. Because they had no records, their language became corrupt so that, when they were discovered by Nephites (circa 279 and 130 B.C.), neither people could understand the other.

The Book of Mormon also includes an abridged record of a third group. These people, called Jaredites, left the ancient world at the time the Tower of Babel was being built, when the Lord confounded the languages of the people. These Jaredites, like the Nephites, Lamanites, and Mulekites, were brought to this continent by the hand of the Lord, where they grew into a large and prosperous nation. Their history covers about 1,800 years. Because of sin and transgression they were destroyed. The only two survivors, Coriantumr and Shiz, battled with an inexplicable hatred until the former slew the latter. The Mulekite colony discovered Coriantumr, the sole survivor, and tended him during the last nine months of his life.

Sometimes the question is asked, "Why does this record bear the title of the "Book of Mormon"?" Mormon, a prophet of the Lord who lived in the last generation of the Nephite civilization, made an abridgement of earlier records in addition to his own eyewitness account of the events that transpired. He gave this book his name (Mormon 1:1). Joseph Smith explains that the title was written on the title page of the book by Moroni, son of Mormon and last keeper of the sacred records:

I wish to mention here that the title-page of the Book of Mormon is a literal translation taken from the very last leaf, on the left hand side of the collection or book of plates, which contained the record which has been translated, the language of the whole running the same as all Hebrew writing in general (that is from right to left); and that said title page is not by any means a modern compo-

sition, either of mine or of any other man who has lived or does live in this generation. Therefore, in order to correct an error, which generally exists concerning it, I give below that part of the title-page of the English version of the Book of Mormon, which is a genuine and literal translation of the title-page of the original Book of Mormon as recorded on the plates.

The Book of Mormon

An account written by the hand of Mormon
upon Plates taken from the Plates of Nephi¹

As published in 1830, the Book of Mormon was printed in “book” style, that is, one full column, without footnotes, divisions into chapters and verses, or internal references. In 1879, LDS apostle Orson Pratt edited the Book of Mormon with chapters, verses, and references which have been included ever since. In 1920, the book was issued in a double-column format with chapter headings, chronological data, revised footnote references, a pronouncing vocabulary, and an index.

To introduce you to this work, I have attempted to include historical data which substantiates its divine source as well as internal evidences of literary genres and patterns that could not have been part of Joseph Smith’s education. In my opinion, the existence of Hebraisms, chiasms, and poetic parallelisms in the Book of Mormon are very persuasive in establishing that its original language was not modern English. A young, unlearned person like Joseph Smith did not have the academic or literary expertise to write such a complex book.

My strong belief is that Joseph Smith did not write the Book of Mormon. He translated it by the gift and power of God. One has only to read the Book of Mormon prayerfully to be informed of its classical beauty and the unique literary style found in its pages.

After considering many titles for this book, I have chosen

¹ Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, edited by B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1961), 1:71-72.

Book of Mormon Reflections: Truth in Perspective. I hope that its contents are harmonious and consonant with the title. I pray that the reader of my endeavors will find as much joy in the insights which I have discovered in the Book of Mormon as I have. Putting these insights into words was an indescribable pleasure, although much time and labor was involved. Many times I bowed in prayer, asking the Lord to illuminate my mind, and give me the ability to write that which I believed was inspired by the Holy Spirit. It is my prayer that you, as the reader, whether you are now a believer in the Book of Mormon or come to these pages as a stranger, will find pleasure in what I have written and become my partner in gleaning beautiful and enlightening insights. Although this book should be self-contained, I hope that you will read it in conjunction with the Book of Mormon itself. As my primary source was the Book of Mormon itself, so should yours be. As I used secondary sources from the writings of scholars who believe in the restoration of the gospel in these last days, so this book should be considered a supplement to the Book of Mormon text.

This book is intended for ministers, lay persons, and all who search for truth, for those who love the Bible and desire God's word in their lives. May God's blessings attend all you who read this book and motivate you to emulate those gallant and intrepid men of God who dedicated their lives to the Lord Almighty, and who braved persecution and death in their determined zeal to fulfill the will of their Creator and Lord. This is my prayer. Amen.

With love towards all,
V. James Lovalvo

Chapter 1

THE BEGINNING

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred and tongue, and people.

Saying with a loud voice, Fear God and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgement is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. (Revelation 14:6-7)

After the passage of thirteen centuries, God sent the angel of this prophecy, Moroni, to a young man, and delivered a message of vital importance. He said that a record written by the ancient inhabitants of North and South America would come forth and that the Lord had chosen this teen-age boy to translate this record. In this record would be written the Lord's gospel, his rock and his salvation.

Thus, it all began!

It was an unhappy and bewildered boy of fifteen who sought spiritual comfort from the disillusionment caused by the perplexing and conflicting claims of the various churches of his time. Joseph Smith was at his wits' end. Where was he to find the answer to his question: Which church was truly keeping and reflecting the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ? He could find no answers among the debating religious leaders and lay-people; therefore he turned to the only source who could supply his needs,

God Almighty. After fervently praying to the Lord, he found solace in the Bible as he read the epistle of James: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (James 1:5). Thus, the story of the restoration of the gospel and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon began!

A Brief Biography of Joseph Smith, Jr.

Joseph Smith, Jr., was born December 23, 1805, in Sharon, Windsor County, Vermont. When he was about ten years old, his father moved his family to Palmyra, Ontario County (now Wayne County), New York. Four years later, the family moved again to Manchester, Ontario County. Eleven people were in this family: Joseph Smith, Sr., Lucy Mack Smith, sons Alvin (died November 19, 1824), Hyrum, Joseph Jr., Samuel Harrison, William, and Don Carlos, and daughters Sophronia, Catherine, and Lucy.¹

Lucy Mack Smith played an integral part in her son’s life and wrote the first biography of him.² From the time he received the plates from Moroni, she was a staunch believer. She bore witness to many concerning the latter-day restoration of the gospel and the organization of the church.

Lucy Mack Smith was born on July 8, 1775 at Gilsun, Cheshire County, New Hampshire, the youngest child of Solomon Mack and Lydia Gates Mack. At age twenty, in January 1796, she married Joseph Smith, a resident of Tunbridge, Vermont, and bore his eleven children. She was a dauntless woman who had a great influence on her son. In 1819, she and several of the children joined the Presbyterian Church; but after Joseph, Jr., communicated his spiritual experiences to his parents, she identified with the mission of her son. She bore witness to many persons regarding the latter-day restoration of the gospel and the organization of the church. Uncomplainingly, she followed the body of the Saints in their migration, leading one group from New York to Ohio,

¹ Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 2nd ed. rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1961), 1:2.

² Material on the family which follows is drawn from Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968), 102-71.

suffering through the persecutions of Missouri, rejoicing in the prosperity of Nauvoo, enduring the anguish of seeing her husband die in 1840 followed by three of her sons in 1844. She died May 14, 1856, consistently retaining her testimony of the Book of Mormon.

From her record, we know how young Joseph first hid the plates in a rotten birch log, carving away the inner matter with his pocket knife, replacing the bark, and concealing the log with nearby debris. On another occasion when the plates and the breast-plate were buried under the hearth, Joseph saw attackers approaching and cried out as if he had an army present while his brothers stormed out of the house. The attackers fled in dismay. On a third occasion, Joseph, Jr., had enough warning to take the record and the breast-plate of the box where he had been keeping them, hiding them in some flax in the loft of a cooper's shop. The mob tore up the cooper's shop, including the box, but was not able to find the places.

But all of that was far in the future in 1820. According to young Joseph, a religious excitement pervaded Ontario County. Some of the mainstream churches were vying with one another to make converts. Part of Joseph's family was converted to the Presbyterian faith. Young Joseph became confused at the apparent bickering between the leaders of the different faiths, and, consequently, doubtless by the will of God, was led to read the passage in James 1:5.³

Amazed, yet feeling a sense of inter-relationship, he pondered again and again the words of James. "Is it possible that the Lord would condescend to answer my bewilderment?" must have gone through his mind. Why would the Lord grant this boy greater wisdom than the learned priests and ministers who had graduated from seminaries and universities as theological sages? Prompted by this beautiful passage of scripture, he nevertheless concluded to "prove the Lord."

With this resolve, he betook himself to a nearby grove and, kneeling humbly before the Lord of the universe, poured out his anguished soul's desire for wisdom and understanding. No sooner

³ *History of the Church*, 2-3.

had he done so, than he was engulfed in a thick darkness and an evil power which threatened to destroy him. As he was about to sink in this awful whirlpool of evil, he cried out to God for succor. Immediately, a pillar of light appeared over his head brighter than the noon-day sun; instantly he found himself delivered from the demonic powers which had bound him.⁴

As the light continued to rest upon him, he heard the voice of the Savior tell him that he should join none of the existing religions, as they were unacceptable to Him. "They draw near to Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me," instructed the Lord. "They teach for doctrines the commandments of men: having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof." Like an intense earthquake, this statement by Jesus Christ shook Joseph Smith to the core of his being. The experience caused him to crumble before the presence of the Lord; and when the light disappeared, he found himself lying on his back, looking up into heaven.⁵

What was he to do with the decree, "Join none of them, for they are all wrong"? Critics may ridicule these words as a figment of the lad's imagination and may rise in indignation, arguing that people of great sincerity have always attempted to serve God to the best of their ability. No one can gainsay the fact that at all times there have been individuals and collective groups of intense sincerity who even became martyrs for their faith. The question, however, is not their sincerity but their systems of religion. Not one religious group from the early centuries on has maintained fully the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ or the ordinances which He initiated.

For example, baptism was changed from its original mode of "immersion" to sprinkling/pouring. This practice started when the learned Bishop of Carthage, Cyprian (200 A.D.-258 A.D.), advocated that sprinkling could be administered in lieu of immersion. He had administered sprinkling to an heretic named Novatus who, upon his death-bed requested rebaptism.⁶

⁴Ibid., 5.

⁵Ibid., 6.

⁶James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1956), 118.

The Lord's Supper was changed around the ninth century by the introduction of a doctrine called transubstantiation.⁷ The bread and wine which the Lord commanded should be eaten and drunk in remembrance of His body and blood was changed into a simple wafer which was hailed as representing "in fact" the body and blood of Jesus.⁸ A discussion of other doctrinal matters could be a lengthy one but is not necessary for an understanding of Joseph Smith's experience.

It is quite natural that young Joseph would be astonished and overcome by his vision and by the words he heard on that early spring morning. Prophets of old were equally overwhelmed when they saw God and heard his voice decrying the sinful conditions of their generations and commanding them to proclaim His displeasure to the people. The Bible is filled with instances when the prophets faced their people, not only revealing their sins but also predicting their destruction if they would not repent. One has only to read the humble wonder of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, and Hosea to get a vivid picture of the fear and trembling generated in their hearts and minds when God disclosed Himself to them and ordained them to be His emissaries.

It was with an awesome wonder, then, that Joseph Smith returned home after his extraordinary experience in the woods. With a normal teen-age exuberance which could hardly be contained, he told others of his vision, surprised when it generated persecution and reviling from ministers and lay-people.

Strange as it may seem, the earliest written account of Joseph Smith's vision dates from 1832. Twelve years passed before he wrote about the heavenly experience which he had received while praying in the woods. Other accounts followed, by him and by others to whom he related his remarkable experience. The different details and various emphases in these accounts show both Joseph Smith's evolving understanding of his vision and also his awareness of the spiritual needs of his growing flock.

⁷ Joseph Milner, *History of the Church of Christ*, Century 9 (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson, Publishers, 1839), 452.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 533.

Accounts of Joseph Smith’s First Vision

Joseph Smith wrote or dictated four accounts of his First Vision (1832, 1835, 1838, 1842); another four were written by Orson Pratt (1840), Orson Hyde (1842), the *New York Spectator* (1843), and Alexander Neibaur (1844). All eight accounts are interesting and slightly different from each other.

Table 1
Elements of Context, Content, and Reaction
in the Eight First Vision Accounts

	Smith 1831-32	Smith 1835	Smith 1838-39	Pratt 1840	Hyde 1842	Wentworth 1844	Spectator 1843	Neibaur 1844
Religious excitement								
Joseph’s concern for his soul								
Disillusionment with other churches								
Concern for humankind								
Forgiveness for personal sins								
Desire to find right church								
Searches scriptures								
Offers prayer								
Force of opposition								
Appearance of light								
Appearance of deity								
Two personages								
Message: forgiveness of sins								
Testimony of Jesus								
All churches wrong								
Gospel to be restored								
Joseph filled with love								
Others disbelieve								

Source: Adapted slightly from James B. Allen, “Eight Contemporary Accounts of Joseph Smith’s First Vision: What Do We Learn from Them?” *Improvement Era* 73 (April 1970): 12.

The 1832 Account

This account of the First Vision Joseph Smith dictated when he was about twenty-six years old. Frederick G. Williams, later a counselor in the First Presidency, was probably the scribe.⁹ In this vision, young Joseph claims to have seen the Lord (one personage).¹⁰

The 1835 Account

Joseph Smith related his early vision to a visiting Jewish minister named Robert Matthews, alias Robert Matthias. Warren A. Cowdery briefly recorded this conversation in Smith's Kirtland diary. Joseph Smith told the Jewish minister that he not only saw two personages in his vision but also "many angels."¹¹

The 1838 Account

This account is from Joseph Smith's Manuscript History, written or copied by James Mulholland in 1839. In this account Joseph Smith specifically says that he saw two personages, the Father and the Son.¹²

The 1842 Account

This account of the First Vision is recorded in the document known as the "Wentworth Letter." Joseph Smith discussed Church doctrine with John Wentworth, a newspaper publisher, and also his first vision. This letter was published in the March 1, 1842, issue of the *Times and Seasons*. It emphasizes that Joseph beheld two personages.¹³

⁹James B. Allen, "Eight Contemporary Accounts of Joseph Smith's First Vision: What Do We Learn from Them?" *Improvement Era* 73 (April 1970): 6.

¹⁰Dean C. Jessee, "The Early Accounts of Joseph Smith's First Vision," *Brigham Young University Studies* 9 (Spring 1969): 278.

¹¹Milton V. Backman, Jr. "Joseph Smith's Recitals of the First Vision," *Ensign* 15 (January 1985): 14.

¹²Jessee, "Early Accounts," 14.

The Orson Pratt Account (1840)

In England, Orson Pratt, a member of the Council of Twelve, published Joseph Smith's first vision in a missionary tract entitled *Interesting Accounts of Several Remarkable Visions and of the Late Discovery of Ancient American Records*. This version records that Joseph Smith beheld two personages.¹⁴

Orson Hyde's Account (1842)

Orson Hyde, while in Frankfurt, Germany, published a missionary pamphlet entitled, *A Cry from the Wilderness, a Voice from the Dust of the Earth*, which states that Joseph Smith saw two personages in his first vision.¹⁵

The New York Spectator Account (1842)

The editor of the *Pittsburgh Gazette* visited Joseph Smith at Nauvoo in 1843, and after his conversation with Smith relating to the First Vision, wrote an account which was published in the *New York Spectator*. This account also includes Joseph Smith's assertion that he saw two personages.¹⁶

Alexander Neibaur's Account (1844)

In his diary, Alexander Neibaur wrote of his conversations with Joseph Smith, among which was recounted his first vision where he saw two personages. Of the eight accounts mentioned, all but the first state that Joseph Smith saw two personages while praying in the woods.¹⁷

Some writers criticize Joseph Smith's first vision unmercifully, repeating like a worn phonograph record the same theme: If Joseph truly had this vision, why does he tell it differently every time? They assume that he should have related this theophany verbatim each time he told it. Rarely, however, can a person relate a divine experience with the same emphasis each time it is told.

¹³ Allen, "Eight Contemporary Accounts," 5.

¹⁴ Ibid., 5; Backman, "Joseph Smith's Recitals," 34.

¹⁵ Backman, "Joseph Smith's Recitals," 36.

¹⁶ Allen, "Eight Contemporary Accounts," 6.

¹⁷ As quoted in Allen, "Eight Contemporary Accounts," 6.

In answer to critics—whoever they may be—who are wont to ridicule differing versions of the First Vision, let it be known that there are precedents for dissimilar accounts of the very same spiritual experience. For example, the events at the garden's empty tomo after Christ's resurrection are related differently in the four Gospels. There is a diversity in the telling about the number of women and angels who were present, and whether the angels were sitting or standing. (Compare Matthew 28 with Mark 16, and Luke 24 with John 20.) These differences cannot mask the important and glorious fact that the tomb was empty! Christ had arisen! How do the critics explain these variations found in the four Gospels? Will they reject the Bible and the resurrection because of these discrepancies? Joseph Smith's Christian critics do not deny the great event of the resurrection because of the variations in the Gospels. Yet they are quick to criticize Joseph Smith for his failure to recite his vision verbatim each time it was told.

John in his Gospel records that when Jesus said "Father, glorify thy name," a "voice" was heard from heaven. Some said that it thundered; others said, "An angel spake to him" (John 12:28-29). When that divine experience was later retold, it seems obvious that some would tell the "thundering" part while others would testify that they saw an angel and heard his voice. No matter how they retold the event, the fact remains that a "voice" spoke to Jesus from heaven.

There are variations in the Gospels regarding the inscription on the cross and Christ's last words. According to Matthew 27:5, the inscription read, "This is Jesus the king of the Jews." Luke 23:38 records the inscription as: "This is the king of the Jews." John 19:19 recorded the inscription as: "Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews."

Mark 15:34 records Jesus' last words, as "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matthew does not record any last words. Luke records the promise of salvation to the thief on the cross; the other Gospels do not.

Because the Gospel writers did not record particular events alike word for word, shall the Bible be laid aside as a fairy tale and

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the event at the cross be rejected? Of course not. The important fact is that Jesus Christ completed the atonement on the cross.

The account of Paul's experience with the Savior while he was on the way to Damascus has its variations as well. Acts 9:7 says that the men who traveled with Saul (Paul) heard a voice but saw no man. In Acts 22:9, Paul says that those that were with him saw a light but did not hear the voice. Shall this marvelous experience be rejected because there are variations in how it is recorded? Note further that the Damascus experience was not recorded until approximately twenty-four years later.¹⁸ What lives on is the core of this event: the conversion of Paul (Saul of Tarsus).

On the question of divorce and remarriage, Matthew records the words of Jesus on this subject twice with notable variations. (cf. Matthew 5:32 and 19:9). Two other Gospels record the same subject differently than Matthew (cf. Mark 10:11-12 and Luke 16:18).

The Beatitudes are recorded differently by Matthew and Luke (cf. Matthew 5-7; Luke 6). One particular verse is instructive. Matthew says "Blessed are the poor in spirit. . ." (5:3). Luke says, "Blessed be ye poor. . ." (6:20). Shall the Bible be discarded because the two men could not record Jesus' words alike? The importance is not in the exegesis—or interpretation—of the verse, but in the hermeneutics—or theology—of the verse.

I believe that I have shown sufficient proof that the same event when it is retold can have some variations. Likewise, Joseph Smith's First Vision may have had its variations in the retelling (or writing), but one fact is important; he did have a heavenly vision, whether he saw one personage or two personages. It should also be taken into consideration that, in the early nineteenth century, autobiographies or histories were often not published until many years after certain experiences had occurred. Regarding charges that Joseph Smith was negligent in not recording his vision until twelve years after he had experienced it, Dean C. Jessee, a research historian at the Brigham Young University, commented:

¹⁸ See Backman's discussion of this point, "Joseph Smith's Recitals," 11.

Considering the youth of the Prophet, the frontier conditions in which he lived, his lack of academic training, the absence of any formal directive to motivate him to write, and the antagonistic reception he received upon first relating the experience, it is not strange that he failed to preserve an account of his First Vision during the decade between 1820 and 1830. . . .¹⁹

Visitation of the Angel Moroni

The next remarkable event after Joseph Smith's First Vision relates directly to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. Three years following the manifestation of Deity, Joseph had another divine experience. On September 21, 1823, after he had retired to his bedroom, he prayed to the Almighty to forgive him for his teen-age follies committed since his wonderful vision in the grove. While he was in the act of praying, a light appeared in his room, increasing in intensity until the room was brighter than the sun at noon-day. In the midst of this glorious light, a personage appeared by his bedside clothed in white. This personage stood suspended in the air with a divine aura surrounding him. According to Joseph Smith:

When I first looked upon him, I was afraid; but the fear soon left me. He called me by name, and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me and that his name was Moroni; and that God had a work for me to do.²⁰

The heavenly personage, Moroni, last keeper of the Book of Mormon in ancient days, rehearsed many things to young Joseph, who was now in his eighteenth year. He told him of a book written on gold plates, hidden in a hill nearby, in which was contained the history of the original inhabitants of the North and South American continents; that these inhabitants, which Joseph understood to

¹⁹“Early Accounts,” 294.

²⁰ As quoted in *History of the Church*, 1:11.

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be the various tribes of Indians, were descendants of Abraham through one the house of Joseph, one of the twelve sons of Jacob. The book related how they had reached the new world. Moroni also told him that the book contained the history of a group of people who had been brought to the Americas from the time of the building of the Tower of Babel. Joseph was told that he would translate from these plates by the gift and power of God. The messenger also warned him that he must bring forth the book expressly with "an eye single to the glory of God."

The divine messenger appeared to Joseph twice more that night, giving him the same information and the same instructions. The messenger appeared to him the fourth time while he was outside on the farm and again reiterated the things he had told him the previous night. Joseph left the field and went directly to the hill where the plates were deposited. The messenger had described the place so accurately that he had no problem finding the exact spot.

According to Joseph Smith, after reaching the hill, which was not far from the family farm near the village of Manchester, Ontario County, New York, he saw a stone protruding from the ground. After removing the top of the stone, he looked in and beheld the plates, the Urim and Thummim (instruments of translation), and a breastplate, just as the messenger had described them.

When he attempted to remove the items, the messenger Moroni, who was standing by, forbade him, telling him that the time had not yet come for him to receive the plates—that he should return each year on that date for four years and then they would be confided to his care.

Young Joseph visited the hill annually for four years at the time previously appointed, meeting with Moroni, who allowed him to look into the box and gave him further instruction.

Oliver Cowdery, later one of the scribes who assisted during the translation process and one of three men who, in the same visitation, saw the angel holding the plates, described the box in which the plates were deposited, no doubt from Joseph's own description to him:

First, a hole of sufficient depth (how deep I know not)

was dug. At the bottom of this was laid a stone of suitable size, the upper surface being smooth. At each edge was placed a large quantity of cement, and into the cement, at the four edges of this stone, were placed, erect, four others, their bottom edges resting in the cement at the outer edges of the first stone. The four last named, when placed erect, formed a box, the corners, or where the edges of the four came in contact were also cemented so firmly that the moisture from without was prevented from entering. It is to be observed also, that the inner surface of the four erect, or side stones was smooth. This box was sufficiently large to admit a breast-plate, such as was used by the ancients to defend the chest, etc., from the arrows and weapons of the enemy. From the bottom of the box, or from the breast-plate, arose three small pillars composed of the same description of cement used on the edges; and upon these three pillars was placed the record of the children of Joseph, and of a people who left the tower far, far before the days of Joseph, or a sketch of each . . . this box, containing the record, was covered with another stone, the bottom surface being flat, and the upper, crowning. But those three pillars were not so lengthy as to cause the places and the crowning stone to come in contact.²¹

In the interim, on January 18, 1827, Joseph Smith married Emma Hale, the daughter of Isaac Hale and Elizabeth Lewis Hale, with whom he was boarding at the time in Chenango County, New York. Emma Hale was a rural school teacher, a highly intelligent person, and a devout Christian. Since this young couple married over the objections of Emma's father, they went to live with Joseph's parents for one year. In the fall of that same year, the plates were delivered to Joseph Smith. On September 22, 1827, accompanied partway by his young bride who waited for him at

²¹Oliver Cowdery, *A Reproduction of Letters Written by Oliver Cowdery* (Monongahela, Pennsylvania: The Church of Jesus Christ (Bickertonites), 1965), 34. These letters were originally written to W. W. Phelps and published in the *Messenger and Advocate* (Kirtland, Ohio), 1834-35).

the foot of the hill, Joseph went up the hill and received the plates from the divine messenger.

Joseph Smith Obtains the Plates

What went on in the mind of the young man as he made his way toward the hill where the plates were buried? Oliver Cowdery, in one of his letters to W. W. Phelps, reports that Joseph Smith, on his way to receive the plates, felt strongly tempted by Satan to selfishly obtain other valuable objects with the plates that would “add to his store of wealth.”²² Phelps explains this temptation as Joseph’s inexperience with the wiles of Satan, his youth, and his compassionate concern about his family’s straitened circumstances.

What lucrative temptations did Satan present to Joseph? No doubt, the demons of hell conjured up visions of wealth and fame from translating the plates and publishing them for profit. Little did he know that there is not much financial gain for an unknown person in the realm of publication! Did these evil messengers manage to obscure Joseph’s memory of Moroni’s warning that Joseph must “accomplish the work set before him with an eye single to the glory of God”? Apparently they did, for feelings of avarice were uppermost in Joseph’s mind as he opened the container where the plates lay. Oliver Cowdery states:

On attempting to take possession of the record, a shock was produced upon his system, by an invisible power, which deprived him, in a measure, of his natural strength. He desisted for an instant, and then made another attempt, but was more sensibly shocked than before. What was the occasion of this he knew not—there was the pure unsullied record, as had been described—he had heard of the power of enchantment, and a thousand like stories, which held the hidden treasures of the earth, and supposed that physical exertion and personal strength was only necessary to enable him to yet obtain the object of his wish. He therefore made the third attempt with an increased

²² Ibid., 36.

exertion, when his strength failed him more than at either of the former times, and without premeditating he exclaimed: "Why can I not obtain this book?" "Because you have not kept the commandments of the Lord," answered a voice within a seeming short distance.

He looked, and to his astonishment, there stood the angel who had previously given him the directions concerning this matter. In an instant, all the former instructions, the great intelligence concerning Israel and the last days, were brought to his mind: he thought of the time when his heart was fervently engaged in prayer to the Lord, when his spirit was contrite, and when his holy messenger from the skies unfolded the wonderful things connected with this record. He had come, to be sure, and found the word of the angel fulfilled concerning the reality of the record; but he had failed to remember the great end for which they had been kept, and in consequence could not have power to take them into his possession and bear them away.²³

According to Oliver Cowdery, Joseph repented on the hill before the holy messenger; and as a consequence, the herald of God gave him the plates which he eventually translated by "the gift and power of God." But the translation of the Book of Mormon is another chapter in this fascinating history.

²³Ibid., 35.

Chapter 2

TRANSLATION OF THE PLATES

Appearance of the Plates

In Joseph Smith's Wentworth Letter, he provided a detailed description of these precious plates:

These records were engraved on plates which had the appearance of gold. Each plate was six inches wide and eight inches long, and not quite so thick as common tin. They were filled with engravings in Egyptian characters, and bound together in a whole. The volume was something near six inches in thickness, a part of which was sealed. The characters on the unsealed part were small, and beautifully engraved. The whole book exhibited many marks of antiquity in its construction, and much skill in the art of engraving. With the records was found a curious instrument, which the ancients called "Urim and Thummim," which consisted of two transparent stones set in the rim of a bow, fastened to a breastplate. Through the medium of the Urim and Thummim I translated the record by the gift and power of God.²⁴

Opinions have varied as to how the translation was accom-

²⁴ As quoted in Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Co., 1981), 17-18.

plished. Because some have said that the Urim and Thummim was not always the means whereby the translation was completed, I have examined and assembled information regarding the translation of the plates to clarify the process and dispel doubts about this historical procedure. To do so, we must understand the nature and role of the Urim and Thummim, the instruments of translation. The Urim and Thummim

Joseph Smith described the Urim and Thummim in more detail:

*There is a set of bows, rather like spectacles, and in each rim there is set a clear three-cornered stone. . . they may be quartz; they may be diamonds, I don't know, but they appear to be glass. The Angel bade me take them, telling me that they were the Urim and Thummim which the ancient High-Priests of Israel used to determine the will of God; and he said I should use them in translating.*²⁵

Lucy Mack Smith, Joseph's mother, also described the Urim and Thummim:

*That of which I spoke, which Joseph termed a key, was indeed, nothing more or less than the Urim and Thummim, and it was by this that the angel showed him many things which he saw in vision; by which also he could ascertain, at any time, the approach of danger, either to himself or the Record, and on account of which he always kept the Urim and Thummim about his person.*²⁶

The Urim and Thummim are first mentioned in the Bible:

And thou shalt put on the breast-plate of judgment the Urim and Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron's

²⁵ As quoted in Margaret Wilson Gibson, *Emma Smith: The Elect Lady* (Independence: Herald House, 1954), p. 37.

²⁶ Lucy Mack Smith *History of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Stevens and Wallis, 1945), 110.

heart, when he goeth in before the Lord; and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the Lord continually. (Exodus 28:30)

And he [Moses] put the breast-plate upon him [Aaron]; also he put in the breast-plate the Urim and Thummim. (Leviticus 8:8; cf. Numbers 27:21; Deuteronomy 33:8)

The Book of Mormon states that some of the prophets in the Western Hemisphere used “two stones” to translate or interpret. The Brother of Jared, a great prophet, had in his possession “two stones” which the Lord commanded him to hide with his writings, until He should reveal them in the latter times. These “two stones” were to be used for the purpose of translating the writings of this prophet (Ether 3:31-28).

The Book of Mormon also records that about 92 B.C., Mosiah, a ruler-prophet, also had a set of “two stones fastened into the two rims of a bow” by which he translated (Mosiah 28:13). The interesting thing about these “two stones” is that, from their description, they resemble the Urim and Thummim which were in Joseph Smith’s possession.

Apparently there were more than one set of “two stones” for the purpose of translating. The Brother of Jared secreted a set of “two stones” which the Lord would reveal in the latter times, and Mosiah had another but similar set. It is written that “these things [two stones fastened into the two rims of a bow] were prepared from the beginning, and were handed down from generation to generation, for the purpose of translating languages” (Mosiah 28:14). While the Book of Mormon does not refer to the “two stones” as the Urim and Thummim, it is my opinion that Joseph Smith was given the same “two stones set in the two rims of a bow” which had once been in the possession of Mosiah. Did not the sacred records deposited in the earth by Moroni (Mormon 8:4) include the means whereby the records could be translated? And finally, Joseph Smith called these “two stones” the Urim and Thummim.²⁷

²⁷ For further information on the translation of the Book of Mormon, see V. James Loyalvo, *It is Written, Truth Shall Spring Out of the Earth* (Fresno: Mid-Cal Publishers, 1980). Chapter 25 in particular deals with the Urim and Thummim.

The Process of Translation

What does it mean, to translate “by the gift and power of God”? With few models for what this process might include, various views have been advanced. Some have been sincere attempts to delineate the translation process; others have been biased and outrageously critical. A considerable number of writers have expressed doubts about Joseph Smith’s claims to have translated the plates.

What did individuals close to Joseph Smith describe as the translation process? I here present several statements by those who were present during all or portions of the translation process and who observed or participated in it in one way or the other. We begin with a statement by Joseph Smith himself:

*Moroni, the person who deposited the plates . . . told me where they were; and gave me directions how to obtain them. I obtained them and the Urim and Thummim with them, by the means of which I translated the plates and thus came the Book of Mormon.*²⁸

On another occasion, he reiterated the most salient point: “Through the medium of the Urim and Thummim I translated the record by the gift and power of God.”²⁹

Oliver Cowdery, principal scribe in the translation of the plates, wrote an 1834 letter commenting on the translation process:

These were days never to be forgotten—to sit under the sound of a voice dictated by the inspiration of heaven, awakened the utmost gratitude of this bosom. Day after day I continued uninterruptedly to write from his mouth, as he translated, with the Urim and Thummim, or as the

²⁸ As quoted in Richard Van Wagoner and Steve Walker, “Joseph Smith: ‘The Gift of Seeing,’ *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 15 (Summer 1982): 49.

²⁹ Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 2nd ed. rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1961), 4:537.

*Nephites would have said, "Interpreters," the history, or record, called, "The Book of Mormon."*³⁰

One of the Three Witnesses like Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, also briefly a scribe, offers a different description.

*I will now give you a description of the manner in which the Book of Mormon was translated. Joseph Smith would put the seer stone into a hat, and put his face in the hat, drawing it closely around his face to exclude the light; and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something resembling parchment would appear, and under it was the interpretation in English. Brother Joseph would read off the English to Oliver Cowdery, who was his principle scribe, and when it was written down and repeated to Brother Joseph to see if it was correct, then it would disappear. Thus the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God, and not by any power of man.*³¹

In another statement attributed to him in the *Kansas City Journal* on 2 January 1888, Whitmer referred to "two stones" instead of one:

I, as well as all of my father's family, Smith's wife, Oliver Cowdery, and Martin Harris were present during the translation. He [Joseph] had two small stones of a chocolate color, nearly egg-shaped and perfectly smooth, but not transparent, called interpreters, which were given him with the plates. He did not use the plates in the translation, but would hold the interpreters to his eyes and

³⁰Oliver Cowdery, *A Reproduction of Letters Written by Oliver Cowdery* (Monongahela, Pennsylvania: The Church of Jesus Christ (Bickertonites), 1965), 34. These letters were originally written to W. W. Phelps and published in the *Messenger and Advocate* (Kirtland, Ohio), 1834-35).

³¹David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ* (Richmond, Missouri: n.pub., 1887), 12.

*cover his face with a hat, excluding all light.*³²

A fourth witness is William Smith, one of Joseph Smith's brothers. In a description published in 1883, he claimed Joseph translated by "looking into the Urim and Thummim which was placed in a hat to exclude the light."³³

George Q. Cannon, later an LDS General Authority and biographer of Joseph Smith, described the process this way:

*Joseph dictated to Martin Harris from the plates of gold, as the characters thereon assumed through the Urim and Thummim the forms of equivalent modern words which were familiar to the understanding of the youthful Seer.*³⁴

Andrew Jenson, assistant LDS Church Historian, did not know the Prophet personally, but had access to many historical documents. His account goes far toward reconciling the differences between versions that talk about the use of the Urim and Thummim and those that talk about stones. He explains that Joseph Smith began the translation of the plates with the Urim and Thummim. After translating 116 pages, he entrusted them to Martin Harris, who took them home to show to his skeptical family who opposed his involvement with Joseph Smith. A few days later, the distraught Harris reported that he had placed the manuscript in a bureau drawer for the night; next morning it was missing.

Lucy Mack Smith writes about Martin Harris with great affection but calls Mrs. Harris an "ill-natured and conniving" woman who schemed against the work of Joseph Smith in a variety of ways. She bribed a young man to make a copy of the characters in her husband's possession for her and, when Martin

³² As quoted in James Lancaster, "The Method of Translation of the Book of Mormon," *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 3(1983): 54.

³³ As quoted in James E. Lancaster, "By the Gift and Power of God," *John Whitmer Association Journal* 3 (1983): 56.

³⁴ As quoted in Paul R. Cheesman, *The Keystone of Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1973), 42.

exhibited them, took her own copy out and said “Joe Smith” was not the only one who had this curiosity. She rudely insisted on seeing the plates and, when denied, openly ransacked the house and then came back a second day to begin searching the grounds. A “horrible” black snake frightened her away.

When Martin Harris refused to break off his relations with Joseph Smith, despite Mrs. Harris’s harangues, she stripped the house of furniture, linen, and bedding. Mrs. Smith sums up: “There is no doubt” that Mrs. Harris stole the manuscript “with the view of retaining it until another translation should be given, then to alter the original translation, for this purpose of showing a discrepancy between them, and thus make the whole appear to be a deception.”³⁵

However, that section of the plates was not retranslated. Two different sets of records in the plates covered the same period, and Joseph was instructed to use the second version in place of the first version. Jenson continues:

As a chastisement for his [Smith’s] carelessness, the Urim and Thummim [were] taken from Smith. But by humbling himself, he again found favor with the Lord and was presented with a strange oval-shaped, chocolate colored stone about the size of an egg, but more flat, which it was promised should answer the same purpose. With this stone all the present book was translated. The prophet would place the stone in a hat, then put his face in the hat and read the words that appeared thereon. This stone was confided to Oliver Cowdery and preserved by him until his death in 1850. After that event, Phineas Young succeeded in getting it from Cowdery’s widow and it is now among the sacred relics preserved at Salt Lake City.³⁶

Lucy Mack Smith is emphatic, however, that Urim and Thummim were returned. She quotes her son: “After the angel left

³⁵ Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1958), 122, 131.

³⁶ As quoted in Van Wagoner and Walker, “Joseph Smith,” 52.

me. . . I continued my supplications to God, without cessation, and on the twenty-second of October, I had the joy and satisfaction of again receiving the Urim and Thummim, with which I have again commenced translating, and Emma writes for me, but the angel said that the Lord would send me a scribe, and I trust his promise will be verified. The angel seemed pleased with me when he gave me back the Urim and Thummim, and he told me the Lord loved me, for my faithfulness and humility.”³⁷ I must say that I firmly believe Joseph Smith’s mother would not deviate from the truth about such an important incident in her son’s life, and Oliver Cowdery confirms her statements.

Still another account comes from Joseph Knight, Sr. Born November 3, 1772, at Oakham, Worcester, Massachusetts, Knight occasionally employed Joseph Smith while Joseph was living in Harmony, Pennsylvania. A close friendship developed between the two men. Young Joseph confided in Knight the circumstances relative to the plates and the translation that was to be done; and Knight was actually a guest in the Smith home in Manchester on the date Joseph obtained the plates. In fact, he loaned Joseph and Emma his own horse and carriage the night Joseph received the plates.³⁸

Knight’s version of Smith’s method of translating the plates (with original spelling and punctuation intact) reads:

*Now the way he translated was he put the urim and thummim into his hat and Darkened his eyes then he would take a sentence and it would appear in Bright Roman letters. Then that would go away the next sentence would Come and so on. But if it was not spelt rite it would not go away till it was rite, so we see it was marvelous. Thus was the hol [whole] translated.*³⁹

Joseph Fielding Smith, also LDS Church Historian and later

³⁷ Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*.

³⁸ Dean Jessee, “Joseph Knight’s Recollection of Early Mormon History, Sept. 1827,” 35.

³⁹ As quoted in *ibid.*, 35.

one of its presidents, insisted Joseph Smith, his uncle, used only the Urim and Thummim. He believed that the “means of translation” hidden in the earth by Moroni were the instruments which Moroni gave Joseph Smith and denied that the translation involved use of a stone:

We have been taught since the days of the Prophet that the Urim and Thummim were returned with the plates to the angel. We have no record of the Prophet having the Urim and Thummim after the organization of the Church. Statements of translations by the Urim and Thummim after that date are evidently errors. The statement has been made that the Urim and Thummim was on the altar in the Manti Temple when that building was dedicated. The Urim and Thummim so spoken of, however, was the seer stone which was in the possession of the Prophet Joseph Smith in early days. This seer stone is now in the possession of the Church.

While the statement has been made by some writers that the prophet Joseph Smith used a seer stone part of the time in his translating of the record, and information points to the fact that he did have in his possession such a stone, yet there is no authentic statement in the history of the Church which states that the use of such a stone was made in that translation. The information is all hearsay. I do not believe that this stone was used for that purpose.⁴⁰

There is also a “stone” in custody of the RLDS Church, headquartered in Independence, Missouri, which was in possession of Hiram Page one of the Eight Witnesses. He said that its purpose was to receive “revelations” from the Lord. The RLDS Church does not take an official position on whether Joseph Smith used the Urim and Thummim or a “seer stone” to translate the plates but rather allows each person to draw his or her own conclusions.

This list does not exhaust all of the diverse accounts of the

⁴⁰*Doctrines of Salvation: Sermons and Writings of Joseph Fielding Smith*, compiled by Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1956), 3:225.

translation of the plates. It is not my intent to criticize or ridicule any of the accounts. However, as a strong believer in the Book of Mormon as a sacred record from the time of my conversion and after carefully examining and perusing the many accounts, I have concluded to accept the statements of translator Joseph Smith and chief scribe Oliver Cowdery that the “plates were translated by using the Urim and Thummim.” But even more important, for me, is their witness that “the plates were translated by the gift and power of God.” The means of translation are of secondary importance.

Assistants in the Translation Process

Three people assisted Joseph Smith in the translation process. When Joseph Smith found it difficult to pursue the translation alone, he acquired the services of Martin Harris as scribe. After the 116 pages were lost, Harris no longer served as scribe. Next, Emma, Joseph’s wife, assisted him, struggling to balance such assistance with her housework responsibilities. After Joseph Smith asked Lord to send him someone to act as scribe to help him finish the translation. Oliver Cowdery, a schoolteacher who was curious about reports of the Smith family, came to visit and proved to be the person sent to aid Joseph. He served as scribe until the process was complete.

Plates Returned to the Angel Moroni

After translating the plates, Joseph Smith returned the sacred record to the Angel Moroni: “When according to arrangement, the messenger called for them, I delivered them up to him, and he has been in charge until this day, being the second of May, One thousand eight hundred and thirty-eight.”⁴¹

Critics have argued that Joseph Smith should have preserved the plates as proof of the Book of Mormon’s divine origin. The implication is that because the plates cannot be produced, Joseph

⁴¹*History of the Church*, 1:18-19.

Smith's story must be false.

Must the Bible be proven authentic by producing the Ark of the Covenant? Can we see the stone tablets upon which were written the Ten Commandments? Skeptics are as numerous today, if not more so, as when Jesus was crucified. As he hung on the cross, they derided him by saying, "Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross that we may see and believe" (Mark 15:32). Would the unbelievers have truly accepted Jesus as Messiah if He had come down from the cross? Consider the miracles He performed and the thousands He fed. In many cases, those He healed or who were fed by Him did not follow Him.

Unbelievers may still argue that Christ should have shown Himself to Pilate and to the mob that thirsted after His blood to convince them that He was indeed the risen Messiah. What skeptics seem not to understand is that Jesus must be accepted by faith, not merely by the "seeing of the eye." Messrs. Weldon and Butterworth cite Evan Fry, who wrote, "I dare say that not one in 10,000 has ever seen any original manuscript of any book he has read. We judge books by their content, not by whether or not the original manuscript in the author's handwriting is still in existence."⁴²

The plates were returned to the Angel Moroni who had delivered them to Joseph Smith to translate. Twelve men—Joseph Smith, the Three Witnesses, and the Eight Witnesses—who saw and touched the plates attested that the Book of Mormon was the result of that translation. Their words are published in the front of every Book of Mormon. The Bible is accepted by millions of believers on the testimony of his first twelve apostles, the Pentateuch, and the written words of the ancient prophets.

God does not have to prove His existence nor Himself to anyone. He and His word must be accepted by faith; then He will disclose himself in His own manner. Humility and faith are two essential elements whereby God's will may be revealed to the seeker.

If one wants to know of the truth of the plates and the Book of

⁴² Roy E. Weldon and F. Edward Butterworth, *Criticisms of the Book of Mormon Answered* (Independence, Missouri: n.pub., n.d.), 55.

Mormon, the following verse is of considerable importance:

And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. (Moroni 10:4).

Chapter 3

WITNESSES OF THE PLATES

It has been a delight for the antagonists of the Book of Mormon to criticize unmercifully the eleven witnesses to the authenticity of the plates given to Joseph Smith by the Angel Moroni. Aspersions have been cast not only on their characters but also on their testimony about the veracity of the Book of Mormon. It has also been rumored that Joseph Smith conspired with these witnesses and, by clandestine methods, produced the Book of Mormon with the collective goal of enriching themselves and foisting upon the public a pseudo-religious record.

Appellations such as “hallucinations, delusions, conspiracy, deceivers, and imaginations” have been applied to Joseph Smith and the eleven witnesses by which the critics hoped to belittle and deprecate their testimony. In spite of all this, however, the testimony of the eleven witnesses has stood as an unshaken bulwark against the onslaught of the critics.

Although some of the witnesses became estranged from Joseph Smith at one time or another, they still remained constant and true to their testimony. Some renewed it on their deathbeds. Two—Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer—even had their testimonies inscribed on their tombstones where they may still be read in the cemetery at Richmond, Missouri. If there had been a collusion or conspiracy between Joseph Smith and any of the witnesses, would that not have been the most predictable accusation to be brought during a moment of estrangement? Would not one or more of these conspirators have been eager to expose Joseph

Smith as a fraud when anger and strife developed among them? It is a common occurrence that when criminals argue or dispute over their “spoils” gotten by subterfuge and conspiracy, and are faced with retribution, they make haste to denounce their partners in crime.

As a case in point, when Joseph Smith denounced Martin Harris, one of the three witnesses, as a “wicked man” (Doctrine and Covenants 3:12), would Harris not have wanted to counter-attack by exposing Smith as a fraud and a co-conspirator? Yet Harris remained true to his testimony about the veracity of the plates and the Book of Mormon.

There were eleven witnesses, in two different groups, during June 1829. During the course of translation, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris urged Joseph Smith to ask God if they could become the three special witnesses referred to in the Book of Mormon (Ether 5:2-4; II Nephi 11:3). Joseph supplicated the Lord on their behalf, and their request was granted.

In June 1829, the four men retired to a woods near the Whitmer home and prayed mightily to the Lord, each praying in turn. After two attempts went unanswered,

Martin Harris proposed that he should withdraw . . . believing . . . that his presence was the cause of our not obtaining what we wished for us. He accordingly withdrew . . . and [we] had not been many minutes engaged in prayer, when presently we beheld a light above us in the air, of exceeding brightness; and behold, an angel stood before us. In his hands he held the plates. . . . He turned over the leaves one by one, so that we could see them, and discern the engravings thereon distinctly. He then addressed himself to David Whitmer, and said, “David, blessed is the Lord, and he that keeps his commandments;” when, immediately afterwards, we heard a voice from out of the bright light above us, saying, “These plates have been revealed by the power of God, and they have been translated by the power of God. The translation of them which you have seen is correct, and I command you to bear

record of what you now see and hear.”

I now . . . went in pursuit of Martin Harris, whom I found at a considerable distance, fervently engaged in prayer . . . and earnestly requested me to join him in prayer. . . . Before we had yet finished, the same vision was open to our view, at least it was again opened to me, and I once more beheld and heard the same things; whilst at the same moment, Martin Harris cried out, apparently in an ecstasy of joy, “’Tis enough; ’tis enough; mine eyes have beheld.”

The second experience involved no angelic ministrations; but after prayer with the Eight Witnesses, Joseph Smith put the plates into their hands “and they . . . handled them and examined the engravings upon them.”⁴³

It is awe-inspiring to the imagination that, in the nineteenth century, God would condescend to give mere mortals such divine experiences. But, notwithstanding the criticisms attending their testimonies, these eleven witnesses never retracted their statements, never balked at telling all who asked of the glory and divine manifestation which they had been privileged to behold, nor at any time denied that the Book of Mormon was translated by the “gift and power of God.”

The Importance of the Witnesses

All events of historical importance have been substantiated by special witnesses. The birth of Jesus was heralded by angels and witnessed by the shepherds and the wise men of the Orient. The Resurrection was witnessed by the apostles and some of the faithful women. On this Western Hemisphere, the descent of Christ from heaven was witnessed by many after the destruction and upheaval of the land during His crucifixion.

Should not then an important event such as receiving and translating the plates be witnessed by others besides Joseph Smith? The whole Christian world accepts the Bible and the

⁴³ *History of the Church*, 1:54-56.

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witness and writings of some who were present with Jesus Christ, and yet scoff at the testimony of twelve honest and sincere men of the nineteenth century who said that they saw the plates and that the angel of God appeared to four of them (Joseph Smith and the Three Witnesses), showing them not only the plates but other sacred items.

The Book of Mormon itself states that there would be three witnesses to it and that the plates would be shown not only to three witnesses but to others as well. Moroni, who gave the plates to Joseph Smith, was one of those who prophesied about the witnesses:

And now I, Moroni, have written the words which were commanded me, according to my memory; and I have told you the things which I have sealed up; therefore, touch them not in order that ye may translate; for that thing is forbidden you, except by and by it shall be wisdom in God. And behold, ye may be privileged that ye may show the plates unto those who shall assist to bring forth this work; and unto three shall they be shown by the power of God; wherefore, they shall know of a surety that these things are true. And in the mouth of three witnesses shall these things be established; and the testimony of three, and this work, in which shall be shown forth the power of God, and also his word, of which the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost bear record; and all this shall stand as a testimony against the world at the last day. . . .(Ether 5:1-4)

. . . Wherefore, by the words of three, God hath said, I will establish my word. Nevertheless, God sendeth more witnesses, and he proveth all his words. (II Nephi 11:3).

Wherefore, at that day when the book shall be delivered unto the man of whom I have spoken, the book shall be hid from the eyes of the world, that the eyes of none shall behold it save it be the three witnesses shall behold it, by the power of God, besides him to whom the book shall be delivered; and they shall testify to the truth of the book, and the things therein.

And there is none other that shall view it, save it be a few according to the will of God, to bear witness of his

word unto the children of men; for the Lord God hath said that the words of the faithful should speak as if it were from the dead. (II Nephi 27:12-13)

Testimonies of the Eleven Witnesses

The testimony of the three witnesses to the angel, the plates, its engravings, and its translation is inscribed in the front pages of every Book of Mormon:

Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come; That we, through the grace of God the Father, and Our Lord Jesus Christ, have seen the plates which contain this record, which is a record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites, their brethren; and also of the people of Jared, who came from the Tower of which hath been spoken. And we also know that they have been translated by the gift and power of God, for His voice hath declared it unto us; wherefore we know of a surety that the work is true. And we also testify that we have seen the engravings which are upon the plates; and they have been shown unto us by the power of Gos, and not of man. We declare with words of soberness, that an angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon; and we know that it is by the grace of God the Father, and Our Lord Jesus Christ, that we beheld and bear record that these things are true. And it is marvelous in our eyes. Nevertheless the voice of the Lord commanded us that we should bear record of it; wherefore, to be obedient to the commandments of God, we bear testimony of these things. And we know that if we are faithful in Christ, we shall rid our garments of the blood of all men, and be found spotless before the judgment seat of Christ, and shall dwell with Him eternally in the heavens. And the honor be to the

Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, which is one God. Amen.

Oliver Cowdery
David Whitmer
Martin Harris

The testimony of the Eight Witnesses is that they saw and touched the plates, although they did not see the angel. This testimony is also inscribed in the front pages of the Book of Mormon:

Be it know unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come; That Joseph Smith, Jun., the translator of this work, has shown us the plates of which hath been spoken, which have the appearance of gold; and as many of the leaves as the said Smith has translated, we did handle with our hands; and we also saw the engravings thereon, all of which has the appearance of ancient work, and of curious workmanship. And this we bear record with words of soberness, that the said Smith hath shown unto us, for we have seen and hefted, and know of a surety that the said Smith has got the plates of which we have spoken. And we give our names unto the world, to witness unto the world that which we have seen. And we lie not, God bearing witness of it.

Christian Whitmer
Jacob Whitmer
Peter Whitmer, Jr.
John Whitmer

Hiram Page
Joseph Smith, Senior
Hyrum Smith
Samuel H. Smith

Biographies of the Three Witnesses

Oliver Cowdery

Oliver Cowdery was born on October 3, 1806, in Wells, Rutland County, Vermont. His schooling led him to become a teacher. He taught school near the home of the Smiths and, while

boarding with them, he heard about Joseph Smith's vision and his subsequent receiving of the plates. On April 5, 1829, he met Joseph Smith. After conversing with him for a short while, Cowdery became convinced of the truth which he was hearing from this young man, only nine months older than he. Two days later he began to write the translation as Joseph Smith dictated to him.

Cowdery describes his meeting with Joseph Smith and the translation as follows:

Near the setting of the sun, Sabbath evening, April 5th, 1829, my natural eyes for the first time beheld this brother. He then resided in Harmony, Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania. On Monday, the 6th, I assisted him in arranging some business of a temporal nature and on Tuesday, the 7th, commenced to write the Book of Mormon.⁴⁴

The translation was completed in ninety days, from April 7, 1829, to July 1, 1829. On May 15, 1829, priesthood authority was restored to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery by an angel. Immediately afterwards, Joseph baptized Oliver, and in turn Oliver baptized Joseph. Cowdery describes the event in glowing terms:

The Lord who is rich in mercy, and ever willing to answer the consistent prayer of the humble, after we had called upon Him in a fervent manner, aside from the abodes of men, condescended to manifest to us His will. On a sudden, as from the midst of eternity, the voice of the Redeemer spake peace unto us, while the veil was parted and the angel of God came down clothed with glory, and delivered the anxiously awaited for message, and the keys of the gospel of repentance. . . . Then his voice, though

⁴⁴ Oliver Cowdery, *A Reproduction of Letters Written by Oliver Cowdery by The Church of Jesus Christ* (Bickertonites) (Monongahela, Pennsylvania: The Church of Jesus Christ (Bickertonites), 1965), 3. These letters were first published in the *Messenger and Advocate* (Kirtland, Ohio, 1834-35).

mild, pierced to the center, and his words, "i am thy fellow-servant," dispelled every fear. We listened; we gazed; we admired. 'Twas the voice of the angel from glory; 'twas a message from the Most High... But, dear brother, think,, further think for a moment, what joyfilled our hearts, and with what surprise we must have bowed, (for who would not have bowed the knee for such a blessing?) when we received under his hand the holy priesthood, as he said, "Upon you, my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer this priesthood and this authority, which shall remain upon earth, that the sons of Levi may yet offer an offering unto the Lord in righteousness."⁴⁵

On April 6, 1830, six persons met at the home of Peter Whitmer, Sr., and organized the Church. Those present were Oliver Cowdery, Joseph Smith, Jr., Hyrum Smith, Peter Whitmer, Jr., Samuel H. Smith, and David Whitmer.

After a few years had elapsed, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery became estranged. He allied himself with his Whitmer relatives as serious differences arose in the church and finally, in 1838, he left the church. He then went into the practice of law which brought him eventually in the city of Tiffin, Ohio. He became active in the political arena and, in 1839, was chosen as one of the thirteen delegates from Geauga County to the bi-county senatorial convention.⁴⁶

During the years that Cowdery was away from the church he nevertheless remained true to his testimony although he did not practice his faith as before. One day, in court, he was attacked viciously by an opposing attorney for his former association with the Book of Mormon. He promptly arose, and very calmly but with distinction and striking effect, defended his testimony:

If your honor please, the gentlemen of the jury, the

⁴⁵ Ibid., 4.

⁴⁶ Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1981), 39-40.

attorney of the opposite side has challenged me to state my connection with Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon; and as I cannot now avoid the responsibility, I must admit to you that I am the very Oliver Cowdery whose name is attached to the testimony, with others, as to the appearance of the angel Moroni; and let me tell you that it is not because of my good deeds that I am here, away from the body of the Mormon church, but because I have broken the covenants I once made; and I was cut off from the church; but, gentlemen of the jury, I have never denied my testimony, which is attached to the front page of the Book of Mormon, and I declare to you here that these eyes saw the angel, and these ears of mine heard the voice of the angel, and he told us his name was Moroni; that the book was true, and contained the fullness of the gospel, and we were also told that if we ever denied what we had heard and seen that there would be no forgiveness for us, neither in this world nor in the world to come.⁴⁷

Shortly after this, he returned to the church, but soon contracted a lung disease which brought about his death in Richmond, Missouri, on March 8, 1850. Although Cowdery differed with Joseph Smith on various points of doctrinal understanding, he nonetheless affirmed and reaffirmed his experiences regarding the translation of the plates, the appearance of the angel, and the reality of the plates and other sacred articles. If the translation of the plates was a conspiracy and a hoax, as some critics say, the estrangement from Smith would have resulted in Cowdery's exposing all the witnesses, especially Joseph Smith, as frauds. But this never happened because Cowdery never faltered in testifying about the veracity of the translation of the plates and young Joseph's sincerity in the whole matter.

David Whitmer

David Whitmer was born January 7, 1805 (Joseph was born

⁴⁷William E. Barrett and Elmer P. Burton, *Church History*, (Salt Lake City, Utah: LDS Publishers, 1951), 1:60-61.

eleven months later in December 1805) in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. He was characterized as a “natural leader” all his life. At twenty years of age, he was serving as sergeant in the newly organized militia company known as the Seneca Grenadiers.⁴⁸ He was a public-spirited person, holding political positions on fair boards and elected as city councilman. His political and business career developed after he resigned from the Church.

Motivated by letters written to him by Oliver Cowdery regarding the plates which were being translated by Joseph Smith, and requesting the hospitality of Whitmer’s home, David made a two-hundred-mile trip with team and wagon to move the translators to his home. Apparently he was intimate with the work of translation.

Lucy Mack Smith records a miraculous experience regarding David Whitmer. Before going to meet Joseph, David asked the Lord for a witness and was told to leave as soon as his wheat was harrowed in. He had two heavy days’ work before him and thought that if he could do this work in less than two days it would be a witness to him.

He worked unceasingly and discovered, at evening, that he had finished the labor. The next morning, he went out to sow plaster of Paris in his field. He had left it in heaps near his sister’s home, but now it was gone. She said it had been sown the day before; her children had come in reporting that they had never seen men sow plaster so fast in their lives. She thought these were David’s workmen, but he was unable to find out who had completed his work for him. Tenderly recognizing that a supernatural power was connected with this occurrence, he went off to complete his commitment to Joseph Smith.

David Whitmer was a farmer like his father before him. It is said that he was strong of build and of average height, had dark eyes, and was quite handsome. He was baptized in June 1829 and excommunicated in 1838. He never returned to the church; however, he never denied his testimony of seeing the angel, the sacred records, and witnessing the translation of the plates.

⁴⁸ Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, 68; he cites *Kansas City Daily Journal*, June 5, 1881.

What made David Whitmer resign from the Church has been a question answered with various opinions. He did not agree with some of the things introduced in the church such as the institution of high priests, the doctrine of “one man” leadership, Joseph Smith’s translation of works other than the Book of Mormon, and possibly suspicion of Sydney Rigdon’s influence over Joseph Smith.⁴⁹

David Whitmer’s integrity and honesty none can deny. He was a highly respected man in his community up to the day he died. Hiram Parker, a locally respected insurance agent in Whitmer’s neighborhood during the 1870, had a relationship with Whitmer so close that he called him Uncle Davy. Parker wrote:

No one could know Uncle Davy and not like and trust him. . . Children liked him, men respected him and trusted him, and I never heard a word from anyone during my ten year’s acquaintance with him and those who had known him intimately for years that spoke a harsh word or uttered a doubt as to his truthfulness and general kindness of heart.⁵⁰

It is reported that of all the witnesses, David Whitmer was the most interviewed. Richard Anderson has written a composite interview documented in multiple situations during the last decade of his life which reveals the integrity and honesty of David Whitmer. (See his essay for documentation on each point Whitmer testifies to.)

Q: Is your published testimony accurate?

A: As you read my testimony given many years ago, so it stands as my own existence, the same as when I gave it, and so shall stand throughout the cycles of eternity.

Q: When did this event take place?

A: It was in June, 1829, the very last part of the month.

Q: What was the approximate time of day?

⁴⁹David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ* (Richmond, Missouri: n. pub., 1887), 32ff.

⁵⁰As quoted in Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, p. 75.

A: *It was about 11 a.m.*

Q: *What were the circumstances of the vision?*

A: *[We] went out into the woods nearby, and sat down on a log and talked awhile. We then kneeled down and prayed. Joseph prayed. We then got up and sat on the log and were talking, when all at once a light came down from above us and encircled us for quite a little distance around, and the angel stood before us.*

Q: *Describe the angel.*

A: *He was dressed in white, and spoke and called me by name and said, "Blessed is he that keepeth His commandments." This is all I heard the angel say.*

Q: *Did the angel have the Book of Mormon plates?*

A: *[He] showed to us the plates, the sword of Laban, the Directors, the Urim and Thummim, and other records. Human language could not describe heavenly things and that which we saw.*

Q: *Did the vision take place under natural circumstances?*

A: *The fact is, it was just as though Joseph, Oliver and I were sitting right here on a log, when we were overshadowed by a light. It was not like the light of the sun, nor like that of a fire, but more glorious and beautiful. It extended away round us, I cannot tell how far, but in the midst of this light, immediately before us, about as far off as he sits (pointing to John C. Whitmer, who was sitting 2 or 3 feet from him) there appeared, as it were, a table, with many records on it—besides the plates of the Book of Mormon, also the sword of Laban, the Directors, and the Interpreters. I saw them as plain as I see this bed (striking his hand upon the bed beside him), and I heard the voice of the Lord as distinctly as I ever heard anything in my life declaring that they were translated by the gift and power of God.*

Q: *Can you explain the supernatural power that surrounded you?*

A: *All of a sudden I saw a dazzling brilliant light that surpassed in brightness even the sun at noonday, and*

which seemed to develop the woods for a considerable distance around. Simultaneous with the light came a strange entrancing influence which permeated me so powerfully that I felt chained to the spot, while I also experienced a sensation of joy absolutely indescribable.

Q: Did you see the Urim and Thummim?

A: I saw the Interpreters in the holy vision; they looked like whitish stones put in the rim of a bow—looked like spectacles, only much larger.

Q: Did you see an actual table?

A: You see that small table by the wall? . . . Well, there was a table about that size, and the heavenly messenger brought the several plates and laid them on the table before our eyes, and we saw them.

Q: Did you handle the plates?

A: I did not handle the plates—only saw them. Joseph, and I think Oliver and Emma told me about the plates, and described them to me, and I believed them, but did not see except at the time testified of.

Q: How clearly could you see the plates?

A: The angel stood before us, and he turned the leaves one by one. [H]e held the plates and turned them over with his hands, so that they could be plainly visible.

Q: Did the angel turn all the leaves before you as you looked on it?

A: No, not all, only that part of the book which was not sealed, and what there was sealed appeared as solid to my view as wood.

Q: Can you describe the plates?

A: They appeared to be of gold, about six by nine inches in size, about as thick as parchment, a great many in number and bound together like the leaves of a book by massive rings passing through the back edges. The engraving upon them was very plain and of very curious appearance.

Q: Is it possible that you imagined this experience?

A: [O]ur testimony is true. And if these things are not

true, then there is no truth; and if there is no truth, there is no God; and if there is no God, there is no existence. But I know there is a God, for I have heard His voice and witnessed the manifestation of His power.

Q: Do you remember the peculiar sensation experienced upon that occasion?

A: Yes, I remember it very distinctly. And I never think of it, from that day to this, but what that spirit is present with me. If you are open to investigation and conviction, I pray you read the Book of Mormon with a prayerful heart. . . . The Book carries conviction with it.⁵¹

These responses by David Whitmer, reconstructed by Richard L. Anderson in dialogue format but using actual documented words that Whitmer spoke on a variety of occasions, breathe sincerity. Without hesitation, he declared to all who would inquire that he “saw the angel, the plates, the Urim and Thummim, the sword of Laban, and other sacred records.” However, there were some who, in spite of his honesty, disbelieve and scoff at his heavenly experience. David Whitmer, in his *Address to All Believers in Christ*, says that the *American Encyclopaedia* and the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* recorded that he, as well as Oliver Cowdery and Martin Harris, had denied his testimony as one of the witnesses to the divinity of the Book of Mormon. On the contrary, asserted Whitmer in his pamphlet, published March 19, 1880:

I will say once more to all mankind, that I have never at any time denied that testimony or any part thereof. I also testify to the world, that neither Oliver Cowdery or Martin Harris ever at any time denied their testimony. They both died reaffirming the truth of the divine authenticity of the Book of Mormon. I was present at the death bed of Oliver Cowdery, and his last words were, “Brother David, be

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 82.

true to your testimony to the Book of Mormon.” He died here in Richmond, Mo., on March 3, 1850. Many witnesses yet live in Richmond, who will testify to the truth of these facts, as well as to the good character of Oliver Cowdery. The very powers of darkness have combined against the Book of Mormon, to prove that it is not the Word of God, and this should go to prove to men of spiritual understanding, that the Book is true.⁵²

To further affirm his declaration, in March 1881, Whitmer printed and distributed the following announcement:

“A PROCLAMATION”

Unto all Nations, Kindred, Tongues and People, unto whom these presents shall come:

It having been represented by one John Murphy, of Polo, Caldwell County, Mo., that I, in a conversation with him last summer, denied my testimony as one of the three witnesses to the “Book of Mormon.”

To the end, therefore, that he may understand me now, if he did not then; and that the world may know the truth, I wish now, standing as it were, in the very sunset of life, and in the fear of God, once for all to make this public statement:

That I have never at any time denied that testimony or any part thereof, which has so long since been published with that Book, as one of the three witnesses. Those who know me best, well know that I have always adhered to that testimony. And that no man may be misled or doubt my present views in regard to the same, I do again affirm the truth of all my statements, as then made and published.

He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear; it was no delusion! What is written is written, and he that readeth let him understand.

. . . And if any man doubt should he not carefully and honestly read and understand the same, before presuming

⁵² Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers*, 8.

to sit in judgment and condemning the light, which shineth in darkness, and showeth the way of eternal life as pointed out by the unerring hand of God.

In the spirit of Christ who hath said, "Follow thou me, for I am the life, the light and the way," I submit this statement to the world. God in whom I trust being my judge as to the sincerity of my motives and the faith and hope that is in me of eternal life.

My sincere desire is that the world may be benefitted by this plain and simple statement of the truth.

And all the honor be to the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, which is one God. Amen.⁵³

David Whitmer claimed that "thousands of people" had spoken with him concerning his testimony, sometimes fifteen or twenty in a day.⁵⁴ If this witness had been deceived either by man or some power other than God's, would he not have faltered in the thousands of times that he had to repeat his testimony? Yet he never changed one iota of his testimony during his entire life.

One particular event is of interest. One evening on January 9, 1872, two visitors named Henry Moon and John Lefler arrived at David Whitmer's home to speak with him concerning his testimony. Being very tired and probably a little irritable at the unexpected company, he sought to avoid speaking to these gentlemen by leaving the house to perform an errand in his livery stable. Nonetheless, these men followed him and, despite his fatigue, prevailed upon him to tell his story. Moon wrote:

We followed him in the street, and I told him that the gentleman with me had come to hear what he had to say with regard to the Book of Mormon. I told Mr. Whitmer I had been reading the testimony of the Witnesses to Mr. Lefler, and . . . he was anxious to hear . . . for himself. "Now Mr. Whitmer, here is the gentleman. What have you to say to him?" Mr. Whitmer turned towards Mr. Lefler and said,

⁵³ Ibid., 9.

⁵⁴ Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, 84.

*“Well, God Almighty requires at my hand to bear testimony to the truth of the Book of Mormon. It is the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ, translated from the plates by the gift and power of God by Joseph Smith. . . . I know I tell the truth.”*⁵⁵

To underscore David Whitmer’s unimpeachable character, many reputable citizens signed the following affidavit to attest to his dependability and honesty.

We, the undersigned citizens of Richmond, Ray County, Mo., where David Whitmer has resided since the year A.D. 1838, certify that we have been long and intimately acquainted with him and know him to be a man of the highest integrity, and of undoubted truth and veracity.

Given at Richmond, Mo., this March 19, 1881.

Gen. Alexander W. Doniphan

L. C. Cantwell, Postmaster, Richmond

Hon. Geo. W. Dunn, Judge of the Fifth Judicial Circuit

Geo. I. Wasson, Mayor

Jas. A. Davis, County Collector.

Thos. D. Woodson, President of Ray Co. Savings Bank.

C. J. Hughes, Probate Judge and Presiding Justice of Ray Co. Court

*J. T. Child, editor of **Conservator***

Geo. W. Trigg, County Clerk

H. C. Garner, Cashier of Ray Co. Savings Bank

W. W. Mosby, M.D.

Thos. McGinnis, ex-Sheriff Ray Co.

W. A. Holman, County Treasurer

J. P. Queensbury, Merchant

J. S. Hughes, Banker, Richmond

W. R. Holman, Furniture Merchant

James Hughes, Banker, Richmond

Lewis Slaughter, Recorder of Deeds

D. P. Whitmer, Attorney-at-Law

Geo. W. Buchanan, M.D.

Hon. Jas. W. Black, Attorney-at-Law

*A. K. Rayburn*⁵⁶

⁵⁵ As quoted in Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, 85.

⁵⁶ Whitmer, “An Address to All Believers,” pp. 9-10.

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A volume could be filled on the honesty and integrity of David Whitmer's character, and his staunchness in telling the world about his testimony to the truth of the Book of Mormon. But suffice it to know that he remained faithful to his witness up to his death. The scoffers of his testimony will, as they stand before their Maker, know the whole truth concerning the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.

Martin Harris

Martin Harris was born May 18, 1783. He was forty-six years old when he was shown the plates while in the company of Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and David Whitmer. On April 6, 1830, he was baptized. However, he disagreed with certain Church policies, and his loss of confidence in Joseph Smith resulted in his excommunication from the Church in 1838.⁵⁷

Martin Harris was a shrewd, hard-working farmer, honest and very frugal. His testimony concerning the Book of Mormon was accepted by a few and ridiculed by many, especially by journalists. Pomeroy Tucker, an editor, portrayed Harris as a fanatic, yet an "honest man."⁵⁸ Tucker was an associate of E. B. Grandin in the printing of the Book of Mormon. Anderson says that Tucker had "frequent and familiar interviews with Harris during the production of the Book of Mormon, and in the previous year, just weeks after the experience of Martin's seeing the angel and the plates, joined Grandin in seeking to divert Harris from his persistent fanaticism in that losing speculation." But Tucker was convinced that Martin Harris firmly believed in the genuineness of Joseph Smith's claims and was "honest and benevolent, a prosperous, independent farmer, strictly upright in his business dealings."⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, note 13, p. 119. He quotes a letter from John Smith, an uncle of Joseph Smith and then a member of the First Presidency, to George A. Smith, dated January 1, 1838, Kirtland, Ohio: "I called the High Council together last week and laid before them the case of a company of dissenters—28 persons—whereupon after mature discussion [we] proceeded to cut them off from the Church. The leaders were Cyrus Smalling, Joseph Coe, Martin Harris, Luke Johnson, John Boynton, and W. W. Parrish."

⁵⁸ As quoted in *ibid.*, 98.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

One of the most complimentary evaluations of Martin Harris came from E. B. Grandin, editor of the *Wayne Sentinel* and printer of the first edition of the Book of Mormon. In the years of 1827-32, Grandin got to know Harris very intimately. Grandin felt that Harris was a thoughtful, religiously independent man. He respected Harris, although he considered him deluded, because of his testimony of the plates:

*Mr. Harris was among the early settlers of this town [Palmyra], and has ever borne the character of an honorable and upright man, and an obliging and benevolent neighbor. He had secured to himself by honest industry a respectable fortune—and he has left a large circle of acquaintances and friends to pity his delusion.*⁶⁰

Whether friend or foe, no one could doubt or say aught against Martin Harris's honesty and integrity.

His acceptance of Joseph Smith's story of having some "gold plates" and the wherewithal to translate these plates was not an immediate one. After his wife and daughter had made some inquiry into this unique story, he visited the Smiths. According to an 1859 interview, he talked to the Smiths separately to "see if their stories agreed." Satisfied that they did, he was permitted to lift the box containing the plates. He concluded, after lifting the box, that it must contain metal as heavy as lead or gold, and he "knew that Joseph did not have enough credit to buy so much lead."⁶¹

As his friendship with Joseph Smith grew and the translation proceeded, Harris, to satisfy his curiosity or doubts, took a copy of some characters transcribed from the plates to some prominent linguists, including Charles Anthon of Columbia University. Anthon, recalling the visit in later years, said he told Harris that "there would be no risk in the matter before pledging to spend his money" for the printing.⁶² Martin Harris's recollection of his visit

⁶⁰ As quoted in *ibid.*, 102.

⁶¹ As quoted in *ibid.*, 107.

⁶² As quoted in *ibid.*, 108.

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to Professor Anthon is as follows:

I went to the city of New York and presented the characters which had been translated, with the translation thereof, to Professor Charles Anthon, a gentlemen celebrated for his literary achievements. Professor Anthon stated that the translation was correct, more so than any he had before seen translated from the Egyptian. I then showed him those which had not yet translated, and he said that they were Egyptian, Chaldaic, Assyric, and Arabic; and he said that they were true characters. He gave me a certificate, certifying to the people of Palmyra that they were true characters, and that the translation of such of them as had been translated was also correct. I took the certificate and put it into my pocket, and was just leaving the house, when Mr. Anthon called me back, and asked me how the young man found that there were gold plates in the place where he found them. I answered that an angel of God had revealed it unto him.

He then said unto me, "let me see that certificate." I accordingly took it out of my pocket and gave it to him, when he took it and tore it to pieces, saying, that there was no such thing as ministering of angels, and that if I would bring the plates to him, he would translate them. I informed him that part of the plates were sealed, and that I was forbidden to bring them. He replied, "I cannot read a sealed book." I left him and went to Dr. Mitchell, who sanctioned what Professor Anthon had said respecting both the characters and the translation.⁶³

In June 1829, all doubts and fears were dispelled when Martin Harris, along with Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and David Whitmer beheld the angel who showed them the plates and other sacred records. On every occasion, whenever he was asked concerning his testimony, he would always recount this wonderful experience and the ecstasy of joy which filled his heart and made

⁶³*History of the Church*, 1:20.

him cry out, "'Tis enough; 'tis enough; mine eyes have beheld; mine eyes have beheld; Hosanna!"⁶⁴

However, an incident which took place during the translation of the Book of Mormon, must have left a bitter memory in Martin's life. He would always blame himself for the loss of the first 116 pages of translated manuscript. He had begged Joseph Smith—when 116 pages had been translated—to allow him to take them home and show them to certain of his family. Joseph inquired of the Lord but was told not to give them to Harris. Nonetheless, Joseph kept asking God until He granted the request. Harris took them home and, rather than showing the manuscript pages only to members of his family, allowed others to see them. That night he put them away; but the next morning, to his dismay, they were gone. Keenly aware that the Lord had first denied Joseph Smith permission to entrust the 116 pages to him, he must have felt the most bitter remorse. The Lord's punishment was to take the Urim and Thummim away from Joseph Smith until he had properly humbled himself; then he returned the "Interpreters" with severe admonitions to remember always the commandments of God.⁶⁵

A Mr. W. H. Homer interviewed Martin Harris and left this record of the interview:

"What about your testimony to the Book of Mormon? Do you still believe that the Book of Mormon is true and that Joseph Smith is a prophet?"

Again the effect was electric. A changed old man stood before me. He was no longer a man with an imagined grievance. He was a man with a message.

"Young man," answered Martin Harris with impressiveness, "Do I see the sun shining? Just as surely as the sun is shining on us and gives us light, and the moon and stars give us light by night, just as surely as the breath of life sustains us, so surely do I know that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God, chosen of God to open the last

⁶⁴ Ibid., 55.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 21.

dispensation of the fulness of times; so surely do I know that the *Book of Mormon* was divinely translated. I saw the plates; I saw the angel; I heard the voice of God. I know that the *Book of Mormon* is true and that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God. I might as well doubt my own existence as to doubt the divine authenticity of the *Book of Mormon*, or the divine calling of Joseph Smith.”⁶⁶

Martin Harris was rebaptized and came to Utah in 1870 where he continued to bear witness of his heavenly experience until he died on July 10, 1875, with his testimony of the *Book of Mormon* upon his aged lips and sealed in his heart forever.

Biographical Sketches of the Eight Witnesses

Joseph Smith, Sr.

Andrew Jenson supplies this biographical data about the Joseph Smith, Sr., family:⁶⁷

Joseph Smith, senior, the father of young Joseph, was born July 12, 1771, in Topsfield, Essex County, Massachusetts. He was the second son of Asahel Smith and Mary Duty Smith. In 1791, the family moved to Tunbridge, Orange County, Vermont, where Joseph assisted in clearing a large farm of a heavy growth of timber. He married Lucy, daughter of Solomon and Lydia Mack, on January 24, 1796, by whom he had ten children, namely, Alvin, born February 11, 1798; Hyrum, born February 9, 1800; Sophronia, born May 16, 1803; Joseph, born December 23, 1805; Samuel Harrison, born March 13, 1808; Ephraim, born March 13, 1810; William, born

⁶⁶ As quoted in Roy E. Weldon and F. Edward Butterworth, *Criticisms of the Book of Mormon Answered* (Independence, Missouri: Herald House, 1973), 56.

⁶⁷ The biographical material which follows comes from Andrew Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Andrew Jenson History Company, 1901-36), 1:181-82.

March 13, 1811; Catherine, born July 28, 1812; Don Carlos, born March 25, 1816; and Lucy, born July 18, 1824.

In 1816 Joseph and Lucy moved with their children to Palmyra, Wayne County, New York, bought a farm and cleared two hundred acres. Joseph, Sr., lost this farm in consequence of not being able to pay the last installment of the purchase money at the time it was due. The children married in due course; those still at home moved with Lucy and Joseph to Manchester, Ontario County, New York, procured a comfortable home with sixteen acres of land, and lived there until they moved to Kirtland, Ohio.

Joseph Smith, Sr., was the first person to receive his son Joseph's testimony after he had seen the angel. He exhorted young Joseph to be faithful to and diligent in keeping the instructions he had received.

In August 1830, in company with his son Don Carlos, Joseph, Sr., took a mission to St. Lawrence County, New York, touching on his route at several of the Canadian ports, where he distributed a few copies of the Book of Mormon. He visited with his father, brothers, and sisters residing in St. Lawrence County, bearing a fervent testimony to the truth which eventually resulted in all the family coming into the church except for his brother Jesse and sister Susan.

Joseph, Sr., in 1836, traveled with his brother John 2,400 miles in Ohio, New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and New Hampshire, visiting the branches in those states, preaching the gospel to all who would hear, and baptizing many. They arrived in Kirtland October 2, 1836. During the persecution in Kirtland in 1837, Joseph, Sr., was made a prisoner but fortunately obtained his freedom; and after a very tedious journey in the spring and summer of 1838, he arrived at Far West, Missouri. After his sons, Hyrum and Joseph, were thrown into the Missouri jails by the mob, he fled from the exterminating order of Governor Lilburn W. Boggs and made his escape in midwinter to Quincy, Illinois, from whence he removed to Commerce in

the spring of 1839, thus becoming one of the founders of Nauvoo.

The exposures he suffered brought on consumption, of which he died September 14, 1840, aged sixty-nine years, two months, and two days. He was six feet, two inches tall, was very straight, and remarkably well proportioned. He weighed about two hundred pounds, and was a very strong and active man.

He was one of the most benevolent of men, opening his house to all who were destitute. While at Quincy, Illinois, he fed hundreds of the poor Saints who were fleeing from the persecutions in Missouri, although he had arrived there penniless.

Hyrum Smith

Hyrum Smith was born in Tunbridge, Vermont, February 9, 1800.⁶⁸ He was the second son of Joseph Smith, Sr., and Lucy Mack Smith. When about nineteen years of age, he moved with his father's family to western New York. He married Jerusha Barden, on November 2, 1826. This marriage was blessed with six children: Lovina, Mary, John, Hyrum, Jerusha, and Sarah. His wife died on October 13, 1827, while he was in Far West, Missouri. The same year, he married Mary Fielding by whom he had two children, Joseph Fielding (known as "Joseph F." to distinguish him from his own son, Joseph Fielding Smith, both of them later presidents of the LDS Church) and Martha.

When Hyrum became acquainted with his brother Joseph's encounter with the angel and the plates, he immediately became a believer in his brother's mission. In June 1829, at Seneca Lake, he was baptized by his brother. He was blessed further by the Lord to become one of the eight persons permitted to see the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated, and to "heft" them, lifting them in his hands to test their weight.

At a conference at Far West, Missouri, held on November 7, 1837, he was appointed second counsellor to Joseph Smith who

⁶⁸The biographical information on Hyrum Smith, unless otherwise noted, is drawn from *ibid.*, 52-53.

by that time had become President of the Church. Hyrum was personally involved with many of the events which took place in the church up to the time of his death. Whatever office he filled, he won the esteem of all persons. He was very attached to Joseph, whom he never left for more than six months at a time during their lifetimes.

He was arrested with Joseph at Far West, Missouri, and imprisoned with him at Liberty. He became a martyr of the Restoration movement when he was killed at Carthage, Illinois, with his brother. His last words as he fell were, "I am a dead man." With loving kindness, Joseph responded, "O dear brother Hyrum!"

Following is a beautiful eulogy of this honorable man, published in the *Times and Seasons*:

He lived so far beyond the ordinary walk of man, that even the tongue of the vilest slanderer could not touch his reputation. He lived godly, and he died godly, and his murderers will yet have to confess, that it would have been better for them to have had a millstone tied to them, and have been cast into the depths of the sea, and remain there while eternity goes and eternity comes, than to have robbed that noble man of heaven of his life.

Hyrum Smith was better educated than the rest of his brothers. He was also a person of outstanding executive abilities, proven by his devoted service to the church from its organization to his death in 1844. In 1828, he served as school trustee in his neighborhood, and was respected by all who knew him.⁶⁹

Because of his devotion to the restored gospel church, he was impeded from further success in the non-Mormon community. In turn, he exerted all his efforts in the promulgation of the gospel. All who knew him, spoke of him in the warmest of terms. John Taylor, wounded beside Hyrum in Carthage and later president of the LDS Church, once said of Hyrum, "If ever there was an exemplary, honest, and virtuous man, an embodiment of all that is noble in the human form, Hyrum Smith was its representa-

⁶⁹ Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, 145.

tive.”⁷⁰

Because Hyrum Smith never left the church and also because his life was cut short in such an untimely fashion, he did not have the numerous public and private opportunities to affirm his testimony of the Book of Mormon plates. However, Hyrum’s brother-in-law, Joseph Fielding, said, “My sister bears testimony that her husband has seen and handled the plates.”⁷¹

That murderous mob at Carthage has already faced an angry God who has certainly meted out His judgment.

Samuel Harrison Smith

Samuel H. Smith was the fourth son of Joseph Smith and Lucy Mack Smith, and was born March 13, 1808, in the town of Tunbridge, Orange County, Vermont. In his early life, he assisted his father in farming. He possessed a religious mind and, at an early age, joined the Presbyterian Church. In May 1829, he visited his brother Joseph in Pennsylvania where Joseph informed him that the Lord was about to commence His latter-day work, showed him the partially translated Book of Mormon, and explained the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ to him.

Samuel was not easily persuaded of the things which his brother had told him. Nonetheless, he prayed that he might receive wisdom from the Lord concerning the matter. He accordingly received revelation sufficient to convince him of the truth of his brother’s testimony. On May 15, 1829, after Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery had received authority from God, had baptized each other, and were returning home, they overheard Samuel engaged in fervent prayer. Oliver Cowdery performed the desired baptism on the spot. This made Samuel the third person to be baptized.

Samuel was one of the six persons who participated in the organization of the Church on April 4, 1830. He was ordained into the priesthood that same day. Two months later on June 30, he took some Books of Mormon and started on his mission. He

⁷⁰ As quoted in Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, 146.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

traveled twenty-five miles the first day, attempting to sell the books. When people found out how the book had been translated, they rejected him. Discouraged and tired but determined in his resolve, he continued his efforts for some time.

On August 13, 1834, he married Mary Bailey, who was born in Bedford, Hillsborough County, New Hampshire on December 20, 1808. In that same year, in and around Far West, Missouri, he and his family suffered from exposure because of the persecution by angry mobs. Samuel's wife died January 25, 1841, after bearing him four children, namely, Susannah B., Mary B., Samuel Harrison B., and Lucy B. On May 3, 1841, he married Levira Clark, born in Livonia, Livingston County, New York, July 30, 1815. Levira bore him three children, Levira A. C., Louisa C., and Lucy J. C.

Shortly after, he moved his family to Nauvoo. In the spring of 1844, upon hearing of his brothers' imprisonment at Carthage, he went there on horseback to see them. On the way, he was pursued by a mob; but due to the fleetness of his horse, he was able to reach Carthage in safety. He returned to Nauvoo to find that his brothers were dead and accompanied the bodies back to Nauvoo the next day. Almost immediately, he was stricken with a bilious fever and died July 30, 1844, age thirty-four.⁷²

His obituary, published in the Mormon newspaper at Nauvoo, *Times and Seasons*, praised him:

The exit of this worthy man, so soon after the horrible butchery of his brothers, Joseph and Hyrum, in Carthage jail, is a matter of deep solemnity to the family, as well as a remediless loss to all. If ever there lived a good man upon the earth, Samuel H. Smith was that person. His labors in the Church from first to last, carrying glad tidings to the eastern cities, and finally his steadfastness as one of the Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, and many saintly traits of virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity, shall be given of him hereafter, as a man of God.⁷³

⁷² Jenson, *LDS Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:278-82.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 282.

History will continue to record *ad infinitum* that truth has always been the target of wicked persons, instigated by the evil machinations of the devil, in the effort to stamp out the name of Jesus Christ and His followers. In the Restoration era, many, including Samuel, Hyrum, and Joseph, became victims of the uncontrolled rage of mobs. Although Samuel was not killed, his mental and physical sufferings because of his testimony to the truth of the restored gospel and the Book of Mormon, finally took their toll on this kind and gentle man.

John Whitmer

John Whitmer, born August 27, 1802, was the third son of Peter Whitmer, Sr., and Mary Musselman Whitmer.⁷⁴ He was baptized by Oliver Cowdery in Seneca Lake in June 1829. His brothers, David and Peter, were baptized about the same time. He became very zealous in the work of the Lord and was closely associated with Joseph Smith in his early administration. On March 8, 1831, he was chosen to be the historian for the Church.

He was at the head of the Church in Jackson County, Missouri, and, at the time of the persecutions, was a member of the committee that negotiated with the mob and agreed that the Saints should leave Jackson County in 1833. His name was attached to petitions addressed to Governor Dunklin, of Missouri, pleading for redress and protection against mob violence.

He was present at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple in March 27, 1836, and was very active in Church affairs. Then he had differences with Church leaders, primarily skepticism of Joseph Smith's venture into the banking business and the failure of the Kirtland bank.⁷⁵ These differences eventually led to his excommunication from the Church at Far West on March 10, 1838. The leaders of the Church attempted to retrieve the records which John Whitmer kept but were unsuccessful until Andrew

⁷⁴ Material in this biographical sketch, unless otherwise noted, comes from *ibid.*, 251-52.

⁷⁵ John Whitmer discussed some of these differences in his incomplete *History of the Church of Latter Day Saints (1831-1836)* (no city, Iowa: Typescript with corrected spelling and punctuation by Michael J. Lambert, 1918), Chapter 20.

Jenson succeeded in getting a copy of the “Old Whitmer Church Record.”

By 1856, John Whitmer was the last survivor of the Eight Witnesses. As a consequence, many people inquired about his experience. He never failed to attest to the truth of the Book of Mormon. He was also the editor of the *Messenger and Advocate* for almost a year and, in his final editorial in 1836, recounted his experiences while he was a member of the Church. In part he wrote, “Therefore I desire to testify to all that will come to the knowledge of this address, that I have most assuredly seen the plates from whence the Book of Mormon is translated, and that I have handled these Plates, and know of a surety that Joseph Smith, Jr., has translated the Book of Mormon by the gift and power of God.”

It is unfortunate that a witness to the Book of Mormon and its translation would, in a short time, leave the Church. However, when he was thereafter questioned about the Book of Mormon, he would affirm his testimony without hesitation.⁷⁶ For example, in 1861, LDS member Jacob Gates, a son-in-law of Brigham Young, conversed with John Whitmer for more than four hours and then wrote in his journal, “[Whitmer] still testified that the Book of Mormon is true and that Joseph Smith was a prophet of the Lord.”⁷⁷ Another person, Myron Bond, wrote, “Old father John Whitmer told me last winter, with tears in his eyes, that he knew as well as he knew he had an existence that Joseph translated the ancient writing which was on the plates, which he ‘saw and handled,’ and which, as one of the scribes, he helped to copy, as the words fell from Joseph’s lips, by supernatural or almighty power.”⁷⁸

One wonders why an honorable man like John Whitmer who handled the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated never returned to the Church. But the reasons may be less important than the fact that he affirmed and steadfastly reaffirmed his testimony of the Book of Mormon to the end of his life.

⁷⁶ Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, 131.

⁷⁷ As quoted in *ibid.*

⁷⁸ As quoted in *ibid.*, 132.

Christian Whitmer

Christian Whitmer, born January 18, 1798, in Pennsylvania, was the eldest son of Peter Whitmer and Mary Musselman Whitmer.⁷⁹ While still very young, he moved with his parents to Seneca County, western New York. There he married Anne Schott February 22, 1825 and became a shoemaker. In 1825 he was appointed an ensign, one of three commissioned officers in the company of Seneca Grenadiers of the 102nd New York Regiment of militia. A civic-minded person, he was elected one of six constables in Fayette Township in 1828-29, the same year he became a witness of the Book of Mormon.

On April 11, 1830, five days after the Church was organized, he and his wife were baptized by Oliver Cowdery. He was ordained an elder in 1831 and, in that same year, moved with the rest of the Whitmer family and many of the Saints from New York State to Jackson County, Missouri. He, along with many of the Saints, suffered persecution and mobbings until they were driven out of Jackson County in November 1833.

He did in Kirtland two years later, November 27, 1835. Nevertheless, he left his mark on history with his testimony concerning the Book of Mormon and his witness of having “handled” the plates from which the Book was translated.

Jacob Whitmer

Jacob Whitmer was the second son of Peter Whitmer, Sr., and Mary Musselman Whitmer.⁸⁰ He was born January 27, 1800, in Pennsylvania. When just a boy, he moved with his parents to New York. When he was twenty-five years old, he married Elizabeth Schott, on September 29, 1825. His brother Christian had married Elizabeth’s sister Anne in February of that same year. He sired nine children, but by 1888 only two were still living.

Jacob was one of the first to become convinced that Joseph Smith had truly received the plates and translated their contents. Like his brother Christian, he was baptized April 11, 1830, in

⁷⁹The information in this biographical sketch is from Jenson, *LDS Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:278.

⁸⁰Information in this biographical sketch is from *ibid.*, 276-77.

Seneca Lake by Oliver Cowdery. (He was also a shoemaker, like Christian.)

With the rest of the Whitmer family, he moved first to Ohio, then settled in Jackson County, Missouri, until driven out with the body of the Saints by mob action. In 1838 he separated himself from the Church and moved to Richmond, Ray County, where he remained until his death on April 21, 1856. In addition to shoemaking, Jacob also owned a small farm.

John C. Whitmer, his only surviving son, was the custodian of the original Church record which his uncle John Whitmer had refused to give up to Church leaders and head of a “Whitmer faction” called the “Church of Christ.” Andrew Jenson records that this group believed some of Joseph Smith’s doctrines and rejected others and adds John C. Whitmer’s 1888 statement to him: “My father was always faithful and true to his testimony in regard to the Book of Mormon, and confirmed it on his death-bed.”

Whether Jacob’s estrangement from the Church was due to his brother David’s influence or whether he and his brothers had just cause to separate themselves from their former friends probably cannot be determined at this historical difference. Again, what is important for Jacob Whitmer as it was for his brothers is that he never denied nor altered his testimony about the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, for he too, had “handled” the plates. Whatever his negative feelings about certain actions of the leaders of the Church, the awesome experience of having seen and touched the plates from which the Book of Mormon had been translated remained intact in his heart.

Peter Whitmer, Jr.

Peter Whitmer, Jr., was the fifth son of Peter Whitmer, Sr., and Mary Musselman Whitmer.⁸¹ He was born September 27, 1809, in Fayette, Seneca County, New York. In the summer of 1829, Joseph Smith arrived in Fayette from Pennsylvania and became fast friends with young Peter, who was soon afterwards baptized by Oliver Cowdery in Seneca Lake. He was twenty when he was baptized.

⁸¹Information in this biographical sketch is from *ibid.*, 277.

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In September 1830, he was called by revelation to preach the gospel with Oliver Cowdery. The following month, he accompanied Parley P. Pratt, Oliver Cowdery, and Ziba Peterson on a mission to the Lamanites. Jenson says that their journey West was “fraught with many hardships and much sufferings.” They established a large branch of the Church in Kirtland, Ohio, and afterwards traveled nearly one thousand miles, mostly on foot, arriving in Jackson County, Missouri in the early part of 1831.

Parley P. Pratt and Oliver Cowdery resumed their mission to the Lamanites across the borders, while young Peter Whitmer, Jr. found employment at Independence, Missouri, as a tailor. During the period of settlement and persecution in Jackson County, Peter suffered with the Saints in 1833. On September 22, 1836, he became ill and died. He was buried beside his brother, Christian, who had passed away ten months earlier.

So died another of the Eight Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. Although he passed away at a very young age, Peter Whitmer, Jr., remained true to his testimony regarding the divine authenticity and origin of the Book of Mormon. He too had “seen and handled” the plates which the angel Moroni had delivered to Joseph Smith.

Hiram Page

Hiram Page was born in Vermont in 1800, studied medicine as a young man, and traveled in New York and Canada as a physician.⁸² He eventually located in Seneca County, New York, where he met the Whitmer family and married Catherine Whitmer, a daughter of Peter and Mary Whitmer, on November 10, 1825. They were the parents of nine children. They were converted to Joseph Smith’s teachings and were in that early group baptized one week after the organization of the Church in Seneca Lake on April 11, 1830 by Oliver Cowdery.

Apparently he soon afterwards came in possession of a stone by which he received manifestations concerning the order of the Church which were contrary to the revelations received by Joseph Smith. This caused great uneasiness and the beginnings of schism

⁸² Ibid., 278-79.

among the members, for “Oliver Cowdery and the Whitmer family believed in those things revealed to Hiram Page.” At a conference held in September 1830, with Joseph Smith presiding, this matter was investigated thoroughly, with the result that Hiram Page as well as all the other members present renounced everything connected with the stone.

During the persecutions of the Saints in Jackson County in 1833, Hiram was one of a committee of three selected to appeal to the circuit judge in Lexington for a “peace warrant.” Although Judge John F. Ryland issued writs against some of the ringleaders of the mob, to be handed to the county sheriff, these writs did not accomplish their purpose.

After the Saints’ expulsion from Jackson County, Hiram settled in Clay County and, in 1836, became one of the founders of Far West. In 1838, like other members of the Whitmer family, he detached himself from the Church and moved to Ray County where he died on August 12, 1852. Although alienated from his former associates, his enthusiasm for the Book of Mormon was always firm and strong. Andrew Jenson records that he replied to inquiries concerning his early experiences by saying, “As to the Book of Mormon, it would be doing injustice to myself, and to the work of God of the last days, to say that I could know a thing to be true in 1830, and know the same thing to be false in 1847.”

At Hiram’s death in 1852, his second son, Philander, told Andrew Jenson, “I knew my father to be true and faithful to his testimony of the divinity of the Book of Mormon until the very last. Whenever he had an opportunity to bear his testimony to this effect, he would always do so, and seemed to rejoice exceedingly in having been privileged to see the plates.”

Chapter 4

THE STORY OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

In the previous two chapters, I have dealt with events which led to the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, the persons and method involved in translation of the plates, and witnesses to the plates. Now it is time to turn our attention to the contents of the Book of Mormon. This chapter provides an overview of the story related in the book.

The Book of Mormon is a history of several nations which inhabited the North and South American continents. The first of these groups arrived shortly after the languages were confounded during the building of the tower of Babel, when the Lord scattered people upon all the face of the earth (Genesis 11:8). A man named Jared asked his brother, a prophet, to beg the Lord not to confound his family's language. God heard the prayer of this prophet and not only spared the language of Jared's family and friends, but brought them miraculously across the ocean to what is now the North American continent.

This people became a great nation, occupying the land for many centuries; but because of pride, greed and wickedness, they were eventually destroyed. Their last prophet, Ether painstakingly recorded a history of his people on gold plates during the death throes of his civilization, which were later discovered by the second colony.

The second colony was of the tribe of Joseph, one of the sons

of Jacob. The Lord directed a prophet-father, Lehi, to leave Jerusalem about 600 B.C. His family and few others, through divine assistance, reached the American continent about 600 B.C. Their descendants also became a mighty and numerous people. After Lehi's death, his sons divided into two factions that eventually became two nations, the Nephites and Lamanites, named after the dominant sons, Nephi and Laman. The rebellion of the defiant Lamanites began with the two eldest sons of Lehi, Laman and Lemuel, who hated their younger brother Nephi, whom the Lord had blessed exceedingly. They taught their children to hate Nephi's offspring and any associated with the Nephites.

The Nephites discovered a third group, the Mulekites, led by Mulek, a descendant of King Zedekiah, the last ruler of Jerusalem before its destruction in 588 B.C. and the resultant Babylonian captivity. The two groups merged, and the history of the Mulekites thereafter became part of the history of the Nephites. The Mulekites discovered the last battleground of the Jaredites, including their record; but it was the Nephite prophet who translated the record of Ether once the two groups had come together.

While both Nephite and Lamanite prophets, predicted the coming of Jesus Christ, his Messianic mission, his death and resurrection, the Nephites were often more righteous than the Lamanites, their prophets encouraging the people to righteousness continuously. The Nephites kept their history written upon plates handed down from father to son.

The Book of Mormon records Jesus's visit to the Nephites, telling them they were his "other sheep," whom he referred to in Jerusalem (John 10:16). He called twelve men upon whom he bestowed the same authority and power as his twelve New Testament apostles. He blessed these people wonderfully during his short visit with them. For several generations following Christ's his brief mission among them, the united Nephite-Lamanite people continued in righteousness. But eventually, as a nation, they fell into sin and transgression. The cultural differences between the recreated nations of the Nephites and Lamanites erupted into a devastating war about A.D. 400. The Nephites were annihilated, leaving only one known survivor. This was the prophet-warrior Moroni, son of the Mormon, also a prophet-

warrior, who had used the brief intervals of peace to abridge a thousand years of his people's records into a single volume, adding wise words of his own. Moroni concluded his father's work, hid the record by divine command in the Hill Cumorah about A.D. 420, and returned to that locale fourteen centuries later as a divine messenger to confer the plates upon Joseph Smith, in 1827.

The Nephites and Lamanites are the progenitors of the American Indians. Descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh, they are a branch of the House of Israel. In the Book of Mormon, God promised them the American continent as their inheritance.

Biblical Prophecies of the Book of Mormon

The Old Testament contains remarkable prophecies of the Book of Mormon. In the first, Ezekiel prophesied that the record of the Jews—the Bible—would eventually be joined with the record of Joseph—the Book of Mormon. He calls the first record “the stick of Judah” and the second “the stick of Ephraim” or “the stick of Joseph.” (Writings on scrolls were often rolled up on a stick.) Here are the prophet's words:

Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions; then take another stick and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel, his companions.

And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand.

And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not show us what thou meanest by these?

Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold. I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand. (Ezekiel 37:16-19)

Critics of the Book of Mormon have argued that the Ezekiel passage does not refer to two records but instead to the union of the Northern Kingdom, with Samaria as its capital, and the Southern Kingdom, with Jerusalem as its capital. If the critics' views are correct, let them prove when this uniting took place. But Ezekiel's prophecy relates to two historical records, two books: the Bible (the stick of Judah) and the Book of Mormon (the stick of Joseph).

A second remarkable prophecy of the Book of Mormon was spoken by the prophet Isaiah:

And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed.

And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned. (Isaiah 29:11-12)

This scripture was fulfilled at the time the plates were in the process of being translated. Joseph Smith gave Martin Harris, one of the Three Witnesses, a few characters from the plates. Harris took them to Professor Charles Anthon of Columbia University in New York for his professional opinion. Asked by Anthon about how he obtained the characters, Harris disclosed their origin: how Joseph Smith had obtained the plates, and that a portion were sealed. Anthon repeated almost verbatim the words of Isaiah, "I cannot read a sealed book."⁸³

The controversy that has shadowed the Book of Mormon from its first publication in 1830 was also the subject of an Old Testament prophecy: The prophet Hosea said, "I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing" (Hosea 8:12). The Book of Mormon has been counted as a "strange thing" by critics. It has been slandered, abused, denigrated, and denounced as a sham and a hoax. Notwithstanding objections

⁸³For a detailed account of Martin Harris's meeting with Professor Anthon, see V. James Loyalvo, *It is Written, Truth Shall Spring Out of the Earth* (Fresno: Mid-Cal Publishers, 1980), Chapter 21.

and aspersions, the book has weathered the storm of criticism like a gallant ship sailing the waves triumphantly.

Nor is the New Testament lacking in Book of Mormon prophecy. While on the Isle of Patmos, John described a vision:

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth; and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.

Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him: for the hour of his judgement is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. (Revelation 14:6-7)

Note that John received this vision while the gospel of Jesus Christ was on the earth, being preached by his apostles and evangelists. Why would “another angel” need to bring the gospel to earth if it were already here? An in-depth treatise on the apostacy and restoration would be necessary to explain.⁸⁴

Some critics claim that the Book of Mormon is the adding-to the Bible warned against by John in Revelation 22:18-19. It is well-known, however, that John wrote the book of Revelation before he wrote the Gospel of John. J. R. Dummelow, for instance, in his Bible commentary, says Revelation was written during the reign of the Emperor Vespasian about A.D. 77, while the Gospel of John was written in John’s old age, about A.D. 90.⁸⁵

John did not mean to “eliminate or append” anything from or to the Bible since the Bible had not yet been compiled. The canon was not created or approved until many years after his day. He meant that nothing should be added to or subtracted from “the words of this prophecy”—his apocalyptic writings.

Readers of the Book of Mormon will find that the entire record is centered on Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and his commandments. Search as they may, no one will ever find one word, one sentence, one chapter in the book that contradicts the Bible. The Book of

⁸⁴ For a more detailed explanation, see *ibid.*, Chapter 19.

⁸⁵ J. R. Dummelow, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible* (New York; Macmillan Company, 1958), 1069.

Mormon is not another Bible, but rather a companion to the Bible, an extension of the Word of God in these latter days.

When Joseph Smith received the plates from the Angel Moroni, he did not expect the revilings and persecutions launched against him. Yet with a determination supported by divine strength, he undertook and finished the task of translating the plates, from which emerged the Book of Mormon.

For sincere readers, the book's worth and beauty unfold with pleasant surprise. It tells of the construction and development of cultures, societies, communities, cities, and buildings, remains of which, I believe, have been discovered subsequent to its first publication. Assaults by agnostics, atheists, or Christian critics will not diminish the value of the Book of Mormon as a historical treasure.

Chapter 5

AUTHORSHIP OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

Contrary to the opinions of the anti-Book of Mormon writers or scathing criticisms against the book itself, I assert with all of the energy of my soul that Joseph Smith did not write the Book of Mormon. It was a literal impossibility for a man of Joseph Smith's very limited education to write a book covering a period of a thousand years and finish it in less than three months. To merely amass research material for such a monumental task would take years of diligent and dedicated endeavor. Joseph Smith was not capable of doing this. Even with the help of educated men like Oliver Cowdery and Sidney Rigdon, he could not have produced so complex a book in such a short time. Nor could such a collaboration have remained secret.

It is impossible, in my opinion for a man with only three years of formal schooling to have written a history of an ancient civilization, covering a period from 600 B.C. to A.D. 421 without making a multitude of historical mistakes. The Book of Mormon has 239 chapters, including wars, history, prophecy, doctrines, missionaries, and the mission of Christ. The book describes the religious, social, economic, and political culture of the two nations, Lamanites and Nephites. It also contains the appearance of Jesus Christ in America and His teachings to the people.

Joseph Smith's claim is that he never wrote the book but rather translated the plates from which came the Book of Mormon. Critics claim that Joseph Smith wrote the book; others say that someone else wrote it for him. In either case, they feel that Joseph Smith's claims are fraudulent and that the book is a hoax insinuated upon an unsuspecting public. Nor does the latter claim seem plausible. If someone else wrote the book, Joseph Smith would run a tremendous risk in claiming authorship. Surely the first person who knew this secret would have unmasked him without hesitation if relations became tense between them. As a point of historical fact, all of the men closest to Joseph Smith with the exception of his brother Hyrum experienced serious rifts with Joseph Smith and sometimes permanent alienation. This list includes Sydney Rigdon, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris. But none of these men ever hinted that they knew of any other explanation for the Book of Mormon's existence except that held by Joseph Smith himself—that the book was an ancient record, conferred on Joseph by an angel and translated by the gift and power of God.

Joseph Smith's lack of education also speaks against his ability to compose a book of such a magnitude. Dr. Hugh Nibley, a professor at Brigham Young University, asks, "We grant [Smith's ignorance] willingly, but who on earth in 1829 was not too ignorant for it? Who is up to it today?"⁸⁶ He then relates an interesting story: In teaching a class composed largely of Muslim students at BYU, Dr. Nibley proposed an assignment:

*Since Joseph Smith was younger than most of you and not nearly so experienced or well-educated (sic) as any of you at the time he copyrighted the **Book of Mormon**, it should not be too much to ask you to hand in by the end of the Semester (which will give you more time than he had) a paper of, say, from five to six hundred pages in length. Call it a sacred book if you will, and give it the form of a history. Tell of a community of wandering Jews in ancient*

⁸⁶Hugh Nibley, *The Book of Mormon: True or False?* Pamphlet, 1962. (Reprinted: Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, n.d.). This pamphlet is reprinted from the *Millennial Star*, 124 (November 1962): 274-77.

*times; have all sorts of characters in your story, and involve them in all sorts of public and private vicissitudes; give them names—hundreds of them—pretending that they are real Hebrew and Egyptian names of circa B. C. 600; be lavish with cultural and technical details—manners and customs, arts and industries, political and religious institutions, rites, and traditions; include long and complicated military and economic histories; have your narrative cover a thousand years without any large gaps; keep a number of interrelated local histories going at once; feel free to introduce religious controversy and philosophical discussion, but always in a plausible setting; observe the appropriate literary conventions and explain the derivation and transmission of your varied historical materials. Above all, do not ever contradict yourself! For now we come to the really hard part of this assignment. You and I know that you are making this all up—we have our little joke—but just the same you are going to be required to have your paper published when you finish it, not as fiction or romance, but as a true history! After you have handed it in you may make no changes in it (in this class we always use the **first** edition of the **Book of Mormon**); what is more, you are to invite any and all scholars to read and criticize your work freely, explaining to them that it is a sacred book on a par with the Bible. If they seem over-skeptical you might tell them that you translated the book from original records by the aid of the Urim and Thummim—they will love that! Further to allay their misgivings, you might tell them that the original manuscript was on gold plates, and that you got the plates from an angel. Now go to work and good luck!”*

Nibley added that no student carried out this assignment—nor did he mean it seriously. Nibley paraphrases Friedrich Blass’s “Rules for testing any document for forgery” to consider whether Joseph Smith followed any of them:

1) *Keep out of the range of unsympathetic critics. There*

is, as Blass insists, no such thing as a clever forgery. No forger can escape detention if somebody really wants to expose him; all the great forgeries discovered to date have been crudely executed, depending for their success on the enthusiastic support of the public or the experts

The Book of Mormon has enjoyed no such support; from the day it appeared important persons at the urgent demand of an impatient public did everything they could to show it a forgery. And Joseph Smith, far from keeping it out of the hands of unsympathetic critics, did everything he could to put it in those hands. Surely this is not the way of a deceiver.

- 2) *Keep your document as short as possible. The longer a forgery is the more easily it may be exposed; the danger increasing geometrically with the length of the writing.*

By the time he had gone ten pages the author of the Book of Mormon knew only too well what a dangerous game he was playing if it were a hoax; yet he carries on undismayed for 600 pages.

- 3) *Above all, don't write a historical document! They are by far the easiest of all to expose being full of "things too trifling, too inconspicuous, and too troublesome" for the forger to check up on.*
- 4) *After you have perpetrated your forgery, go into retirement or disappear completely. For vanity, according to Blass, is the Achilles heel of every forger. A forger is not only a cheat but also a show-off, attempting to put one over on society; he cannot resist the temptation to enjoy his triumph and if he remains in circulation inevitably gives himself away. Joseph Smith ignored any opportunity of taking credit for the Book of Mormon—he took only the responsibility for it.*
- 5) *Always keep an escape door open. Be vague and general, philosophize and moralise. Religious immunity has been the refuge of most imminent forgers in*

the past, beautiful thoughts and pious allegories, deep interpretation of Scriptures, mystic communication to the initiated few, these are safe grounds for the pious fraus.

But the Book of Mormon never uses them. It does not even exploit the convenient philological loophole of being a translation; as an inspired translation it claims all the authority and responsibility of the original.⁸⁷

If the Book of Mormon had been the product of Joseph Smith's uneducated mind or a forgery, critics would have had a holiday in discovering hesitations, draggings of the pace, wanderings, loss of thought, sequential continuity, and especially contradictions. But the most amazing thing is that there are no contradictions in the book.

Joseph Smith was not sufficiently literate to keep the narratives and flash-backs found in the record in such a unique sequential manner. Critics have written hundreds of books against the Book of Mormon and have reproached its adherents unmercifully. Nevertheless, it has withstood the attacks of its enemies and will continue to do so until time is no more. Prophecies regarding the Native Americans, the seed of Joseph, the believing Gentiles, the establishing of the kingdom of God (the Peaceful Reign, or Zion), the building of the New Jerusalem, and other future events are brought out in three-dimensional perspective in the Book of Mormon.

If Joseph Smith had written the Book of Mormon (which he didn't), would he not have staggered and fallen under the assault of personal and literary criticisms? But this young man withstood the onerous critique up until his death, never denying that the book was divinely translated by the "gift and power" of God. The very first criticisms against him, especially from learned persons, would have probably motivated him to get rid of the book and thus avoid any further denunciations or persecutions. But he, along with others, continually promoted the Book of Mormon, regard-

⁸⁷ Ibid.

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less of the animosity and rejection that met it. His firm resolve to testify to the world that the Book of Mormon was translated by the “gift and power” of God never abated but grew in intensity until the day of his martyrdom at the jail in Carthage, Illinois.

Chapter 6

HEBRAISMS IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

Scholars have found many Hebraisms, i.e., the literal translation into English of Hebrew words, parts of speech, idioms, and other language peculiarities. I am not a Hebrew scholar, therefore I must rely on persons who have studied that language to identify the Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon. Still, I find it compelling corroboration of the book's ancient origins. The writers of the original records who so painstakingly inscribed their words on metallic plates were men with literary weaknesses who recognized their limitations and did not hesitate to admit their shortcomings, but behold! the very awkwardness of their prose has become a revelation of strength.

Book of Mormon Language

We must understand that the Book of Mormon was not written in Hebrew but in a unique language that blended both Hebrew and Egyptian. The Book of Mormon states that the Nephite prophets used an altered form of Egyptian language when writing on the metallic plates. Nephi, the son of Lehi, writes, "Yea, I make a record in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians" (1 Nephi 1:2). King Mosiah adds:

For it were not possible that our father Lehi could have remembered all these things, to have taught them to his children, except it were for the help of these plates; for he having been taught in the language of the Egyptians, therefore he could read these engravings and teach them to his children, that thereby they could teach them to their children, and so fulfilling the commandments of God, even down to this present time. (Mosiah 1:4)

When people write in a language unfamiliar to them, there is always the danger of making mistakes in form, syntax, and grammar. The writers in the Book of Mormon—among whom were many commanding speakers—recognized their weakness in writing and were not reluctant about or ashamed of admitting it. Moroni, addressing God, stated, “Thou hast also made our words powerful and great, even that we cannot write them; wherefore, when we write we behold our weakness, and stumble because of the placing of our words; and I fear lest the Gentiles shall mock at our words” (Ether 12:25).

Mormon, a Nephite prophet, wrote to his latter-day readers:

Condemn me not because of mine imperfection, neither my father, because of his imperfection, neither them who have written before him; but rather give thanks unto God that he hath made manifest unto you our imperfections, that ye may learn to be more wise than we have been.

And now behold, we have written this record according to our knowledge, in the characters which are called among us the reformed Egyptian, being handed down and altered by us, according to our manner of speech.

And if our plates had been sufficiently large we would have written in Hebrew; but the Hebrew hath been altered by us also; and if we could have written in Hebrew, behold, ye would have had no imperfection in our record. (Mormon 9:31-33)

Roy E. Weldon and F. Edward Butterworth argue, “Neither Joseph Smith nor any of his contemporaries could have known in

1830 that reformed demotic (popular) Egyptian was superior to other systems of writing belonging to the period with which Book of Mormon writers were concerned. Modern research had not yet discovered and deciphered the necessary evidence.”⁸⁸

Weldon and Butterworth cite an R. C. Webb who in his book, *Joseph Smith as a Translator*, describes three systems available in 600 B.C.: cuneiform, Semitic, Egyptian. Weldon and Butterworth quote Webb as saying:

“Even a brief review of the several systems of writing available in 600 B.C. demonstrates that no system of writing other than one of Egyptian origin could have served the double ends of brevity in expression (using a minimum number of individual characters) and capacity for diminution, writing each character small (without disguising its identity).” That the translation was a miracle is beyond question [continue Weldon and Butterworth]. The claim of the book is that its writers used “reformed Egyptian” characters. The translation of Egyptian records by human knowledge in 1827 was scarcely possible. Egyptian literature and archaeological hieroglyphic writing were secrets to modern man until the discovery of the Rosetta stone and its decipherment. The stone was found in 1799 and transported to England in 1802.

Study of the stone, which contained texts in Greek, hieroglyphic and demotic Egyptian, revealed the key for Egyptian grammar and vocabulary. The French scholar Champollion published his findings on the translation of the stone in the French work, “Lettre ” M. Dacier,” in 1822. But the first Egyptian grammar was not published until 1836. Not only the comparison of Book of Mormon characters with Egyptian forms but the appearance of many Egyptian names and some literary characteristics support the claim that the book was written in “reformed Egyptian.” If this be true, however, the miraculous nature

⁸⁸ The discussion of reformed Egyptian and the summary of Weldon and Butterworth’s argument about Hebraisms is from pp. 20, 59 of their *Criticisms of the Book of Mormon Answered* (Independence, Missouri: n. pub., n.d.).

of the translation is definitely established, for the means of reading Egyptian grammar was not solved until 1836, six years after the Book of Mormon was off the press.

The Significance of Hebraisms

It is said that the Book of Mormon is too literal a translation from the Hebrew to fit into good or classic English. Its style is distinctly reminiscent of the King James translation of the Bible; and the King James translation also contains elements of a too-literal translation from the Hebrew.

Roy Weldon, one of the two authors, admits that he is not a Hebrew scholar but spent approximately two years making a linguistic analysis of the Book of Mormon. He listed only those Hebraisms (possessor nouns, enallages, suspended conclusions) which are most conspicuous and easily recognizable but found over 8,500 examples of these three classes of Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon.

Weldon also says that he did not list the more complex forms such as mimetisms, metonomies, parallelisms, versimilitudes, and colophons. He then argues, "If the reader does not know what these words mean, by what means would Joseph Smith know about them and incorporate an estimated 10,000 or more Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon without having any knowledge of the Hebrew language?"

I strongly agree with Weldon's position. I have a fair knowledge of the English language; but until I read his exposition, I had never heard of these technical linguistic terms. I find it totally improbable that two persons, unlearned in scholarship and not native speakers of Hebrew, could have written a book in approximately ninety days with sequential accuracy while inserting in its pages thousands of Hebraisms.

Weldon further cites I. H. N. Jones, a prominent anti-Mormon writer who admits:

From the standpoint of historical precedence and vital importance in this great movement, the revelation of the

Book of Mormon ranks first. It is the main pillar which supports the superstructure of what is termed Mormonism. Prove that false and all else, so far as authority and distinctiveness are concerned, must tumble like a house of cards before a gale.

Conversely, if the Book of Mormon is actually what its friends claim it to be, then it is obvious that Joseph Smith is one of the greatest prophets (if not the greatest) the world has ever seen.

If true, it follows that the latter-day restoration is veritably the "marvelous work and wonder" visualized by the prophet Isaiah, and as such should be accepted by all Christian men and women in the same spirit of faith as the Bible.

Little did Mr. Jones realize the truth of his words! The Book of Mormon was translated, not written, by the "gift and power of God" by a young man unlearned in either the English or Hebrew languages. The book, although criticized by learned and unlearned persons, still emerges unconquered and unsullied, because it is a product of a divine source, and not the imagined writing of a human being.

John A. Tvedtnes, a teaching assistant in Hebrew at the University of Utah, contends that the Book of Mormon, in its English form is "in many respects a nearly literal translation" of Hebrew. He argues further that many of the expressions found in the book "do not properly belong to the English language, but rather to the language from which the book was translated. Indeed, in some cases thus far investigated, Book of Mormon expressions which are ungrammatical in English are perfect Hebrew grammar."⁸⁹ In view of the fact that Joseph Smith did not know Hebrew in those early years, I find this phenomenon compelling evidence for the authenticity of the translation.

⁸⁹ John A. Tvedtnes, *Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon: A Preliminary Survey*, reprint (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1982), 50. This paper was originally published in the *Zarahemla Record*, Nos. 17-8, Summer and Fall, 1982.

Distinctive Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon

Please note that all of the following biblical references are from the original Hebrew and do not correspond, at times, with the familiar King James translation of the Bible.

Frequent Use of “And”

Hebrew scholars agree that the conjunction “and” is often used instead of “but,” “or,” “then,” “notwithstanding,” “however,” “so,” and “thus.”

Thomas W. Brookbank observes that Hebrew writers liked to use “and” where an English writer (or an English-speaking translator) would be more likely to use “but.” He quotes a work called *Greene’s Hebrew Grammar*, which he does not identify by date:

*“The Hebrew sedulously avoids all involution of sentences. Consequently, instead of linking its clauses together into a complex whole by conjunctions of various power expressing their precise relation of dependence and subordination, it prefers, where this is possible, to connect them together by means of the simple conjunction **and**, leaving the exact nature of the connection intended to be inferred from the meaning of the clauses themselves.”*

*[Brookbank continues:] We have seen that the Biblical writers sometimes employed the conjunction **and** to connect adversative clauses—a very marked transgression against English usage—nevertheless, the English Book of Mormon is chargeable with the same want of conformity to our idiom, and the fault, if such it be, is often repeated.*

Brookbank cites an example Greene had used:

*In Gen. 2:16-17, “of every tree thou mayest eat, but of the tree of knowledge”, etc. [Brookbank then explains:] If, now, we substitute **and** instead of **but** in this passage, the meaning of what has just been said respecting the use of **and** to connect an adversative clause, will become appar-*

ent. The two clauses will then seem joined together in an unusual, or strange manner. Let us read them in full thus: Of every tree of the garden, thou mayest freely eat; and of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it.” The connecting of clauses in this manner by a word which expresses the relation of addition where that of subtraction or of opposition is involved, is something wholly foreign to English modes of thought or form of expression.⁹⁰

Other examples are:

I said unto them, that I knew I had spoken hard things against the wicked; and [but] the righteous have I justified. (I Nephi 16:2)

And he raiseth up a righteous nation, and [but] destroyeth the nations of the wicked. And he leadeth away the righteous into precious lands; and [but] the wicked he destroyeth. (I Nephi 17:38-39)

Behold, here are our weapons of war; we will deliver them up unto you, and [but] we will not suffer ourselves to take an oath (Alma 44:8)

And the law is given unto men. And [but] by the law no flesh is justified (II Nephi 2:5)

Many shall be afflicted in the flesh, and [but] shall not be suffered to perish (II Nephi 6:11)

There is nothing which is good, save it comes from the Lord, and [but] that which is evil cometh from the devil. (Omni 1:25)

. . . And [but] what know ye concerning the law of Moses? . . . (Mosiah 12:31).

Another conspicuous peculiarity of biblical Hebrew is the use of the conjunction “and” in beginning a sentence and in the listing of a series within a sentence. Angela Crowell, also a Hebrew scholar, cites Hebrew grammarian, A. B. Davidson:

⁹⁰Thomas W. Brookbank, “Hebrew Idioms and Analogies in the Book of Mormon,” *Improvement Era* 17 (February 1914): 366-67.

*Hebrew syntax, though it has many subtleties of its own, is broadly speaking, extremely simple, as a glance at any literal translation of the Old Testament, with its ever recurring **and**, will show. The Hebrew habit to express thoughts is to coordinate clauses rather than to subordinate them, with one principal verb following another with a regularity that reminds one of the simple speech of children.*⁹¹

It is surprising how many times “and” is used to begin verses throughout the Old Testament books. In Genesis 22, twenty-one out of twenty-eight verses begin with “and.” In Genesis 23, “and” is used fourteen times to begin its twenty verses. In Genesis 24 (sixty-seven verses), “and” is used fifty-seven times to begin a verse. The Bible is filled to overflowing with verses that begin with “and.”

The same pattern can be seen in the Book of Mormon. In Alma 11, twenty-two out of forty-six verses begin with the conjunction “and.” Alma 5 (62 verses) begins twenty-five of them with “and.” In Alma 46, twenty-five out of forty-one verses begin with “and.” One can pick at random almost any chapter in both the Bible and the Book of Mormon and find many verses that begin with “and.”

A third distinctive way in which “and” is used is in a list. William Gesenius, a Hebrew scholar, writes, “Contrary to English usage, which in lengthy enumerations uses the **and** to connect only the last member of the series, in Hebrew **polysyndeton** is customary.”⁹² In other words, “and” stands before each word or phrase in a series.

Examples from the Bible include:

And** Jacob lifted up his eyes, **and** looked, **and** with him four hundred men. **And** he divided the children unto Leah, **and** unto Rachel, **and** unto the two handmaids, **and** he put the handmaids **and** their children foremost, **and** Leah **and

⁹¹ Angela Crowell, “Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon,” *Zarahemla Record* (Summer/Fall 1982), 1.

⁹² As quoted in *ibid.*, 1.

her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost. (Genesis 33:1-2)

And the Lord hath blessed my master greatly, and he is become great, and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and men servants, and maid servants, and camels, and asses. (Genesis 24:35)

And the sons of Reuben: Hanoch, and Phallu, and Hesron, and Carmi. And the sons of Simeon; Jemuel, and Jamin, and Ohad, and Jachin, and Zohar, and Shaul. . . (Genesis 46:9-10)

Here are parallel examples from the Book of Mormon:

And it came to pass that the people of Nephi did till the land, and raise all manner of grain, and of fruit, and flocks of herds, and flocks of all manner of cattle of every kind, and goats, and wild goats, and also many horses. (Enos 1:21)

And it came to pass that he departed into the wilderness. And he left his house, and the land of his inheritance, and his gold, and his silver, and his precious things. . . . (1 Nephi 2:4)

And I also saw gold, and silver, and silks, and scarlets, and fine-twined linen, and the precious clothing, and I saw many harlots. (1 Nephi 13:7)

A fourth example is that, in Hebrew, the conjunction “and” is used more frequently than in English. It is often used at the beginning of a sentence, even though there is no justification for linking that sentence to the preceding one. Tvedtnes says that in English, the word “and” is used to link up syntactically related words, clauses, and sentences only; in Hebrew it may sometimes be used for special emphasis. The Hebrew *u*’ may oftentimes be translated “now” or “for” instead of “and.” In many instances in the Book of Mormon (for example, Enos 13), it is translated “and now.”⁹³ He cites an example from Alma 43:16-20:

⁹³Tvedtnes, “Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon,” 53.

Now, the leader of the Nephites, or the man who had been appointed to be the chief captain over the Nephites—now the chief captain took command of all the armies of the Nephites—and his name was Moroni; and Moroni took all the command. . . . And he was only twenty and five years old. . . . And it came to pass that he met the Lamanites in the borders of Jershon, and his people were armed with swords, and with scimitars, and all manner of weapons of war. And when the armies of the Lamanites saw . . . that Moroni, had prepared his people with breastplates and with armshields, yea, and also shields to defend their heads, and also they were dressed with thick clothing—Now the army of Zarahemna was not prepared with any such thing; they had only their swords, and their cimeters, their bows and their arrows, their stones and their slings; and they were naked. . . . (Alma 43:16-20).

Tvedtnes explains that while the multiplicity of particles such as “and with” and “and their” in the foregoing passage may seem a waste of precious space on the plates, they are necessary items in Hebrew. “Moreover,” he continues, “in both Egyptian and Hebrew they are treated as affixes to the noun, and take up very little space in writing compared to their English counterparts.”⁹⁴

The words “and also” appear in the Book of Mormon repeatedly. An example Tvedtnes cites is: “Behold, they believed in Christ and worshiped the Father in his name, **and also** we we worship the Father in his name” (Jacob 4:5).

“While this is perfect Hebrew,” Tvedtnes continues, “‘and also’ (**wegam**) being written as one ‘word,’ (with the possible translation of ‘yea, also’) English would more properly render it ‘**and** we do **also** worship the Father. . . .’”⁹⁵

The Construct State

The construct state is a grammatical construction in which two nouns are placed one after the other with the word “of” between

⁹⁴ Ibid, 53.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 54.

them. An example would be “the shoes of Mary,” instead of “Mary’s shoes.” The construct state is used in Hebrew to show possession or other relationships. J. Weingreen gives an illustration of the construct state designating possession: “He is the son of David.” The word “son” (in Hebrew translation) is dependent upon the words “of David” in such a way that the words together form a compound idea—“son of David.” The dependent word “son” is said to be in the construct state.⁹⁶

Here are some examples of the “construct state” from the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon:

<i>Old Testament</i>	<i>Book of Mormon</i>
<i>“children of Israel”</i>	<i>“altar of stones”</i>
<i>“tribe of Reuben”</i>	<i>“state of probation”</i>
<i>“city of David”</i>	<i>“mist of darkness”</i>
<i>“king of Israel”</i>	<i>“words of plainness”</i>
<i>“Kingdom of God”</i>	<i>“land of promise”</i>
<i>“daughter of Zion”</i>	<i>“rod of iron”</i>
<i>“land of Egypt”</i>	<i>“Brother of Jared”</i>
<i>“Book of Daniel”</i>	<i>“army of Moroni”</i>
<i>“word of God”</i>	<i>“language of Jacob”</i>
<i>“law of Moses”</i>	<i>“people of Ammon”</i>

While some of these constructions also are used in English, it is not a common occurrence. One would expect Joseph Smith, a native speaker of English, to use the more common possessive than the awkward construct state; but I have searched the Book of Mormon in vain for English-type constructions such as “Isaiah’s words,” “dark mist,” “Moses’ law,” “Ammon’s people,” “iron rod,” “Jacob’s language,” “stone altar,” “brass plates,” etc.

Crowell points out that, in Hebrew, a quality or attribute of a person or thing is often found in the construct state. Old Testament examples include:

“children of wickedness” for “wicked children” (1 Samuel 7:10)

⁹⁶ As quoted in Crowell, *Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon*, 3.

“children of pride” for “proud children” (Job 41:34)
“altar of stone” for “stone altar” (Exodus 20: 25)
“ark of wood” for “wooden ark” (Deuteronomy 10:1)
“helmet of brass” for “brass helmet” (I Samuel 17:5)

Parallel examples from the Book of Mormon include these:

“words of plainness” for “plain words” (Jacob 4:14)
“mark of red” for “red mark” (Alma 3:13)
“rod of iron” for “iron rod” (I Nephi 8:19)
“idol of silver” for “silver idol” (II Nephi 12:20)
“plates of gold” for “gold plates” (Mosiah 28:11).⁹⁷

Adverbs

Tvedtnes argues that there are very few adverbs in Hebrew. One adjective (*harbeh*, “many” or “exceeding”) is used adverbially, but more often a prepositional phrase is used. He cited these book of Mormon examples:

“with harshness” instead of “harshly”
“with joy” instead of “joyfully”
“with gladness” instead of “gladly”
“with patience” instead of “patiently”
“with diligence” instead of “diligently”
“in abundance” instead of “abundantly”
“in the spirit” instead of “spiritually”
“in righteousness” instead of “righteously”
“in truth” instead of “truly, verily”
“of worth” instead of “worthy”
“of a surety” instead of “surely”

Tvedtnes continues, “All of these examples would reflect the Hebrew preposition *b* (“in, with, by, through,” sometimes “of”) plus the noun. The Book of Mormon has many more of these, however it contains but few examples of true English adverbs.”⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Ibid., 3.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 56-57.

Sundry Hebraisms

Sydney B. Sperry, a noted scholar, claims that the Book of Mormon has abundant traces of Hebrew within its pages. He uses the following example to establish his case: “**And** behold, I am also a man of now small reputation among all those who know me; yea, and behold, I have *kindreds* and friends, and I have also acquired much riches *by the hand of my industry*” (Alma 10:4).

Sperry points to the use of the word “kindreds” for “kindred” as betraying how literally Joseph Smith translated a well-known Hebrew equivalent. He compares Joshua 6:23: “they brought out all her kindred (Hebrew, literally, “kindreds”); “All the kindreds of the nations” (Psalm 22:27); “O ye kindreds of the people” (Psalms 96:7). He further states that the expression “by the hand of my industry” is particularly Hebraic in cast, as “by the hand of” is the equivalent of *beyadh*, a Hebrew word compounded of a preposition and a noun in the construct state. He gives some original Hebrew examples of the phrase “by the hand of” found in the Old Testament, which signify agency or instrumentality: Exodus 9:35 “as the Lord has spoken by Moses” (literally “by the hand of Moses”); I Samuel 28:15, “neither by prophets” (literally “by the hand of prophets”). The last part of Alma 10:4 could read, if it were not written in Hebrew, as “I have also acquired great riches through my industry.”⁹⁹

It is interesting to note at this juncture that in 1922, Herman Miller, a converted Jew, finished translating the Book of Mormon and made some comments on the language in his letter to Elder Joseph Fielding Smith. Elder Smith, at Sperry’s request, summarized Miller’s comments:

*Office of the Church Historian
Salt Lake City, Utah
May 22, 1945*

*Dr. Sydney B. Sperry
Division of Religion
Brigham Young University
Provo, Utah*

⁹⁹Sydney B. Sperry, *Our Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Stevens and Wallis, Inc., 1947), 32-33.

Dear Brother:

I have your letter of May 19th in which you ask me to relate the testimony of Brother Herman Miller in relation to the translation of the Book of Mormon into Hebrew. I regret that I do not have his words in writing, but I remember the substance of them very well as they impressed me greatly, especially after receiving a similar statement from another Hebrew scholar. In his conversation with me, which was repeated several times, Brother Miller said he was convinced that the Book of Mormon was translated from the Hebrew, and he was convinced that the Prophet did have such a record, because the "translation of the record into English fell back readily into Hebrew, thus indicating that it was originally taken from the Hebrew." This was one of the main things that impressed him in relation to the authenticity of the Book of Mormon.

The first time he said this, I paid little attention, but in the meantime I received the following from Elder Josiah E. Hickman, which contained a similar thought, and this impressed upon my mind the statement of Brother Miller.

New York
Feb. 13, 1931

Elder Jos. F. Smith
Salt Lake City, Utah

Dear Brother Smith:

[T]hank you for your promptness in sending the photostatic copy in Hebrew. I took it to Doctor Joshua Bloch and we went over the Hebrew sheets. He even called another Hebrew scholar to go over the sheets with him. They both said that Mr. Miller showed himself a Hebrew scholar, but that his translations were too liberal to be accurate in some of his translations, as an example: in the first chapter 13 verse he had omitted the phrase "into

Babylon,” so that the text would be in Hebrew “and many should be carried away captive.” There were places in the translation that the meaning was not fully clear. He further said that the Book of Mormon (in English) sounded as though it had been translated from Hebrew hence it would be very easy to translate it back into Hebrew with all its richness. I am giving this to you as he explained it to me. He knew nothing of your letter to me.

I was interested in his statement: “It reads as tho it had been translated from the Hebrew into English.” To me it was a vindication that Joseph Smith did translate the records which had been written in the phraseology of the Hebrew with Egyptian characters.

I am returning under separate cover these photostatic copies.

Dr. Bloch said that probably Mr. Miller would grow more accurate as he proceeded in his translation. Thanking you kindly, I am

*Sincerely your brother,
J. E. Hickman¹⁰⁰*

Enalleges

Weldon and Butterworth write:

No other Hebraism in the Book of Mormon appears to have stirred up such a storm of scorn and criticism as have the enalleges. Webster’s dictionary defines an enallege as “the substitution of one gender, number, case, person, tense, etc., of the same word for another, as ‘We the King.’”

They argue that the enallege, or lack of agreement between plural and singular, is good Hebrew and that both the Nephite record and the Old Testament contain hundreds of this Hebraism, which violates good English as no other Hebrew idiom does. They

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 34-35.

also state that “editors of various editions of the Book of Mormon, without apparent knowledge of good Hebrew, have eliminated hundreds of the enalleges.”¹⁰¹ They then give examples of biblical enalleges:

“surely the people is grass” (Isaiah 40:7)

“for my people is foolish” (Jeremiah 4:22)

“and the people that is with thee” (Ezekiel 39:4)

“they are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers which refused to hear my words” (Jeremiah 11:10).

Weldon and Butterworth then provide parallel Book of Mormon enalleges from an “early edition,” unidentified by date:

“there were a great remission of sins” (II Nephi 1:23 [early edition])

“my father had read and saw many things” (I Nephi 1:14 [early ed.])

“and all things which in them is” (Alma 11:39 [early ed.])

“I say Jew_s because I mean them from whence I came” (II Nephi 33:8)

“those who were before Christ, and them who were after” (Ether 12:16 [early edition])

“he curseth your riches, that it becometh slippery” (Helaman 13:31 [early ed])¹⁰²

Thomas W. Brookbank, the associate editor of the *Millennial Star*, the publication of the LDS Church’s British Mission from 1841 to 1970, cites some examples of the Hebrew peculiarity of using nouns in the plural where the English idiom requires the singular form. Again, remember that these examples are from the

¹⁰¹ Weldon and Butterworth, *Book of Mormons Deeps*, 3 vols. (Independence: n. pub., 1970), 3:262-63.

¹⁰² Weldon and Butterworth, *Book of Mormon Deeps*, 3:262-63.

original Hebrew Bible and are not found in the English translation:

bloods (Genesis 4:10, and elsewhere)
sojournings (Genesis 17:8; 28:1, 37:1)
wraths (Job 21:30)
salvations (Psalms 28:8; 53:6; Isaiah 33:6)
revenges (Psalms 94:1)

Brookbank quotes some plurals used instead of singulars in the Book of Mormon:

“there shall be bloodsheds” (II Nephi 1:12)
“the gifts and callings of God” (Moroni 3:4)
“and his great condescensions” (Jacob 4:7)
“because of the destructions of my people” (I Nephi 15:5)
“and great slaughters with the sword” (I Nephi 12:2)
“envyings” (II Nephi 27:21)
“plunderings” (Alma 61:14)
“priestcrafts” (II Nephi 10:5)
“rebellions” (Alma 61:14)
“understandings” (Mosiah 8:20)
“witchcrafts” (III Nephi 21:16)
“deceivings” (III Nephi 21:19)
“magics” (Mormon 1:19)
“murderings” (Alma 50:21)¹⁰³

The Severance of Associated Ideas

This Hebrew element in the Book of Mormon is also a pattern Brookbank identifies.¹⁰⁴ He does not attempt to explain what the phrase means but gives the following examples from the Bible which disclose his meaning plainly: “And it came to pass . . . that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair. . .” Then Brookbank explains: “The passage unadorned with a

¹⁰³ Brookbank, “Hebrew Idioms and Analogies,” 190-91.

¹⁰⁴ The discussion in this section is from *ibid.*, 471-72.

Hebraism would read in plain English, ‘. . . the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were fair.’ The daughters of men and their fairness being comprehended in one view—while it almost appears from the Hebraic coloring of the text as if those men first saw the daughters spoken of, and after that, by a second effort, they discovered that they were fair.”

He then gives another example: “And behold, the Lord stood above it and said, “I am the Lord God of Abraham. . . . ; the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed. . . .” (Genesis 28:13). In the English form, it would read, “. . . I will give thee the land whereon thou liest. . . .” He cites yet another example: “Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire, your land, strangers devour it. . . .”

Then he cites parallel examples from the Book of Mormon:

And I looked and beheld the Lamb of God, that he was taken by the people (I Nephi 11:32)

I saw the multitudes of the earth, that they were gathered together (I Nephi 11:34)

. . . and I saw the earth and the rocks, that they rent . . . (I Nephi 12:4)

. . . and I saw the devil, that he was the foundation of it” (I Nephi 13:6)

. . . and I beheld the Spirit of God, that it came down and wrought upon the man . . . (I Nephi 13:12)

Brookbank invites the reader to notice how the different propositions or ideas are made, as far as possible, to stand alone—separate and distinct from their fellows even though closely related. He argues that the Nephite writer, as a Jew, was bound to disclose his racial identity by signs and marks which no English Gentile bears. He claims that virtually every page in the Book of Mormon proclaims its Jewish origin and “when such features mark that Book . . . how puerile it is for any person to claim that they [Hebrew idioms] were put there by an alleged imposter, let him be either the unschooled Joseph Smith or the better educated Sidney Rigdon.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ As quoted in *ibid.*, 472.

Particular Species of Hebrew Verbs

Brookbank also makes a related point based on Hebrew verbs.¹⁰⁶ “Hebrew verbs,” he observes “have seven different forms which have been called species or conjugations. They represent as many modifications of the verbal idea, and if the Hebrew verb meaning ‘to kill’ be taken as the representative of the regular verb, the various species with their significations will be as follows:

1. Kal (simple active), to kill.
2. Niphal (simple passive), to be killed.
3. Piel (intensive active), to kill many or massacre.
4. Pual (simple passive), to be massacred.
5. Hiphil (causative active), to cause to kill.
6. Hophal (causative passive), to cause to be killed.
7. Hithpael (reflexive), to kill oneself.”

Brookbank notes that two of these species are causatives, of which the ancient Hebrews made frequent use. In English, linguistic structure and special terms express the causative idea but we seldom use them unless the idea of causation is a prominent meaning in a given passage. In contrast, Hebrew employs the verbs meaning “to cause” or the causative species of verbs in many instances where English would not, as the examples following show. The bracketed words are translated from the Hebrew:

. . . and took her and pulled her [caused her to come] in unto him into the ark” (Genesis 8:9)

And the field and the cave were made sure [caused to stand] unto Abraham. . . . (Genesis 23:20)

. . . . and I will rid [cause to cease] out of the land . . . (Leviticus 26:6)

. . . and let them [cause a razor to pass over] . . . (Numbers 8:7)

“And Menahem exacted [caused to come forth] the money . . . (II Kings 15:20)

¹⁰⁶The discussion which follows is from *ibid.*, 623-25.

And he put down [caused to cease] the idolatrous priests . . . (II Kings 23:5)

. . . when he came home, he sent and called [caused to come] his friends . . . (Esther 5:10)

. . . and bring him [cause him to ride] on horseback . . . (Esther 6:9)

Brookbank then points out that the Book of Mormon frequently follows this Hebrew mode, using one or another form of the verb “to cause” as either an active or passive, even when standard English usage would not require it. He cites these examples:

. . . and he will take away from them the lands of their possessions; and he will cause them to be scattered and smitten. (III Nephi 1:11)

I will cause [make them loathsome] that they shall be loathsome to thy people . . . (II Nephi 5:22)

. . . and I will cause [make them howl] that they howl all the day long” (Mosiah 12:4)¹⁰⁷

And if the Lord shall say—Because of thine iniquities, thou shalt be cut off from my presence, he will [do it] cause that it shall be so. (Helaman 12:21)

. . . for the sword of his justice is in his right hand, and . . . if he spurn at his doings, he will [let it fall upon you] cause that it shall soon overtake you. (III Nephi 29:4)

“Yea, it grieveth my soul, and [maketh] causeth me to shrink with shame . . . (Jacob 2:6)

Brookbank also notes this change from the simple to the causative active: “. . . that they could cause [compel] them to yield. . .” (III Nephi 4:16). Rapid transitions from simple to

¹⁰⁷ Brookbank points out that the changes from simple active to causative passive in this last example are abrupt; English would not require it or even make it desirable. However, as the equivalent of a Hebrew verb form, its occurrence here “is not hard to account for.”

causative also occur in this extended passage:

Behold, that great city Zarahemla have I burned with fire . . . and that great city Moroni have I caused to be sunk in the depths of the sea . . . and that great city Moronihah have I covered with earth . . . and the city of Gilgal have I caused to be sunk, and the inhabitants thereof to be buried upon in the depths of the earth . . . and waters have I caused to come up in the stead thereof . . . and the city of Gadiandi, and the city of Gadiomnah . . . have I caused to be sunk, and made hills and valleys in the place thereof; and the inhabitants thereof have I buried up in the depths of the earth . . . and that great city Jacobugath have I caused to be burned with fire . . . (III Nephi 9:3-9)

As Brookbank points out:

In these passages the abrupt transition from one species of verbs to another is remarkable. Beginning with the simple active, the causative passive next occurs, then we find a return to the simple active, which is followed by the causative passive, a number of times, but succeeded again by the simple active, and that once more by the causative passive. Once again, in verse 9, the latter verbal form appears; and also once in verse 10, not here quoted. In verse 11, a return is made to the simple active, and in verse 12 the causative active form is found, and thus closes this noticeable series of transitions from one verbal form to another, and illustrating the employment of a species of Hebrew verb whose use, in these instances is not required by any principle of our own language.

Another example of the causative form occurs in examples of compulsion or order-giving. Brookbank gives two examples:

. . . in my anger I did cause [command] my people to come up to war . . . (Mosiah 20:15)

. . . And he did cause his people to commit sin . . . (Mosiah 11:2)

Our feeling that an individual is virtually completely responsible for committing sin might lead us to substitute a less comprehensive word for “did cause,” suggesting less exercise of power. (See Mosiah 10:4 for another example.) This use of the word “cause” is “analogically proper,” says Brookbank, “according to the Hebraic meaning given to it sometimes, as examples already submitted make manifest.

Compound Structure in Names

Brookbank cites Greene’s *Hebrew Grammar* as saying: “Compound words in Hebrew are few, except in proper names.” He then writes that a “list of different hyphenated compounds of common words, not numerals, in the Book of Mormon, totals almost thirty The consistency observed in reducing compound forms of common words to a minimum is a substantial one.”¹⁰⁸

Brookbank explains that the proper names in the Book of Mormon are undoubtedly compound in structure and, hence, sustain a harmony as Hebrew names should. As examples, he maintains that “Gad” is a Nephite name, no doubt a prefix, from which such names as Gaddiandi, Gaddianton, and Gaddiomnah” are derived. He continues:

Jacobugath resolves into Jacob-u-gath; Kish; Kumen and Riplah were also the more simple forms of certain Nephite names. In compounds of one form or another they appear as A-kish, Kish-kumen, Ripla-kish, Kumen-onhi, Pa-cumeni; “cumen” spelled with a “c,” in the last name being probably the same with “kumen” in others; for the Jews frequently spelled proper names in more than one way. . . . So this and other apparent orthographical changes in the Book of Mormon names is a consistency of no little value.

Hebraisms in I Nephi Chapter 1

In addition to bringing together examples of a particular type

¹⁰⁸ This quotation and the discussion which follows are taken from *ibid.*, 139.

from all over the Book of Mormon, he simply points out the Hebraisms encountered in the first chapter of I Nephi, where, if Joseph Smith were fraudulently creating this record, he might be presumed to have considerable less ease and expertise in producing a Hebrew-sounding volume.¹⁰⁹ For the reader's convenience, I quote the entire chapter, followed by Brookbank's verse-by-verse analysis:

- 1 *I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father; and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days, nevertheless, having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days; yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God, therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days.*
2. *Yea, I make a record in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians.*
3. *And I know that the record which I make is true; and I make it with mine own hand; and I make it according to my knowledge.*
4. *For it came to pass in the commencement of the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah, (my father, Lehi, having dwelt at Jerusalem in all his days); and in that same year there came many prophets, prophesying unto the people that they must repent, or the great city Jerusalem must be destroyed.*
5. *Wherefore it came to pass that my father, Lehi, as he went forth prayed unto the Lord, yea, even with all his heart, in behalf of his people.*
6. *And it came to pass as he prayed unto the Lord, there came a pillar of fire and dwelt upon a rock before him; and he saw and heard much; and because of the things which he saw and heard he did quake and tremble exceedingly.*

¹⁰⁹This discussion is taken from *ibid.*, 139-40.

7. *And it came to pass that he returned to his own house at Jerusalem; and he cast himself upon his bed, being overcome with the Spirit and the things which he had seen.*
8. *And being thus overcome with the Spirit, he was carried away in a vision, even that he saw the heavens open, and he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God.*
9. *And it came to pass that he saw One descending out of the midst of heaven, and he beheld that his luster was above that of the sun at noon-day.*
10. *And he also saw twelve others following him, and their brightness did exceed that of the stars in the firmament.*
11. *And they came down and went forth upon the face of the earth; and the first came and stood before my father, and gave unto him a book, and bade him that he should read.*
12. *And it came to pass that as he read, he was filled with the Spirit of the Lord.*
13. *And he read, saying: Wo, wo, unto Jerusalem, for I have seen thine abominations! Yea, and many things did my father read concerning Jerusalem—that it should be destroyed, and the inhabitants thereof; many should perish by the sword, and many should be carried away captive into Babylon.*
14. *And it came to pass that when my father had read and seen many great and marvelous things, he did exclaim many things unto the Lord; such as: Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty! Thy throne is high in the heavens, and thy power, and goodness, and mercy are over all the inhabitants of the earth, and, because thou art merciful, thou wilt not suffer those who come unto thee that they shall perish!*
15. *And after this manner was the language of my father in the praising of his God; for his soul did rejoice, and*

- his whole heart was filled, because of the things which he had seen, yea, which the Lord had shown unto him.*
16. *And now I, Nephi, do not make a full account of the things which my father hath written, for he hath written many things which he saw in visions and in dreams; and he also hath written many things which he prophesied and spake unto his children, of which I shall not make a full account.*
17. *But I shall make an account of my proceedings in my days. Behold, I make an abridgment of the record of my father, upon plates which I have made with mine own hands; wherefore, after I have abridged the record of my father then will I make an account of mine own life.*
18. *Therefore, I would that ye should know, that after the Lord had shown so many marvelous things unto my father, Lehi, yea, concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, behold he went forth among the people, and began to prophesy and to declare unto them concerning the things which he had both seen and heard.*
19. *And it came to pass that the Jews did mock him because of the things which he testified of them; for he truly testified of their wickedness and their abominations; and he testified that the things which he saw and heard, and also the things which he read in the book, manifested plainly of the coming of the Messiah, and also the redemption of the world.*
20. *And when the Jews heard these things they were angry with him; yea, even as with the prophets of old, whom they had cast out, and stoned, and slain; and they also sought his life, that they might take it away. But behold, I, Nephi, will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance. (1 Nephi 1)*

in construct relation before the subject of the action.
“all my days” — a Hebraism for “all my lifetime.”
“mysteries” — used in harmony with its ancient Jewish meaning of the revealed word of God.
“make a record” — for “write an account or history.”

Verse 4. *“For” — logically improper but strictly in place as introductory to a digression or parenthetical remark. Compare Genesis 35:18; Exodus 9:28, 18:3-4, 32:25, 34:9*

“commencement of the first year of the reign of Zedekiah” — construct state of four successive nouns
“all his days” — for “all his life,” a construction similar to that already noted in verse 1.

An omission very characteristic of Jewish writing. This verse closes with a statement that Lehi was one of the prophets spoken of, but this must be inferred from the context.

Verse 7: *“he cast himself upon his bed” — The Hebrew word for “cast” seems to have been a great favorite with the Israelites of old and is used often where we would employ other terms. See any good concordance of the Bible.*

Verse 11: *“and bade him that he should read” — the discarding of an infinitive, again characteristic of Hebrew usage. More conventional English phrasing would be: “and bade him to read.” A similar example occurs in verse 14: “not suffer those who come unto thee to perish,” and verse 20: “sought his life, that they might take it away.”*

Verse 13: *“that it should be destroyed, and the inhabitants thereof” — an example of the severance of associated ideas.*

Verse 15: *“his whole heart was filled, because of . . .” — Hebraic omission of a phrase. More completely, it would read “filled with joy.”*

Verse 16. *“do not make a full account” — characteristic of Hebrew to use “make” for the more precise “write.” This example occurs twice in this verse and once in*

verse 17.

Verse 18. "Therefore, I would that ye should know . . ." Here "therefore" means "to resume," indicating an interruption in the line of thought, occasioned by what was said in verse 17.

Verse 20: "And when the Jews heard" — an example of the use of "and" where "but" would be more common in English. "they were angry with him; yea, even as with the prophets of old" — an omission. This phrase should probably read "even as their wicked forefathers were angry with the prophets of old."

Brookbank concludes: "It must be evidenced from the Hebraisms and Hebraic analogies reviewed in the above observations, and others heretofore considered, that the Book of Mormon is suffused with a decided Jewish coloring in its general literary aspects.

Chapter 7

PURPORTED ANACHRONISMS IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

Anachronisms and conflicting statements are not to be found in the Book of Mormon. If Joseph Smith or Sidney Rigdon or any other of Smith's contemporaries had fraudulently foisted the Book of Mormon upon an unsuspecting public, as stated by some critics, how could they have possibly avoided using anachronisms of the nineteenth century, either intentionally or inadvertently? Furthermore, anachronisms are not to be confused or compared to prophecy or revelation, as will be explored later.

“Anachronism” has been defined as:

An error in computing time or fixing dates—too early or too late. Anything done or existing out of date; hence anything that was proper to a former age, but is, or, if it existed, would be out of harmony with the present. (Oxford English Dictionary, 1981)

Assignment of events or things or persons to a period earlier or later than that to which they actually belong. Literature abounds in examples of such mistakes in fact; especially in historical drama and fiction owing to imperfect acquaintance with the more or less remote period

dealt with or to mere carelessness. (*Grolier Encyclopedia*)¹¹⁰

An error in the order of time; hence, any error in the misplacement of persons or events in the point of time.” (*Webster’s New School and Office Dictionary*)

A neglect or falsification, whether willful or undesigned of chronological relation. The poetry, prose, song, and classics of all ages are shot through with anachronisms because of the inescapable tendency of nations to color their literature with their own nationality and time. Shakespeare makes Hector quote Aristotle who lived many centuries after the assumed date of Hector. (*Encyclopedia Britannica*)¹¹¹

Anachronisms are very difficult to avoid. Often, without conscious thought, one will ascribe words or events to the past that did not happen until closer to one’s own time. For example: Shakespeare writes of the “striking of a clock” in *Julius Caesar* but clocks were not invented until centuries after Caesar.¹¹²

The island of St. Kitts Neves in the Lesser Antilles shows Columbus on his first voyage of discovery looking at the horizon through a telescope; but the telescope was not invented until about 1600.

Milton has Lucifer in *Paradise Lost* shooting at the angels with cannons.

Mark Twain’s comic novel, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court*, is based on the humor of the anachronism of Yankee inventions and technology being employed during the Middle Ages.

An anachronistic convention in Dutch paintings was depicting Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in modern clothes. Renaissance Madonnas and characters in nativity paintings are likewise depicted in the costuming current at the time.

¹¹⁰ As cited in Weldon and Butterworth, *Criticisms of the Book of Mormon Answered*, 22.

¹¹¹ As quoted in *ibid.*

¹¹² These examples are cited by Roy E. Weldon, *Book of Mormon Deeps*, 3 vols. (Independence, Missouri: n.pub., 1979), 2:294.

Shakespeare's *Henry V* mentions shillings; but these coins were not in use until the time of Henry VII. Also, the character of Henry V speaks of taking the Turk by the beard in Constantinople; Constantinople did not fall into Turkish hands until 1455, thirty-one years after Henry V's death.

Under these circumstances, it is easy to understand why Hugh Nibley warns: "The first thing to do in examining any ancient text is to consider it in the light of the origin and background claimed for it. If it fits into that background there is no need to look further since Historical Forgery is virtually impossible."¹¹³ C. E. Moore agrees: "one of the best methods of detecting a forgery from a historical document is to examine it for things that did not exist at the time the article was supposed to have been made."¹¹⁴

Under these circumstances, then it is amusing to find one Book of Mormon critic stumbling, not only into an error, but also into an anachronism in his criticism of the Book of Mormon: "The Jaredites allegedly set foot in America somewhere in the neighborhood of 600 B.C. and not too long thereafter divided into two tribes, the Nephites and the Lamanites . . ." ¹¹⁵ The Jaredites, as any reader of the Book of Mormon will remember, came to the New World more than a thousand years before Lehi and his group arrived. If a professor and critic can make such a blunder, it is nothing short of miraculous that an unlearned young man could avoid being ensnared in countless anachronisms as he turned out hundreds of pages of a record dealing with other cultures, eras, and literary usages. In 1830, no one, learned or unlearned, could have had more than the slightest clue of the ancient world's mor*s and literary conventions. Yet this young man presented to the world a book which he said was "translated by the gift and power of God."

Many notable authors have produced classic historic novels, including Lloyd Douglas's *The Robe*, James Michener's *Hawaii*, Leon Uris's *Exodus*, and Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*. These writers spent a great deal of time in researching the material

¹¹³ As quoted in *ibid.*, 287.

¹¹⁴ As quoted in *ibid.*, 287.

¹¹⁵ As quoted in *ibid.*, 292.

for their book and months—sometimes years—writing them.

Joseph Smith began his period of sustained work on the Book of Mormon with Oliver Cowdery on April 7, 1829 and completed it about July 1, 1829. This is a period of approximately ninety days. Although Joseph Smith began translating the plates on April 12, 1828, he had first tried to transcribe the record himself, then had the sporadic assistance of Martin Harris and Emma Smith. Their contributions did not materially advance the final production since the 116 manuscript pages thus produced were lost.

As a consequence, the Joseph Smith/Oliver Cowdery effort prepared a book of approximately six hundred pages for the printer in about seventy-five working days. They also experienced many difficulties during that time—interference and threats from persecutors, the hounding of curiosity seekers, and family problems. Joseph Smith had to move from place to place. The transcription was done in longhand, a tedious and lengthy process. There was little or no time for reviews, editing, and proofreading. Certainly there was no professional assistance with these tasks. Considering the meager education of Joseph Smith—from four to seven years of grammar school—contrasted with the library of resources, copy machines, research assistants, etc., available to authors of both historical fiction and non-fiction, the impartial reader must acknowledge that only a higher power could have produced a record like the Book of Mormon through the instrumentality of an untrained youth.

And now we must discuss the difference between purported anachronisms and the role of prophecy in the Book of Mormon. Critics have pointed out that the word “Bible” is used in II Nephi 29:1-14; however, the Greek word, **biblia**, meaning “a collection of books,” was not used by Hebrew prophets in the Old Testament. Is this an anachronism by Joseph Smith that betrays the Book of Mormon as inauthentic?

There is a great difference between anachronisms and prophecy by revelation from the Holy Spirit. The use of the word “Bible” in the Book of Mormon is a prophecy by Nephi concerning what would happen in the nineteenth century:

And because my words shall hiss forth—many of the

Gentiles shall say: A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible.

Wherefore murmur ye, because that ye shall receive more of my word? Know ye not that the testimony of two nations is a witness unto you that I am God, that I remember one nation like unto another? Wherefore, I speak the same words unto one nation like unto another. And when the two nations shall run together the testimony of the two nations shall run together also. (II Nephi 29:3, 8)

Nephi's prophecy is thus on a par with Isaiah's prophecy concerning Cyrus. Isaiah identified this king long before that monarch's birth or the captivity of the Israelites in Babylonia. Josephus, a great Hebrew historian, recorded some context for this prophecy:

This was known to Cyrus by his reading the book which Isaiah left behind him of his prophecies, for this prophet said that God had spoken thus to him in a secret vision: "My will is, that Cyrus, whom I have appointed to be king over many and great nations, send back my people to their own land, and build my temple." This was foretold by Isaiah one hundred and forty years before the temple was demolished. Accordingly, when Cyrus read this, and admired the divine power, an earnest desire and ambition seized upon him to fulfill what was written.

He then sent a message throughout Asia:

Thus says Cyrus the king: Since God Almighty hath appointed me to be king of the habitable earth, I believe he is that God which the nation of the Israelites worship; for indeed he foretold my name by the prophets, and that I should build him a house in Jerusalem, in the country of Judea.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, translated by William Whiston (Philadelphia, Winston Company, n.d.) Book XI, p. 321.

108 BOOK OF MORMON REFLECTIONS

There is not the slightest allusion of modernity to be found in the Book of Mormon. There are no scientific terms such as “hurricane,” “longitude,” “latitude,” “harbor,” “gulf,” “continent,” “temperature,” “tides,” and “elevation.”¹¹⁷

John A. Widstoe and Franklin S. Harris, Jr., two LDS authors, deal directly with areas where possible anachronisms could occur but do not:

The contractions such as can't, couldn't, don't. No titles like Mr., Mrs., Miss, Professor, Dr., D.D., L.L.D., M.A., Hon., Ph.D., Lady, Gentleman, Sir, Madam, Excellency, Highness, Grace, Peer, Lord, Baron, Count, Earl, Reverend, or their plurals. A few to designate offices however, are given such as King, Captain, (general).

There are no surnames in the Book of Mormon—a profoundly wise omission, since surnames first came into general use about A.D. 1040.

Names for cloths: calico, muslin, delaine, linsey, and broadcloth. Nor does it mention modern names of wearing apparel such as skirts, pantaloons, waistcoats, collars, cuffs, gloves, boots, shirts, etc.

No names for intoxicants familiar to modern times and people are used in it. It makes no mention of whiskey, gin, ale, brandy, punch, porter, beer, and so on. The ancient word wine does occur in it. The book does not speak of colleges or universities, nor does it refer directly to any such schools of learning.

Libraries, art collections, museums and like institutions are not mentioned, nor is their existence in any way implied.

The Book of Mormon does not give even an intimation of the relative value of any piece of the Nephite money when compared with some specified coin of America or England.

No week-day names occur in the book in hand. Not one of the names of the days of the week as they are now used

¹¹⁷Weldon, *Book of Mormon Deeps*, 3:288.

is traceable to an original Hebraic source.

Names of months are not given in the Nephite records. The naming of them was unknown to the ancient Israelites.

No modern geographical names are used. Why did not Joseph Smith, if an imposter, refer to the "narrow strip of land" as Panama?

No place is located by means of latitude or longitude. This convenient and accurate system first came into use about A.D. 382.

The time of day when Christ was crucified is correctly given in the Book of Mormon. Making proper allowances for the difference in time between Palestine and the Nephite lands, the Savior was slain in the morning. And so is the fact recorded by Nephi.¹¹⁸

Other words which were known to Joseph Smith and his contemporaries could have been used in the Book of Mormon accidentally are: "moat," "embankment," "palisades," "coal of mail," "trenches," "maneuver," "headquarters," "garrison," and "militia." Even the word "music" is not found in the book.¹¹⁹

Weldon and Butterworth cite a certain J. N. Washburn's book, *Contents, Structure, and Authorship of the Book of Mormon*, as stating that "there is not a name in the entire record which begins with F, Q, W, X, or Y. . . . In the Bible also there is no name with those initials."¹²⁰

The phrase "tower of Babel" is not found in the Book of Mormon or the Bible:

Both Ixtlilxochitl [a native prince of Mexico who wrote his people's history at the time of the Conquistadores] and the Book of Mormon declare that the earliest cultured settlers departed from the Old World at the time of the building of the tower. Ixtlilxochitl refers to this

¹¹⁸ Widstoe and Harris, *Seven Claims of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret News Press, 1937), 51-53.

¹¹⁹ Weldon and Butterworth, *Criticisms of the Book of Mormon Answered* (Independence, Missouri: n. pub., n.d.), 22.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

structure as “The Very High Tower,” whereas the Book of Mormon refers to the structure as “The Great Tower.” The term Babel, it is understood, is a comparatively recent appellation—so no anachronistic error is committed in either of our sources. Other details of the two accounts are in close agreement. Both refer to the confusion of tongues. Ixtlilxochitl dates the exodus from Babel at 3097 B.C.¹²¹

The Book of Mormon also contains expressions that might have seemed anachronistic or fictional to an audience of the nineteenth century but which actually have found support in later research. For example, Franklin S. Harris, Jr., who researched the Book of Mormon for many years, observes, “It is a remarkable coincidence that the word ‘deseret’ . . . enjoyed a position of prominence among the founders of the classical Egyptian civilization, who associated it very closely with the symbol of the bee. The word is DSRT; the vowels were not written then.”¹²²

No one with the limited education of Joseph Smith could have written a record such as the Book of Mormon with its many complexities and singular uses of Hebrew phrases. Nor could others associated with him in 1828-30, regardless of their education, write an intricate and multi-authored book within a ninety-day period without introducing anachronisms and modern English vernacular expression.

A Little More on Anachronisms

Attention has been called by critics to the use of the word “cement” found in the Book of Mormon (Helaman 3:7-11). They have implied that it is an anachronism.

Within recent years, [Hugh Nibley says] much has been made of the surprising extent to which the ancient Americans used cement, concrete, and gypsum in their

¹²¹ Hunter and Ferguson as quoted in *ibid.*, 291.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 22.

*building operations. It is now suggested that the overlavish detail, the extremely high relief, and the tendency to round off all angles in the heavy and serpentine profusion of line that is so characteristic of some early American architectural adornment, are the direct heritage of a time when the builders worked in the yielding and plastic medium of cement.*¹²³

Widstoe and Harris quote a J. D. Baldwin, who says:

*The Peruvian ruins show us remains of cities, temples, palaces, other edifices of various kinds, fortresses, aqueducts (one of them 450 miles long), great roads (extending through the whole length of the empire), and terraces on the sides of the mountains. For all these constructions, the builders used cut stone laid in mortar or cement, and their work was done admirably.*¹²⁴

T. H. Willard, in his *City of the Sacred Well*, writes:

*In the building of their cities with their houses, temples, and monuments, stone was used; and to judge by the excellence of existing remains, the people reached a high degree of skill in stone cutting and building. Curiously enough, a fine variety of cement was known in those days which was used for covering houses and pyramids and for the making of roads. In ancient times, Chichen Itza and all the greater and lesser cities of the Yucatan peninsula were linked by a network of smooth, hard-surfaced highways. The Mayan of today call these roads Zac-be-ob, or white ways.*¹²⁵

The mention of horses in the Book of Mormon has been assailed as an anachronism by some critics. Widstoe and Harris,

¹²³ Hugh Nibley, *Since Cumorah: The Book of Mormon in the Modern World* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1967), 254.

¹²⁴ *Seven Claims of the Book of Mormon*, 64.

¹²⁵ As quoted in *ibid.*, 76.

after some research, write:

Recent research has demonstrated that the prehistoric peoples of America had domesticated many animals, such as sheep, oxen, horses, bees, perhaps also llamas and other beasts. Some doubt has been cast upon the Book of Mormon account which mentions horses because there is no record of horses having been in America at the time of the early explorers. It is well known, however, that the horse was numerous and wide-spread upon the American continent in recent geological time and the absence of the mention of the horse in the scant records of the first explorers is not a proof that the horse was not really there. In fact, evidences of the pre-Columbian use in South America of horses for burden bearing seem conclusive.

After referring to various finds in the southwestern United States, Dr. Alfred S. Romer concludes: "There is very strong evidence that horses, two genera of camels, and a mammoth, the sloth Nothrotherium, two extinct genera of 'antelope', and the giant cat Felix atrox, existed in the southwest in comparatively modern post-Pleistocene time. This immediately suggests a comparison with the La Brea fauna, of which these forms are typical members."¹²⁶

It would be interesting to hear the critics refute the evidence presented (although few in number) of these highways, houses, and monuments made of cement, and of the existence of horses in the pre-Columbian times. This disproves their allegation of calling these two items anachronisms in the Book of Mormon.

A book could be written to prove that what the critics call anachronisms in the Book of Mormon are really things that existed hundreds of years ago. I have used just a few to vindicate the Book of Mormon against the critics' allegations.

¹²⁶ As quoted in *ibid.*, 74.

Chapter 8

CHIASMUS IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

Author's note: Sections of this chapter are extracted from "Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon" by John W. Welch, printed in *Brigham Young University Studies* 10 (1969): 69-84 and reprinted by the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies and also from *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structure, Analyses, Exegesis*, edited by John W. Welch (Hildesheim, Germany: Gerstenberg, 1981), 198-248. He has graciously given me permission to reprint portions of his writings in this volume, for which I acknowledge my great debt. A law professor at Brigham Young University, Mr. Welch discovered the literary pattern of chiasmus in the Book of Mormon as an undergraduate; he studied it for several years and has written many articles on the Book of Mormon.

All biblical passages quoted hereafter are from the original Hebrew and/or Greek texts as the King James translation sometimes obscures the effects of the chiasms.¹²⁷ For the reader's ease, the author's footnotes have been omitted. In his introduction, Mr. Welch credits scholar Nils Lund with having done more than any other to bring the study of chiasmus to life in the twentieth century.

¹²⁷ As is an accepted convention among scriptural scholars, explains Professor Welch, minor omissions or slight paraphrasings are made where desirable in the Book of Mormon passages without resort to ellipses and brackets.

Professor Welch states, "When Nils Lund . . . was first introduced to what was then designated as 'the inverted order' in 1908, he had many legitimate reasons for being skeptical. Such studies were not far advanced at that point, and the form itself appeared somewhat unlikely. While forging ahead to supply the principle of chiasmus to the study of the Bible, Lund had no way of knowing where such studies might lead and how they would ultimately be received."¹²⁸ Many other scholars have written on this interesting and important literary element.

In analyzing the Book of Mormon, the form which has proven especially useful has been the chiasmus, a basic component of ancient Hebrew. In the nineteenth century, the knowledge of chiasmus was rediscovered when formal criticism became popular. However, by the time it was accepted in literary circles, the Book of Mormon had already been published. The Book of Mormon contains a multiplicity of Hebraisms, including many chiasms, which indicates that the writers had a knowledge of this particular literary device.

Chiasmus appears to have begun as a structural form which then developed into an intriguing and rhetorical device which has been used sporadically in prose and poetry by many authors for nearly three thousand years. Nevertheless, the awareness of such a form, except in isolated cases, remained a part of the intellectual subconsciousness of modern Western Europe until frequent chiasmal passages were discovered in the Bible.

The name chiasmus is descriptive of the form itself. The name was derived from chi (X) the twenty-second letter in the Greek alphabet, and the Greek **chiazein** (to mark with an X), for the following reasons. Two lines of poetry are said to be parallel if the component elements of one line correspond directly to those of the other, so to speak, in a 1:1 relationship. There are numerous examples of direct parallelisms among the Proverbs, e.g.,

*a soft answer turneth away wrath:
But grievous words stir up anger. (Proverbs 15:1)*

¹²⁸ Welch, *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, 9.

If the second line of a parallelism is inverted, that is to say, if its last element is placed first and then first, last, then a chiasm is created. As an example is the following verse:

*For **my** thoughts are not **your** thoughts
Neither are **your** ways **my** ways, saith the Lord. (Isaiah
55:8)*

And from the New Testament:

*He that findeth his life shall lose it
And he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.
(Matthew 10:39)*

Formulating this empirically, the simple chiasm takes on the apparent form of an X:

a b
b a

Thus, once the term chiasmus had been coined, it appropriately stuck. And just as the name stuck, the idea of chiasmus also has stuck in the back of Western minds. Heraclitus, one of the early pre-Socrates Greek philosophers, used chiasmus to accentuate his notion of eternal flux and opposition:

*Cold things grow warm
What is warm cools;
The moist dries,
the dry dampens
Immortals are mortals,
mortals are immortal,
each living the others' death
and dying the others' life.*

Even in our modern nursery rhymes and maxims, the natural rhythm and immediate appeal of chiastic lines is apparent. Thus, "Old King Cole was a merry old soul, and a merry old soul was he," is charming; and "he who fails to prepare, prepares to fail," sounds solid and convincing. The reader, however, will notice that all these chiasms contain only two elements whose order is then reversed. This is a significant factor in differentiating the chiasmus known for some time in the West from the chiasmus characteristic

of ancient Hebrew.

Whereas in Greek, Latin, and English, chiasms are rarely, if ever, composed of more than two elements, in Hebrew there appears to be no limit to the number of terms or ideas that can be employed. A chiasm in Hebrew may be expanded to include any number of terms written in one order and then in the exact reverse order, etc. i.e.,

a-b-c-d x-x- d-c-b-a

These structures may be several verses or several chapters long. A simple illustration of this, which uses five elements in an inverted parallelism, is found in Psalms 3:7-8.

*Save me,
O my God
For thou hast smitten
All my enemies
On the cheek-bone
The teeth
Of the wicked
Thou hast broken,
To Yahweh
The salvation*

A second example of this, which is even longer, comes from Isaiah 60:1-3:

*Arise,
Shine
For thy light is come,
And the glory
Of Yahweh
Upon thee is risen
For behold, dimness shall cover the earth
And gross darkness the peoples.
But upon thee will arise
Yahweh
And his glory shall upon thee be seen
And nations shall come to thy light
And kings to the brightness
Of thy rising.*

There are plenty of good reasons why a literary form of this peculiar type was attractive to the ancient Hebrew mind. First, chiasms are easy to memorize. The Hebrew tradition, unlike the written Greek tradition, was oral. Not only were manuscripts and scrolls scarce, but there were also few who could read them. Therefore, the tales of early Israel and the songs of her prophets were handed down through the family generations by word of mouth and long passages of the Torah were committed to memory. In their memorizing and reciting, the Hebrews were surely aided by chiasmic groupings and repetitions. Second, chiasmus was simply in vogue. Each age and culture has been characterized by a dominant form of writing; sixteenth-century England was very fond of the sonnet, and fourth-century Greek, especially Plato, are noted for their frequent usage of the dialectic. Chiasmus remained a common literary form in the Hebrew world until the first century after Christ, when it and most Jewish institutions were destroyed.

The rediscovery of chiasms in the Bible can be credited to three theologians of the nineteenth century: Robert Lowth, John Jebb, and John Forbes. Lowth, the Bishop of London, and Jebb, the Bishop of Limerick, both wrote three-hundred-page volumes describing Hebraisms in the holy scriptures. But their emphasis is almost entirely placed on poetical imagery and direct parallelisms, and only Jebb pays much attention to epanodos (the name used for chiasmus). In 1854, however, John Forbes completed a much more extensive study, *The Symmetrical Study of Scripture*. With the publication of this book, it is possible to begin speaking of relatively widespread awareness of chiasmic forms in the Bible. A wave of other writers followed Forbes, and in 1860 a section on chiasmus was finally added to T. H. Horne's famous encyclopedic *Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures*. This marks the recognition of the form as genuine and significant.

Chiasmus in the Old and New Testaments

The best way to establish the antiquity and the Hebraic characteristics of chiasmus is to observe it in the Bible. The Old Testament represents some of the oldest extant written documents in the world history. When peculiar word patterns consistently

reappear in this text, it can be concluded that these patterns represent deliberate attempts of the ancients at a form of artistic prose. Concerning the Hebraic characteristics of chiasmus, Nils Lund has formulated seven rules of chiasmal passages. The most interesting ones for this study are the first, the third, and the seventh. The first states that the center is always the turning point. The third notes that the ideas will often be distributed so as to occur at the beginning, the middle, and the end of the chiasmus but nowhere else. And the seventh claims that there may be a mixture of directly parallel and inverted parallel lines in the same unit. These characteristics are readily apparent in the following biblical passages:

*And all flesh **died** that moved upon the earth,
Both birds,
And cattle,
And beasts,
And every creeping thing that creepeth upon
the earth,
And every man:
All in whose nostrils was the breath of
the spirit of life
Of all that was in the dry land, died;
And was destroyed
Every **living** thing
That was upon the face of the **ground**,
Both man, and creeping things,
(And beasts),
And cattle,
And they were **destroyed** from the earth. (Genesis 7:21-23)*

*Seek ye
And ye shall live:
But seek not after **Bethel**,
Nor enter into **Gilgal**,
And pass not to Beer-sheba:
For **Gilgal** shall surely go into captivity,
And **Bethel** shall come to naught.
Seek Yahweh, and ye shall **live**. (Amos 5:4-6)*

*Do ye indeed, O **gods**, speak **righteousness**?*

Do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men?

*Nay, in the heart ye work **wickedness***

*Ye weigh the **violence** of your hands in the earth.*

*The wicked are estranged from the **womb***

They go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.

*Their poison is like the poison of a **serpent***

Like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear,

Which hearkeneth not to the voice of charmers,

The most cunning binder of spells.

O God,

Break

Their teeth in their mouth:

The great teeth of the

young lions,

Break out

O Yahweh

They shall melt away like waters,

They shall go away from them,

Like tender grass which wilts away.

*Like a **snail** will melt as it goes along.*

Abortions of a woman

That not have beheld the sun!

*The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the **vengeance***

*He shall wash his feet in the blood of the **wicked**.*

And men shall say, surely there is a reward for the

***righteous** Surely there is a **God** that judgeth the earth.*

(Psalm 58)

*Therefore I speak to them in **parables**:*

*Because they seeing **see** not; and hearing they **hear** not.*

In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which sayeth

*By hearing ye shall **hear** not; and seeing ye shall **see** not*

*For this people's **heart** is waxed gross*

*And their **ears** are dull of **hearing***

*And their eyes they have closed lest at
any time they should see
With their eyes,
And hear with their ears,
And should understand with their heart and be
converted.
Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears,
for they hear.
Many prophets and righteous men
Have longed to see what you see and hear what you hear
and have not.
Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. (Matthew 13:13,18)*

Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon

Now comes the question of chiasmus in the Book of Mormon. Joseph Smith published the Book of Mormon in 1830 in western New York. The first page of the book claims that it was written "in the language of the Egyptians" but "according to the learning of the Jews." That is, it was written with Egyptian characters but in Hebraic style. If the Book of Mormon truly is direct translation of a text whose formalistic rhetorical basis is Hebraic, chiasmus should be found as an integral part of its literary style and should be helpful in interpreting and understanding the total book's design.

If chiasmus can be convincingly identified in the Book of Mormon, then specific Hebraisms will testify of its origin, because there exists no chance that Joseph Smith could have learned of this style through academic channels. No one in America, let alone in western New York, fully understood chiasmus in 1829. Joseph Smith had been dead ten full years before John Forbe's book was published in Scotland. Even the prominent scholars today little know about chiasmic forms beyond its name and a few passages where it might be found. The possibility of Joseph Smith's noticing the form accidentally is even more remote, since most biblical passages containing inverted word orders have been rearranged into natural word orders in the King James translation. And even had he known of the form, he would still have had the

overwhelming task of writing original, artistic chiasmic sentences. Try writing a sonnet or multi-termed chiasm yourself: your appreciation of these forms will turn to awe. If the Book of Mormon then is found to contain true chiasmal forms, should it not be asserted without further qualification that the book is a product of ancient Hebrew culture?

Secondly, chiasmus will greatly enhance interpolation of the Book of Mormon scriptures. If the ancient authors of the Book of Mormon consciously set particular elements Parallel to each other, then these elements must be considered together in order to be fully understood in their complete context. Moreover, the thoughts which appear at the center must always be given special attention, and any antithetical ideas introduced at the turning point must be contrasted with their properly corresponding ideas. Other questions will be answered and interesting observations will be made. Questions of structure within shorter passages and of unity within whole books will be clarified. For example, why Nephi divided his writings into two books, instead of leaving them all in one, will be explained by chiasmus. Questions of style, especially concerning the repetitions which have so often been accused of being ignorant or redundant, will be appreciated in the light in which they originally shone.

Chiasms may appear anywhere in the Book of Mormon, although they predominantly typify the style of the first half of the book. In the first half those who make the greatest use of the form are Nephi, Benjamin, and Alma the Younger. They use chiasmus in practically every possible context, ranging from passages of straight narration or argumentation to ones of beautiful poetic eloquence. The following examples speak for themselves and require little further explanation.

Example 1

*And the Jews
 Shall have the words
 Of the Nephites
 And the Nephites
 Shall have the words
 Of the Jews.*

*And the Nephites and the Jews
 Shall have the words
 Of the lost tribes of Israel
 And the lost tribes of Israel
 Shall have the words of
 The Nephites and the Jews. (2 Nephi 29:13)*

Example 2

*Men will drink damnation to their souls unless
 they **humble** themselves
 and become as little **children**
 believing that salvation is in the **atoning blood of
 Christ**;
 for the **natural man**
 is an enemy to **God**
 and **has been** from the fall of Adam
 and **will be** forever and ever
 unless he yields to the **Holy Spirit**
 and putteth off the **natural man**
 and becometh a saint through the **atonement of
 Christ**
 and becometh as a **child**
 submissive, meek, and **humble**. (Mosiah 3:18-19)*

Example 3

*And now whosoever shall not take upon them the **name** of
 Christ
 must be called by some other name;
 therefore, he findeth himself on the **left hand of God**.
 And I would that ye should **remember** that this is
 the name
 that never should be **blotted out**
 except it be through **transgression**:
 therefore
 take heed that ye do **not transgress**
 that the name be not **blotted** out of your hearts.
 I would that ye should **remember** to retain this name
 that ye are not found on the **left hand of God***

*but that ye hear and know the voice by which ye shall
be called*

*and also the **name** by which he shall call you. (Mosiah
5:10-12)*

Needless to say, the word order in these last two examples is amazing. These passages are just two small parts of the very complex chiasmic structure of King Benjamin's entire speech. The fact that King Benjamin uses chiasmus is not illogical. At the time that he delivered his famous speech, he was acting in a traditional coronation and would naturally be using the most traditional and convincing rhetoric at his command. Benjamin's thoughts had been carefully prepared beforehand and had even been "written and sent forth among those that were not under the sound of his voice." This degree of painstaking deliberation in writing was the rule, rather than the exception, among the Book of Mormon prophets.

Example 4

*And they said unto me, we have not; for the Lord **maketh**
no such thing **known unto us**.*

*Behold, I said unto them: How is it that ye do not keep
the **commandments** of the Lord?*

*How is it that ye will **perish**,*

*because of the **hardness of your hearts**?*

*Do ye not remember the things which the
Lord hath said?*

*If ye will not **harden your hearts**,*

*and ask me in **faith**, believing that ye shall receive,
with diligence in keeping my **commandments**,
surely these things shall be **made known unto you**. (1 Nephi
15:9-11)*

A chiasmus may also appear as a logical device, for its completeness rounds out a thought forcefully and ties in all loose ends tightly. Nephi so successfully used this line of reasoning against his rebellious brothers, that as he later recorded the events of his family's twelve-year expedition, he could still proudly

recall his clever rebuttal. The turning point of the argument is a piercing question: "Do ye not remember the things which the Lord hath said?" The same thought, concerning that which the Lord had said or will say, approximately appears at the extremes as well as in the middle of this chiasmus. Notice also that the first half of the chiasmus contains the words of Nephi, but the second half is built from the words of the Lord, which comprises a deft shift at the center. What better debate partner could Nephi have in his parallelism than scripture? Actually the only two terms in the passage which are not identically parallel are *perish* and *ask in faith*. Perhaps Nephi is contrasting the living strength of true faith with the ominous fear of death which accompanies any traveler through the wilderness.

Example 5

- A *Behold, the Lord hath created the **earth** that it should
be inhabited;
And he hath created his children that they should
possess it.*
- B *And he raiseth up a righteous nation
And he destroyeth the nations of the wicked.*
- B' *And he leadeth away the righteous into precious
lands
and the wicked he destroyeth and curseth the land
unto them.*
- A' *He ruleth high in the heavens for it is his throne and
this **earth** is his footstool
And he loveth those who will have him to be their
God. (1 Nephi 17:36-39)*

This passage is an intricate gem. It masterfully combines direct parallelisms with inverted parallelisms. Parts A and A' each contain two directly parallel thoughts, namely in A the Lord's creation of the earth and the creation of his children, and in A' the Lord's throne and his footstool. It is interesting how the word earth appears in both A and A'. Parts B and B' are built of four poetical lines, each containing three parts. Two of the three parts are inverted when they reappear the second time, i.e.

righteous / nations
 nations / of the wicked
 he leadeth away / the righteous
 the wicked / he destroyeth.

Furthermore, these inverted parts come at the *end* of the lines in B but they come at the *beginning* of the lines in B'. This leaves the words *raiseth up* and *destroyeth* at the beginning of B and *precious lands* and *cursed lands* at the end of B' in direct parallel form. Thus another chiasmus is formed between the directly parallel portions of B and B' and the inverted portions of B and B', i.e.

B'	inverted	direct
B	direct	inverted.

For extra measure, the first line in B and the first line in B' express the same idea, the blessing of the righteous, while the second line in B and the second line in B' both express the idea of evil being punished. So in the midst of inverted parallelisms, the direct parallelism is also skillfully maintained.

Example 6

*And all men are alike to God,
 both Jew
 and Gentile
 but behold in the last Days
 X or in the Days of the Gentiles,
 all nations of the Gentiles
 and also the Jews*

*A yea, all these will be drunken/ with iniquity
 when they shall be visited by the Lord.*

*B And all the nations that fight against Zion
 shall be as a dream of the night*

*C yea it shall be unto them even as
 a hungry man
 which dreameth*

*and behold he eateth
but he awaketh
and his soul is **empty**,*

*C' or like unto a **thirsty** man
which dreameth
and behold he drinketh
but he awaketh
and he is **faint***

*B' Even so shall the multitude of all the nations be
that **fight against Mount Zion**.*

*A' For behold all ye that do **iniquity** / . . . shall be
drunken*

*The Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep
sleep,*

For ye have closed your eyes

*Ye have rejected the **prophets***

*X and your rulers and the **seers** hath he covered
Because of your iniquities, (2 Nephi 27:1-5)*

Example 7

*A My son, but the meaning of the word restoration is to
bring back*

B evil for evil

carnal for carnal

devilish for devilish

$C_{1&2} w_1 w_2$ good for that which is good,

$X1 X2$ righteous for that which is righteous,

$y_1 y_2$ just for that which is just

$z_1 z_2$ merciful for that which is merciful,

Therefore, my son, see that thou art

z_2 merciful unto thy brethren,

y_2 deal justly,

x_2 judge righteously,

w_2 and do good continually;

*and if ye do all these things,
 ye shall receive your reward, yea,
 z₁ ye shall have mercy restored unto you again,
 y₁ ye shall have justice restored unto you again,
 x₁ ye shall have a righteous judgment restored unto
 you again,
 w₁ and ye shall have good rewarded unto you again.
 B' For that which ye do send out
 shall return unto you again,
 And be restored;
 A' Therefore, the word restoration more fully condemneth
 the sinner, and justifieth him not at all. (Alma 41:13-15)*

The twist here is clever: After listing four pairs of terms, Alma pairs two lists of four terms and reverses their order at the same time. Or to use a chiasmus to describe this chiasmus: Alma writes a list of pairs and then a pair of lists. In all seriousness, a great play on words.

By far the most subtle use of chiasmus is its role in the structural design for longer passages and books. The book of Mosiah is one of the longer passages which utilizes a chiasmic structure in its underlying organization.

Example 8

The Book of Mosiah

A King Benjamin exhorts his sons (1:1-8)

B Mosiah chosen to succeed his father (1:10)

C Mosiah receives the records (1:16)

*D Benjamin's speech and the words of the angel
 (2:9; 5:15)*

E People enter into a covenant (6:1)

F Priests consecrate (6:13)

*G Ammon leaves Zarahemla for the land of
 Lehi-Nephi (7:1-6)*

*H People in bondage, Ammon put in
 prison (7:15)*

I The 24 gold plates (8:9)

J The record of Zeniff begins as

he leaves
Zarahemla (9:1)
K Defense against the
Lamanites (9:14; 10:20)
L Noah and his priests
(11:1-15)
M Abinadi persecuted
and thrown into
prison (11-12 chs)
*N **Abinadi** reads the*
old law to the
priests (13-14 chs)
*N' **Abinadi** makes*
his own prophe
cies (15-16 chs)
M' Abinadi persecuted
and killed (17:3-20)
L' Noah and his priests
(18:32; 20:5)
K' Lamanites threaten the
people of Limhi (20:6)
J' Record of Zeniff ends as he
leaves the land of Lehi-Nephi
*I' The 24 **goldplates** (21:27; 22:14)*
H' People of Alma in bondage (23 ch)
*G' Alma **leaves** the land of **Lehi-Nephi***
*for **Zarahemla** (24 ch)*
F' The Church organized by Alma (25:14- 24)
E' Unbelievers refuse to enter covenant
(26:1-4)
D' The words of Alma and the words of the angel
of the Lord (26-27 chs)
C' Alma the Younger receives the records (28:20)
B' Judges chosen instead of a king (29:5-32)
A' Mosiah exhorts his people (29:5-32)

Obviously the foundation of chiasmic literature has not been reached until its underlying organization has been discovered. The Book of Mosiah serves as a sufficient evidence of this, for it

surely has no chronological order and can be very confusing if the wrong organizational scheme is followed. Like the Book of Mosiah, also 1 Nephi, King Benjamin's speech and Alma 36 use a chiasmal framework as a foundation. In 1 Nephi, for example, compare chapters 7 and 16, then chapters 8 and 15, etc. This also will account for the division between 1 Nephi and 2 Nephi.

The shorter passages studied thus far could conceivably have occurred inadvertently (cf. Example 1). Passages as complete as the last few examples, however, could not have occurred accidentally.

Example 9

Alma 36

My son, give ear to my words (v 1)

Keep the commandments and ye shall prosper in the land (v 1).

Captivity of our fathers—bondage (v 2)

He surely did deliver them (v 2)

Trust in God (v 3)

Support in trials, troubles, and afflictions (v 3)

I know this not of myself but of God (v 4)

Born of God (v 5)

Limbs paralyzed (v 10)

The Agony of Conversion

destroyed (v 11)

racked with eternal torment (v 12)

harrowed up to the greatest degree (v 12)

racked with all my sins (v 12)

tormented with the pains of hell (v 13)

Inexpressible horror (v 14)

banished and extinct (v 15)

pains of a damned soul (v 16)

Called upon Jesus Christ (v 18)

The Joy of Conversion

No more pain (v 19)

oh what joy (v 20)
what marvelous light (v 20)
soul filled with joy as exceed-
ing as was my pain (v 20)
exquisite (v 21)
nothing as sweet as was my joy
(v 22)
singing and praising God (v 22)
long to be with God (v 22)

Use of the limbs returns (v 23)
Born of God (v 26)
Therefore my knowledge of God (v 26)
Supported under trials and troubles and
afflicts (v 27)
Trust in him (v 27)
He will deliver me (v 27)
Egypt—captivity (v 28-29)
Keep the commandments of God and ye shall prosper
in the land (v 30)
This is according to his word (v 30).

Amazing!

Two more points deserve comment: first that the contrast between agony and joy, which Alma would like to make as vivid as possible, is made explicit in verse 20, “my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain.” Second, Alma places the turning point of his life at the turning point of the chapter, i.e., Christ belongs at the center of both.

Epistle to Philemon¹²⁹

A Epistolary (1-3)

B Paul’s prayers for Philemon (4)

C Philemon’s love (5-7)

D Paul could use his authority (8)

¹²⁹From John W. Welch, *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, pp. 198-232. He credits Thomas Boys with first detecting a nine-part inverted system in the Epistle to Philemon: This letter, he says, “is surely centrally focused and chiastically balanced with purpose and precision.”

- E But prefers to make supplication (8-9)*
F Onesimus a convert of Paul's (10)
G Paul has made Onesimus profitable (11)
H Received Onesimus as Paul's own bowels (12)
I Paul retained Onesimus as Paul's minister in bonds of the Gospel (13)
J Without Philemon's willing consent Paul will not require Philemon to take Onesimus back (14)
J' Perhaps the reason Onesimus left was so that Philemon could take Onesimus back forever (15)
I' not as a servant but as a brother in the Lord (16)
H' Receive Onesimus as Paul's own self (17)
G' Paul will repay any wrong Onesimus has done (18-19)
F' Philemon indebted as a convert to Paul (19)
E' Paul makes supplication to Philemon (20)
D' Although he could ask for obedience 921)
C' Paul requests hospitality of Philemon (22)
B' Philemon's prayers for Paul (22)
A Epistolary (23-25)

The structure of this letter requires very little explanation. Each element is equally balanced in both halves of the letter. Towards the center, Paul reminds Philemon that he is like Onesimus inasmuch as both are indebted to Paul for their conversions (F and F'). This fact must weigh heavily upon Philemon who was apparently apprehensive about Onesimus' return. Paul, moreover, will vouch for Onesimus' profitability now (G) to the extent of repaying any wrong he may have done (G'). At the center of the letter, Paul deals directly with the problem at hand: Only here does the letter clearly contain enough information for the reader to discover what the letter is about, namely Onesimus' return. Paul

approaches the problem in two ways: first, ecclesiastically, he places the burden upon Philemon to willingly consent to Paul's request (J), and second, philosophically, he invites Philemon to consider the possibility that the prior problems were not all bad, since they led in the final analysis to a beneficial result (J'). These two central comments bind together the balance of the letter.

2 Timothy

Second Timothy is a brief but penetrating letter which divides into four sections. The first and last sections both contain personal statements about Paul's desire to see Timothy, about Timothy's ordination and ministry, and concerning Paul's struggle to spread the gospel and his gratitude toward those who have helped the cause. The central two sections contrast the future life of Christ with the future life on earth. The A-B-B-A pattern of the letter is further augmented by the fact that several of these sections are centrally weighted, just as so many sections of Paul's other letters have been chiasmically structured. The suggested organization of Second Timothy is, therefore, as follows:

A Personal remarks (1:1-18)

(a) The promise of life (1:a)

(b) Desire to see Timothy (2-4)

(c) The faithfulness of Lois and Eunice (5)

(d) Timothy's ordination by Paul (6-7)

(e) Paul's afflictions, not ashamed (8)

(f) Salvation and light in Christ Jesus (9-10)

(e) Paul's sufferings, not ashamed (11-12)

(d) Timothy's instruction by Paul (13-13)

*(c) The unfaithfulness of Phygelus and
Hermogenes (15)*

(b) The visit from Onesiphorus (16-17)

(a) The promise of life (18)

B Future life of Christ (s:1-21)

(a) The good soldier (2:1-6)

*(b) predictions of future blessings: If we be dead
with him, we shall live with him, if we suffer
with him we shall reign with him (7-1)*

- (a) *The good workman who is prepared for every good work (15-21)*
- B' *Future life on earth (2:22; 3:17)*
 - (a) *Instructions to the servant of the Lord (2:22-26)*
 - (b) *Predictions of human evil (3:1-9)*
- (a) *Instructions to Timothy unto all good works (10-17)*
- A' *Personal remarks*
 - (a) *The Lord shall judge at his appearing (4:1; cf. 1:18)*
 - (d) *Timothy's ministry*
 - (c) *Men will turn away (3-4, cf. 1:15)*
 - (e) *Endure afflictions (5, cf. 1:2)*
 - (d) *Make proof of thy ministry (5)*
 - (e) *Paul's sufferings (7, cf. 1:11-12)*
 - (f) *The crown of righteousness at his appearing (8, cf. 1:9-10)*
 - (b) *Desire to see Timothy (9, cf. 1:2-4)*
 - (c) *Those faithful and unfaithful (10-20, cf. 1:5, 15-17)*
- (a) *The promise of life (18)*
 - (b) *Desire to see Timothy (21)*

The body of the letter is evenly balanced, first in juxtaposing one's future in Christ against one's future in the world, and second by interspersing exhortations to Timothy as a good soldier, husbandman, servant, and student for the Lord.

Since this is one of Paul's last letters, it is evident that Paul sustained his use of chiasmus throughout his apostolic career. Paul skillfully employs chiasmus here, as elsewhere, to give focus and organization to his writings. It is, therefore, no accident that Paul, as he faced his final hours of ministry and as his mind turned toward what might come next, saw to it that his final letter to Timothy centrally reflects his thoughts for the future. The Christian's calling unto life and immortality draws central attention in the preface (1:8-10), and the Christian's reward of a crown of righteousness remains central to the conclusion (4:8). The predictions of future life in Christ (2:7-14) and of future evil on earth (3:1-9) stand at the middle of the letter's two central passages... As these sections are well balanced and artfully drafted, they should be read in conjunction, one with the other.

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Paul's prediction of evil forces gaining power in the world, particularly, cannot be viewed in isolation from the vivid hope which Paul maintains for overcoming evil through Christ. Likewise, each part of this letter may be viewed in harmony with the overall structure of this writing as a whole. In this regard, this composition is certainly representative of and worthy of the best of the Apostle himself.

Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon

Robert F. Smith, an independent scholar, prepared an index during the 1980s of all known chiasms in the Book of Mormon discovered to date by different authors.¹³⁰ His index depicts the book of First Nephi as a chiastic structure containing sixty-one embedded chiasms. Smith gives a short one from I Nephi 7:3-4 as:

- (a) . . . *they were made manifest unto the prophet.*
- (b) *by the voice of the spirit*
- (b') *for by the spirit*
- (a) *are all things made known unto the prophets. (INephi 7:3-4)*

In III Nephi, Smith identified this chiastic pattern:

A Gentiles trodden down (16:13)

Land of inheritance (16:16)

B Isaiah 52:8-10 (Zion) (16:17-20)

C Sick restored—circle of fire (Zion) (17:4-24)

D Bread and wine (18:1-12)

E Prayer (18-15-25)

*F Baptism, the 12 Disciples, the Holy Ghost
(18:30, 36-37)*

G Ascent of Jesus (18:38-39)

*F' Baptism, the 12 Disciples, the Holy Ghost
(19:4-16)*

E' Prayer

D' Bread and wine (20-3-9)

C' Restoration of the House of Israel (Zion) (20:10-29)

¹³⁰ As quoted in Raymond C. Treat, "Chiasms in the Book of Mormon," in *Recent Book of Mormon Developments*, 66-65 (Independence, Missouri: Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1984).

- B' Isaiah 52:8-10 (Zion) (20:32-34)*
A' Gentiles trodden down (21:12-20)
Land of inheritance (21:22)¹³¹

Welch's Chiastic Outline of I Nephi

- A Introduction (1:1)*
B Repentance (1:4)
C God reigns (1:6-8)
D Lehi comes to know Christ (1:9-16)
E Testimony of Christ (1:12-19)
F God protects the chosen (1:20)
G A part of the House of Israel is being scattered (2:1)
H Obtaining the Plates of Brass (3:1; 5:22)
I Keeping records (6:1-6)
J A narrative about the family of Ishmael, a journey, and a rebellion against Nephi (7:2-20)
K Nephi exhorts his brothers and they turn to the Lord (7:20-21)
L The tree of life (9:1)
M Two sets of records (9:2-6)
N Prophecy of coming of Christ and other events (10:1-16)
O "... (Lehi) spake by the power of the Holy Ghost (10:17)
P Nephi desires righteousness; "I, Nephi was desirous also that I might see and hear, and know of these things" (10:17)
Q (a) "... the power of the Holy Ghost... is the gift of God unto all those who diligently seek him ..." (10:17)
(b) "... in times of old as in the time that he should manifest him-

¹³¹ As quoted in *ibid.*, 67.

self... (10:17)

(c)

"For he is the same yesterday today, and forever (10-18)

R "And the way is prepared from the foundation of the world, if it so be that they repent and come unto him" (10:18)

(a) "For he that diligently seeketh shall find; and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them by the power of the Holy Ghost" (10:18)

R(b) "as well in these times as in times of old, as well in times of old as in times to come" (10:19)

(c)

"Wherefore, the course of the Lord is one eternal round (10:19)

P' Those who desire wickedness " . . . if ye have sought to do wickedly in the days of your probation" (10:21)

O' "And the Holy Ghost giveth authority that I (Nephi) should speak these things and deny them not" (10:22)

N' Prophecy of coming of Christ and other events (11:1-14:17)

M' Two sets of records (14:14-30)

L' The tree of life (15:1-17:5)

K' Nephi exhorts his brothers, they humble themselves before the Lord (15:1-36)

J' A narrative about the family of Ishmael, a journey, and a rebellion against Nephi (16:7-39)

I' Keeping records (19:1-6)

H' Information from the Plates of Brass (19:10-22:2)

*G' The House of Israel is to be scattered
(22:3-5)*

F' God protects the righteous (22:17)

E' Testimony of Christ (22:20-21)

D' All the righteous will know Christ (22:24-25)

C' The Holy One of Israel reigneth (22:26)

B' Repentance (22:28)

A' Conclusion (22:29-31)

Chiasmus was not popularly recognized, even among theologians, until many years after Joseph Smith's demise in 1844. If in the nineteenth century, the understanding of chiasmus was quite obscure to the learned scholars of that time, how could a young farmer boy with little or no education skillfully introduce chiasmus through the Book of Mormon? In addition, chiasmus was more readily recognized in the original Hebrew than in the King James translation of the Bible, in which many of the Hebrew nuances lost their flavor. The very fact that latter-day scholars have found this unusual and distinctive literary pattern in the Book of Mormon is a minor miracle in itself, establishing a gratifying voice about the authenticity of the book.

Author's conclusion: Mr. Welch, with consummate skill, has given the reader examples of the use of chiasmus in the Book of Mormon which cannot be refuted when looked into with a sincere desire to know whether the Book of Mormon is a fraud, foisted upon an unwary public, written by a master of deceit, or whether the book is truly what Joseph Smith (and others) claimed, that it was "translated by the gift and power of God."

In his analysis of Alma 36, Mr. Welch says, "It is difficult to imagine a more paradigmatic or a more effective use of chiasmus than this. Alma 36 is worthy in form to the best of any chiastic writer... As natural as it might seem to use chiasmus as a literary device in contrasting opposites such as those Alma had experienced or in emphasizing the turning point of one's conversion, its usage is not at all obvious or automatic, as is evidenced by the fact that Alma did not use it when he described his conversion as a

young man. Such a use of chiasmus is, rather, a conscious creation of an imaginative and mature artist."¹³²

No one who has studied Mr. Welch's book on chiasmus (whether one believes in the Book of Mormon or not) can honestly put aside his presentation without giving it due and serious consideration.

¹³² *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, 207.

Chapter 9

POETIC PARALLELISMS IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

Among the literary complexities found in the Book of Mormon, poetic parallelisms and ancient figures of speech stand out as another proof of its divine authenticity. As I read and reread the Book of Mormon with the multifold insights of scholars that I have learned to appreciate, I am overwhelmed with its historical and theological richness. What serendipity! As I read something interesting, I find additional elements that are even more stimulating and exhilarating.

The conclusive evidence is that Joseph Smith, an unlearned young man, could not by the most strenuous efforts of an unbridled imagination write a book with so many convolutions. It would have taken a scholarly individual with a immense knowledge of ancient and modern Greek and Hebrew languages and idioms to have written a volume containing such figures of speech as Hebraisms, chiasms, and parallelisms, including its literary gems, and the narrative itself. Another lustrous element in the Book of Mormon is its poetic parallelisms.

This chapter is drawn from the painstaking work of Professor Donald W. Parry, research manager of the Foundation for Ancient and Mormon Studies. His working paper is entitled, "Poetic Parallelisms of the Book of Mormon" (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1988), 49 pp. In it, he describes parallelisms as "one of the most

impressive type of Hebrew poetry . . . [that] can be found throughout the scriptures—most notably in the Old Testament and Book of Mormon” (p. 1) I have received written permission from Brent Hall, the finance manager, to use some of Mr. Parry’s material in my book. The examples of parallelism are his as is the commentary accompanying each passage. Subheadings, formatting, and punctuation have been edited to conform to the style used in this book; his footnotes have been omitted.

Adele Berlin, in her recent work, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelisms*, introduces a broader definition of parallelism. . . .

“Once we admit smaller segments as being parallel—e.g., words, phrases, even sounds—though the lines to which they belong are not parallel, we raise the incidence of parallelism with a text. And if we do not restrict our search for linguistic equivalences to adjacent lines or sentences, but take a global view, finding equivalences anywhere within a text, we raise the incidence of parallelism still more.” (pp. 2-3)

Thus we define poetic parallelism as words, phrases, or sentences which correspond, compare, or contrast one with another, or are found to be in repetition one with another. . . . The major ways . . . are:

- Synonyms (or near synonyms) such as “heart-soul,” “statutes-commandments,” and “preacher-teacher.”
- Identical words or phrases, such as “light-light” and “cry unto him-cry unto him.”
- Antonyms, such as “holy-unholy” and “poor-rich.”
- Complementaries, such as “bows-arrows,” “bread-butter,” and “river-sea.”
- Different inflections of the same root, such as “to judge,” “a judge,” “judgment,” and “judgment-seat.”
- Gradations, an increase or decrease of the sense or idea.
- Superordinates, such as “breastplates-shields,” “wine-drink,” and “gold-metal.”
- Reciprocal, such as “to retire-sleep,” “to eat-to be full,” and

“to sin-pain of conscience.” . . .

Contrasting Ideas

*Antimetabole*¹³³ (Greek, “to throw against in a reverse way”) is a poetic style which throws or compares one subject or idea against another . . .

*Remember,
to be carnally-minded
is death,
and to be spiritually-minded
is life eternal (II Nephi 9:39).*

The contrast created in these few words is obvious: a carnal mind versus a spiritual mind, a spiritual death versus eternal life.

*Alma . . . uses this poetic form. . . .
For I say unto you
that whatsoever is good
cometh from God,
and whatsoever is evil,
cometh from the devil (Alma 5:40).*

Two words epitomize the perfect contrast, “good and evil,” and two Beings are considered the opposite extremes on the scale of “good and evil,” Deity and Satan. . . .

In an inspired play on words, the prophet Mormon makes a comparison between love of riches, versus love of people:

*For behold,
ye do love
money,
and your substance,
and your fine apparel,
and the adorning of your churches
more than ye love
the poor*

¹³³ . . . the English language lacks terminology sufficient to describe the manifold figures and poetic types found in the scriptures. . . [but] ‘the ancient Greeks reduced these new and peculiar forms to science, and gave names to more than two hundred of them’” (p. 4, note).

*and the needy,
the sick
and the afflicted (Mormon 8:37).*

Part one includes the expression “ye do love” and is followed by four synonymous expressions dealing with material wealth and goods. Part two begins with the superlative expression “more than ye love,” followed by four additional synonymous expressions dealing with those who are in need of the goods and/or services.

Other examples:

*I say unto you,
can ye imagine to yourselves
that ye hear the voice of the Lord,
saying unto you, in that day:
Come unto me ye blessed,
for behold, your works have been the works of
righteousness
upon the face of the earth?*

*Or do you imagine to yourselves
that ye can lie unto the Lord
in that day, and say—Lord,
our works have been righteous works
upon the face of the earth?
(Alma 5:16-17)...*

*For every thing which inviteth to do good
and to persuade to believe in Christ,
is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ;
wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is
of God.*

*But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil,
and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and
serve not God,
then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is
of the devil (Moroni 7:16b-17a).*

Simple Alternate

Alternate consists of four lines placed alternately, such as A-

B/A-B. In this formation, the “A’s” are synonymous, as are the “B’s.” Apparently, the prophets and writers of the scriptures employed the repetition of alternating synonymous lines for the purpose of reinforcing their teachings and doctrines. By hearing something repeated twice, albeit in different words, the hearer is more apt to understand and remember the doctrine being taught...

A *Our father,*
 B *behold he was filled with joy,*
 A *and also my mother, Sariah,*
 B *was exceeding glad (I Nephi 5:1b)*

Lines one and three form synonymous expressions using the complementary word-pair, “father-mother.” These lines alternate with lines two and four, which contain the synonymous word-pair “joy-glad,” thus forming a perfect example of alternating synonymous parallelism.

[Other examples:]

A *And there is none other salvation*
 B *save that which hath been spoken of;*
 A *neither are there any conditions whereby man can*
be saved
 B *except the conditions which I have told you*
(Mosiah 4:8) . . .

A *And he was a just man,*
 B *and he did walk uprightly before God;*
 A *and he did observe to do good continually,*
 B *to keep the commandments of the Lord his God*
(Alma 63:2).

... By means of the resurrection, man is raised from the death, and by means of the atonement, repentant souls are raised from everlasting death—such is the doctrine taught by Nephi.

A *Wherefore, may God raise you from death*
 B *by the power of the resurrection,*
 A *and also from everlasting death*
 B *by the power of the atonement (II Nephi 10:25).*

One of the keys to a good simple alternate form of poetry are the synonymous word pairs found in the four lines. . . . For instance, . . . are “eldest-youngest/Nephi-Lehi” (Helaman 3:21); “heavens-earth/throne-footstool” (I Nephi 17:39), “Jews/Gentiles/Christ-Eternal God” (II Nephi 26:12), “drunken/stagger/wine-strong drink” (II Nephi 27:4), “secret-darkness/revealed-light” (II Nephi 30:17a), “river-sea/sand-gravel” (I Nephi 20:18b-19a)...

Similarly, synonymous phrases are an important part of alternating synonymous constructions. Some of these include: “people of Coriantumr-people of Coriantumr/people of Shiz-people of Shiz” (Ether 15:6b); “children of Nephi-descendants of Nephi/Zarahemla-Mulek” (Mosiah 25:2); “Coriantumr-Shiz/army of Coriantumr-army of Shiz” (Ether 15:6b); . . . “spirit and body-limb and joint/perfect form-proper frame” (Alma 34:34)...

Repeated Alternate

Repeated alternate is similar to alternate, but has two lines which repeat three or more times, as in A-B/A-B/A-B, etc.

A the God of Jacob, yieldeth himself,
B according to the words of the angel,
A as a man, into the hands of wicked men, to be
lifted up,
B according to the words of Zenock,
A and to be crucified,
B according to the words of Neum,
A and to be buried in a sepulchre,
B according to the words of Zenos... (I Nephi 19:10b)

...

A wherefore they scourge him,
B and he suffereth it;
A and they smite him,
B and he suffereth it.
A Yea, they spit upon him,
B and he suffereth it. . . (I Nephi 19:9b).

...

A But if he murdered

- B he was punished unto death;*
A and if he robbed
B he was also punished;
A and if he stole
B he was also punished;
A and if he committed adultery
B he was also punished;
A yea, for all this wickedness
B they were punished (Alma 30:10).

Extended Alternate

Extended alternate belongs to the same family as alternate and repeated alternate, but . . . adds additional alternating lines, as in A-B-C/A-B-C or A-B-C-D/A-B-C-D.

- A I beheld others pressing forward,*
B and they came forth
C and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron;
A and they did press forward
B through the mist of darkness,
C clinging to the rod of iron. . . (1 Nephi 8:24a).

- Nevertheless, I have received a commandment of the Lord*
A that I should make these plates, for the special purpose that there should be an account engraven
B of the ministry of my people.
C Upon the other plates should be engraven
D an account of the reign of the kings
E and the wars
F and contentions of my people;
A wherefore these plates
B are for the more part of the ministry;
C and the other plates
D are for the more part of the reign of kings
E and the wars
F and contentions of my people (1 Nephi 9:3-4).

[For other examples, cited in full in Parry, pp. 14-15, see in II Nephi 9:11-12; Mosiah 7:30-31; Mosiah 23:19-20; Alma 5:19; Alma 9:15; Alma 32:37; Alma 37:45; and III Nephi 12:1b-2.]

Simple Synthetic Parallelism

Simple synthetic . . . is composed of two lines. In this poetic verse, line two gives [the] explanation or adds something new or instructive to the first line:

*Adam fell that men might be,
and men are that they might have joy (II Nephi 2:25)...*

[Other examples:]

*Nevertheless the Lord seeth fit to chasten his people;
yea, he trieth their patience and their faith (Mosiah
23:21).*

...

*Yea, I know that God will give liberally to him that
asketh.
Yea, my God will give me, If I ask not amiss (II Nephi 4:35).*

[See also III Nephi 1:20; III Nephi 10:15; and Moroni 8:17a, quoted fully in Parry, pp. 16-17.]

Extended Synthetic

Extended synthetic parallelism consists of two or more simple synthetic parallelisms, connected together within a passage or collection of verses.

*And wo unto the deaf that will not hear;
for they shall perish.
Wo unto the blind that will not see;
for they shall perish also.
Wo unto the uncircumcised of heart,
for a knowledge of their iniquities shall smite them at
the last day.*

*Wo unto the liar,
for he shall be thrust down to hell.
Wo unto the murderer who deliberately killeth,
for he shall die.
Wo unto them who commit whoredoms,
for they shall be thrust down to hell.
Yea, wo unto those that worship idols,
for the devil of all devils delighteth in them.
And, in fine, wo unto all those
who die in their sins
for they shall return to God, and behold his face, and
remain in their sins (II Nephi 9:31-38).*...

Polysyndeton

Polysyndeton is the Greek word used to describe the repetition of the conjunction “and” found at the beginning of successive phrases or sentences. The literal translation of **polysyndeton** is “many bound together”—referring to the many phrases bound together by the repetition of the many conjunctions. Thus, this figure creates parallel lines by the “many ands” and binds a passage or verse together into a central thought or unified idea.

*And now, because of the steadiness of the church
they began to be exceeding rich
having abundance of all things whatsoever they stood
in need—
and abundance of flocks and herds,
and fatlings of every kind,
and also abundance of grain, and of gold,
and of silver, and of precious things,
and abundance of silk and fine-twined linen,
and all manner of good homely cloth (Alma 1:29).*

[For other examples, cited fully by Parry, pp. 18-19, see Alma 26 29b and Ether 10:30b-31.]...

Climax

When the same word or words are found at the end of one sentence and at the beginning of the next, this is called “climax.”

This continuation of thought from one sentence to the next adds power through repetition to the discourse, while at the same time connecting the lines into an inseparable body. . . .

*and the first fruit of repentance is
baptism; and
baptism cometh by faith unto
the fulfilling the commandments; and
the fulfilling the commandments bringeth
remission of sins; And the
remission of sins bringeth
meekness, and lowliness of heart; and because of
meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation
of the
Holy Ghost, which
Comforter filleth with hope, and perfect
love, which
love endureth by diligence unto prayer,
until the day shall come when all the saints shall dwell
with God (Moroni 8:25-26).*

Accompanying climax is the idea of an ascension of expression, from a beginning point to a climatic situation... The series began with repentance, ...followed by baptism, ...and finally culminated with the righteous receiving an eternal abode with God.

Similarly, a climatic verse in Mormon 9:12-13a begins with the fall of Adam but concludes with [humankind] being “brought back into the presence of the Lord.”

*Behold he created
Adam, and by
Adam came
the fall of man. And because of
the fall of man came
Jesus Christ, even the Father and the Son; and because of
Jesus Christ came the
redemption of man. And because of the
redemption of man, which came by
Jesus, they are brought back into the presence of the*

Lord (Mormon 9:12-13a).

... In this passage the penitent souls who [find] mercy through the atonement, are found saved in the Kingdom of God.

*and mercy claimeth the penitent,
and mercy cometh because of
the atonement; and
the atonement bringeth to pass
the resurrection of the dead; and
the resurrection of the dead bringeth men into the
presence of God; and thus they are restored into his
presence. . . (Alma 42:22b-23).*

Antithetical Parallelisms

This parallelism is characterized by an opposition of thoughts between two lines or thoughts. Often the second line is introduced by the conjunction “but,” which is immediately followed by the contrasting element.

*Ye are swift to do iniquity
but slow to remember the Lord your God (1 Nephi
17:45a).*

... The word “swift” is an antonym to the word “slow,” and the phrase “to do iniquity” is the obverse side of “to remember the Lord.”

*And I would not that ye think that I know of myself—
not of the temporal
but of the spiritual,
not of the carnal mind
but of God (Alma 36:4).*

Other examples:

*Wherefore, brethren, seek not to counsel the Lord,
but to take counsel from his hand (Jacob 4:10).*

I give not

*because I have not,
but if I had
I would give (Mosiah 4:24).*

*Wherefore, nothing that is good denieth the Christ,
but acknowledgeth that he is (Moroni 10:6b).*

Staircase Parallelism: Going Up

Anabasis (Greek, “to go up”), called gradational or staircase parallelism, . . . is a stepping up from one sense to another, until, at the pinnacle is a culmination of thought. . .

*and Melchizedek did establish peace in the land in his days;
therefore he was called the prince of peace,
for he was the king of Salem (Alma 13:18b).*

It is important to note the three parallels of this statement:
line 1 Melchizedek . . . (Heb. “my king is righteous”) peace
line 2 prince peace
line 3 king Salem (Heb. peace)

The first line, represents Melchizedek . . . simply as a man who establishes peace in the land. Line two refers to Melchizedek as royalty, the son of a king, or a prince. The culmination of the passage is found in line three, where Melchizedek is now referred to as the king of Salem, or “king of peace,” the ruler of the area known as Salem. Thus the gradation up, from man to prince to king of peace.

An **anabasis** can pertain to a duration of time [and] . . . a progression of time, from the past, to the present, and finally to the future.

*Yea, verily, verily I say unto you,
if all men had been,
and were,
and ever would be,
like unto Moroni,
behold, the very powers of hell would have been shaken
forever (Alma 48:17a).*

...

[Other examples:]

*For behold, I shall speak unto the Jews
and they shall write it;
and I shall also speak to the Nephites
and they shall write it;
and I shall also speak unto the other tribes of Israel,
which I have led away, and they shall write it;
and I shall also speak unto all nations of the earth
and they shall write it (II Nephi 29:12).*

...

*And it came to pass that they were brought before the
priests,
and delivered up unto the priests by the teachers;
and the priests brought them before Alma,
who was the high priest (Mosiah 26:7).*

Here the gradation is subtle. During the days of Alma the high priest, certain disputations were first brought to the teachers, afterwards to the priests, and finally to the high priest. Hence, the gradation of ecclesiastical authority is thus demonstrated...

Staircase Parallelism: Going Down

Catabasis, (Greek “going down”) is characterized by a lowering of the sense, from one level to another, with each succeeding line, . . . but unlike **anabasis**, this poetic type represents a going down or descending of the stairs. . . .

*And in the eighty and second year
they began again to forget the Lord their God.
And in the eighty and third year
they began to wax strong in iniquity.
and in the eighty and fourth year
they did not mend their ways.
And it came to pass in the eighty and fifth year
they did wax stronger and stronger in their pride, and
in their wickedness (Helaman 11:36-37a).*

In a single verse. . . a view of the deteriorating condition of the Nephite nation is portrayed. Simple forgetfulness was a feature of the eighty-second year of the reign of the judges; but after a period of four years, the Nephites became full of “wickedness” and “pride.”. . .

*they will reject him,
because of their iniquities,
and the hardness of their hearts,
and the stiffness of their necks.
Behold, they will crucify him (II Nephi 25:12-13).*

. . . Two principal lines demonstrate the climactic situation, line one and line five. The other three lines serve as explanatory notes. Because of the extreme wickedness . . . of the people, Jesus is crucified—the ultimate rejection. . . .

Synonymous Words

When a group of three or more words, similar in sense but not identical in meaning, come together in a verse or passage with characteristics which parallel one another, this is called **synonymia**, or synonymous words. All synonyms found in a verse do not make up a parallelism—the proper form and function are needed, and “then,” [as Bullinger observes], “it is for the purpose of enhancing the force and fire of the passage.”

Synonymia is used to emphasize the future magnificent reign of the Lord.

*the Holy One of Israel must reign
in dominion,
and might,
and power,
and great glory (I Nephi 22:24b).*

The four words “dominion,” “might,” “power,” and “glory,” are synonymous, not that they have analogous meanings, but that the purpose and goal of each are similar—to describe the grandeur of the Lord’s reign. . . .

Presented . . . is a list of twelve crimes against God—all the

words portraying . . . wickedness and immorality.

*Now those priests who did go forth among the people
did preach
against all lyings,
and deceivings,
and envyings,
and strifes,
and malice,
and revilings,
and stealing,
robbing,
plundering,
murdering,
committing adultery,
and all manner of lasciviousness,
crying that these things ought not so to be— (Alma
16:18).*

[For other examples, quoted by Parry, pp. 29-30, see II Nephi 27 2; II Nephi 3 22b; Helaman 1 14b; Ether 11 25.]...

“Many Inflections”

This figure of speech called **polytoton** (Greek, “many cases,” or “many inflections”) involves many inflections of the same root, thus creating a close correspondence of two or more words, in both sense and sound. For instance, the well-known expression by Lehi, “Behold, I have dreamed a dream. . .” (I Nephi 3:2a) employs both the verb “dreamed” and the noun “dream.” Both words are derived from the same root, and both have similar soundings. When only the noun-verb combination is used, this is called the cognate accusative.

*I will curse them with a sore curse. (I Nephi 2:20-23)
and he did judge righteous judgments. (Mosiah 29:43b)
succoring those who stood in need of their succor.
(Alma 4:13b)*

having warred a good warfare . . . Alma 1:1b)

die a spiritual death (Alma 12:16)

These examples are simple and yet demonstrate the usage of “many inflections.” ...The Book of Mormon contains longer examples of **polyptoton**.

*they must appear before the judgment-seat of the Holy
One of Israel;
and then cometh the judgment.
and then must they be judged
according to the judgment of God (II Nephi 9:15b).*

Here is shown many inflections of the same root—“judgment-seat,” “judgment,” “judged,” and again “judgment.” Both the sense and the sounds are repeated in the passage. . . .

“Working Out”

Often found in scriptural poetry are two or more lines which deliberate and explain what was first said in line one. This is called **exergasia** (Greek, “working out”), because these subsequent lines work out and echo the words introduced in the first line. Note Nephi’s usage of *exergasia*.

*We had gathered together all manner of seeds of every kind,
both of grain of every kind,
and also of seeds of fruit of every kind (I Nephi 8:1b)...*

...

*And now, behold, the Lamanites could not retreat ei-
ther way,
neither on the north,
nor on the south,
nor on the east,
nor on the west,
for they were surrounded on every hand by the Nephites.
(Helaman 1:31)*

The fact that the Lamanites were not able to “retreat either way” is explained in the verses which follow—there were Nephites in every direction, on all sides, specifically, to the “north,”

“south,” “east,” and “west.”...

Behold, it is expedient that much should be done among this people, because of the hardness of their hearts, and the deafness of their ears, and the blindness of their minds, and the stiffness of their necks (Jarom 1:3a).

In general terms, the expressions in lines two through four can be understood to have synonymous meanings. But a careful consideration of each line will show that lines two and four are devoted to the inner soul (“hearts” and “minds”) and lines three and five to the outward man (“ears” and “necks”). Each line, however, can properly be called an explanation of the first line...

And behold I say unto you all that this was a snare of the adversary, which he has laid to catch this people that he might bring you into subjection unto him, that he might encircle you about with his chains, that he might chain you down to everlasting destruction, according to the power of his captivity (Alma 12:6).

Again, line one introduces the central thought of this passage, but it is followed by several parallel thoughts. Note the different methods which the devil utilizes in order to trap the wicked. He “snares,” “catches,” “subjects,” “encircles,” “chains,” and “captures,” all words similar in sense, but not identical in meaning.

Random Repetition

This figure of speech, often called “repetition,” is the random recurrence of an identical expression within a verse or successive verses of scripture. The Greeks call this figure *epibole*, which is translated “to cast upon” or “to cast one upon another,” meaning to repeat one phrase after another.

“my days” three times (1 Nephi 1:1).

“garments spotless” three times (Alma 7:25).

*. . . I will go with thee to the land of Middoni,
for the king of the land of Middoni,
whose name is Antiomno, is a friend unto me;
therefore I go to the land of Middoni,
that I may flatter the king of the land. . . (Alma 20:4).*

*And there shall be no disputations among you,
as there have hitherto been,
neither shall there be disputations among you
concerning the points of my doctrine,
as there have hitherto been (III Nephi 11:28b).*

*“ten thousand” ten times (Mormon 6:10-15)
For it shall come to pass in that day that the churches
which are
built up, and not unto the Lord,
when the one shall say unto the other:
behold, I, I am the Lord’s,
and the others shall say:
I, I am the Lord’s;
and thus shall everyone say that hath built up churches,
and not unto the Lord (II Nephi 28:3)...*

Regular Repetition

Cycloides or “circular repetition,” as Bullinger explains, “...is so called because the sentence or phrase is repeated at intervals, as though in regular circles.” This figure, therefore, features a phrase, expression, or sentence repeated regularly throughout the paragraph. For instance:

*And now, behold,
I say unto you, my brethren,
you that belong to this church,
have you sufficiently retained in remembrance
the captivity of your fathers? yea, and
have you sufficiently retained in remembrance
his mercy and long-suffering towards them? And
moreover, have ye sufficiently retained in remembrance
that he has delivered their souls from hell? (Alma 5:6).*

The three times repetition of the phrase “have you sufficiently retained in remembrance” is striking, placing emphasis upon the expression rather than the words which follow...

Other examples:

*therefore they have drunk
damnation to their souls.
Therefore, they have drunk
out of the cup of the wrath of God (Mosiah 3:25b-26a).*

*And he laid a tax of one **fifth part** of all they possessed,
a **fifth part** of their gold and of their silver,
and a **fifth part** of their ziff, and of their copper,
and of their brass and their iron,
and a **fifth part** of their fatlings;
and also a **fifth part** of all their grain (Mosiah 11:3).*

[For other examples, quoted by Parry, pp. 37-38, see Alma 3:15-16; Alma 14:29b Alma 62:41a; Alma 24:7-10; and Mormon 7:2-5.]...

Simple Synonymous

Simple synonymous consists of two line, line two being a synonymous repetition, or an echo, of line one. . . .

*pray unto him continually by day,
and give thanks unto his holy name by night (II Nephi
25:2).*

This verse contrasts the antonyms “day-night,” and compares the verbs “pray-give thanks,” in order to form a simple synonymous parallelism. . . .

*And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins,
and faithfulness the girdle of his reins (II Nephi 30:11)*

The elements “faithfulness-reins” of line two are parallel with the respective synonyms of line one, “righteousness-loins.”

Other examples:

*Even this mortal shall put on immortality,
and this corruption shall put on incorruption... (Mosiah
16:10a).*

*For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to
meet God;*

*yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to
perform their labors (Alma 34:35).*

*O remember, my son, and learn wisdom in thy youth;
yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of
God (Alma 37:35).*

...

*for the Lord will go before you,
and the God of Israel shall be your rearward (III Nephi
20:42b).*

...

*...and no monster of the sea could break them,
neither whale that could mar them (Ether 6:10a).*

Extended Synonymous

Extended synonymous constructions consist of three or more lines being similar or identical in meaning...

*they were brought near even to be carried out of this
time to meet their God;*

*yea, their gray hairs were about to be brought down to
lie low in the dust;*

*yea, even they were near to be cast with sorrow into a
watery grave (I Nephi 18:18b).*

Similar to all accomplished writers, Nephi was able to express the condition of his aged parents in three different ways. . . .

Note the beauty of this verse, describing the concluding scenes of the destructions in the lands of America.

and the earth did cease to tremble,

*and the rocks did cease to rend,
and the dreadful groanings did cease,
and all the tumultuous noises did pass away (III Nephi
10:9b).*

Note, the repetition of the idea, expressed in three different ways:

*And the highways were broken up,
and the level roads were spoiled,
and many smooth places became rough (III Nephi
8:13).*

In this verse, there is a synonymous construction:

*And it came to pass that there were many cities built
anew,
and there were many old cities repaired
Followed by another synonymous parallelism:*

*And there were many highways cast up,
and many roads made,*

And finally, three parallel lines:

*which led from city to city,
and from land to land
and from place to place (III Nephi 6:7-8).*

“Like Sentence Endings”

Epistrophe, or “like sentence endings,” is the repetition of an identical word or expression at the end of a sentence. This type of repetition causes a coherence between the various parts of the passage. For instance, in the description of the Jaredite barge, the writer makes clear the point that the boats were built “like unto a dish.”

*And they were built after the manner that they were
exceeding tight,
Even that they would hold water **like unto a dish**;
and the bottom thereof was tight **like unto a dish**,*

*and the sides thereof were tight like unto a dish,
and the ends thereof were peaked;
and the top thereof was tight like unto a dish,
and the length thereof was the length of a tree;
and the door thereof, when it was shut,
was tight (Ether 2:17).*

...

[Other examples:]

*And he began to preach to them in their synagogues,
for they had built synagogues
after the order of the Nehors;
for many of the Amalekites
and the Amulonites were
after the order of the Nehors (Alma 21:4b).*

...

*yea, and whosoever murdereth against the light and
knowledge of God.*

*It is not easy for him to obtain forgiveness;
yea, I say unto you, my son,
that it is not easy for him to obtain a forgiveness (Alma
39:6b)*

*And now it came to pass that all this was done in Mormon,
yea, by **the waters of Mormon**,
in the forest that was near
the waters of Mormon;
yea, the place of Mormon
the waters of Mormon,
the forest of Mormon (Mosiah 18:30a).*

...

*Now, there is a death which is called a **temporal death**;
and the death of Christ shall loose the bands of this
temporal death, that all shall be raised from this
temporal death (Alma 11:42).*

“Detailing”

The poetic pattern of **prosapodosis** (Gr. “detailing”) features

an introductory phrase or sentence, followed by one or more subsequent lines which detail what was said in line one. Often, the first line of the stanza is complete in itself, but additional lines are presented for the purpose of answering one of the questions—“who,” “which,” “where,” “why,” “what,” or “how”? Perhaps a statement in Alma, which, incidently is an example of **prosapodosis**, best explains the purpose of this poetic group.

*And they are made known unto us in plain terms,
that we may understand,
that we cannot err (Alma 13:23).*

Lines two and three answer the question of “why”? Why are the things of God made known unto the children of men? So that “we may understand,” so “that we cannot err.” . . .

*Behold there are save two churches only,
the one the church of the Lamb of God,
and the other is the church of the devil (1 Nephi 14:10a).*

The prophet speaks plainly. The “two churches” are, respectively, “the church of the Lamb of God” and “the church of the devil.”

*And now there was a great mourning and lamentation
among the people of Limhi,
the widow mourning for her husband,
the son and the daughter mourning for their father,
and the brothers for their brethren (Mosiah 21:9).*

Who participated in the “great mourning and lamentation”? The details for this passage are straightforward and not to be misunderstood. The widow, the son, the daughter, and the brothers all were found grieving for their loved ones. . . .

“Like Sentence Beginnings”

Anaphora, translated from the Greek, is defined as “to bring again,” or “to repeat,” and refers to “like sentence beginnings.” This figure is so-called because the same word is found at the beginning of several successive phrases or sentences. This does

not include the conjunction “and,” a figure called **polysyndeton**, or the disjunctions “neither/nor,” “either/or” which are called **paradiastole**...

Anaphora is considered a parallelism because, by its unusual repetition of identical words within a short span of space, it creates a series of thoughts being parallel or connected one to another. This connecting element joins all similar phrases or sentences into a single group for consideration by the reader, thus enabling him to focus on the central message of the passage...

[Examples:]

*Now, this restoration shall come to all,
both old and young,
both bond and free,
both male and female,
both the wicked and the righteous (Alma 11:44).*

*And now, behold,
who can stand against the works of the Lord?
who can deny his sayings?
who will rise up against the almighty power of the Lord?
who will despise the works of the Lord?
who will despise the children of Christ? (Mormon
9:26).*

...

*And behold, now it came to pass that it was upon a tower,
which was in the garden of Nephi,
which was by the highway
which led to the chief market,
which was in the city of Zarahemla;
therefore, Nephi had bowed himself upon the tower
which was in his garden,
which tower was also near unto the garden gate by
which led the highway (Helaman 7:10).*

Like Paragraph Endings

Amoedaeon, or “refrain,” features a recurring phrase or sentence found at intervals, always at the end of a paragraph.

Often the repeated phrase is the culmination or summary of what has been said.

*... there arose a great storm, such an one
as never had been known in all the land.
And there was also a great and terrible tempest;
and there was a terrible thunder,
insomuch that it did shake the whole earth as if it was
about to divide asunder.
And there were exceeding sharp lightnings, such
as never had been known in all the land (III Nephi 8:5b-7).
to hide their wickedness and abominations from before
my face,
that the blood of the prophets and the saints should not
come up any
more unto me against them. 6 times. (III Nephi 9:5-11)*

Author's note: At the conclusion of this extended excerpt from Professor Parry's excellent work on poetic parallelisms and ancient figures of speech found in the Book of Mormon, I can only repeat that attempts to paraphrase this scholarly work would have diminished its impact, rather than enhancing it. I am grateful to Professor Parry for his scholarly expertise, his excellent presentation, and his generosity in sharing this work in the broader form of the book. I know that my readers' enjoyment of the Book of Mormon, like my own, has been enhanced by his exhaustive labors.

Chapter 10

THE WRITINGS OF ISAIAH

Not enough data is found to establish the exact date of Isaiah's birth. His name means "The Lord (Yahweh) has given another salvation." In the modern version, his name means, "The salvation of Jehovah." Little is known of the details of Isaiah's life. From the book that bears his name, we learn that he received his prophetic call in the last year of King Uzziah's reign (Isaiah 6:1). He prophesied during the reigns of the Judean kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.

He was the son of Amoz (not to be confused with the prophet Amos). According to Jan Ridderbos, a noted Old Testament scholar, Isaiah was a city dweller of high birth and social position while Amos was the son of a shepherd. According to rabbinical tradition, Isaiah suffered martyrdom by the sword or by being sawed in two during the reign of Manasseh. He is called the evangelist of the Old Testament.¹³⁴ Many others refer to him as "the silver-tongued prophet."

Some theologians argue that chapter 39 was not written by Isaiah but by Hezekiah. I interpret Isaiah 39:3 to mean that Isaiah was writing about himself in the third person, as a literary device.

¹³⁴ Jan Ridderbos, *Bible Student's Commentary: Isaiah* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), introduction.

The Three-Part View of Isaiah

Many writers, sincerely or not, have criticized the Book of Mormon relative to the writings of the prophet Isaiah which are found in its pages. They argue that the book of Isaiah was produced by more than one individual—in fact, that up to ten persons could have written portions of it.

Sydney B. Sperry writes that Ibn Ezra, who lived in the twelfth century A.D. was among the first to doubt the unity of the book of Isaiah.¹³⁵ It was, however, in the eighteenth century that the real breaking down of the book began. By approximately 1890, critical consensus considered chapters 40-66 a unity, though not from the pen of Isaiah. So the critics termed it “Deutro-Isaiah” or “Second Isaiah,” the work of some wise but anonymous man who lived in Babylonia. Then other critics limited Deutro-Isaiah to chapters 40-66, and a “Trito-Isaiah (or “Third Isaiah”) was conceived.

Sperry quotes a Dr. Charles C. Torrey, a prominent advocate of the complete unity of the book of Isaiah, regarding the partition of Deutro-Isaiah:

The result has been to make a great change, in successive stages, in the critical view of the Second Isaiah, affecting the extent and form, and therefore of necessity the general estimate, of the prophecy. In the hands of those scholars who now hold the foremost place in the interpretation of Isaiah, the series of chapters beginning with 40 and ending with 66 has become an indescribable chaos. The once great “Prophet of the Exile” has dwindled to a very small figure, and is all but buried in a mass of jumbled fragments. The valuation of his prophecy has fallen accordingly; partly because a brief outburst with a narrow range of themes, can never make a like impression with a sustained effort covering a variety of subjects; and partly because the same considerations which covered the

¹³⁵The discussion on the history of Isaiah scholarship which follows comes from Sydney B. Sperry, *Our Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Stevens and Wallis, Inc., 1947), 156-67, 164-65. For more detail on the development of the Isaiah “problem,” see Sperry’s discussion.

analysis of the book have necessitated a lower estimate of each of the parts.

. . . The necessity of making the division into "Deutro-Isaiah" (chs. 50-66) and (56-66), with all that it involves, would of itself be a sufficiently great misfortune. That it is not possible to take this step without going still further, the recent history of exegesis has clearly shown. The subsequent dissection of "III Isaiah" is a certainty, while that of the curtailed II Isaiah is not likely to be long delayed. We have here a good example of that which has happened a few times, in the history of literary criticism, where scholars have felt obliged to pare down a writing to make it fit a mistaken theory. The paring process, begun with a penknife, is continued with a hatchet, until the book has been chopped into hopeless chunks.

Sperry also cites Dr. W. H. Green, one of the foremost Hebrew scholars, who rebuts the critics of the book of Isaiah as follows:

So the critics first dissect Isaiah, and then find it impossible to get the disjointed pieces together again without putting the collection of the canon at a date at variance with historical testimony and every reliable indication bearing on the subject. It is, indeed, a puzzling question which the critics have to solve, and to which no satisfactory answer can be given, how it came to pass that this prince of prophets, living, as we are told, near the end of the exile, whose predictions of the coming deliverance and the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple were so strikingly fulfilled, and who must have stirred the souls of the exiles to an unwonted degree with his own glowing enthusiasm, could be so utterly unknown, and not only his name, but his very existence so utterly forgotten, that his prophecies were attributed to another, who lived at a different period of time.

Sperry continues with a quotation from Dr. R. R. Ottley, an English biblical scholar of the Septuagint (Greek translation of the

Bible) responding to critics who espoused the view of a three-writer book of Isaiah:

These views are probably held, in one form or another, by a majority of the authorities and students of the present day. It is perhaps therefore proper for the writer of these notes to state that he is not convinced by them, but holds that, substantially, the whole of the "Book of Isaiah" is the work of that prophet, and that the work of the modern "critics," while of immense value as a contribution to knowledge of details, is a failure as to the broad issues involved.

Some scholars who have mutilated the book of Isaiah and fragmented it have done so because they claim that the historical vision of a prophet belongs to his own time. The theory behind this view eliminates prediction from prophecy. In other words, they claim, a prophet can predict only events that will happen in his own time but not beyond. If the future is hidden from a prophet, then the apocalyptic prophecies spoken by Isaiah, Daniel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Revelation of John should have been fulfilled in their own time. Even the prophecy of Jesus Christ concerning the kingdom of God on earth should have been fulfilled in his time. How inadequate is it for mortals to think so narrowly! To continue the theme about the beautiful expectations of the church and God's people as prophesied by inspired men, however, would distract us from the subject at hand.

The view that Isaiah is a unified book written by a single prophet is held by such scholars as Oswald T. Allis, who observed:

Consider the heading of the book of Isaiah: "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah (1:1). All prophetic books commence with a heading. They vary in length and composition but all agree in the name of the prophet. Some add the name of the father or the city or district such as: "Joel the son of Pethuel." The District: "Micah, the Morashite";

“Nahum, the Elkoshite.” . . . All but three indicate the time or period in which they prophesied. In the case of four (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Micah), it is stated that this ministry covered the reigns of three or four kings.¹³⁶

Isaiah in the New Testament

In the New Testament, Isaiah is quoted about twenty times, more than all the other prophets. These quotations are selected from throughout his book—beginning, middle, and end. Matthew quotes Isaiah six times by name, from one end of the book to the other. John cites Isaiah 53:1 and 6:10 in consecutive verses (John 12:38-41).¹³⁷ Luke says that when Jesus went into the synagogue, the book of Isaiah was handed to him and he read the words, “The spirit of the Lord . . .” (Isaiah 61:1). Also, all four Gospel writers quote Isaiah 40:3 as being fulfilled in the ministry of John the Baptist (Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4-6; John 1:23). Luke is the most explicit of the four, introducing his quotation with the attribution, “in the book of the words of Esaias [the Greek form of Isaiah] the prophet” (Luke 3:4). When Philip met the eunuch in the desert, he found him reading from the book of Isaiah (Luke 8:30; Isaiah 53:7 (KJV)). Romans contains a number of quotations from Isaiah: Romans 9:27 (Isaiah 10:22); 9:29 (1:9); 10:16 (53:1); 10:20 (65:1); 15:12 (11:10). Please note that these quotations range from chapters one to sixty-five. Allis argues:

Such evidence indicates with sufficient clearness that none of the New Testament writers “dreamt” that the name Isaiah was of doubtful or ambiguous meaning. Such facts as these should carry great weight with every Christian who values the testimony of the New Testament.

¹³⁶ Oswald T. Allis, *The Unity of Isaiah* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1950), 39-43. The one-author view of Isaiah is also held by Joseph Addison Alexander, Hengstenberg, Havernick, Barnest Douglas Stier, Loehr, Himpel, W. H. Green, and others.

¹³⁷ Cf. Matthew 3:3 (Isaiah 40:3); 4:14 (Isaiah 9:1f); 8:17 (53:4); 12:17-21 (42:1-4); 13:14 (6:9); 15:7 (29:13).

The attempt to set aside this evidence on such grounds as the following:

(1) that none of these citations is made "by Our Lord Himself," (2) that none of them are in answer to the question, "Did Isaiah write chs. 40-66 of the book called by his name?" 93) that Isaianic authorship is not "involved" in the argument shows how hard put to it the critics are to avoid the national implications of these quotations from "Esaias the prophet."¹³⁸

No matter how strongly the critics of the book of Isaiah argue that it wasn't written by Isaiah alone but by at least two other unknown prophets, the fact is that these "unknown prophets" are still unknown. There is no evidence whatsoever, historically or in any manuscript, to prove that the entire book—all sixty-six chapters—was not written by Isaiah alone. Certainly they have not dealt satisfactorily with the fact that New Testament writers treat the book as a unity and quote from all portions of it without hesitation.

Ecclesiasticus, an apocryphal book not in the canon but accepted by many historians and theologians, comments on Isaiah: "He saw by an excellent spirit what should come to pass at the last, and he comforted them that mourned in Sion. He showed what should come to pass for ever, and secret things or ever they came."¹³⁹

Isaiah in the Book of Mormon

The Book of Mormon attributes the entire book of Isaiah to one person and quotes amply from it, especially the later part which, according to the critics, was written after 540 B.C. If the critics are correct, Lehi could not have brought Isaiah's book with him when he left Jerusalem in 600 B.C. on the brass plates. These parallel quotations, presented below, are Isaiah 48-49 (I Nephi 20-21); 50-51 (II Nephi 7-8); 2-24 (II Nephi 12-24); 52 (III Nephi

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 42-43. Allis quotes G. A. Smith on the three arguments.

¹³⁹ As quoted in *ibid.*, 2.

20:36) 55 (II Nephi 26:25); 29 (II Nephi 27:14-19); 53 (Mosiah 14); 54 (III Nephi 22). Verses that are the same or substantially similar in both versions are not included. Some differences are important enough to change the meaning; others are relatively insignificant.

All quotations are from the 1864 edition of the Book of Mormon.

Isaiah 2

v. 2 *And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain*
v. 5 *O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord.*

v. 6 *Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people*

v. 9 *And the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself*

v. 10 *Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty.*

v. 11 *The lofty looks of man shall be humbled*

v. 12 *For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty*

v. 13 *And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan,*

v. 14 *And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up,*

v. 16 *And upon all the ships of Tarshish*

II Nephi 12

v. 2 *And it shall come to pass in the last days, when the mountain*
v. 5 *O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord, yea, come, for ye have all*

gone astray, every one to his wicked ways.

v. 6 *Therefore, O Lord, thou hast forsaken thy people*

v. 9 *And the mean man boweth not down, and the great man humbleth himself not*

v. 10 *O ye wicked ones, enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for the fear of the Lord, and the glory of his majesty shall smite thee.*

v. 11 *And it shall come to pass that the lofty looks of man shall be humbled*

v. 12 *For the day of the Lord of hosts soon cometh upon all nations, yea, upon every one; yea upon the proud and lofty*

v. 13 *Yea, and the day of the Lord shall come upon all the cedars of Lebanon, for they are high and lifted up; and upon all*

19 for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

v. 20 In that day a man shall cast his idols ... which they made each one for himself to worship
v. 21 for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

the oaks of Bashan,
v. 14 And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills
v. 16 And upon all the ships of the sea

19 for the fear of the Lord shall come upon them and the glory of his majesty shall smite them when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

v. 20 In that day a man shall cast his idols ... which he hath made for himself to worship
v. 21 for the fear of the Lord shall come upon them and the majesty of his glory shall smite them when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

Isaiah 3

v. 4 And I will give children to be their princes
v. 6 When a man shall take hold of his brother ... saying, ... let this ruin be under thy hand:
v. 8 because their tongue and their doings are against the Lord
v. 9 and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not
v. 10 Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him
v. 11 Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him.
v. 12 As for my people ... they which lead thee cause thee to

II Nephi 13

v. 4 And I will give children unto them to be their princes
v. 6 When a man shall take hold of his brother ... and shall say let not this ruin be under thy hand:
v. 8 because their tongue and their doings have been against the Lord
v. 9 and doth declare their sin as Sodom, they cannot hide it
v. 10 Say unto the righteous, that it is well with them
v. 11 Woe unto the wicked! for they shall perish; for the reward of their hands shall be upon them!

err

v. 15 What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces

v. 18 their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon

v. 12 And my people, ... they who lead thee cause thee to err

v. 15 What mean ye? Ye beat my people to pieces

v. 18 their tinkling ornaments and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon

Isaiah 4

v. 3 he that is left in Zion

v. 5 upon all the glory shall be a defence.

II Nephi

v. 3 they that are left in Zion

v. 5 upon all the glory of Zion shall be a defence.

Isaiah 5

v. 1 Now will I sing to my well beloved

v. 5 I will take away the hedge ... and break down the wall

v. 9 Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair

v. 11 they ... continue until night, till wine inflame them

v. 19 Let him make speed, and hasten his work,

v. 22 Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine

v. 23 Which justify the wicked for reward

v. 24 so their root shall be as

II Nephi 15

v. 1 And then will I sing to my well beloved

v. 5 I will take away the hedge ... and I will break down the wall

v. 9 Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, and great and fair cities

v. 11 they ... continue until night, and wine inflame them

v. 19 Let him make speed, hasten his work,

v. 22 Wo unto the mighty to drink wine

v. 23 Who justify the wicked for reward

v. 24 their root shall be rotten-

rottenness

v. 26 *and, behold, they shall come with speed swiftly:*

v. 27 *None shall be weary nor stumble among them; none shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken:*

v. 28 *Whose arrows are sharp, ... their horses' hoofs shall be counted like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind*

v. 29 *Their roaring shall be like a lion*

v. 30 *and if one look unto the land, behold darkness and sorrow,*

ness

v. 26 *and, behold, they shall come with speed swiftly; none shall be weary nor stumble among them*

v. 27 *None shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken:*

v. 28 *Whose arrows shall be sharp, ... and their horses' hoofs shall be counted like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind, their roaring like a lion.*

v. 29 *They shall roar like young lions*

v. 30 *and if they look unto the land, behold, darkness and sorrow,*

Isaiah 6

v. 9 *Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.*

II Nephi 16

v. 9 *Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but they understand not; and see ye indeed, but they perceived not.*

Isaiah 7

v. 20 *shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired, namely, by them beyond the river,*

v. 21 *And it shall come to pass in that day, that a man shall nourish*

v. 22 *And it shall come to pass, for the abundance of milk that*

II Nephi 17

v. 20 *shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired, by them beyond the river,*

v. 21 *And it shall come to pass in that day, a man shall nourish*

v. 22 *And it shall come to pass, for the abundance of milk they shall give*

they shall give

v. 23 And it shall come to pass in that day, that every place shall be

v. 25 And on all hills that shall be digged

v. 23 And it shall come to pass in that day, every place shall be

v. 25 And all hills that shall be digged

Isaiah 8

v. 1 Moreover the Lord said unto me

v. 4 For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and my mother, the riches of Damascus

v. 12 Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say

v. 19 should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?

v. 20 if they speak not according to this word

v. 22 and they shall be driven to darkness.

Isaiah 9

v. 1 and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan

v. 3 Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy:

v. 4 For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff

II Nephi 18

v. 1 Moreover the word of the Lord said unto me

v. 4 For before the child shall not have knowledge to cry, My father, and my mother, before the riches of Damascus

v. 12 Say ye not, A confederacy, to all to whom this people shall say

v. 19 should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to hear from the dead?

v. 20 and if they speak not according to this word

v. 22 and shall be driven to darkness.

II Nephi 19

v. 1 and afterward did more grievously afflict by the way of the Red Sea, beyond Jordan

v. 3 Thou hast multiplied the nation, and increased the joy:

v. 4 For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his

of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian.

v. 15 The ancient and honorable, he is the head

oppressor.

v. 15 The ancient he is the head

Isaiah 10

v. 2 To turn aside the needy from judgment

v. 13 For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent: and I have removed the bounds of the people

v. 15 or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it?

II Nephi 20

v. 2 To turn away the needy from judgment

v. 13 For he saith, By the strength of my hand and by my wisdom I have done these things; for I am prudent: and I have moved the borders of the people

v. 15 shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it?

Isaiah 13

v. 3 I have also called my mighty ones for mine anger, even them that rejoice

v. 5 even the Lord, and the weapons of his indignation

v. 10 the sun shall be darkened in his going forth

v. 11 And I will punish the world for their evil

v. 14 they shall every man turn to his own people

v. 15 that is joined unto them

v. 17 against them, which shall not regard silver;

v. 22 and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.

II Nephi 23

v. 3 I have also called my mighty ones for mine anger is not upon those that rejoice

v. 5 yea, the Lord, and the weapons of his indignation

v. 10 the sun shall be darkened in her going forth

v. 11 And I will punish the world for evil

v. 14 and they shall every man turn to his own people

v. 15 that is joined to the wicked

v. 17 against them, which shall not regard silver and gold,

v. 22 and her time is near to come, and her day shall not be prolonged.

Isaiah 14

v. 2 *And the people shall take them, and bring them to their place: and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the Lord for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captives, whose captives they were*

v. 4 *thou shalt take up this proverb against the king*

v. 11 *Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols*

v. 12 *how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!*

v. 16 *and consider thee, saying, Is this the man*

v. 17 *That made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners?*

v. 18 *even all of them, lie in glory, every one in his own house.*

v. 25 *That I will break the Assyrian in my land*

v. 27 *and who shall disannul it?*

v. 32 *What shall one then answer the messengers*

II Nephi 24

v. 2 *And the people shall take them, and bring them to their place: yea, from far unto the ends of the earth; and they shall return to their lands of promise.*

And the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the Lord shall be for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captives, unto whom they were captives

v. 4 *And it shall come to pass in that day that thou shalt take up this proverb against the king*

v. 11 *Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, the noise of thy viols*

v. 12 *how thou art cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!*

v. 16 *and consider thee, and say Is this the man*

v. 17 *And made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; and opened not the house of his prisoners?*

v. 18 *yea, all of them, lie in glory, every one in his own house.*

v. 25 *That I will bring the Assyrian in my land*

v. 27 *and who shall disannul?*

v. 32 *What shall then answer the messengers*

Isaiah 29

v. 11 *And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed:*

v. 12 *And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned.*

II Nephi 27

v. 15 *But behold, it shall come to pass that the Lord God shall say unto him to whom he shall deliver the book: Take these words which are not sealed and deliver them to another, that he may show them unto the learned, saying: Read this, I pray thee. And the learned shall say: Bring hither the book, and I will read them.*

v. 16 *And now, because of the glory of the world and to get gain will they say this, and not for the glory of God.*

v. 17 *And the man shall say: I cannot bring the book, for it is sealed.*

v. 18 *Then shall the learned say: I cannot read it.*

v. 19 *... the Lord God will deliver again the book and the words thereof to him that is not learned; and the man that is not learned shall say: I am not learned.*

v. 20 *Then shall the Lord God say unto him: The learned shall not read them, for they have rejected them, and I am able to do mine own work; therefore thou shalt read ...*

Isaiah 48

v. 1 *Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the Lord*

v. 2 *For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel*

v. 3 *I have declared the former things from the beginning; ... and I shewed them; I did them suddenly, and they came to pass.*

v. 4 *Because I knew that thou art obstinate*

v. 5 *I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; ... lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them*

v. 6 *Thou hast heard, see all this; and will not ye declare it?*

v. 7 *They are created now; and not from the beginning; even before the day when thou heardest them not; lest thou shouldest say,*

v. 8 *Yea, thou heardest not;*

v. 9 *For my name's sake will I defer mine anger*

v. 10 *Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver*

v. 11 *For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted?*

v. 13 *when I call unto them, they*

I Nephi 20

v. 1 *Hearken and hear this, O house of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, or out of the waters of baptism who swear by the name of the Lord*

v. 2 *Nevertheless they call themselves of the holy city, but they do not stay themselves upon the God of Israel, who is the Lord of Hosts; yea, the Lord of Hosts is his name*

v. 3 *Behold, I have declared the former things from the beginning; ... and I shewed them; I did show them suddenly*

v. 4 *And I did it because I knew that thou art obstinate*

v. 5 *And I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; ... and I showed them for fear lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them*

v. 6 *Thou hast seen and heard all this; and will not ye declare them?*

v. 7 *They are created now, and not from the beginning; even before the day when thou heardest them not; they were declared unto thee lest thou shouldest say,*

v. 8 *Yea, and thou heardest not*

v. 9 *Nevertheless for my name's sake will I defer mine anger*

stand up together.

v. 14 which among them hath declared these things? The Lord hath loved him: he will do his pleasure on Babylon

v. 15 I, even I, have spoken; yea, I have called him: I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous.

v. 16 hear ye this; ... from the time that it was, there am I

v. 17 Thus saith the Lord ... I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldst go.

v. 19 and the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel

v. 20 utter it even to the end of the earth;

v. 22 There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked.

v. 10 For behold, I have refined thee,

v. 11 For mine own sake, will I do this for I will not suffer my name to be polluted?

v. 13 when I call unto them and they stand up together.

v. 14 who among them hath declared these things unto them? The Lord hath loved him; yea, and he will fulfill his word which he hath declared by them; and he will do his pleasure on Babylon

v. 15 Also, saith the Lord; I the Lord yea I, even I, have spoken; yea, I have called him to declare: I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous.

v. 16 ... from the time that it was declared have I spoken;

v. 17 And thus saith the Lord ... I have sent him, the Lord thy God who teacheth thee to profit, who leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldst go hath done it.

v. 19 the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel

v. 20 utter it even to the end of the earth;

v. 22 And notwithstanding he hath done all this, and greater also, there is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked.

Isaiah 49

v. 1 Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far

v. 4 I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the Lord

v. 5 formed me from the womb to be his servant

v. 7 Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee.

v. 8 In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people

v. 12 Behold, these shall come from far

v. 13 be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted his people

v. 14 But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.

v. 15 Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.

I Nephi 21

v. 1 And again: Hearken O ye house of Israel, all ye that are broken off and are driven out because of the wickedness of the pastors of my people; yea, all ye that are broken off, that are scattered abroad, who are of my people, O house of Israel.

Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far

v. 4 I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: surely my judgment is with the Lord

v. 5 formed me from the womb that I should be his servant

v. 7 Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, his Holy One, servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful.

v. 8 In an acceptable time have I heard thee, O isles of the sea, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee my servant for a covenant of the people

v. 12 And then, O house of Israel, behold, these shall come from far

v. 13 be joyful, O earth; for the feet of those who are in the east shall be established, and break forth into singing, O mountains: for they shall be smitten no more for the Lord hath comforted his

v. 18 *all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth.*

people

v. 14 *But behold Zion hath said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me—but he will show that he hath not.*

v. 15 *For can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee, O house of Israel.*

v. 18 *all these gather themselves together, and they shall come to thee. As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them, as a bride.*

Isaiah 50

v. 1 *Thus saith the Lord, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you?*

v. 2 *Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer? Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh, because there is no water, and dieth for thirst.*

II Nephi 7

v. 1 *Yea, for thus saith the Lord, Have I put thee away, or have I cast thee off forever? Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? To whom have I put thee away? or which of my creditors I have sold you?*

v. 2 *Wherefore, when I came, there was no man? when I called, yea, there was none to answer? O house of Israel, is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make*

v. 4 *Speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning*

v. 8 *He is near that justifieth me*

v. 9 *Behold, the Lord God will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up.*

v. 10 *Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.*

the rivers a wilderness: their fish to stink, because the waters are dried up and they die because of thirst.

v. 4 *Speak a word in season unto thee, O house of Israel. When ye are weary he wakeneth morning by morning*

v. 8 *And the Lord is near, and he justifieth me*

v. 9 *For the Lord God will help me, and all they shall condemn me, behold, all they shall wax old as a garment; and the moth shall eat them up.*

v. 10 *Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light?*

Isaiah 51

v. 1 *Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.*

v. 2 *Look unto ... unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.*

v. 9 *awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab*

v. 11 *everlasting joy shall be upon their head*

v. 12 *I, even I, am he that*

II Nephi 8

v. 1 *Look unto the rock from whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit from whence ye are digged.*

v. 2 *Look unto ... unto Sarah she that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him.*

v. 9 *awake, as in the ancient days. Art thou not he that hath cut Rahab*

v. 11 *everlasting joy and holiness shall be upon their head*

v. 12 *I am he; yea, I am he that comforteth you. Behold, who*

comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass;

v. 15 But I am the Lord thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared: The Lord of hosts is his name.

v. 18 There is none to guide her among all the sons whom she hath brought forth; neither is there any that taketh her by the hand

v. 19 These two things are come unto thee; who shall be sorry for thee? desolation, and destruction, and the famine, and the sword: by whom shall I comfort thee?

v. 20 Thy sons have fainted, they lie at the head of all the streets

v. 22 I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup

art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man who shall die, and of the son of man who shall be made as grass;

v. 15 But I am the Lord thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared: The Lord of hosts is my name.

v. 18 And none to guide her among all the sons she hath brought forth; neither any that taketh her by the hand

v. 19 These two sons are come unto thee; who shall be sorry for thee? thy desolation, and destruction, and the famine, and the sword: and by whom shall I comfort thee?

v. 20 Thy sons have fainted save these two, they lie at the head of all the streets

v. 22 I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, the dregs of the cup

Isaiah 52

v. 1 Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion;

v. 2 arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem:

v. 7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth

III Nephi 20

v. 36 Awake, awake again and put on thy strength, O Zion;

v. 37 arise, sit down, O Jerusalem;

v. 40 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings unto

good tidings of good,

*them that publisheth peace; that
bringeth good tidings unto them
of good,*

*v. 41 touch not that which is
unclean*

Isaiah 53

*v. 9 because he had done no
violence, neither was any deceit
in his mouth*

Mosiah 14

*v. 9 because he had done no evil
neither was any deceit in his
mouth*

Isaiah 54

*v. 4 thou shalt forget the shame
of thy youth, and shalt not re-
member the reproach of thy
widowhood*

*v. 5 For thy Maker is thine
husband*

*v. 9 For this is as the waters of
Noah ... I would not be wroth
with thee, nor rebuke thee.*

*v. 15 they shall surely gather
together, but not by me:*

III Nephi 22

*v. 4 thou shalt forget the shame
of thy youth, and shalt not re-
member the reproach of thy
youth, and shalt not remember
the reproach of thy widowhood*

v. 5 For thy Maker thy husband

*v. 9 For this the waters of Noah
... I would not be wroth with
thee*

*v. 15 they shall surely gather
together, against thee, but not
by me,*

I hope this parallel treatment gives the reader an insight into the differences in the prophecies of Isaiah as recorded in the Bible and the Book of Mormon. Some of the changes are insignificant. For example, III Nephi 22:15 adds “against thee” to the original wording of Isaiah 54:15.

Other differences, however, are more significant. Isaiah 48:1 reads “out of the waters of Judah” while I Nephi 20:1 reads “out of the waters of Judah, or out of the waters of baptism.” Whoever inserted this addition must have felt that the phrase “out of the waters of Judah” was metaphorical or allegorical and therefore required an explanatory phrase.

I am not a Greek or Hebrew scholar; therefore, in the following discussion, I draw heavily from Dr. Sydney B. Sperry, a Hebrew and Greek scholar and a former professor of Old Testament languages and literature at Brigham Young University.¹⁴⁰ He agrees that the prophecies in the Book of Mormon are not identical to those in the King James version: 234 of the 433 verses of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon were changed or modified by Joseph Smith. “Some of the changes made were slight, others were radical,” he writes. He suggests that Joseph Smith may have used the King James Version when he came to the text of Isaiah on the Book of Mormon plates and adds, “As long as the familiar version agreed substantially with the text on the gold plates he let it pass; when it differed too radically, he translated the Nephite version and dictated the necessary changes.”

Sperry makes some interesting observations on Isaiah’s prophecies, comparing them with those found in the Book of Mormon, the King James version of the Bible, the Hebrew Old Testament, and the Septuagint (LXX) version, or Greek translation, using II Nephi 12:16 as an example. This text prefixes a phrase of eight words not found in the Hebrew or King James version: “And upon all the ships of the sea. . . .” However, the Septuagint begins with a similar phrase, “and upon every ship of the sea”

Sperry suggests, “By a common accident, the original Hebrew and the King James text lost the first phrase, which was preserved by the Septuagint. Scholars may suggest that Joseph Smith took the first phrase from the Septuagint, but Joseph Smith did not know Greek and there is no evidence that he had access to a copy of the Septuagint when he was translating the Book of Mormon.

In another passage, II Nephi 12:20 (cf. Isaiah 2:20), the Book of Mormon version accords with Codex Alexandrinus, a manuscript of the Septuagint:

Book of Mormon: In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver and his idols of gold, which he hath made. . .

King James: In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver

¹⁴⁰ Sperry, *Our Book of Mormon*, 172-77.

and his idols of gold, which they made...

Codex Alexandrinus: In that day a man shall cast out his abominations the silver and the golden, which he made...

In this case, the Hebrew text and the King James translation read “they made,” while the Codex Alexandrinus supports the Book of Mormon reading, “he hath made” with “he made.” Interestingly enough, according to Sperry, “The Codex Vaticanus and the Codex Sinaiticus, together with some other manuscripts, have a reading, ‘For in that day’ at the beginning of it. The Book of Mormon attests the correctness of the Hebrew, the King James, the Codex Alexandrinus, and the Codex Marchalianus in omitting ‘for’.”

In II Nephi 7:2, which compares to Isaiah 50:2, Sperry comments: “The corruption that exists in both the King James (following the Hebrew) and Septuagint versions are beautifully untangled for us by the Book of Mormon”:

Book of Mormon: Wherefore, when I came, there was no man; when I called, yea, there was none to answer, O house of Israel, is my hand shortened at all that it cannot redeem or have I no power to deliver? Behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make their rivers a wilderness and their fish to stink because the waters are dried up, and they die because of thirst.

*King James: Wherefore, when I came **was there** no man? when I called was there none to answer? is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness and their fish stinketh because there is no water and dieth for thirst.*

LXX: Why did I come, and there was no man? I called and there was none to hearken? is not my hand strong to redeem? or have I not strength to deliver? Behold, at my threat I will desolate the sea and

make rivers a wilderness and their fish shall be dried up because there is no water and shall die for thirst.

Sperry argues that the Book of Mormon reads “their rivers” as against “rivers.” This is readily explained on the basis that the letter **mem** (“their”), which was attached originally to “rivers,” accidentally dropped out of the Hebrew text (hence the omission in the King James version of “their”), because the adjoining letter in the very next word, “wilderness,” is also **mem**. “Such accidents,” he says, “are well-known to textual critics. The reading ‘their fish’ farther on in the sentence also argues well for the correctness of ‘their rivers.’”

Sperry further observes that the King James version and, hence, the Hebrew, omits “dried up” while the LXX omits “stinketh.” The Book of Mormon retains both, indicating that the Hebrew and Greek each lack elements that were in the original Isaiah text. Sperry also notes that “stinketh” and “dried up” in the Hebrew text would have about the same sound and appearance, and the accidental dropping of one of these verbs would generate some difficulty; consequently, later scribes, of necessity, would have to reconstruct the text in different ways. He further states that “the Book of Mormon version of this verse is so reasonable on the basis of textual evidence as to appeal to every thinking person.”

A third example from Sperry’s analysis is II Nephi 19:3, which compares to Isaiah 9:3. Here the reading hinges on “not,” which appears in the King James version but not in the Book of Mormon:

Book of Mormon: Thou hast multiplied the nation, and increased the joy

King James: Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy

Sperry says that most scholars agree that “not” is unsuitable in the Hebrew and the King James versions. He argues that some Syriac and Targum versions suggest that originally the Hebrew text contained another word which had the same sound but a

different meaning and hypothesizes that the scribe, writing from dictation, selected the wrong word. “Lo” means both “not” and “to it” in Hebrew. Although the Book of Mormon does not include the “to it” meaning, it rejects the “not.” Sperry hypothesizes that the complete phrase should be, “Thou hast multiplied the nation, (and) to it thou hast increased the joy.” This translation obviously brings clarity and better sense to the phrase.

Numerous illustrations could be given but I believe that these examples help show that the Book of Mormon is correct in treating the book of Isaiah as a unit. There is enough evidence in the New Testament and the Book of Mormon to prove beyond a shadow of doubt that only one person—Isaiah himself—wrote the entire book that bears his name.

Chapter 11

“PLAIN AND PRECIOUS PARTS” REMOVED FROM THE BIBLE

Early in the Book of Mormon, Nephi has a vision of the New World—the voyages of Columbus and the Pilgrims, their subsequent success on this continent, and the importance of their Bible to them. However, the vision warns, “many parts which are plain and most precious” were missing from the Bible (I Nephi 13:12-42). These parts would have to be restored for the purity of the gospel of Jesus Christ to be maintained.

And I looked and beheld a man among the Gentiles, who was separated from the seed of my brethren by the many waters; and I beheld the Spirit of God, that it came down and wrought upon the man; and he went forth upon the many waters, even unto the seed of my brethren, who were in the promised land.

And it came to pass that I beheld the Spirit of God, that it wrought upon other Gentiles; and they went forth out of captivity, upon the many waters.

And it came to pass that I beheld many multitudes of the Gentiles upon the land of promise; and I beheld the wrath of God, that it was upon the seed of my brethren; and they were scattered before the Gentiles and were smitten.

And I beheld the Spirit of the Lord, that it was upon the

Gentiles, and they did prosper and obtain the land for their inheritance; and I beheld that they were white, and exceeding fair and beautiful, like unto my people before they were slain.

And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld that the Gentiles who had gone forth out of captivity did humble themselves before the Lord; and the power of the Lord was with them.

And I beheld that their mother Gentiles were gathered together upon the waters, and upon the land also, to battle against them.

And I beheld that the power of God was with them, and also that the wrath of God was upon all those that were gathered together against them to battle.

And I, Nephi, beheld that the Gentiles that had gone out of captivity were delivered by the power of God out of the hands of all other nations.

And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld that they did prosper in the land; and I beheld a book, and it was carried forth among them.

And the angel said unto me: Knowest thou the meaning of the book?

And I said unto him: I know not.

And he said: Behold it proceedeth out of the mouth of a Jew. And I, Nephi, beheld it; and he said unto me: The book that thou beholdest is a record of the Jews, which contains the covenants of the Lord, which he hath made unto the house of Israel; and it also containeth many of the prophecies of the holy prophets; and it is a record like unto the engravings which are upon the plates of brass, save there are not so many; nevertheless, they contain the covenants of the Lord, which he hath made unto the house of Israel; wherefore, they are of great worth unto the Gentiles.

And the angel of the Lord said unto me: Thou hast beheld that the book proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew; and when it proceeded forth from the mouth of a Jew it contained the plainness of the gospel of the Lord, of

whom the twelve apostles bear record; and they bear record according to the truth which is in the Lamb of God.

Wherefore, these things go forth from the Jews in purity unto the Gentiles, according to the truth which is in God.

And after they go forth by the hand of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, from the Jews unto the Gentiles, thou seest the foundation of a great and abominable church, which is most abominable above all other churches; for behold, they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away.

And all this have they done that they might pervert the right ways of the Lord, that they might blind the eyes and harden the hearts of the children of men.

Wherefore, thou seest that after the book hath gone forth through the hands of the great and abominable church, that there are many plain and precious things taken away from the book, which is the book of the Lamb of God.

And after these plain and precious things were taken away it goeth forth unto all the nations of the Gentiles; and after it goeth forth unto all the nations of the Gentiles, yea, even across the many waters which thou hast seen with the Gentiles which have gone forth out of captivity, thou seest—because of the many plain and precious things which have been taken out of the book, which were plain unto the understanding of the children of men, according to the plainness which is in the Lamb of God—because of these things which are taken away out of the gospel of the Lamb, an exceeding great many do stumble, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them.

Nevertheless, thou beholdest that the Gentiles who have gone forth out of captivity, and have been lifted up by the power of God above all other nations, upon the face of the land which is choice above all other lands, which is the land that the Lord God hath covenanted with thy father that his seed should have for the land of their inheritance;

wherefore, thou seest that the Lord God will not suffer that the Gentiles will utterly destroy the mixture of thy seed, which are among thy brethren.

Neither will he suffer that the Gentiles shall destroy the seed of thy brethren.

Neither will the Lord God suffer that the Gentiles shall forever remain in that awful state of blindness, which thou beholdest they are in, because of the plain and most precious parts of the gospel of the Lamb which have been kept back by that abominable church, whose formation thou hast seen.

Wherefore saith the Lamb of God: I will be merciful unto the Gentiles, unto the visiting of the remnant of the house of Israel in great judgment.

And it came to pass that the angel of the Lord spake unto me, saying: Behold, saith the Lamb of God, after I have visited the remnant of the house of Israel—and this remnant of whom I speak is the seed of thy father—wherefore, after I have visited them in judgment, and smitten them by the hand of the Gentiles, and after the Gentiles do stumble exceedingly, because of the most plain and precious parts of the gospel of the Lamb which have been kept back by that abominable church, which is the mother of harlots, saith the Lamb—I will be merciful unto the Gentiles in that day, insomuch that I will bring forth unto them, in mine own power, much of my gospel, which shall be plain and precious, saith the Lamb.

For, behold, saith the Lamb: I will manifest myself unto thy seed, that they shall write many things which I shall minister unto them, which shall be plain and precious; and after thy seed shall be destroyed, and dwindle in unbelief, and also the seed of thy brethren, behold, these things shall be hid up, to come forth unto the Gentiles, by the gift and power of the Lamb.

And in them shall be written my gospel, saith the Lamb, and my rock and my salvation.

And blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion at that day, for they shall have the gift and the power

of the Holy Ghost; and if they endure unto the end they shall be lifted up at the last day, and shall be saved in the everlasting kingdom of the Lamb; and whoso shall publish peace, yea, tidings of great joy, how beautiful upon the mountains shall they be.

And it came to pass that I beheld the remnant of the seed of my brethren, and also the book of the Lamb of God, which had proceeded forth from the mouth of the Jew, that it came forth from the Gentiles unto the remnant of the seed of my brethren.

And after it had come forth unto them I beheld other books, which came forth by the power of the Lamb, from the Gentiles unto them, unto the convincing of the Gentiles and the remnant of the seed of my brethren, and also the Jews who were scattered upon all the face of the earth, that the records of the prophets and of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are true.

And the angel spake unto me, saying: These last records, which thou hast seen among the Gentiles, shall establish the truth of the first, which are of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, and shall make known the plain and precious things which have been taken away from them; and shall make known to all kindreds, tongues, and people, that the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father, and the Savior of the world; and that all men must come unto him, or they cannot be saved.

And they must come according to the words which shall be established by the mouth of the Lamb; and the words of the Lamb shall be made known in the records of thy seed, as well as in the records of the twelve apostles of the Lamb; wherefore they both shall be established in one; for there is one God and one Shepherd over all the earth.

And the time cometh that he shall manifest himself unto all nations, both unto the Jews and also unto the Gentiles; and after he has manifested himself unto the Jews and also unto the Gentiles, then he shall manifest himself unto the Gentiles and also unto the Jews, and the last shall be first, and the first shall be last.

Nephi thus saw the purity of the gospel of Jesus Christ as preached by his twelve apostles but also saw how the Bible had become weakened and contaminated by the removal of some “plain and precious parts.” While the vision refers to a “church,” it is a well-known fact that the Bible, during its many translations, has suffered from translators who have deliberately removed, changed, or added words and phrases to make the results fit better with their own theological understandings. For instance, Weldon and Butterworth quote E. Cecil McGavin:

When Martin Luther translated the Bible in the daily speech of the common people of Germany, he left out four books from the New Testament because they did not agree with his preconceived notions about faith and works.

Enough manuscripts were forged in the name of Peter to form a book larger than the new Testament.

The Book of Revelations [sic] passed one council by a majority of one vote.

[Weldon and Butterworth then continue:] . . . During his lifetime [Martin Luther] had vigorously propounded the doctrine of Justification by Faith. When he undertook the translation of the New Testament he omitted from the Canon the Epistle of James which completely shattered his life-long hobby of “Justification by Faith,” and jeeringly called it “an epistle of straw.”¹⁴¹

Furthermore, many doctrinal beliefs and practices have been altered through interpretations of the text. Roy Weldon quotes a Catholic scholar who accused:

There is no whim, fad or fancy that someone does not claim to prove from the Bible. Almost any man is conceited enough to set himself up as a competent interpreter of the Word of God. . .

¹⁴¹E. Cecil McGavin, as quoted in and commented on by Roy E. Weldon and F. Edwin Butterworth, *Book of Mormon Deeps*, 3 vols. (Independence, Missouri: n.pub., 1979), 3:86-87.

*Today there are so many churches because there are so many different interpretations of the Bible; there are so many interpretations because there are so many wrong interpretations, because the system of interpreting it is radically wrong.*¹⁴²

There is no doubt that wrong interpretations have adulterated the word of God in the bible. For example, baptism has been changed through wrong interpretation from the original mode of immersion to either sprinkling or pouring or just signing one's name to a church register.¹⁴³ The Lord's supper has been changed to suit the individual church. Catholicism uses a "wafer" in lieu of bread and wine. Some Catholic churches use both the wafer and wine in their services. Most Protestant churches use bread and fruit juice, instead of wine, in their sacrament services. A few, like The Church of Jesus Christ (Bickertonites) still serve bread and wine for the Lord's Supper.

Commenting on how painfully the Bible has been abused by wrong interpretations, Hugh Nibley cites a noted scholar, W. F. Albright, who said, "Our Hebrew text has suffered more from losses than glosses."¹⁴⁴

Nephi's vision of the deletion of "plain and precious parts from the gospel of the Lamb" involves entire books. The Book of Mormon refers to several prophetic books which were inscribed on the Plates of Brass but which are no longer found in the Bible, to wit; Zenos, Neum, and Zenock. The Bible also mentions books that are missing: Book of the Covenant (Exodus 24:7), Book of the Wars of the Lord (Numbers 21:14), Book of Jasher (Joshua 10:13; II Samuel 1:8), Book of the Manner of the Kingdom (I Samuel 10:25), books by Solomon (I Kings 4:32-33), books of the Acts of Solomon (I Kings 11:41), books of Samuel, Nathan, and Gad (I Chronicles 29:29), Book of Nathan (II Chronicles 9:29), prophe-

¹⁴² Scholar not identified; but source given as Intermountain Catholic Truth Society, Feb. 22, 1930, as quoted in *ibid.*, 87.

¹⁴³ For detailed information on the history of the ordinance of baptism, see V. James Loyalvo, *A History of Baptism* (Fresno, California: The Church of Jesus Christ Print House, 1991).

¹⁴⁴ As quoted in Weldon, *Book of Mormon Deeps*, 88.

cies of Ahijah the Shilonite (II Chronicles 9:29), Visions of Iddo the Seer (II Chronicles 9:29), Book of Shemaiah (II Chronicles 9:29), story of the prophet Iddo (II Chronicles 13:22), Book of Jehu (II Chronicles 20:34), Book of the Kings of Israel (II Chronicles 20:34), Second Epistle of Jude (Jude 3), Second Epistle to the Ephesians (Ephesians 3:3-4); Epistle to the Laodiceans (Colossians 4:16), and another Epistle to the Corinthians (I Corinthians 5:9).

How do errors of transcription occur during the process of transmitting the Bible from one generation to another? Weldon cites E. Cecil McGavin's lucid explanation:

A recent writer says of the errors that have crept into the text of the Bible, "Most of these were of the kind commonly made by copyists; e.g., confusion of similar letters; the wrong grouping of letters into words, and phrases only once where they should have been written twice; the confusion of similar sounds, and the elision of words and phrases due to their being between two occurrences of the same word, so that the eye of the scribe after leaving the manuscript where the word first occurred returned to the manuscript where the word occurred the second time, thus omitting the intervening material. Other errors were due to the damaged or illegible condition of the manuscript serving as a copy, so that the scribe misread it. Some also were due to the deliberate corrections of copyists and editors who considered the text in need of improvement of various kinds.

[Weldon quotes McGavin's comments, who is citing Dr. G. B. Smith, "A Guide to the Study of Christian Religion," p. 164] The Hebrew perhaps more than the Greek or Latin piled up problems for the translators. The Hebrews in order to abbreviate their language . . . for recording upon skins of animals . . . developed a literature without vowels. These extraneous consonant combinations permitted more than one interpretation, depending upon the vowels which the reader supplies. Thus, St. Jerome asserted that "when we translated Hebrew into

Latin we are sometimes guided by conjecture.”

The Hebrew language was incapable of transmitting an infallible record. It would require far more inspiration to read it than to write it. . . [For example] the consonants for “Arabs” and “Ravens” are exactly the same. Many scholars are wondering if the crows carried food to Elijah or did the Arabs take fresh meat to him each morning and evening?¹⁴⁵

Weldon also quotes J. N. Washburn (“The Contents, Structure, and Authorship of the Book of Mormon,” pp. 201-202):

There are, in the [King James version of the] Bible, thousands of words and phrases in italics. The translators used these italics, we are told, when they were not certain just what English phraseology to use. These portions thus contain or represent the concentration of possible or probable errors. . . . It would be interesting to compare the uncertain elements with the corresponding rendering in the Book of Mormon.¹⁴⁶

McGavin continues his quotations from Washburn, both of them as cited in Weldon:

Chapter 42 [of Washburn’s book] deals with various differences between the King James and the Book of Mormon versions of Isaiah. The differences are evidently in Isaiah’s style. The author suggests, “It is no small thing to go along with the great Isaiah, especially for an unknown youth [Joseph Smith]” (ibid., p. 201).

The errors of Holy Scripture are not errors of falsehood or of deceit; they are such errors of ignorance, inadvertence, and of partial and inadequate knowledge, as belong to man as man (p. 78).

Today there are more than 4000 Greek manuscripts of

¹⁴⁵ McGavin as quoted in *ibid.*, 84, 89-90.

¹⁴⁶ As quoted in *ibid.*, 90.

the New Testament or parts of it. In these sources there are 200,000 variations, 400 of which materially affect the meaning of the text.

There are 24,000 changes made in the Authorized Version since the King James Version was published in 1611.

The scholars of 1885 made 36,191 corrections in the King James version.

The Old Testament was copied by hand for more than 1600 years, while the New Testament was transmitted in this manner for about 1400 years.¹⁴⁷

Critics delight in pointing out that there have been almost four thousand changes in the Book of Mormon since the 1830 edition.¹⁴⁸ Yet most of these critics view the Bible as being sacred, inviolate, and inspired. They attest to its inerrancy unequivocally. Noted atheists like Robert G. Ingersoll and Thomas Paine, in their attempt to discredit the Bible, point out problems with the text. Ingersoll claims that there have been “at least one hundred thousand changes in the English version of the Old Testament” while Paine argues:

These books beginning with Genesis and ending with Revelation . . . are, we are told, the word of God. . . . It is a matter altogether of uncertainty to us whether such of the writings as now appear under the name of the Old and New Testament are in the same state in which those collectors say they found them, or whether they added, altered, abridged, or dressed them up.¹⁴⁹

I, like many others, often wonder why opponents of the Book of Mormon do not drop the Bible and engage in a crusade against it because of the thousands of changes that have been made in it

¹⁴⁷ As quoted in *ibid.*, 90.

¹⁴⁸ Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *3,913 Changes in Bok of Mormon* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Lighthouse Ministry, n.d.).

¹⁴⁹ As quoted in *ibid.*, 93.

throughout the centuries.

The changes made in the Book of Mormon involve mostly grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Theological changes such as “the Mother of God” to “Mother of the Son of God” (I Nephi 11:18) or Jesus referred to as “God” are grammatical and theological quibbles that have been argued by scholars and theologians for centuries on the basis of the Bible. The Catholic Church still calls Mary the mother of God because Jesus is referred to as God (among many other titles) in the Bible. Thomas called Jesus, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28). Joseph Smith, apparently not wanting the phrase “mother of God” to be argumentative, changed it to “mother of the Son of God.” The Book of Mormon, like the Bible, refers to Christ by the names of “Lord, God, Holy One of Israel,” etc. Jesus Christ was and is God incarnate.

To substantiate the fact that the Bible has been tampered with and “many plain and precious things” have been deleted from it, here is a sermon by Pastor Alvin G. Hause of the Bales Baptist Church, Kansas City, Missouri, with whom I heartily agree, advancing ten objections to this new Bible. Subheadings have been omitted.

[First, the new version] indirectly makes Joseph the father of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Now take your new Bible and read Luke 2:33. The new version says, “And his father and his mother marvelled at what was said of him.” Now let us read the same passage in the King James Version: “And Joseph and his mother marvelled.” You will note that the old version does not even imply that Joseph was the father of Our Lord Jesus while the new version states that he was the father of Jesus. This of course destroys the doctrine of the deity of Our Lord. But even more serious is a footnote that we find in the new version to Matthew 1:16 . . . : “Other ancient authorities read that Joseph, to whom was betrothed the virgin Mary, was the father of Jesus who was called the Christ.” The revisers of the new version do not tell us who these “ancient authorities” are. They do not tell us that these “ancient authorities” were the Ebonites, a sect of Christian heretics who did not admit

the divinity of Christ and whose writings date A.D. 200. If this footnote is true, the whole Bible is false, for the deity of Christ is one of the foundational truths of our Christian faith.

Matthew 18:11 "For the Son of Man is come to save that which is lost," as well as Luke 9:56 "For the son of Man is come not to destroy mens' lives but to save them" are omitted from the new version. No explanation is given for these omissions, except the usual other "ancient authorities, add," then we have quoted the verses left out of the text itself.

My third objection to the new Bible is that in the preface the revisers state that they will continue to use "thee," "thou and thine," when referring to God; however, when translating Peter's confession of the Christ in Matthew 16:16 they say, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," indicating that they do not consider that Peter, in addressing Christ, recognizes Him as God, and this is done several times in the new version, yet Christ states especially, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" and we are told in John's Gospel, chapter one, that "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."

My fourth objection is a very serious one. As we well know, the modernists do not accept the blood atonement and we find in the new Bible the words, "In my blood" omitted from Luke 22:19-20, while in very small print as a footnote, they say, "Other ancient authorities add, 'this cup which is poured out for you is a new covenant [of] my blood'" Many readers of the new Bible will fail to read the footnotes and even if they do will consider that these "other ancient authorities" are less reliable than the manuscript used by these present revisers. The American Revised Version of 1901 includes the words "in my blood." Even a more serious omission is found in Col. 1:14. The King James Version reads: "In whom we have redemption through his blood even the forgiveness of sins," while the

new version reads, "In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins," omits entirely the words, "thru his blood." No explanation is given why the words, "thru his blood" are left out. So once again we find the modernist influence asserting itself in the new Bible.

The fifth objection is the weakening of the doctrine of the physical resurrection of Christ by leaving out the words, "He is not here but is risen" from Luke 24:6. The King James Version reads "He is not here but is risen; remember how he spake unto you while he was yet in Galilee." Also in Luke 24, we find, verse 12, as well as verse 40, which deal with the resurrection, omitted entirely. True it is, that in a very small print, as a footnote, they say "other ancient authorities add these verses." Also—Mark 16:9-20. This is all a footnote.

My sixth objection is found in Luke 24:51. King James Version says, "and it came to pass while he blessed them he parted from them and carried up into heaven." The American Revised Version of 1901 gives the same translation, while the new version omits entirely the words "carried into heaven," saying merely while he blessed he parted from them," thus denying the supernatural fact of the Ascension. As usual, the new version adds these words in a small printed footnote.

My seventh objection is that the new version in Mark 9 omits verses 44 and 46, which reads "where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." Of course, the modernists do not believe in a literal hell and take every opportunity to weaken this doctrine.

Objection number eight is illustrated in Matthew 27:54 and Mark 15:39 where the new version uses the word "a" instead of the word "the" in quoting "truly this was the Son of God making it read "truly this was a Son of God." Now all born again ones are sons of God. In John 1:12 we read, "But as many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Only Christ was the Son of God. Of course this discounts the deity of Christ.

My ninth objection is found in the translation of I Peter 2:2. The King James Version reads, "As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." The new version says "that ye may grow up to salvation." Here we find the teaching of salvation by education, cultivation and natural growth. No one ever grows up to salvation! Salvation is a supernatural experience brought through repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christs. All the verse really means is that after we are saved through faith, as new born babes, we grow in Christian life by reading and meditating on the Word of God.

My tenth and last objection to be considered, is found in the much publicized translation of Isaiah 7:14. The King James Version says "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son," the American Revised Version of 1901 has the same rendering, but the new translation says, "A young woman," while a footnote says, "virgin." This reveals the fact that the translator of the new version preferred to use the words "young woman" thus weakening again the doctrine of the virgin birth of Our Lord.¹⁵⁰

There is much more evidence that could be produced to verify that, through the many translations and the countless number of individual interpretations submitted, the Bible has been shorn of some of its original texts—words and phrases—that were “plain and precious” and easily understood by even the unlearned and literarily unsophisticated persons. Critics may challenge this statement; but the fact still remains that scholars, theologians, priests, ministers, and lay people argue vehemently about the Godhead, the divinity of Jesus Christ, the virgin birth of Jesus, the atonement, the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s supper, the nature of heaven, paradise, and hell, salvation, resurrection, faith, works, the soul, the gathering of Israel, whether the kingdom of

¹⁵⁰Sermon delivered on December 14, 1952, “Ten Objections to the New Bible,” as cited in Roy E. Weldon and F. Edwin Butterworth, *Book of Mormon Deeps, 3 vols.* (Independence, Missouri: n.pub., 1979), 3:93-95. Neither he nor the authors specify which “new” Bible Haose opposes.

God will be established on earth or not, and other theological subjects. The Book of Mormon, however, is very explicit on these matters.

Book of Mormon Clarifications on Crucial Topics

The Old Testament contains prophecies relating to the life of Jesus Christ. There are also “types and shadows” regarding His sufferings, shedding of blood, and death, a fascinating topic on which we cannot linger at this time. The Gospels of the New Testament are biographies of Our Lord, in which the prophecies of the Old Testament relative to His birth, mission, atonement, and resurrection are fulfilled. Prophecies, with respect to His second coming and the events of the “last days” in which He will be the central figure, are yet to be fulfilled. It must be observed, however, that prophecy must be interpreted by the Spirit of God to be truly understood. Theologians have striven for ages to understand the words of the prophets. For this reason, volumes have been written on their words, with various interpretations ascribed to them. But when the Spirit of the Lord is bestowed, then they who are recipients thereof feel enlightened about the words of the prophets.

The biblical Old Testament prophets did not mention Jesus nor His mother by name. On the other hand, the pre-Christian portion of the Book of Mormon (from I Nephi 1 to III Nephi 11, including Ether), which we may term its “Old Testament” portion, is filled with prophecies and testimonies concerning Jesus Christ. These prophets, unlike those of the Old Testament, knew His name, the name of His mother, and details of His divinity, Messianic mission, sufferings, atonement, and resurrection.

The difference between the Bible and the Book of Mormon is that the biography of Jesus Christ is given in plain and precious words throughout the Book of Mormon as prompted by the Holy Spirit, whereas the story of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament is given in types and shadows, in prophetic analogies and metaphors. Many things which are made clearer in the Book of Mormon will now be reviewed.

The Godhead

The Bible attests that God has a bodily form with parts and passions; that He can see, hear, speak, feel and touch, walk, and move through the universe; that He is omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent (cf. Genesis 1:26-27; James 3:9; John 14:9; Genesis 1:31; Deuteronomy 11:12; Mosiah 27:31; I Peter 3:12; John 9:31; II Samuel 22:7; Ether 1:40; Exodus 33:11; III Nephi 11:3; Jeremiah 1:9; Exodus 20:5; Zech. 8:17; Exodus 34:6-7; I John 4:8; II Nephi 1:15; Genesis 3:8; Isaiah 60:13; Nahum 1:3; Psalms 139:7-12; Acts 15:8; Acts 2:23; I Peter 1:2; Exodus 20:23; Psalms 83:18; Isaiah 12:2; and Matthew 6:13.¹⁵¹

The Book of Mormon also contains very explicit teachings on the nature of God. King Limhi, rehearsing the words of the prophet Abinadi, said,

*... And because he said unto them that Christ was the God, the Father of all things, and said that he should take upon him the image of man, and it should be the image after which man was created in the beginning; or in other words, he said that **man was created after the image of God,** and that God should come down among the children of men, and take upon him flesh and blood, and go forth upon the face of the earth . . . (Mosiah 7:27).¹⁵²*

Another prophet, Ammon stated, “Ammon said unto him, I am a man; and man in the beginning was created **after the image of God . . .**” (Alma 18:34).

Hundreds of years before His birth, Jesus appeared to another prophet, identified in the text as the Brother of Jared, in His spirit body, which resembled the body in which he would sojourn upon the earth. He told the Brother of Jared that men had been created after His image:

¹⁵¹ For a more detailed account of the nature of God, see V. James Lovalvo, *A Dissertation on the Faith and Doctrine of The Church of Jesus Christ* (Detroit: The Church of Jesus Christ Print House, 1986), Articles 1 and 2, pp. 1-31.

¹⁵² Unless otherwise noted, all italics in quoted passages are mine.

Seest thou that ye are created after mine own image? Yea, even all men were created in the beginning after mine own image.

Behold, this body, which ye now behold, is the body of my spirit. . . and even as I appear unto thee to be in the spirit will I appear unto my people in the flesh. (Ether 3:14-16)

Other references to God's body also appear in the Book of Mormon:

*Yea, every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess before him. . . and they shall quake and tremble, and shrink beneath his **all-searching eye**. (Mosiah 27:31)*

*But, notwithstanding the greatness of the task, I must do according to the strict commands of God, and tell you concerning your wickedness and abominations, in the presence of the pure in heart, and the broken heart, and under **the glance of the piercing eye of the Almighty God**.*

*. . . O that he would show you that he can pierce you, and with **one glance of his eye** he can smite you to the dust (Jacob 2:10, 15).*

*And it came to pass that when the brother of Jared had said these words, behold, the Lord stretched forth his hand and **touched the stones one by one with his finger**. . . . (Ether 3:6)*

The God in the Book of Mormon also speaks directly to human beings:

*And now, when I, Nephi, had heard these words, I remembered the words of the Lord **which he spake unto me** in the wilderness, saying that: Inasmuch as thy seed shall keep my commandments, they shall prosper in the land of promise. (1 Nephi 4:14)*

*And it came to pass that after he had poured out his whole soul to God, **the voice of the Lord came to him saying**: Blessed art thou, Alma, and blessed are they who were baptized in the waters of Mormon. Thou art blessed*

because of thy exceeding faith in the words of my servant Abinadi. (Mosiah 26:14-15)

*And it came to pass while they were thus conversing one with another, **they heard a voice** as if it came out of heaven; and they cast their eyes round about, for they understood not the voice which they heard; and it was not a harsh voice, neither was it a loud voice; nevertheless, and notwithstanding it being a small voice it did pierce them that did hear to the center, insomuch that there was no part of their frame that it did not cause to quake; yea, it did pierce them to the very soul, and did cause their hearts to burn.*

*. . . And behold, the third time **they did understand the voice** which they heard; and it said unto them: Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him. (III Nephi 11:3, 6-7)*

The Book of Mormon has extensive comments concerning the feelings, passions, and emotions of God:

*. . . But behold, I, Nephi, will show unto you that the **tender mercies of the Lord** are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance. (I Nephi 1:20)*

*But behold, the Lord hath redeemed my soul from hell; I have beheld his glory, and I am encircled about eternally **in the arms of his love**. (II Nephi 1:15)*

*I say unto you, if ye have come to a knowledge of the **goodness of God**, and his matchless power, and his wisdom, and his patience, and his long-suffering towards the children of men; and also, the atonement which has been prepared from the foundation of the world, that thereby salvation might come to him that should put his trust in the Lord, and should be diligent in keeping his commandments, and continue in the faith even unto the end of his life . . . (Mosiah 4: 6)*

*And behold, I say unto you that if ye do this ye shall always rejoice, and be filled with **the love of God**. . . (Mosiah 4:12)*

*.. According to the love of God which was in me . . .
(Mormon 3:12)*

*Wherefore we labored diligently among our people,
that we might persuade them to come unto Christ, and
partake of **the goodness of God**, . . . (Jacob 1:7)*

*And because he said this, they did put him to death;
and many more things did they do which brought down **the
wrath of God** upon them. . . . (Mosiah 7:28)*

*Ye are laying plans to pervert the ways of the righteous,
and to bring down **the wrath of God** upon your heads, even
to the utter destruction of this people. (Alma 10:18)*

The Book of Mormon is equally clear on other attributes of God such as his omnipotence and omniscience:

*But behold, hearken ye unto me, and know that by the
help of the **all-powerful Creator** of heaven and earth I can
tell you your thoughts . . . (Jacob 2:5)*

*And now, Zerahemna, I command you, in the name of
that all-powerful God who has strengthened our arm. . .
. (Alma 44:5)*

*O how great the holiness of our God! **For he knoweth
all things, and there is not anything save he knows it.** (II
Nephi 9:20)*

*And Ammon said: Yea, and he looketh down upon all
the children of men; and **he knows all the thoughts and
intentions of the heart.** . . (Alma 18:32)*

*. . . and my joy is carried away, even unto boasting in
my God; **for he has all power, all wisdom, and all under-
standing; he comprehendeth all things.** . . . (Alma 26:35)*

The Justice of God

A sometimes problematic attribute of God is His justice. Most people like to think of God as merciful, kind, forgiving, long-suffering, gracious, and loving; and of a certainty He is. There are times, however, in individuals' lives when not even repentance can check the consequences that will fall upon them for sinning

against the commandments of the Almighty. Breaking the commandments of the Lord carries its own consequences, especially after one has made a covenant with Him. God metes out justice with divine equity. He does not judge by appearance, as human beings often do, but according to the intents and purposes of the heart.

We may ask: “If we repent of our sins, why should we suffer any consequences? God’s mercy should erase the offense.” The scriptures do not tell us the reason why, but they do tell us without any uncertainty that God’s justice is a reality.

Cain killed his brother Abel; and for this crime, the Lord marked him so that everyone would know he was a murderer. One wonders whether Cain repented of this heinous crime — or how often.

During Joshua’s leadership, Israel was warring against the city of Ai with the Lord’s strict instructions to destroy everything or consecrate it to Him. Nothing was to become private spoil. Because someone violated this injunction, the battle turned against them. Finally, Joshua ordered a search, and the culprit, Achan, was found. He confessed his sin; he had taken a Babylonian garment, a wedge of gold, and two hundred shekels of silver. Even though the scriptures imply that Achan repented, he was killed along with his entire, presumably innocent family.

David committed adultery and murder; and though he repented in sackcloth and ashes, the prophet Nathan told him that “the sword would never depart from his house,” his child by Bathsheba would die, and his wives would be taken from him and given to his neighbors (II Samuel 12:1-14).

Another time, David had a census taken of his armed forces, which thing displeased the Lord. The prophet Gad told David that, because he had sinned, he was to suffer one of three punishments: seven years of famine, three months of fleeing before a pursuing enemy, or three days of pestilence. Although David repented and threw himself on the mercies of God, the justice of the Lord fell upon him and Israel. In the pestilence, seventy thousand people died (II Samuel 24:11-15).

Why didn’t the Lord withhold his punishment at the repentance of David? Only one conclusion can be arrived at: sin always

has its consequences. Paul the Apostle says, “Be ye not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, so shall he also reap” (Galatians 6:7). In dealing with the quandary, the Book of Mormon contains excellent insights on God’s mercy and His justice:

... according to justice, the plan of redemption could not be brought about, only on conditions of repentance of men in this probationary state, yea, this preparatory state; for except it were for these conditions, mercy should not take effect except it should destroy the work of justice. Now the work of justice could not be destroyed; if so, God would cease to be God.

... But God ceaseth not to be God, and mercy claimeth the penitent, and mercy cometh because of the atonement; and the atonement bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead; and the resurrection of the dead bringeth back men into the presence of God; and thus they are restored into his presence, to be judged according to their works, according to the law and justice.

For behold, justice exerciseth all his demands, and also mercy claimeth all which is her own; and thus, none but the truly penitent are saved.

What, do ye suppose that mercy can rob justice? I say unto you, Nay; not one whit, if so, God would cease to be God (Alma 42: 13, 24-25).

We may therefore conclude that, while mercy has claim over the repentant person, the justice of God is so absolute that the sinner must always pay a price for transgressing against the Lord. Furthermore, the judgments of the Lord sometimes serve the purposes of correction and discipline, even if no punishment is merited (or intended): “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth” (Hebrews 12:6). God does not dispense His justice randomly or indiscriminately but according to the measure of sin committed. As good works are blessed exceedingly, so too are sins and transgressions punished by the Divine “Weight Master” who holds the scales of equal justice in His hands.

The Divinity of Jesus Christ

The Book of Mormon is replete with testimonies of the divinity of Jesus Christ and His virgin birth, Messianic mission, sufferings, atonement, crucifixion, and resurrection.

Nephi, in his vision, was permitted to see—among other things—Mary, a virgin (cf. Mosiah 3:8, 15; Alma 7:10), who gave birth to Jesus Christ, and His mission, sufferings, crucifixion, and apostles. This vision, recorded in I Nephi 11:4-34, enabled Nephi to see the life of Christ in a beautiful sequential manner:

And it came to pass that I saw the heavens open; and an angel came down and stood before me; and he said unto me: Nephi, what beholdest thou?

And I said unto him: A virgin, most beautiful and fair above all other virgins.

And he said unto me: Knowest thou the condescension of God?

And I said unto him: I know that he loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things.

And he said unto me: Behold the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God

And it came to pass that I beheld that she was carried away in the Spirit; and after she had been carried away in the Spirit for the space of a time the angel spake unto me, saying: Look!

And I looked and beheld the virgin again, bearing a child in her arms.

And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father! Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw?

And I answered him, saying: Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things.

And he spake unto me saying: Yea, and the most joyous to the soul.

And after he had said these words, he said unto me: Look! And I looked, and I beheld the Son of God going

forth among the children of men; and I saw many fall down at his feet and worship him.

And it came to pass that I beheld that the rod of iron, which my father had seen, was the word of God, which led to the fountain of living waters, or to the tree of life; which waters are a representation of the love of God; and I also beheld that the tree of life was s representation of the love of God.

And the angel said unto me again: Look and behold the condescension of God.

And I looked and beheld the Redeemer of the world, of whom my father had spoken; and I also beheld the prophet who should prepare the way before him. And the Lamb of God went forth and was baptized of him; and after he was baptized, I beheld the heavens open, and the Holy Ghost come down out of heaven and abide upon him in the form of a dove.

And I beheld that he went forth ministering among the people, in power and great glory; and the multitudes were gathered together to hear him; and I beheld that they cast him out from among them.

And I also beheld twelve others following him. And it came to pass that they were carried away in the Spirit from before my face, and I saw them not.

And it came to pass that the angel spoke unto me again, saying: Look! And I looked, and I beheld the heavens open again, and I saw angels descending upon the children of men; and they did minister unto them.

And he spake unto me again, saying: Look! And I looked, and beheld the Lamb of God going forth among the children of men. And I beheld multitudes of people who were sick, and who were afflicted with all manner of diseases, and with devils and unclean spirits; and the angel spake and showed all these things unto me. And they were healed by the power of the Lamb of God; and the devils and the unclean spirits were cast out.

And it came to pass that the angel spake unto me again, saying: Look! And I looked and beheld the Lamb of God,

that he was taken by the people; yea, the Son of the everlasting God was judged of the world; and I saw and bear record.

And I, Nephi, saw that he was lifted up upon the cross and slain for the sins of the world.

And after he was slain I saw the multitudes of the earth, that they were gathered together to fight against the apostles of the Lamb; for thus were the twelve called by the angel of the Lord...

This scripture covers almost the entire biography of Jesus Christ—from His virgin birth to His resurrection. Many other Book of Mormon prophets bore witness about Jesus Christ before His birth and concerning His brief life on earth. From the book of I Nephi to Moroni, Jesus Christ was expounded and the people were taught to believe in Him, to keep His commandments, and to endure to the end for the reward of eternal salvation. These prophets taught that He was the Redeemer, the giver of life eternal, and that in His atonement humankind could be saved.

State of the Soul after Death

Some of the most theologically profound statements on the redemptive mission of the Savior and the resurrection of the just occur in the teachings of Alma the Elder. Addressing a congregation of those about to be baptized, he instructed them that their baptisms meant that “ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life” (Mosiah 18:9). Alma had learned about the Messianic mission of Jesus Christ from the prophet Abinadi, who preached of God “coming down to earth and taking upon Himself flesh, being called the Son of God because of the flesh” (Mosiah 15). Jesus’ atoning sacrifice would take away the sins of the world, thus making the promise viable that those who took upon them His name could become “redeemed of God.”

Alma knew about the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the resurrection of the dead. (Further eschatological mysteries were revealed to his son, Alma the Younger, concerning the state of the soul between death and the resurrection.) Alma the Elder also

knew by revelation that there would be more than one resurrection and proceeded to quote the words of Jesus Christ which he had received: “And it shall come to pass that when the second trump shall sound then shall they that never knew me come forth and shall stand before me” (Mosiah 26:25).

Neither Alma nor his son speaks about a resurrection after the thousand years (Millennium), as John the Apostle does (Revelation 20). When Alma spoke to the people gathered around the Waters of Mormon, he used the phrase, “first resurrection” with assurance. Was Alma speaking of the same “first resurrection” which Alma the Younger explains so thoroughly years later (Alma 40)? Here it is clear that the “first resurrection” is of all those from Adam down to Christ. Was this also the meaning of Alma the Elder or was he alluding to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, not having the knowledge which would be given to his son? It appears obvious however, that Alma was rehearsing the doctrine of the “first resurrection” as Abinadi had presented it (Mosiah 15:20-24).

Alma the Younger received—or at least expounded—the more detailed revelation that there would be two important resurrections. The initial “first resurrection” would be for all who had lived from Adam to Christ; the next “first resurrection” would be of those who had lived from the time of Christ to the end of the world. Since the Book of Mormon does not say that Alma the Younger knew about the Apostle John’s prediction of a “First Resurrection,” he—justifiably so—referred to the resurrection of all the righteous from Adam to Christ as their first resurrection. Conversely, John the Revelator, not knowing about Alma’s prediction, called the resurrection of all the righteous, the First Resurrection. It is my assumption that John included all the righteous from Adam to the end of the world.

His sermon, preserved in Alma 40, is a singular and clear description of post-mortal existence and one of the great theological contributions of the Book of Mormon. It speaks particularly of paradise, the resurrection, the state of the soul between death and the resurrection, the condition of the righteous after they die, and the final status of the wicked. This revelation came to the prophet Alma, and he here explains it to his son:

Now my son, here is somewhat more I would say unto thee; for I perceive that thy mind is worried concerning the resurrection of the dead.

Behold, I say unto you, that 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.

Behold, he bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead. But behold, my son, the resurrection is not yet. Now, I unfold unto you a mystery; nevertheless, there are many mysteries which are kept, that no one knoweth them save God himself. But I show unto you one thing which I have inquired diligently of God that I might know—that is concerning the resurrection.

Behold, there is a time appointed that all shall come forth from the dead. Now when this time cometh no one knows; but God knoweth the time which is appointed.

Now, whether there shall be one time, or a second time, or a third time, that men shall come forth from the dead, it mattereth not, for God knoweth all these things; and it sufficeth me to know that this is the case—that all shall rise from the dead.

Now there must needs be a space betwixt the time of death and the time of the resurrection.

And now I would inquire what becometh of the souls of men from this time of death to the time appointed for the resurrection?

Now whether there is more than one time appointed for men to rise it mattereth not; for all do not die at once, and this mattereth not; all is as one day with God, and time only is measured unto men.

Therefore, there is a time appointed unto men that they shall rise from the dead; and there is a space between the time of death and the resurrection. And now, concerning this space of time, what becometh of the souls of men is the thing which I have inquired diligently of the Lord to know; and this is the thing of which I do know.

And when the time cometh when all shall rise, then

shall they know that God knoweth all the times which are appointed unto man.

Now, concerning the state of the soul between death and the resurrection—Behold it has been made known unto me by an angel, that the spirits of all men, as soon as they are departed from this mortal body, yea, the spirits of all men, whether they be good or evil, are taken home to that God who gave them life.

And then shall it come to pass, that the spirits of those who are righteous are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise, a state of rest, a state of peace, where they shall rest from all their troubles and from all care, and sorrow.

And then it shall come to pass, that 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; therefore the spirit of the devil did enter into them, and take possession of their house—and these shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, and this because of their own iniquity, being led by the will of the devil.

Now this is the state of the souls of the wicked, yea, in darkness, and a state of awful, fearful looking for the fiery indignation of the wrath of God upon them; thus they remain in this state, as well as the righteous in paradise, until the time of their resurrection.

Now, there are some that have understood that this state of happiness and this state of misery of the soul, before the resurrection, was a first resurrection. Yea, I admit it may be termed a resurrection, the raising of the spirit or the soul and their consignment to happiness or misery, according to the words which have been spoken.

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.

Now, we do not suppose that this first resurrection,

which is spoken of in this manner, can be the resurrection of the souls and their consignation to happiness or misery. Ye cannot 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.

Now, whether the souls and the bodies of those of whom has been spoken shall all be reunited at once, the wicked as well as the righteous, I do not say; let it suffice, that I say that they all come forth; or in other words, their resurrection cometh to pass before the resurrection of those who die after the resurrection of Christ.

Now, my son, I do not say that their resurrection cometh at the resurrection of Christ; but behold, I give it as my opinion, that the souls and the bodies are reunited, of the righteous, at the resurrection of Christ, and his Ascension into heaven.

But whether it be at his resurrection or after, I do not say; but this much I say, that there is a space between death and the resurrection of the body, and a state of the soul in happiness or misery until the 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.

Yea, this bringeth about the restoration of those things which has been spoken by the mouths of the prophets.

The soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul; yea, every limb and joint shall be restored to its body; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost; but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame.

And now, my son, this is the restoration of which has been spoken by the mouths of the prophets—

And then shall the righteous shine forth in the kingdom of God.

But behold, an awful death cometh upon the wicked; for they die as to things pertaining to things of righteousness; for they are unclean, and no unclean thing can inherit the kingdom of God; but they are cast out, and

consigned to partake of the fruits of their labors or their works, which have been evil; and they drink the dregs of a bitter cup (Alma 40).

No one can deny that these teachings about the resurrection are “plain and precious.” Although the Bible speaks of the resurrection of Christ and also promises human resurrection, the status of the soul between death and the resurrection is unclear. The Book of Mormon, in contrast, gives an explicit and unambiguous view of the same subject.

Baptism

It is understood by reading the Bible that “baptism” is essential to becoming a member of the Church, and it also is essential to salvation as an ordinance necessary for the remission of sins. However, one does not find in the Bible the manner in which those endowed with priesthood authority should baptize. Many years following the apostolic days, baptism was changed to sprinkling and pouring; in time, infant or child baptism was instituted.

The Book of Mormon gives a clear and eloquent description of the manner and mode of baptism in III Nephi 11:23-26:

Verily I say unto you, that whoso repenteth of his sins through your words and desireth to be baptized in my name, on this wise shall ye baptize them—Behold, ye shall go down and stand in the water, and in my name shall ye baptize them.

And now behold, these are the words which ye shall say, calling them by name, saying:

Having authority given me of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen

And then shall ye immerse them in the water, and come forth again out of the water.

One of Nephi’s most illuminating prophecies explains why Christ would be baptized. According to the Bible, John the Baptist

hesitated to baptize Him, until Jesus answered, “Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15). Nowhere does the Bible explain clearly why the sinless Jesus had to be baptized. The most ordinary answer, that Christ was baptized to set an example is not sufficiently compelling. But the Book of Mormon gives a wonderful and thoroughly satisfactory explanation:

And now, if the Lamb of God, he being holy, should have need to be baptized by water, to fulfill all righteousness, O then, how much more need have we, being unholy, to be baptized, yea, even by water.

And now, I would ask of you, my beloved brethren, wherein the Lamb of God did fulfill all righteousness in being baptized by water?

*Know ye not that he was holy? **But not withstanding that he being holy, he showeth unto the children of men that, according to the flesh he humbleth himself before the Father, and witnesseth unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments.***

Wherefore, after he was baptized with water the Holy Ghost descended upon him in the form of a dove.

And again, it showeth unto the children of men the straightness of the path, and the narrowness of the gate, by which they should enter, he having set the example before them. (II Nephi 31:5-9)

The reason for Jesus’s baptism is now clearly unfolded. According to this wonderful explanation, baptism has many components, including humbling oneself to the will of God, remission of sins, witnessing to the Father that one will be obedient in keeping His commandments, and it will show everyone the “narrow gate” essential to eternal salvation.

Other Teachings

The Book of Mormon, in a “plain and precious” manner further explains why infant baptism is forbidden (Moroni 8:4-15),

how the Holy Ghost is bestowed (III Nephi 12:1; Moroni 2:1-3), and that wine—not fruit juice—should be used in the sacrament services (II Nephi 18:1-11). It thus clarifies the possibly ambiguous biblical phrase, “fruit of the vine” (Matt. 26:29), which some have interpreted to mean fruit juice.

The Book of Mormon also contains many prophecies about:¹⁵³

1. The scattering and gathering of the House of Israel: I Nephi 1, 2; II Nephi 25:14-18; I Nephi 10:3, 12-14, III Nephi 5:23-26; I Nephi 13:14, 15; III Nephi 16:1-5; Jacob 5-6; III Nephi 20:21, 22, 27, 29-46; II Nephi 6:8, 11; III Nephi 21:1-7, 14-29; II Nephi 10:5-9; and Mormon 5:5:9, 14-24.
2. The role of the Gentiles: I Nephi 14:14; II Nephi 29:1; I Nephi 22:8, 9; III Nephi 16:4; I Nephi 13:32-34; III Nephi 21:2-6; II Nephi 27:26; and III Nephi 21:22.
3. What the name of Christ’s church should be: III Nephi 27:2-8.
4. A material New Jerusalem: III Nephi 20.
5. The role of a “choice seer”: II Nephi 3:6-19
6. Blessings on the seed of Joseph, or Native American Indians.

¹⁵³ For detailed description and analysis, see V. James Loyalvo, *It Is Written: Truth Shall Spring out of the Earth* (Fresno: Mid-Cal Publishers, 1980) and *A Dissertation on the Faith and Doctrine of The Church of Jesus Christ* (Detroit: The Church of Jesus Christ Print House, 1986).

Chapter 12

MAJOR THEOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

Joseph Smith once said that the Book of Mormon was the “most correct book” of any in the world.¹⁵⁴ Critics have challenged this statement with the observation that the Book of Mormon was (and is) full of errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar. What the critics fail to understand is that being the “most correct book” does not refer to its literary perfection but to the correctness of its contents, especially when it comes to the teachings of Christ and His gospel.

The New Testament is filled with the teachings of Christ, and no one can gainsay that His gospel is written within its pages. But because of the many translations and revisions that it has undergone, some plain and precious things have been either altered or changed. On the other hand, the Book of Mormon has gone through only one translation; and although there have been changes in grammar, spelling, and punctuation, the contents have not been altered. That fact alone makes its theological contributions of great import for all Christendom.

The Book of Mormon is filled with prophecies concerning the

¹⁵⁴ Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 7 vols., 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1961), 4:4.

advent of Jesus Christ. Divine revelations about Jesus Christ and the redemption that came through Him begin with the founding patriarch, Lehi, and his son Nephi, then continue to the last man of God in the Book of Mormon. In what we may term the “Old Testament” of the Book of Mormon (I Nephi to III Nephi chapter 11), we read that many believed in Jesus Christ although He was not yet born. They kept the law of Moses, and lived as though Christ had already been born.

Christ’s Two Natures

Book of Mormon prophets understood about the two natures of Christ—the human and the divine contained in one person. His divine nature was imbued with love, compassion, forgiveness; His divine nature healed the sick, raised the dead, and redeemed humankind on the cross. His divine nature is incapable of weariness, physical feebleness, temptation, suffering, or death; but because of the union with His human nature, He suffered as a human being. The human nature in Him wept, was weary, suffered, and died. Truly Isaiah said, “He is despised and rejected of men: a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3). Because of his human nature, he shared in the same emotions, instincts, and potential range of behaviors as any human being: hunger, weariness, compassion, anger, sorrow unto groaning and tears, and prayer (Matthew 4:2; Matthew 5:24; Matthew 14:28; John 4:6; John 11:33, 35; John 19:28; Mark 3:5).

Christ was subject to the laws of human development: He grew and waxed strong in the Spirit, asked questions, grew in wisdom and stature, learned obedience, suffered, was tempted, and was made perfect through sufferings (Luke 3:40, 46-49, 52; Hebrews 2:10, 18; 5:8). Although Christ had a human nature, He was sinless. E. H. Bancroft, a Christian theologian, briefly sums up his explanation of the nature of Christ’s sinlessness:

Free, both from hereditary depravity, and from actual sin; as is shown by His never offering sacrifices, never praying for forgiveness, teaching that all but He needed

the new birth, challenging all to convict Him of sin.

Jesus frequently went up to the Temple, but He never offered sacrifice. He prayed, "Father forgive them" (Luke 23:34); but He never prayed, "Father, forgive me." He said, "Ye must be born anew" (John 3:7), but the words indicated that He had no such need.¹⁵⁵

Of His divine nature, the scriptures are replete with evidences: He was born of the Virgin Mary, conceived by the Holy Spirit. He is God incarnate (Mosiah 15). In the prologue of John's Gospel it is written: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1:1). He is associated in equality with the Father (Mosiah 15:4, 5; II Nephi 31:21; Alma 11:44). Equality with God is expressed by the apostle Paul's statement: "[He], being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God" (Philippians 2:6).

Book of Mormon prophets bore stirring witness to the terrible things that Christ would suffer as a human being. Nephi wrote, "And it came to pass that the angel spake unto me again, saying, Look! And I looked and beheld the Lamb of God, that he was taken by the people; yea, the Son of the everlasting God was judged of the world; and I saw and bear record" (I Nephi 11:32).

Jacob, the brother of Nephi spoke of the anguish and pain Jesus would undergo in the flesh: ". . . for it behooveth the great Creator that he suffereth himself to become subject unto man in the flesh, and die for all men, that all men might become subject unto him . . . he suffereth the pains of all men, yea, the pains of every living creature, both men, women, and children, who belongeth to the family of Adam" (II Nephi 9:5, 21). The human nature of Christ bore this suffering, for the plan of salvation required that He be slain for the sins of the world. The human nature in Him asked God to "take this cup from me" in the Garden of Gethsemane, for, as King Benjamin said, ". . . behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and abominations of his people" (Mosiah 3:7). But the divine nature in Him said, "Not my will, but thine be done"

¹⁵⁵ Emery H. Bancroft, *Christian Theology* (Hayward, California: J. F. May Press, 1949), 53.

(Luke 22:42 Matthew 26"39; Mark 14:36). On the cross, the human nature in Him cried out, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Luke 15:34) But the divine nature in Him said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." The two natures are vitally and inseparably united so that He is both God and man. The prophet Abinadi said: ". . . And because he dwelleth in the flesh he shall be called the Son of God, an having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son . . . and thus the flesh becoming subject to the Spirit, or the Son to the Father, being one God . . . " (Mosiah 15:1-5).

Human beings are subject to the infirmities of the flesh and the emotions that are associated with it. But when one is "born again of the water and of the spirit" (John 3:1-7), thus becoming a child of God, a portion of the divine nature of Jesus Christ, through receiving the Holy Spirit, is a gift conferred by the Almighty. Hence the attributes of the Lord are inherited by the believer; as it is written: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12). That divine portion, the gift of the Holy Spirit, changes one from a lion into a lamb, and a raven into a dove.

The Scriptural View of Saints

Webster's dictionary describes saints as "persons eminent for their piety and virtue; one of the blessed in heaven." The word "saints" is used throughout the Bible to indicate the people of God in contrast to those who are termed sinners. They occupy a unique place in the Lord's earthly institution, or church; especially set apart to be called saints are those who have made a covenant with Him to serve Him all the days of their lives. David the Psalmist says, "Gather my saints unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice" (Psalms 50:5).

In the Old Testament dispensation, they made covenants with God through sacrificing animals and sprinkling their blood. From the time of Christ, covenants are made through the sacrifices of one's heart, through the promise to put away the "old man" and walk in newness of mind by exercise of the principles of faith and repentance, and through the ordinance of baptism. There is no

need for animal sacrifices or the sprinkling of blood. Christ was the last blood sacrifice; on Calvary's cross, His blood was shed for the redemption of the human family.

The Bible is replete with references to "saints": Deuteronomy 33:2; I Samuel 2:9; Psalms 30:4; Psalms 37:28; Psalms 89:5-7; Proverbs 2:8; Hosea 11:12; Matthew 27:52; Acts 26:10; Romans 1:7; Romans 16:15; Ephesians 4:12; I Corinthians 6:2; II Corinthians 9:1; Colossians 1:28; and Jude 3:14.

The Book of Mormon also contains an important passage on saints. Nephi, the son of Lehi, saw in his vision, the persecution of the saints of God and their subsequent victory:

And the angel said unto me: Behold the foundation of a church which is most abominable above all other churches, which slayeth the saints of God, yea, and tortureth them and bindeth them down, and yoketh them with a yoke of iron, and bringeth them down into captivity.

And also for the praise of the world do they destroy the saints of God, and bring them down into captivity. (I Nephi 13:5, 9)

And it came to pass that I beheld the church of the Lamb of God, and its numbers were few, because of the wickedness and abominations of the whore who sat upon many waters; nevertheless, I beheld that the church of the Lamb, who were the saints of God, were also upon all the face of the earth; and their dominions upon the face of the earth were small, because of the wickedness of the great whore whom I saw.

And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld the power of the Lamb of God, that it descended upon the saints of the church of the Lamb, and upon the covenant people of the Lord, who were scattered upon all the face of the earth; and they were armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory. (I Nephi 14:12,14)

In addition to these extended passages, there are other references as well:

1. Saints shall inherit kingdom of God (II Nephi 9:18; Moroni 8:26).

2. The cry of the blood of the Saints ascends to God against the wicked (II Nephi 26:3; 28:10; Mormon 8:27).
3. Many graves shall be opened and saints shall appear (Helaman 14:25; III Nephi 23:9-13).
4. The Lord will avenge the blood of the saints (Ether 8:23).
5. All saints shall dwell with God (Moroni 8:26).

Nephi, interpreting a portion of his father's vision to his brothers Laman and Lemuel, explained that the "river of water" represented filthiness: "And I said unto them that it was an awful gulf which separated the wicked from the tree of life, and also from the saints of God" (I Nephi 15:28).

King Benjamin, in his remarkable address to his people, spoke of many theological matters, including among them a stirring description of the characteristics of a "saint":

For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the a Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seethe fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father (Mosiah 3:19).

Jacob, a younger brother of Nephi, in a sermon to the people of Nephi contrasted the glorious blessings of the people of God—the saints—with the future state of the wicked:

But, behold, the righteous, the saints of the Holy One of Israel, they who have believed in the Holy One of Israel, they who have endured the crosses of the world, and despised the shame of it, they shall inherit the kingdom of God, which was prepared for them from the foundation of the world, and their joy shall be full forever.

O the greatness of the mercy of our God, the Holy One of Israel! For he delivereth his saints from that awful

monster the devil, and death, and hell, and that lake of fire and brimstone, which is endless torment. (II Nephi 9:18-19)

Jacob then reminded his people that God does not deal with the proud, the rich, and the learned, who are puffed up in their own wisdom and riches; and unless they repent and bow in humility before the Almighty, He will not “open unto them” or reveal Himself to them. He continues, “But the things of the wise and the prudent shall be hid from them forever—yea, that happiness which is prepared for the saints” (II Nephi 9:43).

Nephi expands on Jacob’s teachings concerning the dire consequences that shall befall the wicked because of their persecution of the people of God. His words were fulfilled after the advent of Jesus Christ. He says:

And after the Messiah shall come there shall be signs given unto my people of his birth, and also of his death and resurrection; and great and terrible shall that day be unto the wicked, for they shall perish; and they perish because they cast out the prophets, and the saints, and stone them, and slay them; wherefore the cry of the blood of the saints shall ascend up to God from the ground against them.

And they that kill the prophets, and the saints, the depths of the earth shall swallow them up, saith the Lord of Hosts; and mountains shall cover them, and whirlwinds shall carry them away, and buildings shall fall upon them and crush them to pieces and grind them to powder (II Nephi 26:3, 5).

And the blood of the saints shall cry from the ground against them (II Nephi 28:10).

It is interesting to note that neither Nephi nor Jacob was perplexed or passive concerning the meaning of the word “saint.” They knew from their acquaintance with the scriptures and from tradition that those who covenanted with the Lord and kept His commandments were referred to as “saints.” Often Lehi spoke to his family regarding the administering of God’s love upon those

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who served Him in righteousness, and the great and bountiful happiness it wrought in them. Some of his children listened and obeyed, while others rebelled. Those who hearkened to his words relayed them to their own children. To some such teachings brought understanding and subsequent obedience. Such a one was Enos, the son of Jacob.

The Book of Mormon does not say whether Enos was an initially rebellious or indifferent son; it only says that he heard his father speak often about the Lord and about the exhilarating effects His Spirit brought in their lives. His thrilling and life-changing experience came when he was an adult:

And I will tell you of the wrestle which I had before God, before I received a remission of my sins. Behold, I went to hunt beasts of the forests; and the words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart (Enos 1:2-3).

This phrase, “the joy of the saints,” is found only in the book of Enos. Since the restoration of the gospel, this phrase has been used often by many of the saints. But what did Enos mean by it? What had Jacob, his father, taught him about experiencing the joy of the saints? Whatever it was, Enos prayed that he might feel this kind of joy. It is remarkable that the first words that the Lord spoke to Enos were: “Thy sins are forgiven, and thou shalt be blessed.” Was the knowledge that his sins were forgiven the joy he was seeking? While realizing that one’s sins are forgiven is a thrill and a joy unspeakable, surely the “joy of the saints” also includes these powerful truths:

1. Knowing that Jesus is the Lord!
2. Knowing that in His Atonement, the sins of the world are taken away.
3. Knowing that in His resurrection, the saints will also rise from the dead.
4. Knowing that in His ascension, the saints will also ascend to heaven.
5. Knowing that there is a mansion awaiting the saints in the

- House of the Father, prepared by Jesus Christ.
6. Knowing that when one falls, Jesus is there to pick him or her up.
 7. Knowing that when one fails, Jesus is there to help.
 8. Knowing that when one errs, Jesus is ready to forgive.
 9. Knowing that when one sorrows, Jesus can turn it into happiness.
 10. Knowing that when one weeps, Jesus can turn the tears to laughter.
 11. Knowing that when one mourns, Jesus is there to comfort.
 12. Knowing that when one is sick, Jesus can heal.
 13. Knowing that when a loved one is gone, Jesus can assuage the soul.
 14. Knowing that when one is in need, Jesus can provide what one lacks.

The word “saints” was not new to those who had come from Jerusalem; it was a household word, meaning “righteous and holy people.” So when God speaks of “my saints” he refers to a people who have covenanted to serve Him in spirit and in truth all the days of their lives. A glorious and overwhelming feeling arises in the breast of followers of the Almighty God and Jesus Christ when they realize the honor and privilege of having such a beautiful title given to them as “saints”!

Nor was this Book of Mormon understanding limited to one time period. Long after the days of Nephi, prophets in the Book of Mormon were told of blessings which would be bestowed upon those who would walk in righteousness and keep the covenant they made with the Lord. Samuel, the Lamanite, a prophet of God predicted the birth, death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He also prophesied concerning the resurrection of the many who would arise at the resurrection of our Lord. He said, “And many graves shall be opened, and shall yield up many of their dead; and many saints shall appear unto many” (Helaman 14:25). Samuel used the word “saints” with a keen knowledge of what it meant, and with a certainty beyond a shadow of a doubt.

At the crucifixion of our Lord, Book of Mormon lands in the Western Hemisphere were shaken with earthquakes, tempests,

whirlwinds, floods, and fires. The destruction was indescribable; cities were torn asunder, burned to the ground, buried, and/or inundated with floods. Nature itself was revolting against the cruel death of Christ and the wickedness among the people. In the midst of all this destruction, the voice of Jesus Christ was heard among all the inhabitants upon the face of this land, telling them that this devastation was due to the iniquities among them. One verse in particular pinpoints the reason for God's wrath upon them: "And behold, that great city Moronihah have I covered with earth, and the inhabitants thereof, to hide their iniquities and their abominations from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints shall not come any more unto me against them" (III Nephi 9:5). Here, the Lord Himself refers to His people (those who have covenanted with Him) as "saints." That phrase, "blood of the prophets and the saints" recurs several times in the same chapter (see verses 7-9, 11).

Only the more righteous among the people were spared the awesome destruction which had taken place; and they were left in no doubt about why: "And it was the more righteous part of the people who were saved, and it was they who received the prophets and stoned them not; and it was they who had not shed the blood of the saints, who were spared" (III Nephi 10:12). It is altogether a fact that God will not tolerate for very long the wickedness and iniquities of people, especially when their venom is released against those who have made a covenant to love and serve Him.

At the very end of the Book of Mormon record of the Nephites, after the carnage on Cumorah's hill had terminated the Nephites as a civilization and as a people, and after millions were slain, Moroni, the son of Mormon, prophesies against whoever would fight or persecute the righteous people of the Lord. He writes, "Search the prophecies of Isaiah. Behold, I cannot write them. Yea, behold, I say unto you, that those saints who have gone before me, who have possessed this land, shall cry, yea, even from the dust will they cry unto the Lord; and as the Lord liveth he will remember the covenant which he hath made with them" (Mormon 8:23).

Moroni, like the prophets before him, understood the word "saint" and what it implied. He also understood that the wrath and

vengeance of God would befall those who seek to destroy His saints. He continued: “And it shall come in a day when the blood of saints shall cry unto the Lord, because of the secret combinations and the works of darkness... Behold the sword of vengeance hangeth over you; and avengeth the blood of the saints upon you, for he will not suffer their cries any longer” (Mormon 8: 27, 41; see also Ether 8:22).

“And behold, these things which we have desired concerning our brethren,” Moroni continues, “yea, even their restoration to the knowledge of Christ, are according to the prayers of all the saints who have dwelt in the land” (Mormon 9:36). What a wonderful thing it is to know that the prayers of saints who have gone to their reward in heaven can be of great value for future generations! Prayers of the righteous people of the Lord can be answered not only in—and for—the present, but are held in store by God for future blessings upon those for whom they were intended.

In short, a saint is a person who is consecrated to God, covenanting with Him to be His servant and a servant to His people. A saint is filled with piety, compassion, love, and the fear of the Lord, one who denounces iniquity and abhors sin of every form, one who is set apart by the Lord because of his or her righteous living. Paul the apostle, in writing to the churches, often used the phrase, “called to be saints” (Romans 1:7; I Corinthians 1:2). If people are “called to be saints,” it means that they are “set apart” by God to be examples of righteousness and a light to the world. Therefore, it behooves those who are “called to be saints” to walk circumspectly before the Lord, knowing that He will expect an accounting from them if they deviate from their service to him.

The Identity of Christians

The Bible says that the “disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (Acts 11: 26). It has been said by some that the term Christian was a derogatory word invented by the enemies of Christ and that it was used as an inflammatory remark hurled at the followers of Jesus Christ. There is no evidence whatsoever that this was the case.

Paul's words do not in the slightest imply that the Antiochians coined this term as an insult to the disciples of Christ. Nor is there any evidence whatsoever that the Jews invented the term because they did not admit that Jesus was the Christ, or Messiah. But there is evidence that the term Christian was adopted by friend and foe alike to mean "followers of Christ." In A.D. 64, a certain Tacitus mentions that the name was in use among the common people in Rome. It is also said that "the inclusion of numerous Gentiles within the Church, without necessarily becoming Jews, and the preaching of Jesus as one whose authority was superior to that of Moses, gave complete justification to those who saw in Christianity a new religion."¹⁵⁶

Another evidence that "Christian" was not coined as a derogatory term is amplified when Paul was witnessing before King Festus and Agrippa. When the apostle asked Agrippa whether he believed in the prophets, the reply was, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28). If the term had been one of derision, Agrippa would have used it sneeringly. But there is not an iota of smirking or jeering in the king's response.

The Apostle Peter in his epistle writes, "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet, if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf" (I Peter 4: 15-16). If the term Christian really were a demeaning slogan or an insulting name, it seems unlikely that Peter would have commended it as an ideal of conduct. Nowhere in the New Testament can anyone find where the name Christian is used other than referring to the followers of Jesus Christ.

In the Book of Mormon, "Christian" is likewise an appellation of pride and honor. Moroni, the captain of the Nephite army, when recruiting men to fight against the enemy, rent his cloak and made it into a makeshift flag. Then he

prayed mightily unto his God for the blessings of liberty to rest upon his brethren, so long as there should a band of Christians remain to possess the land.

¹⁵⁶ J. R. Dummelow, *A Commentary on The Holy Bible* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1958), 833.

For thus were all the true believers of Christ, who belonged to the church of God, called by those who did not belong to the church.

And those who did belong to the church were faithful; yea, all those who were true believers in Christ took upon them, gladly, the name of Christ, or Christians as they were called, because of their belief in Christ who should come.

And therefore, at this time, Moroni prayed that the cause of the Christians, and the freedom of the land might be favored. (Alma 46:12-16)

And thus he was preparing to support their liberty, their lands, their wives, and their children, and their peace, and that they might live unto the Lord their God, and that they might maintain that which was called by their enemies the cause of Christians (Alma 48:10).

It is interesting to note that all the events described above happened before the birth of Jesus Christ. The knowledge of the coming Christ was given to these ancient inhabitants of the Americas by revelation, and they took upon themselves the name of Christ and covenanted with the Lord to serve Him all the days of their lives.

To the early disciples of Jesus Christ, the name “Christian” was a term of honor and respect, separating them from the Jewish sects or other Gentile religions. Polycarp, the Bishop of Smyrna, was martyred in A.D. 167. It is said that he was ordained by John the Revelator and presided over the church in Smyrna for about seventy-four years. Polycarp was a very old man when he met his martyrdom by fire. It is also understood that he was the “angel” of the church of Smyrna addressed by our Lord.¹⁵⁷

When he was arrested and brought before the Proconsul, he was asked to have pity on his own age and deny his Lord. “Swear and I will release you, reproach Christ,” the Proconsul said. Whereupon Polycarp answered, “Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He hath never wronged me, and how can I

¹⁵⁷ Joseph Milner, *The History of the Church of Christ* (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson Publisher, 1839), 75-79.

blaspheme my King who hath saved me?" The Proconsul next commanded Polycarp to swear by the fortune of Caesar. This wonderful old brother replied, "If you still vainly contend to make me swear by the fortune of Caesar, as you speak, affecting an ignorance of my real character, hear me frankly declaring what I am. I am a Christian; and if you desire to learn the Christian doctrine, assign me a day and hear."¹⁵⁸

The words, "I am a Christian" were spoken with dignity and pride. This aged bishop, a saint in word and deed, wore the name of "Christian" as a cloak of honor, knowing that he was a follower of the Christ who was the Redeemer of the world.

Since the Reformation, many churches have arisen whose members bear the name of Christians. The mark of a Christian, whether church or individual, is identified with those who obey the commandments of Jesus Christ and put in effect His doctrine. All churches and individuals have to analyze themselves to see whether the teachings of our Lord are displayed in their lives and communities. If the analysis comes up negative, it is imperative that a complete reorganization take place so that the name "Christian" be worn with reverence and virtue.

Consider therefore the honor and prestige which the names of "saints" and "Christians" imply. Contemplate also the measure of piety that people have to demonstrate to display to the world that they are true disciples of Jesus Christ. The Divine Master said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). This should settle the question of how the people of God should live, and how their works should "shine" in the presence of others, so that all who come in contact with them will depart more spiritually revived for having come under the influence of the truly faithful and dedicated "Christians" and/or "Saints."

The High Priesthood

Of all the theological treasures found in the Book of Mormon, few can compare with Alma's masterful dissertation on the holy

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

calling of the high priesthood after the Order of the Son of God. Throughout this chapter, Alma consistently refers to the “high priesthood,” never to the “priesthood.”

He says that “these priests were ordained after the Order of Jesus Christ, that people might know in what manner to look forward to His Son for redemption.” He continues that those who were ordained in this “holy high priesthood were called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God.” Alma describes the nature and characteristics of those who “took upon themselves the High Priesthood”:

Therefore they were called after this holy order, and 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, exceeding great many, who were made pure and entered into the rest of the Lord their God. (vv. 11-12).

The phrase “high priesthood” does not refer to an office or position to which a person may be elected, but rather to a divine calling or ordination (v. 6). Alma says that this high priesthood is with beginning or end, just as Christ is without beginning of days or end of years (v. 8,9). The phrase “after the order of the Son of God” means that the power and authority of the divine calling into this high priesthood was and is with Christ from eternity to eternity. Hence, being called and ordained with the high priesthood means that one is ordained with divine authority which has no beginning or end. This also means that those consecrated into this holy calling will have this gift for time and eternity. For if the “high priesthood after the Order of the Son of God” is from everlasting to everlasting, that calling for righteous men (or gift to them) will remain forever. Nothing and no one can remove this “high calling” except one’s own transgression and sinning against the commandments of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Eschatology in the Book of Mormon

The doctrine of “last things” (eschatology) was well known to the Book of Mormon prophets. Eschatology deals with important events such as the end of time, the state of the soul between death and the resurrection, the kingdom of God on earth, resurrection, paradise, heaven, hell and the final judgment. The Book of Mormon is replete with this revelatory information. Following is the prophet Jacob’s explanation concerning the end-time:

For as death hath passed upon all men, to fulfill the merciful plan of the great Creator, there must needs be a power of resurrection, and the resurrection must needs come unto man by reason of the fall; and the fall came by reason of transgression; and because man became fallen they were cut off from the presence of the Lord.

Wherefore, it must needs be an infinite atonement—save it should be an infinite atonement this corruption could not put on incorruption. Wherefore, the first judgment which came upon man must needs have remained to an endless duration. And if so, this flesh must have laid down to rot and to crumble to its mother earth, to rise no more.

O the wisdom of God, his mercy and grace! For behold, if the flesh should rise no more our spirits must become subject to that angel who fell from before the presence of the Eternal God, and became the devil, to rise no more.

And our spirits must have become like unto him, and we become devils, angels to a devil, to be put out from the presence of our God, and to remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself; yea, to that being who beguiled our first parents, who transformeth himself nigh unto an angel of light, and stirreth up the children of men unto secret combinations of murder and all manner of secret works of darkness.

O how great the goodness of our God, who prepareth a way for our escape from the grasp of this awful monster.

yea, that monster, death and hell, which I call the death of the body, and also the death of the spirit.

And because of the way of deliverance of our God, the Holy One of Israel, this death, of which I have spoken, which is the temporal, shall deliver up its dead; which death is the grave.

And this death of which I have spoken, which is the spiritual death, shall deliver up its dead; which spiritual death is hell; wherefore, death and hell must deliver up their dead, and hell must deliver up its captive spirits, and the grave must deliver up its captive bodies, and the bodies and the spirits of men will be restored one to the other; and it is by the power of the resurrection of the Holy One of Israel.

O how great the plan of our God! For on the other hand, the paradise of God must deliver up the spirits of the righteous, and the grave deliver up the body of the righteous; and the spirit and the body is restored to itself again, and all men become incorruptible, and immortal, and they are living souls, having a perfect knowledge like unto us in the flesh, save it be that our knowledge shall be perfect.

Wherefore, we shall have a perfect knowledge of all our guilt, and our uncleanness, and our nakedness; and the righteous shall have a perfect knowledge of their enjoyment, and their righteousness, being clothed with purity, yea, even with the robe of righteousness.

And it shall come to pass that when all men shall have passed from this first death unto life, insomuch as they have become immortal, they must appear before the judgment-seat of the Holy One of Israel; and then cometh the judgment, and then must they be judged according to the holy judgments of God.

And assuredly, as the Lord liveth, for the Lord God hath spoken it, and it is his eternal word, which cannot pass away, that they who are righteous shall be righteous still, and they who are filthy shall be filthy still; wherefore, they who are filthy are the devil and his angels; and they shall go away into everlasting fire; prepared for them; and their torment is as a lake of fire and brimstone, whose flame ascendeth up forever and ever and has no end.

O the greatness and the justice of our God! For he executeth all his words, and they have gone forth out of his mouth, and his law must be fulfilled.

But, behold, the righteous, the saints of the Holy One of Israel, they who have endured the crosses of the world, and despised the shame of it, they shall inherit the kingdom of God, which was prepared for them from the foundation of the world, and their joy shall be full forever.

O the greatness of the mercy of our God, the Holy One of Israel! For he delivereth his saints from that awful monster the devil, and death and hell, and that lake of fire and brimstone, which is endless torment.

O how great the holiness of our God! For he knoweth all things, and there is not anything save he knows it.

And he cometh into the world that he may save all men if they will hearken unto his voice; for behold, he suffereth the pains of all men, yea, the pains of every living creature, both men, women, and children, who belong to the family of Adam.

And he suffereth this that the resurrection might pass upon all men, that all might stand before him at the great and judgment day. (II Nephi 9: 6-22)

Amulek answered Zeezrom's questions concerning the end-time by saying,

And he shall come into the world to redeem his people; and he shall take upon him the transgressions of those who believe on his name; and these are they that shall have eternal life, and salvation cometh to none else.

Therefore, the wicked remain as though there had been no redemption made, except it be the loosing of the bands of death; for behold, the day cometh that all shall rise from the dead and stand before God, and be judged according to their works.

Now there is a death which is called a temporal death; and the death of Christ shall loose the bands of this temporal death, that all shall be raised from this temporal death.

The spirit and the body shall be reunited again in its perfect form; both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame, even as we now are at this time; and we shall be brought to stand before God, knowing even as we know now, and have a bright recollection of all our guilt.

Now, this restoration shall come to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, both the wicked and the righteous; and even there shall not so much as a hair of their heads be lost; but everything shall be restored to its perfect frame, as it is now, or in the body, and shall be brought and be arraigned before the bar of Christ the Son, and God the Father, and the Holy Spirit, which is one Eternal God, to be judged according to their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil.

Now, behold, I have spoken unto you concerning the death of the mortal body, and also concerning the resurrection of the mortal body. I say unto you that this mortal body is raised to an immortal body, that is from death, even from the first death unto life, that they can die no more; their spirits uniting with their bodies, never to be divided; thus the whole becoming spiritual and immortal, that they can no more see corruption (Alma 11:40-45).

When Jesus Christ visited the Nephites on this land, He spoke to them concerning Himself, the restoration of the house of Israel, the blessings upon the believing Gentiles, the building of the New Jerusalem, and many more wonderful things that would take place before the end came. He also spoke to them about the end-time, corroborating that which had been given to the prophets in the Old Testament, to His apostles in the New Testament and also to those who had come to this land, including those from the Tower of Babel. Relative to the resurrection and judgment, He said:

And even unto the great and last day, when all people, and all kindreds, and all nations and tongues shall stand before God, to be judged of their works, whether they be good, or whether they be evil.

If they be good, to the resurrection of everlasting life;

and if they be evil, to the resurrection of damnation; being on a parallel, the one on the one hand, and the other on the other hand, according to the mercy, and the justice, and the holiness which is in Christ, who was before the world began. (III Nephi 26:4-5)

According to all the words of Christ and all who prophesied about the resurrection, the dead will not all be raised at the same time nor to the same destiny, nevertheless all the dead shall rise; it will be a universal event. This coincides with the biblical account of two resurrections (Revelation 20:4-5). The Book of Mormon, however, records three resurrections: from Adam to the resurrection of Christ; from Christ's resurrection to the end of the world, when the righteous shall rise; and at the end of the first resurrection, when "the rest of the dead will not rise until the thousand years are finished" (Alma 40; Revelation 20).

The truths contained in the doctrine of the last things are given and understood by divine inspiration. Ignoring these doctrines deprives one of the joy of looking forward to their fulfillment. But believing and hoping in the crowning and glorious consummation of these truths will enrich the spirit and the mind. However, to gain a glimpse of the events of the end-time necessitates a great deal of study, showing oneself approved of God, mixed with fasting and praying so that little by little one becomes adept in "rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15).

One of the great events under the category of last things is the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth. Probably the only organization believing that this "kingdom" will exist in the flesh—in other words, prior to the Millennium (the thousand years with Christ) or first resurrection—is The Church of Jesus Christ (Bickertonites), of which I am a member.

Often, the scriptures which refer to the kingdom of God on earth are placed in the context of the Millennium by well-meaning theologians who forget that there is no blood-life in the Millennium, for the simple reason that a resurrected body has no blood!

In the kingdom of God on earth, "men shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war

anymore” (Isaiah 2: 2-5; see also Hosea 2:18-20; Job 5:22-25; Ezekiel 34:25-26; Isaiah 51:3; Isaiah 65:18-25; Daniel 7:9-14, 22). It is also written that even the natures of the beasts will be changed, and all the world will know about Christ’s kingdom on earth:

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

And the suckling child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’s den.

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 11:6-9)

This passage of scripture can refer only to a literal peaceful condition on earth—the kingdom of God. It is not an allegorical or poetical image. This prophecy is another valid proof that “blood-life” and procreation shall be found in the kingdom of God on earth, and cannot—either by allegory or symbol—be placed in Christ’s reign during the Millennium.

The Book of Mormon is even more specific on this matter. Referring to the end-time, Nephi, the son of Lehi, says:

And the time cometh speedily that the righteous must be led up as calves to the stall, and the Holy One of Israel must reign in dominion, and might, and power, and great glory.

And he gathereth his children from the four quarters of the earth; and he numbereth his sheep, and they know him; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd; and he shall feed his sheep, and in him they shall find pasture.

And because of the righteousness of his people, Satan

has no power; wherefore, he cannot be loosed for the space of many years; for he hath no power over the hearts of the people, for they dwell in righteousness, and the Holy One of Israel reigneth.

And now behold, I, Nephi, say unto you that all these things must come according to the flesh. (1 Nephi 22: 25-27)

The statement, “he cannot be loosed for the space of many years,” does not refer to the Millennium when Satan is bound for a thousand years by God. Nephi explains that Satan is bound because of the righteousness of the people of the Lord. Further, it is clear that all these events shall happen while God’s people are in the mortal state, for he continues: “And now behold, I, Nephi, say unto you that all these things must come according to the flesh. But, behold, all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people shall dwell safely in the Holy One of Israel if it so be that they will repent” (1 Nephi 22:27-28).¹⁵⁹

The Fulness of the Gospel

Although I have searched with patient diligence, I have found the phrase “fulness of the gospel” only in Romans 15:29 in the New Testament. In the Book of Mormon, however, it occurs ten or twelve times. The fulness of the gospel as recorded in the Book of Mormon carries a note of entirety, the sum total of Christ’s teachings. The fulness of the gospel means our Lord’s Messianic mission, the fundamental doctrines of faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit, the power of Christ’s Spirit, His revelation of Himself as Son of God, and His basic teachings of how His followers should live.

Christ defined His gospel when He visited the Nephites on this land:

Behold, I have given unto you my gospel, and this is the

¹⁵⁹For more information on the kingdom of God on earth (or the Peaceful Reign), see V. James Loyalvo, *It Is Written: Truth Shall Spring out of the Earth* (Fresno, California: Mid-Cal Publishing Co., 1980), 167-76.

gospel which I have given unto you—that I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me.

And my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, that I might draw all men unto me, that as I have been lifted up by men even so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me, to be judged if their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil—

And for this cause have I been lifted up; therefore, according to the power of the Father I will draw all men unto me, that they may be judged according to their works.

And it shall come to pass, that whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world.

And he that endureth not to 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.

And this is the word which he hath given unto the children of men. And for this cause he fulfilleth the words which he hath given, and he lieth not, but fulfilleth all his words.

And no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end.

Now this is the commandment; Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel; and ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do; for that which ye have seen me do even that shall ye do.

Therefore, if ye do these things blessed are ye, for ye

shall be lifted up at the last day. (III Nephi 27: 13-22)

The fulness of the gospel as specified and outlined by Jesus Christ signified:

1. That He came to earth to do the Father's will.
2. That in His atonement, accomplished through his death on the cross, humankind, through faith and acceptance of His gospel, would be brought guiltless before the throne of God.
3. That all who accept Jesus Christ must endure to the end to be saved.
4. That through faith, repentance, baptism and enduring to the end, humankind would be sanctified and stand spotless before Him at the last day.

Hundreds of years before the advent of Christ and His visit to the Nephites on the American continent, there were many righteous men who prophesied concerning Christ and the bringing of the fulness of the gospel to the Nephites, as well as to the Gentiles in the latter days. Lehi, whose words were inscribed upon plates made by Nephi, his son, said:

And after the house of Israel should be scattered they should be gathered together again; or, in fine, after the Gentile had received the fulness of the gospel, the natural branches of the olive-tree, or the remnants of the house of Israel, should be grafted in, or come to the knowledge of the true Messiah, their Lord and their Redeemer. (I Nephi 10:14)

Nephi then explained his father's words:

And now, the thing which our father meaneth concerning the grafting in of the natural branches through the fulness of the Gentiles, is, that in the latter days, when our seed shall have dwindled in unbelief, yea, for the space of many years, and many generations after the Messiah shall be manifested in body unto the children of men, then shall

the fulness of the gospel of the Messiah come unto the Gentiles, and from the Gentiles unto the remnant of our seed. (I Nephi 15:13)

Nephi was transmitting this prophetic information which he had received from an angel, who explained that Nephi's descendants ("the seed of Joseph") would be given many things to write by the power of Jesus Christ: "And in them shall be written my gospel, saith the Lamb, and my rock, and my salvation" (I Nephi 153:36).

The things which they wrote, as the Savior explained when he was among them after his resurrection, would come to the Gentiles in the latter days:

And I command you that ye shall write these sayings after I am gone, that if it be so that my people at Jerusalem, they who have seen me and been with me in my ministry, do not ask the Father in my name, that they may receive a knowledge of you by the Holy Ghost, and also of the other tribes whom they know not of, that these sayings which ye shall write shall be kept and shall be manifested unto the Gentiles, that through the fulness of the Gentiles, the remnant of their seed, who shall be scattered forth upon the face of the earth because of their unbelief, may be brought in, or may be brought to a knowledge of me, their Redeemer.

And then will I gather them in from the four quarters of the earth; and then will I fulfill the covenant which the Father hath made unto all the people of the house of Israel.

And blessed are the Gentiles, because of their belief in me, in and of the Holy Ghost, which witnesses unto them of me and of the Father.

Behold, because of their belief in me, saith the Father, and because of the unbelief of you, O house of Israel, in the latter day shall the truth come unto the Gentiles, that fulness of these things shall be made known unto them. (III Nephi 16: 4, 7)

Jesus then told them that if the Gentiles sin against His gospel

by rejecting the fulness of His gospel, He will take it away from them, and give it to the house of Israel. However, He also said, “But if the Gentiles will repent and return unto me, saith the Father, behold they shall be numbered among my people, O house of Israel” (III Nephi 16: 8-13).

When did the Gentiles receive the fulness of the gospel? The answer is obvious. It began when Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery baptized each other and an angel, according to Oliver Cowdery’s letter to W. W. Phelps, conferred the priesthood of the Son of God upon them in May 1829.¹⁶⁰ From thence the Church was organized and the preaching of the fulness of the gospel began.

Hundreds of years before these events, it was prophesied that the Gentiles would receive the gospel of Jesus Christ in the latter days. The angel of the Lord spoke to Nephi in a vision saying, “. . . Behold, saith the Lord, after I have visited the remnant of the house of Israel—and this remnant of whom I speak is the seed of thy father—. . . I will be merciful unto the Gentiles in that day, insomuch that I will bring forth unto them, in mine own power, much of my gospel, which shall be plain and precious, saith the Lamb.” (I Nephi 13:34)

Fulness of the Gentiles

Closely related to the concept of the fulness of the gospel is the fulness of the Gentiles, a phrase that recurs repeatedly through these prophecies cited above. Many of the early father of the restoration interpreted this phrase to mean “when the Gentile church to whom had been given the fulness of the gospel reached a peak of wickedness by sinning against His gospel, God would remove the gospel from it.”

This interpretation was, no doubt, based on III Nephi 16:10. Notwithstanding this verse, Jesus, a little later said that, if the Gentiles repented, He would establish His church among them. The Gentile church should not only preach the gospel to the seed

¹⁶⁰ *A Reproduction of a Series of Letters Written by Oliver Cowdery by The Church of Jesus Christ* [Bickertonites], p. 4.

of Joseph but to the entire world including the whole house of Israel (I Nephi 22:6).¹⁶¹ According to my opinion, however, the fulness of the Gentiles is when the [Gentile] church reaches its height of righteousness.

The Book of Mormon states with certainty that the nation of Gentiles (the United States of America) would prosper because the hand of God was upon it. The book also says that if this Gentile nation indulged in transgression, His wrath would fall upon it (III Nephi 16:8-12). No one can deny that sin is rampant in the world's nations, and in this nation as well. Drug abuse, indulgence in alcohol, adultery, fornication, unnecessary divorces, dishonesty, and many other vices are taking a frightening and appalling toll. In this generation, good is looked upon as evil, and evil good. The prophet Isaiah denounced this condition: "Woe unto them who call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter" (Isaiah 5:20).

Some schools of learning have striven to eliminate religion from their curricula, thereby communicating a tolerance for sin and a disbelief in the Almighty. Dr. Warner Muir, in an address on Station KRNT, in Des Moines, Iowa, in April 1953, said, "The modern university neither inculcates nor especially repudiates belief in God. But it does what is far more deadly than open rejection; it ignores Him."¹⁶²

How long will God tolerate these conditions? No one can say when His anger will become sufficiently heated to bring this nation and others to their knees. History reveals only too clearly that immorality was the downfall of many nations and empires. Modern assumptions that God does not exist and that everyone is free to "do your own thing" will not keep the wrath of God from descending on this wicked world. Daniel Webster, in a speech before the New York Historical Society as early as 1852, predicted a wonderful future for this nation, then added a note of warning:

¹⁶¹ For further discussion on the phrase, "fulness of the Gentiles," and the role of the Gentiles, see Loyalvo, *It Is Written*, 289 ff.

¹⁶² As quoted in Roy E. Weldon, *Book of Mormon Deepes*, 3 vols. (Independence, Missouri: n pub. 1978) 2:322.

But if we and our posterity reject religious instruction and authority, violate the rules of eternal justice, trifle with the injunctions of morality, and recklessly destroy the political constitution which holds us together, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us, that shall bury all our glory in profound obscurity.¹⁶³

A great leader of this nation, Abraham Lincoln, foresaw what could happen to this nation if they failed to observe God's commandments in issuing a proclamation for a national day of prayer in the depths of the Civil War:

*A Proclamation for a Day of National
Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer*

*By His Excellency, Abraham Lincoln
President of the U. S. A.*

WHEREAS, The Senate of the United States, devoutly recognizing the Supreme authority and just government of Almighty God in all the affairs of men and nations, has by a resolution, requested the President to designate and set apart a day for National prayer and humiliation.

And whereas, it is the duty of nations, as well as of men, to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon, and to recognize the sublime truth announced in the Holy scriptures and proven by all history that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord.

And inasmuch as we know that by His Divine law, nations, like individuals, are subject to punishments in this world. May we not greatly fear that the awful calamity of the cruel war which now desolates the land, may be a

¹⁶³ As quoted in *ibid.*, 331.

punishment inflicted upon us for our presumptive sins, to the needful end of our National reformation as a whole people.

We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power as no other nation has ever grown.

But we have forgotten God!

We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us. And have vainly imagined in the deceitfulness of our hearts that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us!

It behooves us then, to humble ourselves before the offended power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.

Now, therefore, in compliance with the request, and fully concurring in the views of the Senate, I do, by this my proclamation, designate and set apart Thursday, the 30th day of April, 1863, as a day of National Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer. And I do hereby request all the people to abstain on that day from all their ordinary, secular pursuits, and to unite in their several places of public worship and their respective homes, in keeping the day holy to the Lord and devoted to the discharge of the religious duties proper to that solemn occasion.

All this being done, in sincerity and truth, let then rest humbly in hope, authorized by the divine teachings, that the united cry of the nation will be heard on high, and answered with blessings, no less the pardon of our national sins, the restoration of our now divided and suffering country, to its former happy condition of unity and peace.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand, and caused the Seal of the United States to be affixed.

*Done at the City of Washington the 30th day of March,
in the year of our Lord 1863.*

Signed by

Abraham Lincoln

President of the U.S.A.¹⁶⁴

The eloquent words of this proclamation make the deep religiosity of the Senate—and especially of Abraham Lincoln—vividly apparent. Would current presidents or Senates feel comfortable in using the same language today? The government of America, beginning with the Pilgrims who signed the Mayflower Compact, depended unabashedly upon God and divine providence. In our own day, would not our nation benefit from setting apart certain days periodically for fasting and prayer to implore the Lord’s mercy and blessings?

It is a keen and not altogether comfortable reminder that a Book of Mormon leader, Moroni, captain of the Nephite army, prayed that the blessings of liberty would rest upon his people “so long as there should a band of Christians remain to possess the land” (Alma 46:13). Nephi had earlier stated that this land would be consecrated to those whom the Lord would bring:

And if it so be that they shall serve him according to the commandments which he hath given, it shall be a land of liberty unto them; wherefore, they shall never be brought down into captivity; if so, it shall be because of iniquity; for if iniquity shall abound cursed shall be the land for their sakes, but unto the righteous it shall be blessed forever. (II Nephi 1:7)

I firmly believe that only the prayers of righteous people have kept and continue to keep the wrath of God from falling upon this nation because of its sins and transgressions.

I have shown the immorality that is rampant throughout the world, including the United States of America. Of a certainty, wickedness has played a great part in bringing some empires to an

¹⁶⁴ As quoted in *ibid.*, 332-33.

end. (This is a bit of history that I will not write about at this time.) However, iniquity is not the “fulness of the Gentiles,” which some have taken out of context (I Nephi ch. 16; ch. 20). In my opinion, the aforementioned phrase has a distinct relationship with the phrase “fulness of the gospel.”

The “fulness of the gospel” is the power, the glory, the diverse ordinances and the attendant gifts of the Holy Spirit. This is what was restored in these latter days. The “fulness of the Gentiles” is a time when the church shall arise in righteousness so that they will be used as instruments in the hands of God to take the gospel, not only to the Seed of Joseph (the American Indian, a descendant of the tribe of Joseph), but also to the rest of the House of Israel, that they may come to a knowledge of the Lord their God. The Book of Mormon records:

And after our seed is scattered, the Lord God will proceed to do a marvelous work among the Gentiles, which shall be of great worth unto our seed; wherefore, it is likened unto their being nourished by the Gentiles and being carried in their arms and upon their shoulders.

And it shall be of great worth unto the Gentiles; and not only unto the Gentiles but unto all the house of Israel, unto the making known of the covenants of the Father of heaven unto Abraham, saying: In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. (I Nephi 22:8-9)

In spite of all the efforts made, the restoration of the Seed of Joseph and of the house of Israel is yet to be realized. The fulfilling of these events is graphically expounded by the Savior when He visited the Nephites:

And verily I say unto you, I give unto you a sign, that ye may know the time when these things shall be about to take place—that I shall gather in, from their long dispersion, my people, O house of Israel, and shall establish again among them my Zion;

And behold, this is the thing which I will give unto you for a sign—for verily I say unto you that when these things

which I declare unto you, and which I shall declare unto you hereafter of myself, and by the power of the Holy Ghost which shall be given unto you of the Father, shall be made known unto the Gentiles that they may know concerning this people who are a remnant of the house of Jacob, and concerning this my people who shall be scattered by them;

Verily, verily, I say unto you, when these things shall be made known unto them of the Father, and shall come forth of the Father, from them unto you;

For it is wisdom in the Father that they should be established in this land, and be set up as a free people by the power of the Father, that these things might come forth from them unto a remnant of your seed, that the covenant of the Father may be fulfilled which he hath covenanted with his people, O house of Israel;

Therefore, when these works and the works which shall be wrought among you hereafter shall come forth from the Gentiles, unto your seed which shall dwindle in unbelief because of iniquity;

For thus it behooveth the Father that it should come forth from the Gentiles, that he may show forth his power unto the Gentiles, for this cause that the Gentiles, if they will not harden their hearts, that they may repent and come unto me and be baptized in my name and know of the true points of my doctrine, that they may be numbered among my people, O house of Israel;

And when these things come to pass that thy seed shall begin to know these things—it shall be a sign unto them, that they may know that the work of the Father hath already commenced unto the fulfilling of the covenant which he hath made unto the people who are of the house of Israel.

And when that day shall come, it shall come to pass that kings shall shut their mouths; for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider. (III Nephi 21:1-8)

The church has been established among the Gentiles; now it's up to the church to fulfill the responsibility of accomplishing that which Jesus Christ predicted. There is no way to fulfill Jesus' words other than by righteousness and complete dedication. Since 1830, results of taking the gospel to the Seed of Joseph have not been very successful. The church has to ask itself whether it has reached that pinnacle of righteousness demanded by the Lord. The church cannot say that it has realized the axiom of being "fathers and mothers" to the Seed of Joseph.

That day will not come until the church reaches that peak of righteousness, that unity of Spirit which will warrant it the right to bring the Seed of Joseph and many of the other tribes of Israel to the knowledge of their Lord and Redeemer. Only by the combination of the "fulness of the gospel" and the righteousness of the church can all this be accomplished. This is what I call the relationship between the "fulness of the gospel" and the "fulness of the Gentiles."

Chapter 13

LITERARY GEMS IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

Criticisms have been heaped upon the Book of Mormon because of its lack of psalms, parables, and poetry, which are all such prominent and beautiful features of the Bible. This is a true criticism, but it is hardly a fair one. Almost certainly, the scarcity of these gems is due to the abridgement processes. One wonders what the Bible would be like if it were to be abridged and reduced to a hundredth part of its present state. Without a doubt the narratives, Psalms, poetry, prophecies, and parables would be reduced to a minimum.

The Book of Mormon is not a full and complete record and cannot be judged as such. Moroni says of the Jaredite record, “. . . and the hundredth part I have not written” (Ether 15: 33). Mormon said the same thing: “. . . and I cannot write the hundredth part of the things of my people” and “. . . this book cannot contain even a hundredth part of what was done among so many people . . .” (Words of Mormon 1:5; III Nephi 5:8; cf. III Nephi 26:6). Other writers in the Nephite record made similar lamentations. Helaman writes, “But behold, a hundredth part of the proceedings of this people . . . cannot be contained in this work” (Helaman 3:14).

When all the sacred records of this Western Hemisphere are brought to light, then a literary comparison can be made between

the Bible and the Book of Mormon.

But until then, despite the abridgement, the Book of Mormon has preserved some inspiring psalms, prayers, and poetic passages. Men like Lehi, Nephi, King Benjamin, Alma, Abinadi, the two Moronis, and Samuel the Lamanite have the same eloquence and inspired utterance of their prophetic counterparts in the Bible. Rejoice in these exquisite examples of beautiful literature.

Nephi's Lamentation

O wretched man that I am! Yea my heart sorroweth because of my flesh; my soul grieveth because of mine iniquities.

I am encompassed about, because of the temptations and the sins which do so easily beset me.

And when I desire to rejoice, my heart groaneth because of my sins; nevertheless, I know in whom I have trusted.

My God hath been my support; he hath led me through mine afflictions in the wilderness; and he hath preserved me upon the waters of the great deep.

He hath filled me with his love, even unto the consuming of my flesh.

He hath confounded mine enemies, unto the causing of them to quake before me.

Behold, he hath heard my cry by day, and he hath given me knowledge by visions in the nighttime.

And by day have I waxed bold in mighty prayer before him; yea, my voice have I sent up on high; and angels come down and ministered unto me.

And upon the wings of his Spirit hath my body been carried away upon exceeding high mountains. And mine eyes have beheld great things, yea, even too great for man;

O then, if I have seen so great things, if the Lord in his condescension unto the children of men hath visited men in so much mercy, why should my heart weep and my soul linger in the valley of sorrow, and my flesh waste away,

and my strength slacken, because of mine afflictions?

*And why should I yield to sin, because of my flesh?
Yea, why should I give way to temptations, that the evil one
have place in my heart to destroy my peace and afflict my
soul? Why am I angry because of mine enemy? (II Nephi
4:17-27)*

Nephi's Psalm

*Awake my soul! No longer droop in sin. Rejoice, O my
heart, and give place no more for the enemy of my soul*

*Do not anger again because of mine enemies. Do not
slacken my strength because of mine afflictions.*

*Rejoice, O my heart, and cry unto the Lord. and say:
O Lord, I will praise thee forever; yea, my soul will rejoice
in thee, my God, and the rock of my salvation.*

*O Lord, wilt thou redeem my soul? Wilt thou deliver
me out of the hands of mine enemies? Wilt thou make me
that I may shake at the appearance of sin?*

*May the gates of hell be shut continually before me,
because that my heart is broken and my spirit is contrite!
O Lord, wilt thou not shut the gates of thy righteousness
before me, that I may walk in the path of the low valley, that
I may be strict in the plain road!*

*O Lord, wilt thou encircle me around in the robe of thy
righteousness! O Lord, wilt thou make a way for mine
escape before mine enemies! Wilt thou make my path
straight before me! Wilt thou not place a stumbling block
in my way—but that thou wouldst clear my way before me,
and hedge not up my way, but the ways of mine enemy.*

*O Lord, I have trusted in thee, and I will trust in thee
forever. I will not put my trust in the arm of flesh; for I know
that cursed is he that putteth his trust in the arm of flesh.
Yea, cursed is he that putteth his trust in man or maketh
flesh his arm.*

*Yea, I know that God will give liberally to him that
asketh. Yea, my God will give me, if I ask not amiss;*

therefore I will lift up my voice unto thee; yea, I will cry unto thee, my God, the rock of my righteousness. Behold, my voice shall forever ascend up unto thee, my rock and mine everlasting God. Amen. (II Nephi 4:28-35).

Alma's Yearning

O that I were an angel, and could have the wish of mine heart, that I might go forth and speak with the trump of God, with a voice to shake the earth, and cry repentance to every people!

Yea, I would declare unto every soul, as with the voice of thunder, repentance and the plan of redemption, that they should repent and come unto our God, that there might not be more sorrow upon the face of the earth.

But behold, I am a man, and do sin in my wish,; for I ought to be content with the things which the Lord hath allotted unto me.

I ought not to harrow up in my desires, the firm decree of a just God, for I know that he granteth unto men according to their desire, whether it be unto death or unto life; yea, I know that he alloteth unto men according to their wills, whether they be unto salvation or unto destruction.

Yea, and I know that good and evil have come before all men; he that knoweth not good from evil is blameless; but he that knoweth good and evil, to him it is given according to his desires, whether he desireth good or evil, life or death, joy or remorse of conscience.

Now, seeing that I know these things, why should I desire more than to perform the work to which I have been called?

Why should I desire that I were an angel, that I could speak unto all the ends of the earth?

For behold, the Lord doth grant unto all nations, of their own nation and tongue, to teach his word, yea, in wisdom, all that he seeth fit that they should have; there-

fore we see that the Lord doth counsel in wisdom, according to that which is just and true.

I know that which the Lord hath commanded me, and I glory in it. I do not glory of myself, but I glory in that which the Lord hath commanded me; yea, and this is my glory, that perhaps I may be an instrument in the hands of God to bring some soul to repentance; and this is my joy. (Alma 29:1-9)

Mormon's Wisdom

O how great is the nothingness of the children of men; yea, even they are less than the dust of the earth.

For behold, the dust of the earth moveth hither and thither, to the dividing asunder, at the command of our great and everlasting God.

Yea, behold at his voice do 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.

Yea, by the power of his voice doth the whole earth shake;

Yea, by the power of his voice, do the foundations rock, even to the very center.

Yea, and if he say unto the earth—Move—it is moved.

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

And thus, according to his voice 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.

Behold, if he say unto this mountain—Be thou raised up, and come over and fall upon that city, this it be buried up—behold it is done.

And behold, if a man hide up a treasure in the earth, and the Lord shall say—Let it be accursed, because of the iniquity of him who hath hid it up—behold, it shall be

accursed.

And if the Lord shall say—Be thou accursed, that no man shall find thee from this time henceforth and forever—behold, no man getteth it henceforth and forever.

And behold, if the Lord say unto a man—Because of thine iniquities, thou shalt be accursed forever—it shall be done.

And if the Lord shall say—Because of thine iniquities thou shalt be cut off from my presence—he will cause that it shall be so.

And wo unto him to whom he shall say this, for it shall be unto him that will do iniquity, and he cannot be saved; therefore, for this cause, that men might be saved, hath repentance been declared.

Therefore, blessed are they who will repent, and hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God; for these are they that shall be saved. (Helaman 12: 7-23).

Mormon's Lamentation

O ye fair ones, how could ye have departed from the ways of the Lord! O ye fair ones, how could ye have rejected that Jesus, who stood with open arms to receive you!

Behold, if ye had not done this, ye would not have fallen. But behold, ye are fallen, and I mourn your loss.

O ye fair sons and daughters, ye fathers and mothers, ye husbands and wives, how is it that ye could have fallen!

But behold, ye are gone, and my sorrows cannot bring your return.

And the day soon cometh that you mortal must put on immortality, and these bodies which are now moldering in corruption must soon become incorruptible bodies; and then ye must stand before the judgment seat of Christ, to be judged according to your works; and if it so be that ye are righteous, then are ye blessed with your fathers who have gone before you.

O that ye had repented before this great destruction had come upon you. But behold, ye are gone, and the Father, yea, the Eternal Father of heaven knoweth your state; and he doeth with you according to his justice and mercy. (Mormon 6:17-22)

Nephi's Dirge

Oh that I could have had my days in the days when my father Nephi first came out of the land of Jerusalem, that I could have joyed with him in the promised land; then were his people easy to be entreated, firm to keep the commandments of God, and slow to be led to do iniquity; and they were quick to hearken unto the words of the Lord.

Yea, if my days could have been in those days, then would my soul have had joy in the righteousness of my brethren.

But behold, I am consigned that these are my days, and that my soul shall be filled with sorrow because of this the wickedness of my brethren. (Helaman 7:7-9)

King Benjamin's Address

Among the many exhortations and addresses given by some of the righteous men in the Book of Mormon, none exceeds that given by King Benjamin, the son of Mosiah the Elder. Prior to addressing the people, he appointed his son Mosiah as king, and also gave him charge of the Brass Plates, the plates of Nephi, the sword of Laban, and the Liahona (a sacred artifact that had been instrumental in the voyage to the promised land). He especially emphasized to his sons the necessity of having the written word of God:

And he also taught them concerning the records which were engraven on the plates of brass, saying: My sons, I would that ye should remember that were it not for these plates, which contain these records and these command-

ments, we must have suffered in ignorance, even at this present time, not knowing the mysteries of God.

For it were not possible that our father, Lehi, could have remembered all these things, to have taught them to his children, except it were for the help of these plates; for he having been taught in the language of the Egyptians therefore he could read these engravings, and teach them to his children, that thereby they could teach them to their children, and so fulfilling the commandments of God, even down to this present time. (Mosiah 1:3-4)

In this righteous king's farewell address, Benjamin covered subjects of a philosophical and theological nature. Here are some highlights from Mosiah 2-5:

1. His speech was a revelation of God given to him by an angel:

And these things which I shall tell you are made known unto me by an angel from God. (Mosiah 3:2)

2. His humility:

I have not commanded you to come up hither that ye should fear me, or that ye should think that I of myself am more than a mortal man. . .

And have not sought gold nor silver nor any manner of riches of you; . . .

And even I, myself, have labored with mine own hands that I might serve you, and that ye should not be laden with taxes

And I, even I, whom ye call your king, am no better than ye yourselves are; for I am also of the dust. (Mosiah 2:10, 12, 14, 26)

3. Service to God is unending:

If ye should serve him who has created you from the beginning, and is preserving you from day to day, by lending you breath, that ye may live and move and do according to your own will, and even supporting you from one moment to another—I say, if ye should serve him with all your whole souls yet ye would be unprofitable servants. (Mosiah 2:21)

4. **To those who keep His commandments, His blessings are given instantly.**

And secondly, he doth require that ye should do as he hath commanded you; for which if ye do, he doth immediately bless you; and therefore he hath paid you.

And ye are still indebted unto him, and are, and will be, forever and ever; therefore, of what have ye to boast? (Mosiah 2:24)

5. **Contentions are not of God:**

But, O my people, beware lest there shall arise contentions among you, and ye list to obey the evil spirit, which was spoken of by my father Mosiah. (Mosiah 2:32)

6. **God does not dwell in unholy temples:**

And now, I say unto you, my brethren, that after ye have known and have been taught all these things, if ye should transgress and go contrary to that which has been spoken, that ye withdraw yourselves from the Spirit of the Lord, that it may have no place in you to guide you in wisdom's paths that ye may be blessed, prospered, and preserved. . . . therefore, the Lord has no place in him, for he dwelleth not in unholy temples. (Mosiah 2:36, 37; cf. Alma 7:21)

7. **Mercy has no claim on an unrepentant person:**

And now I say unto you, that mercy hath no claim on that man; therefore his final doom is to endure a never-ending torment. (Mosiah 2:39)

8. **Blessed are of those who obey the commandments of God.**

... For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness... (Mosiah 2:41)

9. **Incarnation of Christ:**

For behold, the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth,

who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity, shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay . . . “ (Mosiah 3:5; cf. Mosiah 15).

10. **Christ’s Messianic mission:**

. . . working mighty miracles, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear . . .

. . . that salvation might come unto the children of men even through faith on his name . . . (Mosiah 3:5, 9)

11. **Christ’s sufferings:**

And lo, he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and abominations of his people. (Mosiah 3:7)

12. **Christ’s atonement:**

For behold, and also his blood atoneth for the sins of those who have fallen by the transgression of Adam, who have died not knowing the will of God concerning them, or who have ignorantly sinned. (Mosiah 3:11, 13, 17, 19; 4:6)

13. **Christ’s crucifixion:**

. . . and even after all this they shall consider him a man, and say that he hath a devil, and shall scourge him, and shall crucify him. (Mosiah 3:9)

14. **Christ’s resurrection:**

And he shall rise the third day from the dead and behold, he standeth to judge the world . . . (Mosiah 3:10).

15. **The natural man is an adversary to God:**

For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, . . .

(Mosiah 3:19)

16. **Knowledge of Christ shall be universal:**

And moreover, I say unto you, that the time shall come when the knowledge of the Savior shall spread throughout every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.

(Mosiah 3:20)

17. **The state of the righteous and the wicked after death:**

. . . they shall be judged, every man according to his works, whether they be good, or whether they be evil. (Mosiah 3:24; cf. Alma 40)

18. **Every person is a beggar:**

. . . and ye will not suffer that the beggar putteth up his petition to you in vain, and turn him out to perish.

Perhaps thou shalt say: The man has brought upon himself his misery; therefore I will stay my hand, and will not give unto him of my food, nor impart unto him of my substance that he may not suffer, for his punishments are just—

But I say unto you, O man, whosoever doeth this the same hath great cause to repent; and except he repenteth of that which he hath done he perisheth forever, and hath no interest in the kingdom of God.

For behold, are we not all beggars? Do we not all depend upon the same Being, even God, for all the substance which we have, for both food and raiment, and for gold, and for silver, and for all the riches which we have of every kind?

And behold, even at this time, ye have been calling on his name, and begging for a remission of your sins. And has he suffered that ye have begged in vain? Nay, he has poured out his Spirit upon you, and has caused that your hearts should be filled with joy . . . (Mosiah 4:16-20, 21-26)

19. **Return that which is borrowed:**

And I would that ye should remember, that whosoever among you borroweth of his neighbor should return the thing that he borroweth, according as he doth agree, or else thou shalt commit sin; and perhaps

*thou shalt cause thy neighbor to commit sin also.
(Mosiah 4:28)*

20. Children of Christ are born again:

*And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters: for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters
(Mosiah 5:7)*

21. The name of Christ shall never be blotted out except by transgression:

There is no other name given whereby salvation cometh; therefore, I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ . . . And I would that ye should remember also, that this is the name that I said I should give unto you that never should be blotted out except it be through transgression; therefore, take heed that ye do not transgress, that the name be not blotted out of your hearts. (Mosiah 5:8, 11-12)

Thus, under the umbrella of one sermon, King Benjamin touched upon an impressive number of phases of the plan of redemption. Nor did he omit exhortations to righteous living, the love of God, and the fear of the Lord. The effect of his address was electrifying! All the people accepted the name of Jesus Christ and therewith received a confirmation of the Holy Spirit which caused a rejoicing beyond description. Immediately, they made a covenant with God to live according to the words of King Benjamin and to be called by the name of Christ, their Savior.

Alma the Younger's Sermon

Another beautiful address, which stands out as a literary masterpiece, was given by Alma, the son of Alma, recorded in Alma 5. He has organized it around a series of very pertinent questions and teaching material that cover being born of God (v.

14), receiving His image (v. 14), the resurrection (v. 15), changes in the heart (v. 26), lying (v. 17), reaching the state of having one's garments purified (v. 21), how sinful hearts are stained with blood (v. 22), filthiness (v. 22), blamelessness (v. 27), pride (v. 28), envy (v. 29), mocking each other (v. 30), persecuting each other (v. 30), repentance (v. 33), the Good Shepherd (v. 38-39), the coming of Christ (v. 48), consequences of sin (v. 54-56), and the book of life (v. 58).

Consequently, this single chapter is of remarkable importance, with its emphasis on these crucial subjects. However, verses 14, 26, and 40 stand out with philosophical significance:

And now behold, I ask of you, my brethren of the church, have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?"

And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, if ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now? (v. 14, 26)

The latter question is of the utmost importance. Does time dim the enthusiasm of a "born again" person? or diminish the passion, zeal, and delight of one whose heart has been changed from a sinful condition to a state of righteousness? This is what Alma is really asking. The implication is that time should not alter the joy that is felt when one's heart is changed from sin to a life of virtue. The "song of redeeming love" should resound in the heart and its melody reverberate in one's life forever.

Verse 40 says, "For I say unto you that whatsoever is good cometh from God, and whatsoever is evil cometh from the devil." Alma draws a distinct line between good and evil. He doesn't say, "Some good things" or "some evil things." He states unequivocally "whatsoever," meaning "everything," "all things." Since this is an inalienable truth, a person who does good to another, or works a righteous work, is responding to the inner voice of the Good Shepherd. Conversely, those who do evil are aligning themselves with the devil and hearkening to his voice (v. 41).

Book of Mormon Reflections

These instructions raise another important question: Can a person who serves God do something evil? And can an evil person, at times, do something good? The answer has to be “yes” to both questions. David, the king of Israel, who was the “apple of God’s eye” committed both adultery and murder. Was he not yielding to the voice of the devil? On the other hand, a drunken person on Skid Row was seen to push another person out of the way of a speeding automobile, putting his own life in jeopardy. Was this not a good deed? If so, this good came from God.

If envy, jealousy, gossiping, lying, and pride should ever rise up in the heart of a born-again person, it must be acknowledged that these feelings and behaviors are not good and therefore are not from God. Alma is cautioning the people to strive for righteousness and eschew evil (and not only in this chapter). Hence, to live righteously is an every-day concern for those whose lives have been changed through the reception of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 14

EPISTLES IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

The Book of Mormon contains nine epistles in Alma, III Nephi, Ether, and Moroni. Others are mentioned, but their contents are not recorded. These letters can be distinguished as pastoral, prophetic and war epistles.

Pastoral Epistles

Pastoral epistles deal with the duties of the pastor or the person in charge of a group of believers. Among New Testament epistles, I Timothy, II Timothy, and Titus are classic examples of pastoral concerns. The warp and woof of these Epistles are instructions on how to discharge faithfully the pastor's duties as a shepherd of the Lord's flock.

The Book of Mormon contains two pastoral letters, both of them from Mormon, the general-prophet who was abridger of the record, to his righteous son, Moroni.

The first letter, Moroni 8: 2-30, came to Moroni from his father "soon after my calling to the ministry" (Moroni 8:1). In the course of his missionary endeavors, the youthful leader had encountered some communities of the church who were disputing whether little children should be baptized or not. In all probability,

Moroni asked his father for advice and immediately received an answer. The entire epistle revolves around the sacrilege of baptizing little children, whom Mormon says “are alive in Christ” and need no baptism. “For little children are whole, for they are not capable of committing sin.” He said that the curse of Adam—meaning his sin against God, and thereby his fall—is taken away in Jesus Christ (v. 8). He continued, “And their little children need no repentance, neither baptism. Behold, baptism is unto the fulfilling the commandments unto the remission of sins” (v. 11).

Mormon argues that little children cannot repent, “and he that saith little children need baptism denieth the mercies of Christ, and setteth at naught the atonement of him and the power of his redemption” (v. 19). He minces no words when he declares, “. . . he that supposeth that little children need baptism is in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity; for he hath neither faith, hope, nor charity; wherefore, should he be cut off while in the thought, he must go down to hell” (v. 14).

This letter, no doubt, impressed Moroni so much that he felt the necessity of inscribing it on the plates for future generations to read and implement his father’s instructions.

Mormon’s second letter to his son is quite different than the first. Despite the absence of doctrinal instructions, it is nonetheless pastoral. The letter deals mostly with the cruelty and atrocities committed by his own people, the Nephites. With a broken heart he writes:

And notwithstanding this great abomination of the Lamanites, it doth not exceed that of our people in Moriantum. For behold, many of the daughters of the Lamanites have they taken prisoners; and after depriving them of that which is most dear and precious above all things, which is chastity and virtue—

And after they had done this thing, they did murder them in a most cruel manner, torturing their bodies even unto death; and after they have done this, they devour their flesh like unto wild beasts, because of the hardness of their hearts; and they do it for a token of bravery (Moroni 9: 9-10).

O the depravity of my people! They are without order and without mercy. Behold, I am but a man, and I have but the strength of a man, and I cannot any longer enforce my commands.

And they have become strong in their perversion; and they are alike brutal, sparing none, neither old nor young,; and they delight in everything save that which is good; and the suffering of our women and our children upon all the face of this land doth exceed everything; yea, tongue cannot tell, neither can it be written. (Moroni 9: 18-19)

This letter is written with great sorrow, yet with much faith in the Lord and exceptional love for his righteous son:

And now, my beloved son, notwithstanding their hardness, let us labor diligently; for if we should cease to labor, we should be brought under condemnation; for we have a labor to perform whilst in this tabernacle of clay, that we may conquer the enemy of all righteousness, and rest our souls in the kingdom of God. . . .

My son, be faithful in Christ; and may not the things which I have written grieve thee, to weigh thee down unto death; but may Christ lift thee up, and may his sufferings and death, and the showing his body unto our fathers, and his mercy and long-suffering, and the hope of his glory and of eternal life, rest in your mind forever.

And may the grace of God the Father, whose throne is high in the heavens, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who sitteth on the right hand of his power, until all things shall become subject unto him, be, and abide with you forever. Amen. (Moroni 9:6, 25-26)

The time of the writing of these letters cannot be pin-pointed with exactness; but from reading the rest of Moroni's record, it must have been a score of years, more or less, prior to the destructive battle on Hill Cumorah. The second letter states that Mormon had sacred records in his possession that he wanted to give to his son (Moroni 9:24). He did, in fact, deliver these sacred

records to Moroni (Mormon 6:6).

Although this transfer is recorded in the third book from the end of the Book of Mormon, the chronology seems quite clear: Mormon's final instructions as abridger occurred in advance of the final battle, Moroni then added the abridged record of the Jaredite people (the book of Ether), and finally added his own final remarks. Some redactors would have probably placed the book of Ether at the beginning of the Book of Mormon, since it deals with the record of the people who reached the land first and became extinct at about the time the Lehitites and Mulekites were arriving, with Moroni's writings coming before his father's book. In any case, it is not difficult to keep the order of composition in mind.

Prophetic Epistle

Ether 5, some personal writings of Moroni appended to the abridgement, is a prophetic epistle. In it, Moroni speaks across the ages to Joseph Smith, approximately 1400 years in the future:

And now I, Moroni, have written the words which were commanded me, according to my memory; and I have told you the things which I have sealed up; therefore touch them not in order that ye may translate; for the thing is forbidden you, except by and by it shall be wisdom in God.

And behold, ye may be privileged that ye may show the plates unto those who shall assist to bring forth this work.

And unto three shall they be shown by the power of God; wherefore they shall know of a surety that these things are true.

And in the mouth of three witnesses shall these things be established; and the testimony of three, and this work, in the which shall be shown forth the power of God and also his word, of which the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost bear record—and all this shall stand as a testimony against the world at the last day.

And if it so be that they repent and come unto the Father in the name of Jesus, they shall be received in the

kingdom of God.

And now, if I have no authority for these things, judge ye; for ye shall know that I have authority when ye shall see me, and we shall stand before God at the last day. Amen. (Ether 5)

The epistle is short, concise, and to the point. Moroni tells his unnamed translator not to touch the sealed portion of the records but gives him permission to show the plates to others who shall assist him. Prophetically, he identifies “three witnesses” who will attest to the veracity of the plates and states unequivocally that their testimony shall stand as a witness against the world. The last two verses certify his authority to say the things he has inscribed on the plates.

Military Epistles

The other six epistles deal with the dynamics of war. They are found in Alma 54:5-14 and 54:16-24. Ammoron, a Lamanite leader had requested an exchange of prisoners from Moroni, the captain of the Nephite armies.

In the first letter, Moroni’s reply was sharp and angry, agreeing to Ammoron’s request only if he would exchange one man, his wife and his children for one prisoner held by him (v. 11).

The second epistle contains Ammoron’s reply; though arrogant and disdainful, he nevertheless agreed to Moroni’s terms.

The next letter is one written by Helaman, a Nephite general, to General Moroni (Alma 56:2-58; 41). It is the longest letter in the Book of Mormon. In it Helaman writes of certain stages of war between the Nephites and the Lamanites and records the beautiful narrative of the two thousand stripling warriors, whom he affectionately calls “my sons.” Sixty more youths joined these stalwart young warriors a little later (57:6).

Helaman tells of the faith they had learned from their mothers, who had instilled in their hearts that “if they did not doubt, God would deliver them” (v. 47-48). In fulfillment of this promise, none of the two thousand and sixty young men were slain in battle,

although two hundred among them were wounded (57:25):

And it came to pass that after the Lamanites had fled, I immediately gave orders that my men who had been wounded should be taken from among the dead, and caused that their wounds should be dressed.

And it came to pass that there were two hundred, out of my two thousand and sixty, who had fainted because of the loss of blood; nevertheless, according to the goodness of God, and to our great astonishment, and also the foes of our whole army, there was not one soul of them who did perish; yea, and neither was there one soul among them who had not received many wounds.

And now, their preservation was astonishing to our whole army, yea, that they should be spared while there was a thousand of our brethren who were slain. And we do justly ascribe it to the miraculous power of God, because of their exceeding faith in that which they had been taught to believe—that there was a just God, and whosoever did not doubt, that they should be preserved by his marvelous power.

Now this was the faith of these of whom I have spoken; they are young, and their minds are firm, and they do put their trust in God continually. (vv. 24-27)

The next epistle (Alma 60) is an angry complaint from General Moroni to Pahoran, the governor of the land. Moroni documents the government's neglect in supporting his armies on the field with adequate food, arms, and men to repel the enemy, thereby causing many to be wounded and die. In his anger and frustration, Moroni implies that Pahoran and his government are sitting idly by, secure in their homes, while his warriors are being slaughtered by the Lamanite armies. He threatens Pahoran that if succor does not come soon, he will go to them and wreak dire vengeance upon them.

Yea, will ye sit in idleness while ye are surrounded with thousands of those, yea, with tens of thousands, who

do also sit in idleness, while there are thousands round about in the borders of the land who are falling by the sword, yea, wounded and bleeding?...

And except ye grant mine epistle, and come out and show unto me a true spirit of freedom, and strive to strengthen and fortify our armies, and grant unto them food for their support, behold I will leave a part of my freemen to maintain this part of our land, and I will leave the strength and the blessings of God upon them, that none other power can operate against them. . . .

And I will come unto you, and if there be any among you that has a desire for freedom, yea, if there be even a spark of freedom remaining, behold I will stir up insurrections among you, even until those who have desires to usurp power and authority shall become extinct. . . .

Behold, I wait for assistance from you; and, except ye do administer unto our relief, behold, I come unto you, even in the land of Zarahemla, and smite you with the sword, insomuch that ye can have no more power to impede the progress of this people in the cause of our freedom. (Alma 60:22, 25, 27, 30)

Pahoran replied (Alma 61:2-21) with conciliation and an extreme desire to help Moroni in his needs. Because of insurrection among his people, which has required his full attention to defeat, he has not been able to send supplies and men to Moroni. But he assured Moroni that soon he would replenish their urgent requirements. The humility, faith, and concern of Pahoran are easily seen in his letter.

I, Pahoran, who am the chief governor of this land, do send these words unto Moroni, the chief captain over the army. Behold, I say unto you, Moroni, that I do not joy in your great afflictions, yea, it grieves my soul...

And it is those who have sought to take away the judgment-seat from me that have been the cause of this great iniquity; for they have used great flattery, and they have led away the hearts of many people, which will be the

cause of sore affliction among us; they have withheld our provisions, and have daunted our freemen that they have not come unto you.

And behold, they have driven me out before them, and I have fled to the land of Gideon, with as many men as it were possible that I could get.

And now, in your epistle you have censured me, but it mattereth not; I am not angry, but do rejoice in the greatness of your heart. I, Pahoran, do not seek for power, save only to retain my judgment-seat that I may preserve the rights and the liberty of my people. My soul standeth fast in that liberty in the which God hath made us free.

Therefore, come unto me speedily with a few of your men, and leave the remainder in the charge of Lehi and Teancum; give unto them power to conduct the war in that part of the land, according to the Spirit of God, which is also the Spirit of freedom which is in them.

Gather together whatsoever force ye can upon your march hither, and we will go speedily against those dissenters, in the strength of our God according to the faith which is in us.

And we will take possession of the city of Zarahemla, that we may obtain more food to send forth unto Lehi and Teancum; yea, we will go forth against them in the strength of the Lord, and we will put an end to this great iniquity.

See that ye strengthen Lehi and Teancum in the Lord; tell them to fear not, for God will deliver them, yea, and also all those who stand fast in that liberty wherewith God hath made them free. And now I close mine epistle to my beloved brother, Moroni. (Alma 61:2, 4-5, 9, 16-18, 21)

The sixth military epistle was written by Giddianhi, a robber chief, to Lachoneus, the Nephite governor, about A.D. 3-5 (III Nephi 2-10). In this letter, he threatens the people, demands possession of the Nephite lands, and in an arrogant, egotistical tone swears to avenge the imaginary wrongs done to the robbers. Lachoneus did not answer the letter but rather gathered his people

to battle; happily, they subsequently defeated the arrogant chief and his robbers.

...Yield yourselves up unto us, and unite with us and become acquainted with our secret works, and become our brethren that ye may be like unto us—not our slaves, but our brethren and partners of all our substance.

And behold, I swear unto you, if ye will do this, with an oath, ye shall not be destroyed; but if ye will not do this, I swear unto you with an oath, that on the morrow month I will command that my armies shall come down against you, and they shall not stay their hand and shall spare not, but shall slay you, and shall let fall the sword upon you even until ye shall become extinct.

And I write this epistle unto you, Lachoneus, and I hope that ye will deliver up your lands and your possessions, without the shedding of blood, that this my people may recover their rights and government, who have dissented away from you because of your wickedness in retaining from them their rights of government, and except ye do this, I will avenge their wrongs. I am Giddianhi. (III Nephi 3:7-8, 10)

Chapter 15

DIVERSE TYPES OF LITERATURE IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

The following types of literature found in the Book of Mormon are rich in quality and substance. They are reminiscent of biblical exhortations, blessings, and predictions. The reader will find a recurring ring of similar patriarchal blessings as those found in Genesis 49 (Jacob's blessings to his sons), historical narratives as those in the books of Kings and Chronicles, prophetic utterances similar to those of Isaiah, Jeremiah, et al., and pastoral counsel as given by the apostles Paul, Peter, John, and others.

In the writers' words, one can discern the candid and forthright manner with which their innermost feelings were expressed. Their words are filled with pathos, desires, dedication, faith, and great love for their people and for the Lord. After reading the following literature, one must conclude that the same Holy Spirit which motivated the biblical writers also inspired the Book of Mormon writers.

Helaman's Fatherly Counsel

Helaman was the son of Helaman who was the son of Alma who was the son of Alma. An important section in the Book of Mormon is given over to his advice to his own sons, Lehi and Nephi, named for the righteous founders of his people:

Behold, my sons, I desire that ye should remember to keep the commandments of God; and I would that ye should declare unto the people these words. Behold, I have given unto you the names of our first parents who came out of the land of Jerusalem; and this I have done that when ye remember your names ye may remember them; and when ye remember them ye may remember their works; and when ye remember their works ye may know how that it is said, and also written, that they were good.

Therefore, my sons, I would that ye should do that which is good, that it may be said of you, and also written, even as it has been said and written of them.

And now my sons, behold I have somewhat more to desire of you, which desire is, that ye may not do these things that ye may boast, but that ye may do these things to lay up for yourselves a treasure in heaven, yea, which is eternal, and which fadeth not away; yea, that ye may have that precious gift of eternal life, which we have reason to suppose hath been given to our fathers.

O remember, remember, my sons, the words which king Benjamin spake unto his people; yea, remember that there is no other way nor means whereby man can be saved, only through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, who shall come, yea, remember that he cometh to redeem the world.

And remember also the words which Amulek spake unto Zeezrom, in the city of Ammonihah; for he said unto him that the Lord surely should come to redeem his people, but that he should not come to redeem them in their sins, but to redeem them from their sins.

And he hath power given unto him from the Father to redeem them from their sins because of repentance; therefore he hath sent his angels to declare the tidings of the conditions of repentance, which bringeth unto the power of the Redeemer, unto the salvation of their souls.

And now, my sons, remember, remember, that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the

devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereupon if men build they cannot fall (Helaman 5:6-12).

Helaman's last words to his sons direct them to:

1. Keep the commandments of the Lord.
2. Remember the good works of their forefathers and emulate them.
3. Remember the words of King Benjamin, and the words of Amulek.
4. Believe in the redemptive powers of Jesus Christ who was to come.
5. Build their foundation upon the Rock, Christ Jesus.

One can see how meticulously the writings of the above predecessors were kept. Unfortunately all the words which Helaman taught his sons are not written (Alma 5:13). But those which are recorded may in themselves have been enough to inspire his sons to become faithful men of God. The Book of Mormon records that Nephi and Lehi did remember the words of their father Helaman, and kept the commandments of the Lord, teaching and preaching the Word of God with power in many cities.

Historical Literature

Historical narratives take up approximately fifty percent of the Book of Mormon. In these various narratives, one detects the layman's simple but sincere attempt to convey, in an intelligent manner, the events that occurred.

It has been the innate desire of human beings through the ages to keep a record of current history and traditions, whether in writing or passed on orally from one person to another. The

purpose has evidently been to let future generations know about themselves. We seek immortality in our history. Those who do not keep records are eventually forgotten, and their history lies in the dust, swept away by the winds of time, gone forever.

Likewise, the writers in the Book of Mormon wanted their future generations, as well as the Gentiles to whom the record would come, to know about their existence—hence, their purpose in keeping this record.

From Nephi on, they knew that their people were doomed and the record was not only to instruct the people sufficiently with lessons from the past to stave off the inevitable as long as possible (at least, as I see it) but also they were written with the future “Gentile” readers in mind. Certainly they were abridged with that audience in mind?]) Because the narratives are so numerous in the Book of Mormon, this descriptive analysis can do no more than touch on representative passages and themes.

Although the historians, to a man, felt that what they were recording was important, they also felt keenly their limitations and expressed often the hope that communication would occur despite these limitations. For example, Nephi, the son of Lehi, states:

And now, I, Nephi, cannot write all the things which were taught among my people; neither am I mighty in writing, like unto speaking; for when a man speaketh by the power of the Holy Ghost, the power of the Holy Ghost carrieth unto the hearts of the children of men. (II Nephi 33:1)

Moroni, the son of Mormon, also acknowledged his writing inadequacy:

And I said unto him: Lord, the Gentiles will mock at these things, because of our weakness in writing; for Lord thou hast made us mighty in word by faith, but thou hast not made us mighty in writing; for thou hast made all this people that they could speak much, because of the Holy Ghost which thou hast given them;

And thou hast made us that we could write but little because of the awkwardness of our hands. Behold, thou hast nor made us mighty in writing like unto the Brother of Jared, for thou madest him that the things which he wrote were mighty even as thou art, unto the overpowering of man to read them.

Thou hast also made our words powerful and great, even that we cannot write them; wherefore, when we write we behold our weakness, and stumble because of the placing of our words; and I fear lest the Gentiles shall mock at our words. (Ether 12:23-25).

As far as grammatical imperfections in the Book of Mormon go, the fears of Nephi and Moroni have been fulfilled. Critics of the Book of Mormon have delighted in criticizing it because of its simplicity and ungrammatical contents, not realizing that if the record had been translated without literary flaws, the apologies and laments of Nephi and Moroni would have sounded ridiculous, even self-serving.

To my way of thinking, this is another proof that the Book of Mormon was translated correctly, i.e., with all of its grammatical shortcomings.

In all of the history written, one can observe not only the emphasis upon candor and truism, but also the subtle nuance of reflection and retrospection, combined with the systematic recurring of religious concepts. Some of the words of Moroni, the last writer in the Book of Mormon are an illustration:

And I exhort you to remember these things; for the time speedily cometh that ye shall know that I lie not, for ye shall see me at the bar of God; and the Lord God will say unto you: Did I not declare my words unto you, which were written by this man, like as one crying from the dead, yea, even as one speaking out of the dust?

I declare these things unto the fulfilling of the prophecies. And behold, they shall proceed forth out of the mouth of the everlasting God; and his word shall hiss forth from generation to generation.

And God will show unto you, that that which I have written is true. (Moroni 19:27-29)

Here is a fine example of the type of historical writing which embodies the elements just identified:

Now behold, I, Jarom, write a few words according to the commandment of my father, Enos, that our genealogy may be kept.

And as these plates are small, and as these things are written for the intent of the benefit of our brethren the Lamanites, wherefore, it must needs be that I write a little; but I shall not write the things of my prophesying, nor of my revelations. For what could I write more than my fathers have written? I say unto you, Yea, and this sufficeth me.

Behold, it is expedient that much should be done among this people, because of the hardness of their hearts, and the deafness of their ears, and the blindness of their minds, and the stiffness of their necks; nevertheless, God is exceeding merciful unto them, and has not as yet swept them from the face of the land.

And there are many among us who have many revelations, for they are not all stiffnecked. And as many as are not stiffnecked and have faith, have communion with the Holy Spirit, which maketh manifest unto the children of men, according to their faith.

And now, behold, two hundred years have passed away, and the people of Nephi had waxed strong in the land. They observed to keep the law of Moses and the Sabbath day holy unto the Lord. And they profaned not; neither did they blaspheme. And the laws of the land were exceedingly strict.

And they were scattered upon much of the face of the land, and the Lamanites also. And they were exceeding more numerous than were they of the Nephites; and they loved murder and would drink the blood of beasts.

And it came to pass that they came many times against

us, the Nephites, to battle. But our kings and our leaders were mighty men in the faith of the Lord; and they taught the people the ways of the Lord; wherefore, we withstood the Lamanites and swept them away out of our land, and began to fortify our cities, or whatever place of our inheritance.

And we multiplied exceedingly, and spread upon the face of the land, and became exceeding rich in gold, and in silver, and in precious things, and in fine workmanship of wood, in buildings, and in machinery, and also in iron and copper, and brass and steel, making all manner of tools of every kind to till the ground, and weapons of war—yea, the sharp pointed arrow, and the quiver, and the dart, and the javelin, and all preparations for war.

And thus being prepared to meet the Lamanites, they did not prosper against us. But the word of the Lord was verified, which he spake unto our fathers, saying that: Inasmuch as ye will keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land.

And it came to pass that the prophets of the Lord did threaten the people of Nephi, according to the word of God, that if they did not keep the commandments, but should fall into transgression, they should be destroyed from off the face of the land.

And I, Jarom, do not write more, for the plates are small. But behold, my brethren, ye can go to the other plates of Nephi; for behold, upon them the records of our wars are engraven, according to the writings of the kings, or those which they caused to be written.

And I deliver these plates into the hands of my son Omni, that they may be kept according to the commandments of my fathers. (Jarom 1:1-10, 14-15)

It is interesting to me to observe that the historical data is liberally supplemented with religious and spiritual exhortations. In the midst of his narrative, Jarom reminds the reader that “the word of the Lord was verified, which he spake unto our fathers, saying that: Inasmuch as ye will keep my commandments ye shall

prosper in the land.” Then he continues his chronicle about the prophets, priests, and teachers exhorting the people to repent, to serve the Lord, and to believe in Jesus Christ as though He had already come.

Another note of special interest is that Jarom mentions receiving many revelations and prophesying often to the people. We do not have these revelations and prophesyings because the limited space on the plates demanded such severe condensation. But it is remarkable what Jarom is able to compress into such a small compass; the reader also learns about their industry, and their science in iron, steel, wood, construction, and weapon-making.

Prophetic Literature

Prophetic utterances are not as numerous in the Book of Mormon as they are in the Bible, particularly in the Old Testament where historical narrative is set aside for long periods of time while whole books record the prophecies of both major and minor prophets.

The prophecies uttered by some of the men in the Book of Mormon are relatively unpretentious, yet delivered in a sincere, straightforward manner. Unperturbed by rebuffs and hostile receptions, the prophets declared the word of God unflinchingly and boldly by the power of the Holy Spirit. Some braved and disregarded death like Samuel the Lamanite. Others, like Abinadi, actually suffered death for their courageous message.

Abinadi, who met his martyrdom by fire, recorded this account of the Lord’s calling to him and the message he was to transmit to the people:

.. Abinadi, go and prophesy unto this my people, for they have hardened their hearts against my words; they have repented not of their evil doings; therefore, I will visit them in my anger, yea, in my fierce anger will I visit them in their iniquities and abominations.

Yea, wo be unto his generation! And the Lord said unto me: Stretch forth thy hand and prophesy saying: Thus

saith the Lord, it shall come to pass that this generation because of their iniquities, shall be brought into bondage, and shall be smitten on the cheek; yea, and shall be driven by men, and shall be slain; and the vultures of the air, and the dogs, yea, and the wild beasts, shall devour their flesh.

And it shall come to pass that the life of king Noah shall be valued even as a garment in a hot furnace; for he shall know that I am the Lord.

And it shall come to pass that I will smite this my people with sore afflictions, yea, with famine and with pestilence; and I will cause that they shall howl all the day long.

Yea, and I will cause that they shall have burdens lashed upon their backs; and they shall be driven before like a dumb ass.

And it shall come to pass that I will send forth hail among them; and they shall also be smitten with the east wind; and insects shall pester their land also, and devour their grain.

And they shall be smitten with a great pestilence—and all this will I do because of their iniquities and abominations.

And it shall come to pass that except they repent I will utterly destroy them from off the face of the earth; yet they shall leave a record behind them, and I will preserve them for other nations which shall possess the land; yea, even this will I do that I may discover the abominations of this people to other nations. And many things did Abinadi prophesy against this people. (Mosiah 12: 1-8)

Another example of prophetic literature is the words of Nephi, the son of Helaman. Multitudes of people had gathered around the tower upon which Nephi had retired to pray because of the sins of the people. When Nephi became aware of their presence, he cried out:

*...Behold, why have ye gathered yourselves together?
That I may tell you of your iniquities?*

Yea, because I have got upon my tower that I might

pour out my soul unto my God, because of the exceeding sorrow of my heart, which is because of your iniquities!

And because of my mourning and lamentation ye have gathered yourselves together, and do marvel; and ye have great need to marvel; yea, ye ought to marvel because ye are given away that the devil has got so great hold upon your hearts.

Yea, how could you have given away to the enticing of him who is seeking to hurl away your souls down to everlasting misery and endless wo?

O repent ye, repent ye! Why will ye die? Turn ye, turn ye unto the Lord your God. Why has he forsaken you?

It is because you have hardened your hearts; yea, ye will not hearken unto the voice of the good shepherd; yea, ye have provoked him to anger against you.

And behold, instead of gathering you, except ye will repent, behold, he shall scatter you forth that ye shall become meat for dogs and wild beasts.

O, how could you have forgotten your God in the very day that he has delivered you?

But behold, it is to get gain, to be praised of men, yea, and that ye might get gold and silver. And ye have set your hearts upon the riches and the vain things of this world, for the which ye do murder, and plunder, and steal, and bear false witness against your neighbor, and do all manner of iniquity.

And for this cause wo shall come unto you except ye shall repent. For if ye will not repent, this great city, and also all those great cities which are round about which are in the land of our possession, shall be taken away that ye shall have no place in them; for behold, the Lord will not grant unto your strength, as he has hitherto done, to withstand against your enemies.

For behold, thus saith the Lord: I will not show unto the wicked of my strength, to one more than the other, save it be unto those who repent of their sins, and hearken unto my words. Now therefore, I would that ye should behold, my brethren, that it shall be better for the Lamanites than

for you except ye shall repent.

For behold, they are more righteous than you, for they have not sinned against that great knowledge which ye have received; therefore the Lord will be merciful unto them; yea, he will lengthen out their days and increase their seed, even when thou shalt be utterly destroyed except thou shall repent.

Yea, wo be unto you because of that great abomination which has come among you; and ye have united yourselves unto it, yea, to that secret band which was established by Gadianton!

Yea, wo shall come unto you because of that pride which ye have suffered to enter your hearts, which has lifted you up beyond that which is good because of your exceeding great riches!

Yea, wo be unto you because of your wickedness and abominations!

And except ye repent ye shall perish; yea, even your lands shall be taken from you, and ye shall be destroyed from off the face of the earth.

Behold now, I do not say that these things shall be, of myself, because it is not of myself that I know these things; but behold, I know that these things are true because the Lord God has made them known unto me, therefore I testify that they shall be. (Helaman 7:13-29)

One can sense the anguish in Nephi's heart because of the iniquity of the people. His words, though simple and forthright, are stern with condemnation for the people's transgression of God's commandments. He therefore does not hesitate to tell them of the doom that awaits them and the wrath of God that shall befall them if they do not repent. Enraged at Nephi's denunciation, they sought to kill him but refrained because the fear of God which came upon them. Nephi's discourse, following the aborted attempt, is truly a masterpiece. (See Helaman 8; for additional examples of prophetic discourse, see also I Nephi 22; II Nephi 1, 29, 32; Jacob 6; Mosiah 12:1-8; Alma 10:17-23; 32:8-43; 33:12-23; 34:2-41).¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ Sydney B. Sperry, *Our Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake city: Stevens and Wallis, Inc., 1947), 117.

For additional references focused on keeping the commandments of the Lord, interspersed with religious warnings and exhortations, read Enos 10; I Nephi 5 and 16; Omni 6; Omni 1-30 ; Alma 9:14; 37:13; 38:1; 45:6-8; Helaman 10:4, 5; Mosiah 18:1-25:24; IV Nephi 15-18, 23; Alma 19:1-25:17; Mormon 3:2-3; Alma 46:1-53:23; Ether 2:8-12; Helaman 1:1-4:25¹⁶⁶

Literature of Personal Revelation

The Book of Mormon also contains autobiography and memoirs. Dr. Sydney Sperry observes that autobiography and memoirs “may be grouped together as literature of personal revelation. . . . Technically an autobiography is a connected account of the author’s life, with due stress on introspection, or on the importance of his life against a communal, or world background, while a memoir does not have as a primary purpose giving a connected and systematic summary of the writer’s life.¹⁶⁷

In fairness, we must note that the writers in the Book of Mormon probably did not maintain this distinction between autobiography and a memoir—or other literary forms either. These are categories of which they may have known nothing and have only the limited usefulness of helping us understand and appreciate what was happening in the Book of Mormon. Credit must be given to the authors, however, for their unmistakable desire to convey the spiritual truths they held dear in a forthright and sincere manner.

Patriarchal Blessings

According to Webster’s New School and Office Dictionary, a patriarch is “a founder or head of a family, or an aged man.” The word is applied also to “a venerable and respected old man.”

The Bible establishes the concept of the patriarchal blessing—or a dying father’s blessing upon his posterity—most notably with the blessings that Jacob pronounced upon each of his twelve sons.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 115.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 117.

(He also pronounced separate blessings upon his grandsons Ephraim and Manesseh.) The Book of Mormon records the parallel situation of the aged Lehi, on his deathbed, giving separate blessings to his sons and sons-in-law:

And now my son, Laman, and also Lemuel and Sam, and also my sons who are the sons of Ishmael, behold, if ye will hearken unto the voice of Nephi ye shall not perish. And if ye will hearken unto him I leave unto you a blessing, yea, even my first blessing.

But if ye will not hearken unto him I take away my first blessing, yea, even my blessing, and it shall rest upon him. (II Nephi 1:28,29)

It is apparent that Lehi desired to give the birthright blessing to Nephi because of his faithfulness; but submerged in the old tradition of giving the birthright blessing to the oldest son, he reluctantly bestowed it upon the eldest, Laman. He nevertheless warned his elder sons that this birthright blessing would be taken away from them and given to Nephi, the younger brother, if they failed to heed his words. Lehi next blessed Zoram, the servant who had accompanied them from Jerusalem:

And now Zoram, I speak unto you: Behold, thou art the servant of Laban; nevertheless, thou hast been brought out of the land of Jerusalem, and I know that thou art a true friend unto my son, Nephi, forever.

Wherefore, because thou hast been faithful thy seed shall be blessed with his seed, that they dwell in prosperity long upon the face of this land; and nothing, save it shall be iniquity among you, shall harm or disturb their prosperity upon the face of this land forever.

Wherefore, if ye shall keep the commandments of the Lord, the Lord hath consecrated this land for the security of thy seed with the seed of my son. (II Nephi 1:30-32)

The blessings which Lehi pronounced upon his youngest sons, Jacob and Joseph (II Nephi 2, 3) are very lengthy and include

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prophetic proclamations, philosophical discourses, and exhortations from a loving father. Prophecies include the coming of Jesus Christ (2:6); the final judgment (2:10); the atonement (2:7-10); prophecies of Joseph of Egypt (3:5-21); redemption through Christ (3:7); the coming of the choice seer (3:2-19); Christ's resurrection, the resurrection of all humankind (3:8-9); and the restoration of the house of Israel (v. 24).

In the philosophical category come such topics as why Satan fell (2:17-18); mortality as a probationary stage (2:21); human free agency (2:27); and the fall of Adam and Eve (2:19-25). Exhortations include beautiful encouragement to Jacob (2:1-4, 28-29) and to Joseph (3:1-4, 25) to live righteous lives.

In a moving address to Laman's children, Lehi says:

Behold, my sons and my daughters, who are the sons and the daughters of my first-born, I would that ye should give ear to my words.

For the Lord God hath said that: Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land; and inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from my presence.

But behold, my sons and my daughters, I cannot go down to my grave save I should leave a blessing upon you; for behold, I know that if ye are brought up in the way ye should go ye will not depart from it.

Wherefore, if ye are cursed, behold, I leave my blessing upon you, that the cursing may be taken from you and be answered upon the heads of your parents.

Wherefore, because of my blessing the Lord God will not suffer that ye shall perish; wherefore, he will be merciful unto you and unto your seed forever. (II Nephi 4:3-7)

To Lemuel's children, Lehi continues:

Behold, my sons and my daughters, who are the sons and daughters of my second son; behold, I leave unto you the same blessing which I left unto the sons and daughters

of Laman; wherefore, thou shalt not utterly be destroyed; but in the end thy seed shall be blessed. (II Nephi 4:9)

He next pronounced a blessing upon the children of Ishmael (his words are not recorded), and then proceeded to bless the children of Sam:

Blessed art thou, and thy seed; for thou shalt inherit the land like unto thy brother Nephi. And thy seed shall be numbered with his seed; and thou shalt be even like unto thy brother, and thy seed like unto his seed; and thou shalt be blessed in all thy days. (II Nephi 4:11)

In reading the blessings of Lehi upon his children and grandchildren, one can perceive the deep affection he had for them and his desire for them to be faithful to the Lord so that their succeeding generations would have the grace and blessings of God upon them.

One can also understand that the life of a prophet of God is not always filled with happiness. At times he is persecuted, reviled for God's sake, opposed by his own family, imprisoned, and sometimes slain. But there are also times of extreme joy when he sees that the word of God spoken through him bears good fruit. Lehi, it seems, experienced most of this range of experience in his life.

Chapter 16

ROLE MODELS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

What constitutes righteousness? Personal definitions vary widely; but to me, righteousness is keeping and teaching the commandments of the Lord, walking in His precepts, being just, merciful, kind, long-suffering, humble, and filled with love, walking in the fear of the Lord, [?? what does this mean?] displaying wisdom, and otherwise exemplifying divine traits in one's life.

The Bible defines righteousness as a gift: "... much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:17). Righteousness is acquired by faith: "For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith" (Galatians 5:5).

James exhorts: "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (James 3:17-18).

A wonderful example of a righteous society is found in IV Nephi. For approximately two hundred years, the people of God enjoyed a peace and harmony unparalleled in the history of

mankind. There were no rich and poor, bond and free, and they had “all things common” among them. The sick were healed, the blind were made to see, the lame to walk, the dead were raised to life, and all manner of miracles were wrought among them. This was the result of walking in righteousness before the Lord. Alas, when pride entered into the hearts of the people, the reign of peace which they had enjoyed for so many years came to an end.

Noticeable in the history of humankind, is that when there was righteous leadership, the people also became righteous and prosper. When wicked leadership arose, the people suffered; prejudice and racism developed, hatred increased, and inevitably wars were initiated, with the subsequent results of economic chaos, pestilence and famine.

The same relationship between righteous leadership and spiritual flourishing can be discerned in the realm of religion. When the leadership is righteous, the people learn to walk in righteousness. The blessings and the gifts of God abound. Conversely, when leaders of religious communities grow lax in righteousness and allow worldly components to influence their lives and the lives of the flock over which they have been made shepherds, then the gifts and blessings of the Lord lessen until eventually they disappear altogether. The Book of Mormon records this spiritual cycle very vividly. One of the most valuable things in the Book of Mormon of Mormon for me is the series of biographies of righteous prophets and leaders—role models of righteousness.

Lehi

Fashioned of the same mold as the prophets of old, Lehi stands out as a faithful and obedient servant of God. He is a counterpart of Abraham, for as Abraham, by the command of God, left his land of birth, and followed His direction, so did Lehi. Nephi, declares that his father Lehi was a prophet, to whom the Lord revealed the imminent destruction of Jerusalem if the people did not repent. Obedient to this revelation, Lehi went about among the people, prophesying concerning their iniquity and the city’s impending

destruction. As their forefathers had stoned the prophets who had preceded him, so did the people attempt to slay Lehi.

Escaping their indignation and resentment, he returned home; shortly the Lord appeared to him in a dream and commanded him to leave Jerusalem and depart into the wilderness, for He was about to destroy the city because of the abominations that were committed by its residents. Lehi did not question God, but immediately left the city with his wife, Sariah, and his four sons, Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and Nephi. (Two more sons, Joseph and Jacob, were born during their eight-year wandering in the desert which followed.) He took nothing with him of his worldly goods; neither gold, silver, nor precious things. He took only the bare necessities such as provisions and tents.

What manner of man was this, who, upon the word of the Lord in a dream, obeyed without murmuring or questioning the divine command? How many people, even those who consider themselves deeply religious, would leave all their possessions and depart for unknown destinations? The answer to these questions must be not only in Lehi's but in the lives of all who have obeyed the Lord without questioning His purposes.

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the patriarchs of the house of Israel, were blessed because of their obedience to God's word. Moses obeyed the Lord's commandment at the burning bush. Many others forsook their avocations, families, and friends in obedience to God's commands. And why? Paul the apostle answers us: they did so by faith! (Hebrews 11)

Although we are not conversant with how often these faithful men had received experiences from the Lord or had heard His voice, it seems logical to assume that God had disclosed Himself to them in one form or another many times—dream, vision, promptings of the heart, sudden illuminations or slowly emerging insights, signs and portents, and the often secret but irresistible workings of the Holy Spirit deep within the soul and conscience. In unique cases, God reveals Himself in exceptional power and self-disclosure, as with Moses at the burning bush and speaking to him as one person to another on Mount Sinai. Another experience is that which the apostle Paul underwent when he was struck down on the way to Damascus.

Added to the list of persons who left all that they had, even their own families to follow the decrees of God must be Christ's apostles, evangelists, and multitudes of His followers. The conclusion of the matter is that these men, including Lehi, were men whose belief in God was deep-rooted prior to the revelation to depart for unknown locales.

Upon reaching the wilderness, this wonderful man, Lehi, built an altar of stones and made a thanksgiving offer to the Lord—no questions, no recriminations, no regrets, just thanksgiving to the Almighty for His direction and preservation. Against the murmurings of his sons Laman and Lemuel, he closed his ears, because he knew that the One who had commanded him to leave Jerusalem was the Lord!

In the wilderness, Lehi received a revelatory dream to send his sons back to Jerusalem to retrieve the Brass Plates upon which were engraved the genealogy of his forefathers, the five books of Moses, and the words of many prophets. It was in the mind of God that the written word on the Plates of Brass would help to preserve their language (I Nephi 3:19; Mosiah 1:4-5).

The wisdom of these instructions was verified when the Zarahemlites (the descendants of those who had arrived on the Western Hemisphere with Mulek and his small colony eleven years after the Lehi expedition), were discovered by the people of Mosiah. Neither side could understand each other, as the language of the Zarahemlites had become corrupted. The reason for this was that Mulek and the few who left the land of Palestine with him had not taken the written word with them. One can readily see the wisdom of God in commanding Lehi to send his sons back to Jerusalem for the Brass Plates. Without the written word, the language of people would become defiled, and the scriptures would, in time, become adulterated completely.

Lehi suffered untold pangs of sorrow and heartaches as he watched his eldest sons continually rebel against him and his son Nephi. Neither cajoling nor threats were able to change the disposition of Laman and Lemuel. Their hearts had become hardened to the extent that, if the Lord had not stopped them from time to time, they would have killed their own father as well as their younger brother.

In the midst of this turmoil, Lehi had moments of rejoicing. He saw his son Nephi grow spiritually stronger each day, indomitable in the face of persecution by his older brothers, and impervious to their threats. Lehi also rejoiced when his wife bore him two sons in the wilderness, Jacob and Joseph. Great also was his joy at finding a brass ball, named the Liahona, outside his tent door. The Lord had now provided them with an instrument which would lead them where He intended them to go.

But this “compass” worked only by faith. When it fell into the hands of Laman and Lemuel aboard the ship bound to the promised land, the results were nearly disastrous. They had bound Nephi and had threatened Lehi who had pleaded with them for Nephi’s safety. The Liahona would not work while it was in their hands, so, afraid that they would perish in the sea, they loosened the bonds from Nephi who took the “ball” in his hands, and lo, it began to work again.

Lehi and his wife Sariah lived long enough to see the land which God had promised to them. Lehi must have been greatly gratified to see that Nephi remained steadfast and continued to be blessed by God, even while his concerns about Laman and Lemuel continued to grieve him. In contrast to Nephi’s righteous children, he and Sariah mourned to see the older sons still rebellious and teaching their offspring to hate and despise Nephi and those affiliated with him. Lehi’s dying effort was a series of blessings and exhortations to righteousness directed toward those who had voyaged with him to the promised land. Thus ended the days of a wonderful man of faith, humility, and strict obedience to the commandments of the Lord..

Nephi

It was with unfeigned love and respect that this son of Lehi eagerly listened to his father expound the scriptures and admonish his children in righteousness. From his childhood, young Nephi stood in awe of his father’s wisdom and prophetic gift. Nothing in the world would please him more than to know and understand some of the things which were revealed to his father. He was an

obedient son, never questioning his father's authority, either in temporal or spiritual matters. His love for his parents is indicated in the very first words he wrote: "I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents. . . "

Because of his exceptional faith, the Lord promised Nephi that he would be led to a promised land, "a land which is choice above all other lands; and that he would be made a ruler and a teacher over his brethren (I Nephi 2:20-22). The fact that he was blessed of God inflamed his older brothers to a deeper hatred for him, insomuch that several times they sought to take his life. If it were not for God's intervention, they would have murdered Nephi.

Yet God's promises continued to unfold. Nephi did become the leader of the group. The Lord also kept His promise by bringing the family to this Western Hemisphere.

Nephi's faith never faltered despite the persecutions from his older brothers and their children. From the very outset, his obedience to whatever his father required of him dominates his account. When the Lord commanded Lehi to send his sons back to Jerusalem to retrieve the religious records on the Brass Plates, then held by a ruler named Laban, the older sons rebelled at the request, but Nephi without hesitation said to Lehi, "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them" (I Nephi 3:7). What a wonderful exhibition of faith! No wonder that the Lord "favored" this young man all the days of his life.

The first attempt to get the Brass Plates from Laban was unsuccessful, and Nephi's older brothers wanted to retreat in defeat. But the faith and strength of young Nephi prevailed; and upon returning to the city, he found Laban outside in a drunken stupor. Constrained by the Spirit of God to kill Laban, he rebelled at the thought of taking a human life; but remembering the commandment of the Lord that they must have the records, he overcame his revulsion and slew Laban. Moreover, the Holy Spirit whispered that "it was better that one man should perish than that a nation should dwindle and perish in unbelief" (I Nephi 4:13).

Donning Laban's garments and his entire armor, Nephi entered the treasury where the records were kept and took them away with the assistance of Zoram, Laban's servant, whom Nephi won over as an ally. Shortly after their return to Lehi, they were instructed by revelation to return to Jerusalem to persuade a second family, composed primarily of daughters, to go with them to the promised land. After hearing Nephi explain the reason for their visit, Ishmael consented to go with them. As soon as the two groups united, they continued on their journey.

The reader of Nephi's account will immediately perceive how deep-rooted this young man's faith was. Desiring that future generations would know of their history, he made small and large plates upon which he inscribed a spiritual and a historical record respectively. These plates were handed down from generation to generation to continue the history and formed the genesis of the Book of Mormon plates created in abridged form by Mormon, delivered to Joseph Smith by Moroni, and translated by him.

Nephi's faith was so intense and his desire to know the things which had been revealed to his father so fervent that he was blessed with a vision like his father's. By the power of God's Spirit, he saw in vision, not only the history of his people and that of the new world toward which they were bound, but he also received the interpretive commentary of an angelic messenger.

In Lehi's vision (1 Nephi 8), a man, clothed in a white robe, appeared to him and led him through a dark and dreary waste, after which he saw a large and spacious field containing a tree filled with white and desirable fruit. Upon partaking of this fruit, Lehi realized that he had never tasted anything sweeter in his life.

As soon as he partook of the fruit, his soul was filled with excessive joy, insomuch that he desired that his family would partake of it also. While looking for his family, he beheld a river which ran by the side of the tree; and at the head of the river, he saw his wife, Sariah, and his two sons, Nephi and Sam. He immediately beckoned to them to come and partake of the marvelous fruit which he had tasted. They went and also partook of the fruit. Then Lehi saw his sons Laman and Lemuel, who refused to come when their father called to them to eat of the fruit.

Next, he saw a rod of iron running along the bank of the river,

and it led to the tree where he stood. He also saw a straight and narrow path by the rod of iron, and it too came to the tree. This path led to a large field, which appeared as though it was a world.

He saw a large number of people attempting to reach the path which led to the tree. Some of them succeeded and began to follow the path; but there arose a mist of darkness so thick that those who had started began to lose their way, wandered off the path, and became lost. However, others struggled through the mist of darkness until they reached the tree and partook of the fruit.

On the other side of the river, Lehi saw a large building filled with people, old and young, male and female, who were all dressed in fine clothes. These people were in the attitude of mocking those who were eating of the fruit from the tree. Some of the partakers of the fruit became ashamed because of the criticism from those in the building and left the tree, wandering in forbidden paths until they became lost.

Desiring to see and know that which his father had seen, Nephi prayed to this end. He was carried away in the Spirit to a high mountain, where the Spirit, who was in the form of a man, asked his desire. He replied, "I desire to behold the things which my father saw." Nephi not only wanted to see those things but receive the interpretation thereof.

Nephi saw the tree and the rod of iron which his father had seen and was given to understand that the tree was a representation of life and the love of God and that the rod of iron was the word of God. The fountain of living waters represented the love of God also.

The angel (as Nephi called the personage who appeared to him) interpreted the gathering of the multitude in the large building as those, including the house of Israel, who would fight against the apostles of the Lord. The angel also told Nephi that the building was the pride of the world, which would fall. The angel also said, "Thus shall be the destruction of all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, that shall fight against the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (1 Nephi 11:36).

Nephi also saw in vision these Old World events: the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus; he beheld Jesus Christ, His Messianic mission, the Twelve Apostles of the Lamb, His crucifixion, and

the persecutions against the apostles. He also saw the twelve disciples who would minister to his own descendants in the new world and the subsequent downfall of his posterity four generations after the advent of Christ.

Among the many revelations given to this young faithful man were the discovery of America by Columbus, the arrival of the Pilgrim Fathers on this land, the Revolutionary War, and the importance of the Bible, even though “many plain and precious parts” were missing. He witnessed Joseph Smith, who would translate the records and the men who would become witnesses to the Book of Mormon’s truthfulness. He also predicted the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth in the latter days (I Nephi 22:24-27). Careful reading and rereading reveal hidden treasures in Nephi’s experiences with the gift of visions, prophecy, wisdom, and understanding from God.

A great test of Nephi’s faith occurred when the Lord commanded him to build a ship which would carry them to the promised land. He had never built a ship, didn’t have the tools, and didn’t have plans from which to construct an ocean-going vessel that would have to accommodate a significant number of passengers and provisions. But he had faith in God. Within him was always a complete belief in the Almighty. “Where shall I go that I may find ore to molten, that I may make tools to construct the ship after the manner which thou hast shown unto me?” he inquired of the Lord (I Nephi 17:9). What he was really saying was, “Show me and I will do it.” If our faith resembled Nephi’s, no mountain would be too steep to climb, no valley too deep to traverse; nothing would be impossible if we trusted in God’s word.

As a result of his faith, Nephi finished building the ship despite the mockings of his older brothers, and the time arrived for embarking on the voyage to the Promised Land. On the ship, Laman and Lemuel with some of their families resorted to irreverent revelry, which displeased Nephi and Lehi. For their efforts to dissuade them from their evil doings, Nephi was bound hand and foot, and Lehi was threatened physically. The Liahona ceased to operate; but even then, the rebellious brothers repented only after a three-day storm intensified to the point that the ship was actually about to be swallowed up by the sea. Quickly they

loosened Nephi's bonds. When he took the brass ball in his hands it began to work again because of his faith. Eventually they arrived at the promised land.

Nephi's life in this new world was filled with joy and also sorrow—joy in seeing the blessings of the Lord upon the group, the spiritual growth of his brothers Sam, Jacob, and Joseph and their families, the blessed and fertile land which brought forth in abundance, both in vegetation and animals. Sorrow was his constant companion because of the rebellion of and persecution from his older brothers. Because of their wickedness, a curse came upon them, which caused their skins to become dark.

Before he died, Nephi reiterated his prophecy that the record of his people would come forth unto the Gentiles, who would later inherit the land; through their instrumentality, the remnant of his descendants and those of his brothers, would become acquainted with the history of their forefathers, know that they came from Jerusalem, and understand that they were descendants of the house of Israel. Among Nephi's many wonderful predictions was that the other tribes of Israel, no matter where they were, would also write their own histories and that the time would come when they would share each other's records (II Nephi 29:11-13).

One cannot read the record of Nephi without the deepest admiration for his unwavering faith in the Lord and his unquenchable desire to understand God's divine purposes. One is awestruck by God's condescension to this man of spiritual determination. The Lord disclosed Himself to Nephi by revealing many beautiful events which would transpire in the future. Blessed indeed is the person who reads Nephi's historical record.

Jacob

Lehi's fifth son, Jacob, was born in the wilderness prior to the group's voyage to the promised land. Joseph, Lehi's youngest son was also born in the wilderness, but the Book of Mormon does not contain any of his writings. It merely states that Nephi ordained both him and Jacob as priests and teachers and that, in the blessing given him by Lehi, his seed should not altogether perish. Joseph,

it appears, was thus also a righteous preacher and teacher of the Word of God (Jacob 1:18-19).

Jacob, to the reader's loss, leaves only a brief account of himself and his teachings, but that short section is extremely important. Jacob was a man of great faith, gifted with wisdom and understanding of the prophecies, especially those of Isaiah. He was a learned expositor of the word of God, and his preaching was that of a gifted orator. Through him the reader learns of the separation between those who believed as Nephi did and those who joined with Laman and Lemuel; these divisions eventually produced the two nations called Nephites and Lamanites.

Jacob's predilection for the prophecies is very apparent in the writings of his that are preserved in the Book of Mormon. He not only quotes Isaiah and others, but understands and expounds their words with inspiration. He strongly preached family unity, denounced unchastity, and strictly upheld the sanctity of marriage: "For there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife; and concubines he shall have none" (Jacob 2:27).

Jacob condemns pride and the aspiration for riches. He attempts to instill in the hearts of his people a desire to seek the kingdom of God first, and then let Him supply their needs. One can readily observe, in reading his record, the inherent moral principles of this man who continually exhorted his people to strive for higher levels of righteous living.

Revealed to Jacob was also the advent of Christ, the atonement, and the resurrection. Although they kept the law of Moses, they worshipped God in the name of Jesus Christ, "insomuch," he says, "that we truly can command in the name of Jesus and the very trees obey us, or the mountains, or the waves of the sea" (Jacob 4:6).

One of the most beautiful prophecies quoted by Jacob is that of Zenos' allegory of the tame and wild olive tree. In this prophecy can be seen events which will transpire in the latter days, even unto the end of the world. They include the totality of Israel (represented by tame tree), the dispersion of Israel, the advent of Christ, the divine calling of the Gentiles (represented by the wild tree), the apostasy, the restoration, the establishment of the kingdom of God, and the end of the world.

Jacob does not interpret the allegory of the two trees in any

great detail, merely commenting that Zenos likened Israel to a tame olive tree and that the servants of the Lord should go forth in power to nourish and prune His vineyard before the coming of the end of the world. It would have been educational indeed if Jacob had written his understanding of this allegory at length; but the reader is inspired to seek its interpretation, as Jacob did, by the gift and power of the Holy Spirit.

The last one reads of faithful Jacob is his debate with Sherem who taught the people that there was no Christ. The debate is not long but it is intensely interesting. On one side stands a faithful servant of God and on the other side an unbeliever. Jacob, by the power of the Holy Spirit, was able to confound Sherem. After Sherem's physical collapse and an illness of many days, he confessed that he had been deceived by the devil and that he really there was a God and a Christ. Sherem also stated that he feared he had committed the unpardonable sin for he had denied Christ and lied unto God. He died immediately afterwards; and the sobered people of Nephi, understanding the consequences of what he had done in some respects, restored peace among them (Jacob 7:1-20).

Before he died, Jacob gave the plates to his son Enos who promised to care for them with diligence. With respect for a truly faithful man, the reader finishes the short biography of Jacob, the son of Lehi.

King Benjamin

Nowhere in the Book of Mormon is there found a more faithful Spirit-filled man than Benjamin. His life was permeated with the grace of God who disclosed Himself in wondrous ways to him. By divine revelations he knew about many wonderful events which would transpire in the future. His address to the people, which has been mentioned earlier, was a masterpiece of theological, philosophical, and exhortational insights.

He was a man who would not ask another person to undertake a task that he would not do himself. He worked with his own hands so that his people could follow his example. In all things—in his humility, faith, love, long-suffering, spirituality, and commitment

to following the commandments, Benjamin was a role model.

The Lord revealed to Benjamin the coming forth of Jesus Christ, His name, His Messianic mission, his atonement, His resurrection, and the conditions of salvation. All this he taught his people. In his address to the people, he testified that an angel of the Lord had revealed the advent of Jesus Christ and other important things to him. Eloquently, he urged his people to believe:

For behold, the time cometh, and is not far distant, that with power, the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity, shall come down from heaven among the children of men, and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay, and shall go forth amongst men, working mighty miracles, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, causing the lame to walk, the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear, and curing all manner of diseases.

And he shall cast out devils, or the evil spirits which dwell in the hearts of the children of men.

And lo, he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and abominations of his people.

And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning; and his mother shall be called Mary.

And lo, he cometh unto his own, that salvation might come unto the children of men even through faith on his name; and even after all this they shall consider him a man, and say that he hath a devil, and shall scourge him, and shall crucify him.

And he shall rise the third day from the dead; and behold, he standeth to judge the world; and behold, all these things are done that a righteous judgment might come upon the children of men.

For behold, and also his blood atoneth for the sins of those who have fallen by the transgression of Adam, who

have died not knowing the will of God concerning them, or who have ignorantly sinned. . . . (Mosiah 3:5-11)

Three years later, this humble prophet-king died and was succeeded by his chosen successor, his son Mosiah.

Mosiah

Mosiah was a righteous king, ruling over his people with justice and equity.

But he was also a prophet and a seer (Mosiah 8:13). During his reign, twenty-four gold plates were brought to him for translation, through the instruments of translation which he exercises in righteousness. These twenty-four plates had been prepared by the last prophet of the Jaredite people during its final years of massacre and annihilation and had been discovered on the last battlefield. These plates contained a history of the world from the creation to the building of the Tower of Babel, the departure of the Jaredites from that tower, and their subsequent history. Many years before, a large stone had been brought to his grandfather Mosiah, also a seer, who likewise interpreted the writings upon it by the gift and power of God. Upon this stone was an account of Coriantumr and Shiz, the last Jaredite survivors. The translation of the twenty-four plates, abridged by Moroni, is the book of Ether, which is placed at the end of the Book of Mormon.

As we might expect, Mosiah's history includes an interesting exposition of the role of the seer. When Limhi, king of the group who had found the twenty-four gold plates asked their Nephite missionary, Ammon, if he could interpret languages he answered, "No, [but] I can assuredly tell thee, O king, of a man that can translate the records; for he has wherewith that he can look, and translate all records that are of ancient date; and it is a gift from God. . . ." (Mosiah 8:13). Limhi thereupon remarked "that a seer is greater than a prophet." Ammon quickly explained:

. . . a seer is a revelator and a prophet also; and a gift which is greater can no man have, except he should possess the power of God, which no man can; yet a man

can have great power given him from God.

But a seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed, or, rather, shall secret things be made manifest, and hidden things shall come to light, and things which are not known shall be made known by them, and also things shall be made known by them which otherwise could not be known

Thus God has provided a means that man, through faith, might work mighty miracles; therefore he becometh a great benefit to his fellow man. (Mosiah 8:16-18)

Although there is not too much recorded about Mosiah, enough can be gleaned to satisfy the reader that he was a righteous man and singularly gifted as a seer and prophet. He established a “democratic” type of government through a system of elected judges, forbade any persecution of members of the church as well as internal persecution within the church, and ordered social equity. Alma became the first chief judge. The reign of judges was established, interestingly enough, because his once-rebellious sons became converted and insisted on becoming missionaries, bearing the word to their idolatrous cousins, the Lamanites. All four totally refused to consider accepting designation as the future king.

Righteous laws were enacted, and people were judged accordingly. Mosiah’s explanation to the people of the system of judgeship is worthy of the consideration of any democracy that wishes to remain free:

And now if ye have judges, and they do not judge you according to the law which has been given, ye can cause that they may be judged of a higher judge.

If your higher judges do not judge righteous judgments, ye shall cause that a small number of your lower judges should be gathered together, and they shall judge your higher judges, according to the voice of the people. (Mosiah 29:28-29)

Mosiah commanded that all judges should be chosen by the “voice of the people” and that all of their business was to be

conducted by the voice of the people. But he warned them to choose righteous men as judges who would judge them according to God's laws. He also told them that it was "not common for the voice of the people to choose anything that was not right," showing a great deal of confidence in the basic decency and good judgement of ordinary human beings. But even this base can be corrupted, he warned: "And if the time comes that the voice of the people doth choose iniquity, then is the time that the judgments of God will come upon you; yea, then is the time he will visit you with great destruction even as he has hitherto visited this land" (Mosiah 29:27).

Before he died, Mosiah conferred the sacred records in his possession to Alma the Younger. These records consisted of the Brass Plates, the plates of Nephi (large and small), the twenty-four gold plates found by the people of Limhi, the translation of the twenty-four gold plates, and the "interpreters."

An example of Mosiah's great faith occurred in association with the system of judges. His four sons, Ammon, Aaron, Omner, and Himni, desired intensely to go to the land of Nephi to preach the word of God. Before he answered his sons, Mosiah asked the Lord if he should grant them their request. Immediately the Lord answered Mosiah and told him to allow his sons to go according to their desire, promising to "deliver them out of the hands of the Lamanites."

What a beautiful example for those who read this account! Should not all those who wish to do missionary work fast and pray to God, and wait (like Mosiah) for His answer? Noteworthy also is the trust and confidence these young men had in their father. They waited patiently and obediently until their father inquired of God and received an affirmative answer.

Refreshed and encouraged by the Lord's answer, Mosiah sent his sons on their way with his blessings. After he set his kingdom in order, Mosiah died at the age of sixty-three years of age.

Abinadi

In the days of wicked Noah, a wicked king who ruled over a colony of Nephites separated from the main body of Nephites in the land of Zarahemla. His father, Zeniff, had been a righteous

man, and his son, Limhi, would also be a righteous man. But Noah's sins were such that a prophet named Abinadi arose, prophesying against his abominations, oppressions, luxury, and extravagance. Instead of repenting, the king and his court hardened their hearts against the word of the Lord and against Abinadi. The prophet fled, but two years later, he returned in disguise and again denounced the sins of the people. The angry people took him before the king, who in self-righteous wrath imprisoned this courageous man.

Not satisfied with isolating and silencing Abinadi, Noah assembled his priests and had Abinadi brought before them for a quasi-theological interrogation. With courage and divine zeal Abinadi confounded both the priests and Noah, who violently commanded his priests to kill Abinadi. But the power of God was a literal shield to this prophet who warned them that they could not touch him until he had finished the message which the Lord had commanded him to deliver. In his message, Abinadi quoted the Ten Commandments and Isaiah 53.

King Noah and his priests had become wicked beyond description, engaging in polygamy, idolatry, and licentious living (Mosiah 11). Yet, when confronted by Abinadi, Noah boasted that he and his people kept the law of Moses. Abinadi then quoted the First Commandment to show this wicked king and his priests that they were breaking the law, then quoted the rest of the commandments and rebuked them equally for not keeping these commandments (Mosiah 13:11-27).

In response to Noah's assertion that salvation comes by the law, Abinadi told them of Jesus Christ and His atonement. To strength his argument, he quoted Isaiah 53, which predicts the coming of Christ, His sufferings, and His death. With great fervor and passion, Abinadi expounded the prophecy of Isaiah (Mosiah chs. 14-15).

Abinadi also predicted the incarnation of Jesus Christ, His Messianic mission, the atonement, His resurrection, and His ascension. He gave a marvelous interpretation to the words of Isaiah regarding His "seed": "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and

the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand” (Mosiah 14:10). Abinadi gave an inspired and inspiring interpretation of this passage to his hostile hearers:

. . . And now what say ye? And who shall be his seed?

Behold I say unto you, that whosoever has heard the words of the prophets, yea, all the holy prophets who have prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord—I say unto you, that all those who have hearkened unto their words, and believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins, I say unto you, that these are his seed, or they are the heirs of the kingdom of God.

For these are they whose sins he has borne; these are they for whom he has died, to redeem them from their transgressions. And now, are they not his seed?

Yea, and are not the prophets, every one that has opened his mouth to prophesy, that has not fallen into transgression, I mean all the holy prophets ever since the world began? I say unto you that they are his seed. (Mosiah 15:10-13)

Abinadi spoke with power and conviction concerning the mortality and corruption of those who reject the Son of God. He prophesied with reverence and with the power of the Holy Spirit concerning the immortality and glory of those who would accept Jesus Christ and keep His commandments to the end. The heavens would be open to such for all eternity. One rejoices in the wonderful words of Abinadi, for he spoke them with divine authority.

Alma the Elder

We know nothing of Alma’s youth. He emerges, with no preamble, into the Book of Mormon record as a young priest in the court of the wicked King Noah. It is possible that he also shared the fleshly excesses indulged in by the rest of the priests. But as he listened to Abinadi’s chastening and castigating words, the word of the Lord, delivered by this holy man of God, had an

immediate effect upon him. A tremendous thrill coursed through him as the words of Abinadi fell upon his ears. The plan of salvation as outlined by Abinadi was a balm to his soul. The Son of God would come to redeem mankind; He would take upon Himself the sins of the world; He would be crucified, and He would still arise from the dead, a victor over the grave. Through His resurrection all humankind would also arise, whether righteous or evil and be judged according to their works.

What glorious words came forth from the mouth of Abinadi! It is a marvelous thing how quickly Alma absorbed the teachings of Abinadi. No doubt it was through the power of the Holy Spirit that this divine information was transmitted to Alma's mind. Abinadi was used as an instrument in the Lord's hand to convert Alma as he, in turn, was used to preach and prophesy in the name of the Lord that others might believe in God and in Jesus Christ, His Son. Alma rejoiced exceedingly while King Noah and his priests, blinded by their pride and angered by his unsparing denunciation, sought only to silence the fearless prophet. When Abinadi was sentenced to a fiery death, Alma pleaded with the king to spare his life, but to no avail. Now the wrath of King Noah was kindled against the young priest who dared to question his judgment. Wrathfully, he also ordered Alma's death.

By the grace of God, Alma escaped from his pursuers, and immediately began to preach privately that which he had heard from the prophet Abinadi. He had instant success in his mission. Shortly afterwards he received divine authority to baptize. At a place called the waters of Mormon, he and a man called Helam were baptized simultaneously by submerging themselves in the water. Following that, Alma baptized 204 persons. Thus the Church was established.

The inspiring words which Alma spoke to the people prior to baptizing them are still one of the best succinct sermons anywhere on the duties and responsibilities of the Christian life:

And it came to pass that he said unto them: Behold, here are the waters of Mormon (for thus they were called) and now, as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one

another's burdens, that they may be light;

Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life—

Now I say unto you, if this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you?

And now when the people had heard these words, they clapped their hands for joy, and exclaimed: This is the desire of our hearts. (Mosiah 18:8-11)

What remarkable philosophical treasures are found in the words of Alma! I call his approach the philosophy of caring, sharing, and daring—an ethical and spiritual approach to living that embodies both theological and eschatological themes.

First, he called upon these new Christians to care for each other: “willing to mourn, willing to comfort” are words reminiscent of the words of Jesus Christ in His Sermon on the Mount: “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Matthew 5:4). He repeated this teaching to his Nephite audience when he visited this continent after his resurrection (III Nephi 12:4). Although the words of Alma have slightly different nuances than those of Christ, the inference is practically the same.

Alma meant for his listeners to be disposed to grieve with those who encounter tragedies, afflictions and/or misfortunes of any kind. Those who mourn for the sorrow of others out of godly sympathy and compassion will be rewarded with empathy and kindness when adversities befall them.

Jesus' words, “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted” embrace not only the caring for others, but for the adversities that may befall oneself. Luke recording the same words of Jesus says, “Blessed are ye that weep now; for ye shall

laugh” (Luke 6: 21). In this epigram, he captured the paradox that the greatest of sorrows can be turned to blessedness. While it seems incomprehensible to the rational world, it is nevertheless sublimely true to the believer in Christ.

The adversities which the Lord permits, if received with humble surrender to His will, can ennoble the character and enrich the spirit. The Apostle Paul wrote, “And not only so, but we glory in tribulation also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope” (Romans 5:3-4). Jesus’ followers can truly say, “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Hebrews 12:11).

Those who mourn for their own sins with a godly repentance will be rewarded with a remission and a forgiveness of their sins. Those who mourn for the sins of others, praying for their conversion, will be comforted in the knowledge that their prayers (mourning) have been answered.

The second element of Alma’s message is sharing, captured in his injunction to be “willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light.” To lighten another’s burden means to succor others, to take upon oneself a part of their misfortunes, to sincerely feel their anguish, and to share their heartaches. There are many ways of doing this: fasting and prayer for unfortunate victims of circumstances, comforting others in their afflictions, sharing the grief of a lost loved one, or providing direct physical and/or temporal service, including material assistance, to ease a burden.

The reward of sharing others’ burdens is to see joy and happiness replace their sorrow and pain. James asked a piercing question of complacent Christians: “If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?” (James 2:15-16). The answer is obvious; sharing physically and spiritually whatsoever God has given one is an absolute priority.

The third aspect of Alma’s message is daring. After preaching to the people gathered around the Waters of Mormon and asking

whether they were willing to mourn, to comfort, and to be witnesses of God, Alma asks, "If this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord. . . ?" This direct question is a challenge, summoning up his listeners' resources of courage and commitment and making them decide immediately how important it was to act on his words. Paraphrasing Alma, he was daring them to take the challenge of a Christian life: "Are you willing to accept the challenge of mourning, comforting, and witnessing? Are you willing to abide by the things that I have laid before you? Will you dare?"

The things that Alma was asking them to accept were not easy, especially since the people before him were in danger of death if the king found out what they were doing. But more consistent than political opposition is the sloth and laziness that undermine commitment and diligence. It takes the power of the Holy Spirit to engage in the spiritual exercise of Christian living. Often it is easy to disregard the trials and misfortunes of others, by either carelessness or design, because one's own problems seem more grievous than someone else's. But when one is "born again of God" the plights of others become one's own. Therefore, to assume the cares of others is indeed a challenge (or a dare).

Jesus offered a similar challenge or dare to His New Testament disciples by telling them, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). Christ did not promise an easy road to His disciples, for the path He trod was filled with trials, persecution, and rejections. But the end result of His Messianic mission was a victory over death and the grave and salvation for all humankind. So if one dares the perils of following Him as an intrepid believer, a mansion in the house of the Father is the ultimate reward.

Those who heard Alma lay down the principles of true discipleship and were asked if they were willing to accept the challenge (dare), clapped their hands for joy and in unison exclaimed, "This is the desire of our hearts." In other words, "We accept the challenge."

Alma's faith increased daily. God revealed Himself to him in marvelous ways. Under his leadership, the infant church grew and prospered. Soon, this remarkable movement came to the attention

of the evil King Noah, whose rage turned upon Alma and the humble people of the church. He sent his armies to annihilate them. But Alma, warned by the Lord, fled with his people (who by this time numbered in the hundreds). They pursued an eight-days' journey into the wilderness where they began a new life. They built buildings, tilled the soil, obeyed the commandments of God, and became a prosperous people.

To stabilize their government, the people asked Alma to be their king—to become their political head as he was their spiritual head. But he refused, wisely pointing out, “If it were possible to always have righteous men as kings, they would prosper, but evil kings like Noah would bring them to destruction” (Mosiah 23:8-9) He also spoke the word of the Lord to them, saying, “Ye shall not esteem one flesh above another, or one man shall not think himself above another” (Mosiah 23:7). He exhorted them to cherish their liberty and trust no man to be their king. Additionally he counseled, “And also trust no man to be your teacher nor your minister, except he be a man of God, walking in his ways, and keeping his commandments” (Mosiah 23:14).

In just a few words, Alma thus captured the characteristics of the true teacher and minister: “walking in his ways, and keeping his commandments.” The Lord gave Alma authority to ordain (consecrate) priests and teachers who diligently nourished the people with the word of God daily.

The faith of Alma was tried often, but this man of God became stronger as he overcame each obstacle which challenged his belief in the Almighty. After escaping from the wrath of King Noah, Alma and his people arrived in the wilderness after eight days' journey and made a settlement they named Helam. In a short time, the Lamanites, under Amulon, subjected Alma and his people to an oppressive rule. They eventually escaped and, though a divine revelation, arrived at the city of Zarahemla, where they were received with joy by King Mosiah and his people (Mosiah chs. 23-24).

Alma thereafter was instrumental in establishing many churches throughout the land of Zarahemla. Since there were many who had been baptized, it became impossible to meet in one place. Therefore the people assembled themselves in different

bodies called churches, with the respective congregations considered one church. The number of churches in Zarahemla grew to seven.

But simultaneously, Satan also labored among the people, stirring up unbelievers who persuaded many to commit sin. This caused great grief in Alma's heart; nothing like this had happened before in the church. After consulting with King Mosiah on how to deal with this evil, he prayed mightily to the Lord for direction. In answer to Alma's prayer, the Lord responded:

Blessed art thou, Alma, and blessed are they who were baptized in the waters of Mormon. Thou art blessed because of thy exceeding faith in the words alone of my servant Abinadi.

And because thou hast inquired of me concerning the transgressor, thou art blessed.

Therefore I say unto you, that he that will not hear my voice, the same shall ye not receive into my church, for him I will not receive at the last day.

Therefore I say unto you, Go; and whosoever transgresseth against me, him shall ye judge according to the sins which he has committed; and if he confess his sins before thee and me, and repenteth in the sincerity of his heart, him shall ye forgive, and I will forgive him also.

Yea, and as often as my people repent will I forgive them their trespasses against me.

And ye shall also forgive one another your trespasses; for verily I say unto you, he that forgiveth not his neighbor's trespasses when he says that he repents, the same hath brought himself under condemnation.

Now I say unto you, Go; and whosoever will not repent of his sins the same shall not be numbered among my people; and this shall be observed from this time forward. (Mosiah 26:15, 19, 28-32)

Immediately, upon hearing these instructions from a divine source, Alma wrote them down so that he would not forget them;

from them, he began to judge the people. He was soon able to regulate the affairs of the church, restoring peace and prosperity.

Among the many trials that beleaguered Alma, none exceeded the painful experience of seeing his son, Alma the Younger, and the four sons of Mosiah—Ammon, Aaron, Omner, and Himni—deliberately working among church members, fomenting strife, turning the hearts of many members away from the Lord. Their actions brought untold grief to Alma's heart. His anguish knew no bounds; but like the man of faith that he was, he turned to the Lord in continuous prayer.

The Lord answered his prayers in a remarkable way. As young Alma and the sons of Mosiah were going about their wicked business one day, God struck down Alma with His mighty power in the same manner in which Saul of Tarsus was stricken on his way to Damascus. Struck dumb by the power of the angel of God, Alma also lost the use of his limbs and his voice.

Through the fasting and prayers of Alma the Elder and the church, Alma the Younger revived from two days and nights of unconsciousness during which he had suffered the torments of hell, fully realizing the consequences of his rebellion. Alma's anguish in watching the rebellion of his son against the Lord and the church was now replaced with unspeakable joy because he knew that the Lord had stopped him and his friends by His miraculous power. His happiness was absolute; tears of sorrow gave way to joyful praises unto the Lord. His joy was further augmented when he witnessed the complete change in his son. He saw his son preach and teach by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Alma also lived to see his son chosen as the chief judge in the system of judges established by King Mosiah and consecrated his son as high priest before he died. At the age of eighty-two years, this wonderful man of God passed on to his eternal reward, having lived to fulfill the commandments of God. The great faith of the father was transmitted to the son, who equalled and even surpassed his father in spiritual stature.

Alma the Younger

Perhaps only Paul in the New Testament equals Alma the

Younger's dramatic change—from someone who delighted in opposing his father, persecuting the church, and leading many into corruption and iniquity to becoming a pure-hearted missionary and a mighty man of God, a prophet and a righteous leader. This experience is such a powerful and extraordinary one that it merits fuller treatment.

As young Alma and his friends (the four sons of Mosiah: Ammon, Aaron, Omner, and Himni) were going about their nefarious activities, an angel descended in a "cloud" and spoke to them in a voice so powerful, that it sounded like thunder.

At its sound, Alma and his companions fell to the earth. The angel addressed Alma directly, reprimanding him for persecuting the Church and seeking to destroy the work which his father had done. The angel told Alma that the only thing which kept the Lord from destroying him was the prayers of his father and of the people. After the angel finished speaking, he departed, but the power of his words caused Alma to lose his voice as well as the use of his limbs.

When he was brought before his father, there was great rejoicing because Alma knew that God had stricken his son. Immediately he called the entire church to fast and pray for his son, who, after two days and two nights, received strength in his body and also regained his voice. Young Alma stood on his feet and confessed to all that during those two days of immobility, his soul had been racked with the pains of hell, but the Lord had snatched him from the "gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity." He praised the Lord for his deliverance from certain destruction; and from that day on, he devoted himself completely to the service of the Lord.

Alma and the sons of Mosiah, who also repented of their evil-doing, traveled throughout the land seeking to repair the damage they had done to the church. Their zeal was so great that many hundreds were brought to the knowledge of the Lord.

The points of comparison between the conversions of Alma the Younger and Paul the Apostle are compelling. As Paul was struck down on the way to Damascus where he was going to continue his persecution of the followers of Jesus Christ, likewise Alma, while persecuting and seeking to destroy the church was

also stricken by the Lord. Paul was inflicted with blindness and weakness; Alma was stricken with dumbness and weakness. But both, after their conversions, became mighty instruments in the hands of the Lord. Because of his faith and wisdom, Alma was chosen by the people as the first chief judge (Mosiah 29:42). He was also ordained a high priest under the hands of his father.

The life of this wonderful man was filled with many trials where his faith was tested to the uttermost. Nevertheless, God supported him by the power of His Holy Spirit whereby he overcame all obstacles. His confrontations with Zeezrom and Korihor are classic examples of the wisdom and power which God had bestowed upon Alma. Zeezrom, after debating with Alma finally confessed his guilt and attempted to defend Alma and Amulek, but was cast out by his people, who sought to destroy the two men of God. Eventually Zeezrom, who lay sick with a burning fever because of his wickedness and because he thought that he had caused the deaths of Alma and Amulek, heard that the two godly men were alive, and immediately he sent for them. When the two prophets reached his house, Alma questioned him thoroughly about his belief in the power of Christ to heal him. Upon Zeezrom's affirmative answer, Alma prayed for him and immediately he was healed. Without hesitation, he asked to be baptized, Alma performed the ordinance, and Zeezrom immediately began to preach the gospel (Alma 11:31; 15:3; 16:5-12).

In contrast, Korihor's confrontation with Alma ended in a disastrous finale for the apostate. After a long debate in which Korihor sought to confuse the man of God, the power of the Holy Spirit came upon Alma and he commanded Korihor to become dumb because of his wickedness. Korihor confessed that the devil had deceived him, appearing to him as an angel, and begged Alma to pray for him. Alma refused, commenting sadly but piercingly that, if Korihor's voice were restored, he would lead away the hearts of the people again. The curse was not taken from Korihor. Rather he went begging for bread; and while he was among the Zoramites, he was trodden upon until he died (Alma 30:43, 50, 59).

Alma's faith and wisdom were exhibited in the highest degree when he and his missionary companion, Amulek, were imprisoned

in the city of Ammonihah. Bound with cords, they were brought to the place where the wives and children of their converts were burned to death. Seeing this terrible carnage, Amulek pleaded with Alma to use the power which God had given them to save those innocent lives. But Alma refused, saying that the perpetrators of this atrocity committed upon those guiltless people would receive a just punishment from the Lord. He explained:

But Alma said unto him: The Spirit constraineth me that I must not stretch forth mine hand; For behold, the Lord receiveth them up unto himself, in glory; and he doth suffer that they may do this thing, or that the people may do this thing unto them, according to the hardness of their hearts, that the judgments which he shall exercise upon them in his wrath may be just; and the blood of the innocent shall stand as a witness against them, yea, and cry mightily against them at the last day. (Alma 14:11)

It is evident that Alma was very sensitive to the direction of the Holy Spirit. He did not trust his own judgment but waited patiently for God to direct him in the proper actions, as dictated by His will. Alma and Amulek suffered ignominiously at the hands of the judge and his underlings. They were smitten repeatedly, spat upon, and challenged to use their power to deliver themselves. Their oppressors withheld food and water from these two men of God, mocking them continuously. The final affront was to deprive them of clothing, leaving them nude in prison.

After many days of enduring insult upon insult from the chief judge, many teachers, and many lawyers, these two servants of God called upon the power of the Almighty. Armed with divine power, Alma called upon the Lord, according to the faith they had in Jesus Christ, to deliver them. Immediately, the bonds fell from them, the walls of the prison were rent, and collapsing masonry fell upon those who had tormented them so inhumanly.

Those who came to see what had happened saw the prison walls broken down and the two men of God free from their shackles. So great was the fear of God upon the people that they fled from the presence of Alma and Amulek. Thus, Alma's faith was so great

that it could deliver both men from certain death.

Alma's knowledge of spiritual matters was unequalled in the Book of Mormon. God gave this brave and faithful man insights to mysteries that baffled many before him. His discourse on the resurrection is unparalleled (Alma 40; discussed in Chapter 11). His knowledge of the contents of the Brass Plates was admirable, as seen by his quoting the prophecies of Zenos and Zenock to the Zoramites (Alma 33:13-16).

Led by the Holy Spirit to preach in different areas of the land, Alma and the sons of Mosiah enjoyed tremendous success, being used of God to bring thousands to the knowledge of the Lord. The last act of his life was to depart on yet another mission; but he never arrived and his body was never found. Before his departure, he predicted the eventual destruction of the Nephite people because of their wickedness, blessed his three sons, "blessed the church and all those who should stand fast in the faith," and entrusted the sacred records and the Brass Plates to his son Helaman, commanding him to keep them sacred as he had done.

Then "he departed out of the land of Zarahemla, as if to go to the land of Melek. And it came to pass that he was never heard of more; as to his death and burial we know not of" (Alma 45:18). However, the people believed that Alma had been "taken up by the Spirit, or buried by the hand of the Lord, even as Moses" (Alma 45:19). This humble man of God left a model of faith and courage that others will always be inspired to emulate.

General Moroni

There are two Moronis in the Book of Mormon. Not much is written about him, yet even his short biography is an amazing account, not only of his military genius, but also of marvelous faith in God and in Jesus Christ who would be born generations after his day. He was also a remarkable recruiter of men to a just cause.

When a certain Amalickiah, who was a wicked man, began to turn the hearts of the people to sin and rebellion against the Nephites, Moroni determined to quell this rebellion, because

Amalickiah had sworn to destroy the Nephites. In consequence thereof, Moroni “rent his coat: and he took a piece thereof, and wrote upon it—In memory of our God, our religion, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children—and he fastened it upon the end of a pole” (Alma 46:12).

Donning his armor, he knelt and prayed that the “cause of the Christians, and the freedom of the land might be favored” (v. 16). It is apparent that Moroni was a religious man, and one of great strength and courage. The cause which the Nephites had embraced was that of Jesus Christ who would come; they had taken upon themselves the name of Christians. It was as true in this society before Christ as it has been historically after Christ that accepting Jesus Christ as the Savior and bearing the name of Christian has usually aroused a ferocious hatred and the impulse to destroy in the hearts of unbelievers.

Moroni was not intimidated by the threats of Amalickiah and immediately called for volunteers to come to aid of the Christian Nephites:

... He went forth among the people, waving the rent part of his garment in the air, that all might see the writing which he had written upon the rent part, and crying with a loud voice saying:

Behold, whosoever will maintain this title upon the land, let them come forth in the strength of the Lord, and enter into a covenant that they will maintain their rights, and their religion, that the Lord God may bless them

And it came to pass that when Moroni had proclaimed these words, behold, the people came running together with their armor girded about their loins, rending their garments in token, or as a covenant, that they would not forsake the Lord their God; or, in other words, if they should transgress the commandments of God, or fall into transgression, and be ashamed to take upon them the name of Christ, the Lord should rend them even as they had rent their garments. (Alma 46: 19-21)

The people answered Moroni’s call to arms with alacrity,

without the slightest hesitation. They covenanted their support with Moroni by tearing their garments and throwing them at his feet, saying, "We covenant with our God, that we shall be destroyed, even as our brethren in the land northward, if we shall fall into transgression; yea, he may cast us at the feet of our enemies, even as we have cast our garments at thy feet to be trodden underfoot, if we shall fall into transgression" (v. 22).

Moroni then reminded them to preserve their liberty, as they were a remnant of Joseph who had been sold into Egypt. He carried out the image of the rent garment one stage further, reminding them that as a remnant of his coat was preserved, a remnant of the seed of Joseph might also be preserved.

Armed with courage, determination, and faith in the Lord, Moroni led them, after many battles, to victory over the enemy. The battles were fierce and long, but this man of God was also a superb military strategist. Even more important, his tremendous faith never wavered; he exhorted the people constantly to be faithful to God, promising that God would deliver them from their enemies. The narrator of the short biography of Moroni was overwhelmed by the physical and spiritual prowess of this man, and anyone who reads about Moroni will be awed by his tremendous spiritual caliber. The Book of Mormon records the following:

And Moroni was a strong and mighty man; he was a man of a perfect understanding; yea, a man that did not delight in bloodshed; a man whose soul did joy in the liberty and the freedom of his country, and his brethren from bondage and slavery;

Yea, a man whose heart did swell with thanksgiving to his God, for the many privileges and blessings which he bestowed upon his people; a man who did labor exceedingly for the welfare and safety of his people.

Yea, and he was a man who was firm in the faith of Christ, and he had sworn with an oath to defend his people, his rights, and his country, and his religion, even to the loss of his blood.

Now the Nephites were taught to defend themselves against their enemies, even to the shedding of blood if it

were necessary; yea, and they were also taught never to give an offense, yea, and never to raise the sword except it were against an enemy, except it were to preserve their lives.

And this was their faith, that by so doing, the Lord would prosper them in the land, or in other words, if they were faithful in keeping the commandments of God that he would prosper them in the land; yea, warn them to flee, or to prepare for war, according to their danger.

And also, that God would make it known unto them whither they should go to defend themselves against their enemies, and by so doing God would deliver them; and this was the faith of Moroni, and his heart did glory in it; not in the shedding of blood but in doing good, in preserving his people, yea, in keeping the commandments of God, yea, and resisting iniquity.

Yea, verily, verily I say unto you, if all men had been, and were, and ever would be, like unto Moroni, behold, the very powers of hell would have been shaken forever; yea, the devil would never have power over the hearts of the children of men. (Alma 48:11-17)

What made Moroni so great as to be honored with these majestic attributes? Surely, he was a man made of flesh like other men, who had emotions like other men. Yet the narrator says that “if all men were like Moroni, the very powers of hell would be shaken.” What was in his personality that made him stand out so remarkably, like a giant above pygmies? Some of his attributes are revealed:

He was a strong and mighty man.

He was a man of a perfect understanding.

He did not delight in bloodshed.

He delighted in the liberty and freedom of his country.

He delighted in the liberty and freedom of his brethren.

He was a man of prayer, whose heart swelled in thanksgiving to God for the many privileges and blessings which He bestowed upon his people.

He was a man who labored exceedingly for the welfare and

safety of his people.

He was a man who was firm in the faith of Christ.

Among these above-mentioned qualities, there are two outstanding attributes:

1. He was a man of perfect understanding. To me, this means that Moroni had an extraordinary understanding of “right” and “wrong,” of “good” and “evil.” He was a man who stood aloof from the petty elements of mortal inadequacies, such as jealousy, envy, hatred (except for sin and unrighteousness), machinations of evil, manipulatory designs, deception, hypocrisy, pride, and self-glory. In other words, he had striven for divine attributes, and had achieved them. Although he was a man who would arm himself in defense of his country and his people, he never forgot his God, never forgot to pray, never forgot to give the Lord credit for all the things which He had bestowed upon him and his people. Moroni was a man who understood the ways of the devil and had the divine wisdom and understanding how to thwart the devil’s designs. This is indeed optimal understanding.

2. He was a man firm in the faith of Christ. The quality of being “firm in the faith of Christ” speaks volumes in itself. It means that Moroni was solidly founded on the Rock (Christ Jesus), indomitable and unyielding in the face of opposition, adversities, and persecution. He was steadfast in his faith, surrendering himself unconditionally to the will of the Lord. The amazing attribute that dwelled in Moroni was his faith in the Christ who was yet to come.

To believe in God was to Moroni’s credit. But to believe in the Son of God, a Being who had only been prophesied about and whose birth was still in the future, is truly remarkable. It is similar to those who lived yesteryear (and are living today) after the coming of Christ, who believed (and who do believe) in Him, although He has never been seen in person. Christ said that those who would believe in Him without having seen him are truly blessed.

The firmness of Moroni’s faith in Christ is inspirational to all believers. To have an unconquerable determination to achieve a “firmness of faith” should be the goal of every person who loves the Lord. To reach this goal, one should challenge the evil forces

with righteousness—to live above the mortal weaknesses of envy, jealousy, hatred, self-righteousness, pride, and covetousness. May the Lord help every lover of truth in their quest to achieve—as Moroni did—this “firmness of faith” in Jesus Christ.

Nephi and Lehi, the Sons of Helaman

It is written that Nephi’s brother Lehi “was not a whit behind him as to things pertaining to righteousness” (Helaman 11:19). The two brothers were inspired by the Holy Spirit to preach with astounding power. For their zeal, they were cast into prison but were liberated by the Lord. They were encircled with what appeared to be fire, insomuch that no one dared to lay a hand upon them. They were also overshadowed with a cloud of darkness which instilled a great fear in the people. Out of the darkness came the voice of God telling the people to repent and “seek no more to destroy my servants.”

Encircled by this heavenly fire, they heard a voice which said, “Peace, peace be unto you, because of your faith in my Well Beloved, who was from the foundation of the world.” The result of this marvelous experience by the two brothers was that three hundred people, who had witnessed this miraculous event and heard this voice, quickly went about the city proclaiming the things which they had seen and heard, with many being converted to the Lord. These two brothers were not only preachers but prophets as well. (Their ability to predict things to come is recorded in the book of Helaman).

Of the two brothers, much more is recorded of Nephi than of Lehi. For his dedication and supreme faith, God rewarded him with divine power such as no man had ever possessed in the history of mankind. On his way home, one day, troubled in heart and soul because of the iniquities of the people, he heard the voice of God saying,

Blessed art thou, Nephi, for those things which thou hast done; for I have beheld how thou hast with unweariness declared the word, which I have given unto thee, unto this people. And thou hast not feared them, and hast not sought

thine own life, but hast sought my will, and to keep my commandments.

And now, because thou hast done this with such unwearyingness, behold, I will bless thee forever; and I will make thee mighty in word and in deed, and faith and in works; yea, even that all things shall be done unto thee according to thy word, for thou shalt not ask that which is contrary to my will.

Behold, thou art Nephi, and I am God. Behold, I declare it unto thee in the presence of mine angels, that ye shall have power over this people, and shall smite the earth with famine, and with pestilence, and with destruction, according to the wickedness of this people.

Behold, I give unto you power, that whatsoever ye shall seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven; and thus ye shall have power among this people.

And thus, if ye shall say unto this temple it shall be rent in twain, it shall be done.

And if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou cast down and become smooth, it shall be done.

And behold, if ye shall say that God shall smite this people, it shall come to pass.

And now behold, I command you, that ye shall go and declare into this people, that thus saith the Lord God, who is the Almighty: Except ye repent ye shall be smitten, even unto destruction. (Helaman 10:4-11)

According to God's command, Nephi went among the people preaching His word but to no avail. Instead of repenting, they sought to imprison him; but because the power of God was upon him they could not touch him. They then turned against each other slaughtering each other. Seeing this, Nephi prayed to God that He would send a famine upon the land to humble the people. The Lord honored this request; thousands died during the four-year famine before the people repented and turned again to the Lord. Once again, Nephi interceded with God to turn His wrath away; and once again, God honored the request. Rains restored the dry land,

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which began to produce the fruits, vegetables, and wheat to sustain the people.

The faith of Nephi defies description. He never abused the divine power which had been given to him, for he remembered the Lord's words of caution, "For thou shalt not ask that which is contrary to my will" (Helaman 10:5).

He was a contemporary of the prophet Samuel the Lamanite, for it is recorded that those who believed on the words of Samuel sought Nephi and were baptized by him (Helaman 16:1). Meanwhile Nephi was preaching with power, performing miracles, and prophesying concerning the imminent coming of Jesus Christ. It was now six hundred years from the time that Lehi and his group had left Jerusalem. Nephi gave the Brass Plates and all the sacred records in his charge to his son Nephi. He then departed, and no one knew where he went. It is possible that the Lord translated this faithful man as He had Moses, Elijah and Alma the Younger.

Samuel the Lamanite

Samuel the Lamanite is a mysterious prophet. No one knows from whence he came nor where he returned. It is written only that he came into the land of Zarahemla, the Nephite capital, then ripe in wickedness and evil, to preach repentance and deliver the prophetic word of the Lord to them. His introduction of himself was simple: "I am Samuel, a Lamanite." And with that he rebuked their sins and transgressions.

The question that was uppermost in the minds of the masses was, "Who sent this unknown and brazen man among us to upbraid us and predict our destruction?" The answer came forth with resounding clarity, "The Lord has sent me!" He then told them that nothing except repentance and faith in God could save them.

Here was a unique man, a stranger to the Nephites, but bold and self-assured, preaching with a prophetic eloquence. From whence came his knowledge? He boldly declared, "The Lord has given this to me. He has put it in my heart. Also, an angel of the Lord has declared it unto me" (Helaman 13:5-7).

Like all men of God from the beginning of time who receive the word of the Lord, he could not contain it within himself but burned to deliver his message to those appointed to receive it. So Samuel, the Lamanite prophet, was directed by the Holy Spirit to deliver God's message to the sinful city of Zarahemla. His rejection at the hands of the inhabitants and being denied access to it again did not discourage him. Brave and resourceful, he climbed upon the city wall and began to preach.

The anger of the inhabitants knew no bounds. They sought to kill him by shooting arrows at him and pelting him with stones. But the Spirit of the Almighty surrounded him like a shield, and every arrow and every stone missed him completely. Meanwhile, he continued his vibrant message: the Son of God would come into the world to redeem humankind from its fallen state. At His birth would come lights in heaven so great that the night would not be dark. There would be one day and a night and a day as though it were a continuous day, while the sun rose and set as usual, letting the people know that two days and a night had passed. A new star would also appear, such as never had been seen before. Other signs and wonders in heaven would amaze them. Furthermore, these signs would come five years from the day he was speaking (Helaman 14).

The Zarahemlites also heard Samuel predict the death of Jesus Christ. On the day that the Lord would be crucified the sun, moon, and stars would all be darkened and refuse to give their light. The darkness would last for three days across the face of the land until Jesus arose from the dead. There would be earthquakes, lightning storms, and other violent manifestations. Mountains would be leveled, valleys would become mountains, and many cities would be desolate.

Samuel then told the people of Zarahemla that Christ would rise from the dead and break the bands of death—that without the resurrection of Christ, human beings would remain forever in the grip of the grave. The graves of many of the righteous saints would be opened at Christ's resurrection, and be seen by others. Because of His resurrection, all human beings would be brought before God to be judged according to their works; that without the resurrection of Christ, the grave would hold the bodies of mankind

forever.

Samuel also predicted the fall of the Nephites cities because of their wickedness and pride, which further enflamed the rage of his listeners. He told them that their lands and their treasures, their riches and their possessions were cursed because their hearts were “set upon them” instead of God and His word. He pronounced woe upon them for having cast out the prophets, for mocking them, throwing stones at them, and killing them.

Even worse, while committing all this wickedness, they had justified themselves saying smugly that if they lived in the days of their forefathers, they would not have slain the prophets as their fathers did. What hypocrisy! Samuel denounced them, “Ye are worse then they.” So great was the iniquity among the Nephites that even the very land was cursed. Samuel told them that when they laid down their tools, their swords, or even their riches, they would not find them any more. Powerfully he cried unto them:

Behold, I, Samuel, a Lamanite, do speak the words of the Lord which he doth put into my heart; and behold he hath put it into my heart to say unto this people that the sword of justice hangeth over this people; and four hundred years pass not away save the sword of justice falleth upon this people.

Yea, heavy destruction awaiteth this people, and it surely cometh unto this people, and nothing can save this people save it be repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ, who surely shall come into the world, and shall suffer many things and shall be slain for his people.

And four hundred years shall not pass away before I will cause that they shall be smitten; yea, I will visit them with the sword and with famine and with pestilence

Yea, I will visit them in my fierce anger, and there shall be those of the fourth generation who shall live, of your enemies, to behold your utter destruction; and this shall surely come except ye repent, saith the Lord; and those of the fourth generation shall visit your destruction. (Helaman 13:5-6, 9-10)

But nothing the prophet said motivated them to repent. Their hearts were so steeped in sin that the words of Samuel engendered anger and resentment rather than repentance. And of a consequence, they sought to destroy this wonderful man of God.

Many things did this mysterious prophet reveal to the Zarahemlites. All they had to do was repent and believe on the Son of God. But since their hearts were set upon the temporal things of life rather than upon God, they reviled the prophet. Apparently the life of sin and wickedness made it very difficult for the Zarahemlites to accept the words of Samuel. Instead, his words further hardened their already-hard hearts. As water can either melt sugar or harden steel, so the word of God can either melt the heart or harden it, depending entirely on the person who is listening to the word being expounded by a man of God.

It is not God who softens or hardens the heart, it is the person who does either one. If the heart of a person is set upon riches, pride, and the pleasures of the flesh, the word of God cannot touch him. But if a sinner, though indulging in the pleasures of the flesh, will listen to the word with sincerity and interest, the chances are good that his or her heart will be softened until, through the workings of the Spirit, he or she will accept the word of God. Therein lies the secret: Listen to the word of the Lord and let it begin to grow in the breast like a good seed sown in the earth which eventually brings forth its fruit. Likewise, the word of God, sown and nurtured in the heart will bring beneficial results.

Samuel told the Zarahemlites of other Lamanites, who through the preaching of faithful Nephites, believed so much that they had buried their arms of war and promised before the Lord never to take them up again against their brethren. He appealed to the people to repent and do likewise; but to no avail—his words did not affect them. Although he predicted that in four hundred years they would be annihilated, they steeled themselves against him until he had to flee from among them for fear of his life.

Who was this man of mystery? One can only surmise who he was by his own words. He said he was a Lamanite, one of the many who had been converted by the preaching of the Nephites. In all likelihood, he was a descendant of those who had been proselytized by the sons of Mosiah and/or Alma. A dedicated man, in

obedience to God's will, he traveled to the land of Zarahemla to give them the message of salvation. Many believed on his words and sought Nephi who after hearing their desire to accept the Lord, baptized them.

Picture this mighty prophet of the Lord standing on the walls of Zarahemla, prophesying while arrows and stones were assailing him. Undaunted by the barrage of deadly missiles, he preached the word of the Lord until he was finished with that which God had commanded him to say. And then climbing down from the walls, he disappeared, never to be heard of again.

Is not the world today in a similar situation as was evident among the Zarahemlites? Are not sin and transgression as rampant in our cities as in the city of Zarahemla? The answer is a resounding YES! Who shall declare the word of God to this generation? They who have taken upon themselves the holy priesthood after the order of the Son of God. There can be no rest for ministers in the dispatching of their duties.

The time is at hand for the latter-day Samuels to stand on the walls of today's Zarahemla (every city, town, hamlet, and village) and declare the word of the Lord. Symbolic arrows and stones will be hurled at men of God who, without fear, will denounce sin and transgression, calling men and women to repent and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The "arrows and stones" will be deflected by the Almighty, and His Spirit will be the shield and buckler of those men who will emulate Samuel, the Lamanite prophet. God's word shall be like a two-edged sword, cutting through the bone and marrow of sin and transgression. Amen.

Samuel the Lamanite prophet was not forgotten. When five years had passed, the people began to mock his words, not believing that the "sign" (two days and a night without darkness) would be fulfilled. Faithful Nephi, the son of Nephi, believed steadfastly in the words of Samuel and was rewarded with hearing the voice of the Lord confirming the prophet's words.

Neither was Samuel forgotten by Jesus Christ. When He appeared to the Nephites he said to them:

Verily I say unto you, I commanded my servant Samuel, the Lamanite, that he should testify unto this people, that

at the day that the Father should glorify his name in me that there were many saints who should arise from the dead, and should appear unto many, and should minister unto them. And he said unto them: Was it not so?

And his disciples answered him and said: Yea, Lord, Samuel did prophesy according to thy words, and they were all fulfilled.

And Jesus said unto them: How be it that ye have not written this thing, that many saints did arise and appear unto many and did minister unto them?

And it came to pass that Nephi remembered that this thing had not been written. (III Nephi 23:9-12)

Was Zarahemla the only mission field to which the Lord called Samuel? His appearance and departure are mysterious and intriguing. Will we ever know more about this intrepid servant of God, who, like others before and after him, challenged the world with the word of God and emerged victorious? Time will tell.

Perhaps in the future, when the unabridged plates come to light, the whole story about this mysterious prophet will be made known. One thing is certain; Samuel was indeed a chosen vessel of the Lord, to whom was given a precious knowledge concerning future events.

Nephi, the Son of Nephi

Who among myriad authors or historians can put in words the life and righteousness of Nephi, the son of Nephi? He was a descendant of several generations of righteous men. His genealogy runs as follows: Alma the Elder begat Alma the Younger; Alma the Younger begat Helaman the Elder; Helaman the Elder begat Helaman the Younger; Helaman the Younger begat Nephi the Elder; Nephi the Elder begat Nephi the Younger.

In reading Nephi's spiritual accomplishments, one stands amazed at his unswerving faith in the face of all obstacles. He had gained his knowledge and wisdom from his father and also from intense study of the sacred records which were in his charge. His

theological knowledge was immeasurable by scholastic or academic standards. The Book of Mormon is silent on the existence of schools of theology; but, without a doubt, there were schools of learning, for it is recorded, “But to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God” (II Nephi 9:29).

Nephi’s unwavering faith was demonstrated effectively during the crisis of faith when the time came for the fulfillment of the prophecy by Samuel the Lamanite of Jesus’ birth. The people had gone so far as to proclaim a death sentence upon whosoever believed in Samuel’s prophecy. But this wonderful man believed with all his heart and mind that the prophet’s words would be fulfilled. Without a single doubt, he prayed mightily to God all day long until the Lord answered him, saying, “Lift up your head and be of good cheer; for behold, the time is at hand, and on this night shall the sign be given, and on the morrow come I into the world, to show unto the world that I will fulfill all that which I have caused to be spoken by the mouth of my prophets” (II Nephi 1:13).

That very night, the words of Samuel were fulfilled; the sun went down as usual but there was no darkness. Hence, there was a day, a night, and a day as though there had been one continuous day. Skepticism and threats disappeared. The people fell to the earth as though they were dead, and they repented of their wickedness. As a consequence, Nephi and others went among the people baptizing them in great numbers.

The extraordinary ministry of Nephi, mightily executed through the power of the Holy Spirit, is a paradigm for all ministers to emulate. Nephi was visited by angels and instructed by the very voice of the Lord; power was given him to know concerning the Messianic ministry of Christ. He ministered to the people with divinely conferred power, performing such miracles that “all of them cannot be written, and a part of them would not suffice, therefore they are not written in this book” (III Nephi 15-17). However, we do know some of them: Nephi cast out devils and unclean spirits, healed the sick, and even raised his brother Timothy from the dead. What wonderful power was given to this humble man of God to be able to perform such superb miracles. Whoever reads about Nephi cannot help but desire that God would bless him or her with the same attributes of righteousness which

he possessed, to warrant the same blessings as those given to Nephi.

Nephi witnessed the terrible destruction that befell the earth when Christ was crucified. He saw how God displayed His anger when His Son was nailed on the cross by causing many major cities to be burned and others to be inundated with water. Mountains became valleys, valleys become mountains, and the wicked were destroyed with only the “more righteous” being spared.

When Jesus Christ descended among the survivors, He invited them to come to Him and feel the nail-prints in His hands and feet, and touch His side. After the multitude had done this, Nephi was the first person He addressed and to whom He gave power to baptize the people after He should ascend into heaven. It is difficult to imagine, and much less to capture in words, the emotions that must have coursed through Nephi when he knelt before Jesus Christ and kissed His feet. What unspeakable joy filled his soul when he received the priesthood authority, including the power to confer the Holy Spirit, at the very hands of the Redeemer! No one, after reading this account, can help but desire to have been present when Jesus descended among the Nephites.

Nephi was one of the Twelve Disciples chosen by Jesus Christ to be the spiritual leaders of His church. He was present at all of Jesus’ discourses, including His repetition of the Sermon on the Mount. He witnessed the miraculous administering of the bread and wine by Christ. It is written that no one had brought either bread or wine, yet the Lord gave them bread to eat and wine to drink. An interesting thing to observe is that Jesus, in Jerusalem, blessed the bread before He broke it; but on this land He broke the bread first and then blessed it. The reason is obvious: In Jerusalem, His body had not been broken when he blessed the bread before breaking it. On this land, His body had already been broken; hence, the reason for blessing the bread before breaking it.¹⁶⁸

One can only surmise what went on in Nephi’s heart and soul and those of the other eleven when they heard the Savior promise nine of the twelve that they would be with Him after their ministry

¹⁶⁸“Broken” does not apply to His bones, for none of His bones were broken; rather, it expresses the indignities and injury inflicted on His body, which was humiliated by being beaten with stripes, crowned with thorns, and nailed to the cross.

was ended on earth. Three of the disciples had not spoken when Christ asked them their desire. The Lord answered them in this manner:

Behold, I know your thoughts, and ye have desired the thing which John, my beloved, who was with me in my ministry, before that I was lifted up by the Jews, desired of me.

Therefore, more blessed are ye, for ye shall never taste of death; but ye shall live to behold all the doings of the Father unto the children of men, even until all things shall be fulfilled according to the will of the Father, when I shall come in my glory with the powers of heaven.

And ye shall never endure the pains of death; but when I shall come in my glory ye shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye from mortality to immortality; and then shall ye be blessed in the kingdom of my Father.

And again, ye shall not have pain while ye shall dwell in the flesh, neither sorrow save it be for the sins of the worlds; and all this will I do because of the thing which ye have desired of me, for ye have desired that ye might bring the souls of men unto me, while the world shall stand.

And for this cause ye shall have fulness of joy; and ye shall sit sown in the kingdom of my Father; yea, your joy shall be full, even as the Father hath given me fulness of joy; and ye shall be even as I am, and I am even as the Father; and the Father and I are one;

And the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me; and the Father giveth the Holy Ghost unto the children of men, because of me. (III Nephi 28::6-11)

Moroni, the narrator of this beautiful experience, says that Jesus touched these Three Nephites, and immediately they were caught up in heaven where they saw and heard things which they were forbidden to speak or write about. Moroni says that he did not know whether the Three Nephites were in a mortal or immortal state, but he knew that they had been transfigured. Prisons could not hold them, nor the pits in which they were thrown; three times

they were cast into fiery furnaces and received no harm. They were cast in a den of wild beasts, but they played with them as “a child playing with a suckling lamb.” They traveled among the people performing miraculous deeds and preaching the gospel with great power.

Moroni adds that he was about to disclose the names of the Three Nephites but was forbidden to do so by the Lord; however, he had seen them and they had ministered to him. These three “would be among the Gentiles, and the Gentiles shall not know them; they would be among the Jews, and the Jews shall not know them; that they would minister among all the scattered tribes of Israel, and unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, and would bring out of them unto Jesus many souls, that their desires may be fulfilled.” It is interesting to note that the ministry of the Three Nephites who would tarry on earth continued through the peaceful era which followed for the people of Nephi, a period of approximately two hundred years. After the people became wicked again, these three disappeared and were not heard from again except by individuals like Mormon, Moroni, and perhaps others.

The names of the Twelve Disciples who were chosen by Jesus Christ are Nephi, Timothy, Jonas, Mathoni, Mathoniah, Kumen, Kumenonhi, Jeremiah, Shemnon, Jonas, Zedekiah, and Isaiah.

Was Nephi one of these three who would never taste of death? And why was Moroni forbidden to write their names? These two questions have puzzled many since the restoration of the gospel. These questions were also an enigma and a mystery to me. However, after many years of constant and sincere prayer, the Lord revealed the names of the Three Nephites me, an unworthy servant of God. They are Nephi, Timothy, and Isaiah.

Why would the Lord reveal these names to me, when he forbade Moroni to disclose them? I pondered long and prayerfully concerning this matter; and one day, as I was meditating and petitioning the Lord to clarify this contradiction, He made me understand that because of the unparalleled blessing upon the Three Nephites, the people of their day would have revered them as divine beings, placing their trust and faith in them equal to the Lord, possibly engendering a form of idolatry. But since centuries have passed, the knowledge of their names will not result in any

manifestations of personal reverence.

It is my testimony that I have walked and talked with one of the Three Nephites. I have been blessed to see all three in a vision of the night; at other times, I have seen them again, both together, and also one at a time. For this I am grateful to Almighty God, who condescended in His everlasting kindness to grant me these unforgettable experiences. All praise be to Him forever and ever. Amen.

It is written that the Three Nephites are “as angels of God, and if they shall pray unto the Father in the name of Jesus they can show themselves unto whatsoever man it seemeth them good (III Nephi 28:30).

There are other questions regarding the Three Nephites that will someday be answered. For example: What did they do during the period of apostasy? Did the Lord forbid them to show themselves to anyone because He had taken the priesthood authority from the earth as predicted in Revelation 12? During the restoration of the gospel dispensation, why haven't they revealed themselves in person to the church collectively or to the world? Has God withheld their presence according to some timetable of his own?

Obviously, these are questions which cannot be answered, as no one knows the mind of God nor His will. It is, however, my opinion that the Lord permits the Three Nephites to show themselves to individuals periodically. In His own due time, I believe he will command them—and others who have not tasted death—to reveal themselves in person to the church and to the world, to help bring souls to Jesus Christ. What a glorious day that will be! It is difficult, even bordering on the impossible, to visualize the power with which they will preach and perform their miracles. Without a shadow of a doubt, many would desire to be living in that day.

We cannot say that Nephi's life closed; rather a chapter in his life came to an end, because Nephi is still alive and well. He and his two companions are merely waiting for the Lord to say, “Go forth, the time is at hand for the church and the world to know that I have had righteous men kept in reserve, ready to do my bidding in these last days, for my honor and for my glory.” Does this sound like a myth, a fairy tale, an impossible dream? Perhaps to some,

but to those who believe in the words written in the Book of Mormon, this is a reality, a fact. Time will prove that the words concerning Nephi and his two companions, written in the Nephite record, will come to pass in these latter days.

Mormon

An entire book could be written about Mormon, the last great prophet-general of the Nephite people and a faithful servant of the Lord. He was called Mormon after the land Mormon, the land in which Alma the Elder established the church among the people (III Nephi 5:12). He was a follower of Jesus Christ from his youth and was called by the Holy Spirit to declare the word of God among the people. The custodian and compiler of the records of his people, he abridged the large plates of Nephi and included the small plates of Nephi with his record. He was also a descendant of Lehi.

He had a difficult time in writing his record, due to the complexity of their language. His own words are, "And I know the record which I make to be a just and a true record; nevertheless there are many things which, according to our language, we are not able to write" (III Nephi 5:18). Through Mormon's painstaking and devoted care in preserving the history of his people, beginning with Lehi and his family, we have their record, even though the Book of Mormon is an abbreviated account of the people. By his sensitiveness to the Holy Spirit, he put the small plates of Nephi with his own abridgement "for a wise purpose." He could not have known that Martin Harris's carelessness would be responsible for the loss of the first 116 pages of the translated manuscript. But as a result of what must have seemed like a duplication of effort except to the eye of faith, the complete history of the period was transmitted to Joseph Smith.

One notices Mormon's comments and explanations occurring periodically, especially concerning the words of Jesus Christ when He visited the Nephites on this land. One can also discern the spirituality of this wonderful man when reading the Nephite record. Of Jesus' words he says, "And now there cannot be written in this book even a hundredth part of the things which Jesus did

truly teach unto the people” (III Nephi 26:6). His writing was inspired by the Holy Spirit, with the intent that the things that he recorded would someday come to his people, the seed of Joseph, through the instrumentality of the Gentiles. He wrote that if his people, after receiving and believing the things which he had abridged (the Book of Mormon), then greater things would be manifested to them (III Nephi 26:9).

His narrative of Jesus’ visit to the Nephites is a literary masterpiece. One passage is of especially great interest. He tells of the disputation that had arisen after Jesus had ascended to heaven. The people were contending about the proper name of the church. The Twelve Disciples, gathered together in mighty fasting and prayer, implored God for an answer. Jesus appeared and gave them the desired instruction:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, why is it that the people should murmur and dispute because of this thing?

Have ye not read the scriptures, which say ye must take upon you the name of Christ, which is my name? For by this name shall ye be called at the last day;

And whoso taketh upon him my name, and endureth to the end, the same shall be saved at the last day.

Therefore, whatsoever ye shall do, ye shall do it in my name; therefore ye shall call the church in my name; and ye shall call upon the Father in my name that he will bless the church for my sake.

And how be it my church save it be called in my name? For if a church be called in Moses’ name then it be Moses’ church; or if it be called in the name of a man then it be the church of a man; but if it be called in my name then it is my church, if it so be that they are built upon my gospel.

Verily I say unto you, that ye are built upon my gospel; therefore ye shall call whatsoever things ye do call, in my name; therefore if ye call upon the Father, for the church, if it be in my name the Father will hear you.

And if it so be that the church is built upon my gospel then will the Father show forth his own works in it.

But if it be not built upon my gospel, and is built upon

the works of men, or upon the works of the devil, verily I say unto you they have joy in their works for a season, and by and by the end cometh, and they are hewn down and cast into the fire, from whence there is no return. (III Nephi 27:4-11)

Fully willing to take responsibility for the accuracy and truthfulness of the records from the past, Mormon was also a faithful witness to the events of his own time. He wrote: “And now I, Mormon, make a record of the things which I have both seen and heard, and call it the Book of Mormon” (Mormon 1:1). This is why the translation of the plates given to Joseph Smith by the angel Moroni, including the unabridged small plates of Nephi, is called the Book of Mormon.¹⁶⁹

Mormon’s faith was indisputable; in the face of adversity, he emerged as a true man of God. His years were filled with trouble, despair, grief, hope, love, and loneliness. At the age of sixteen, he became the leader of the Nephite armies, because of his large stature and wisdom. He was in charge of the armies until he was an old man.

He saw his people increase in wickedness until their evil-doing surpassed that of the Lamanites. He witnessed the destruction of millions, ravaged through hate and war. His heart was broken as his people violated the laws of God and trampled them underfoot. Though he often pleaded with his people to return to God, they rebelled and continued in more wickedness. Their hatred against the Lamanites was so great that it blinded them; they became blood-thirsty, determined to kill every Lamanite. Simultaneously, the Lamanites were just as determined to annihilate the Nephites.

Mormon beheld the Holy Spirit depart from his people because of their wickedness: “. . . I saw the that the day of grace was passed with them, both temporally and spiritually; for I saw thousands of them hewn down in open rebellion against their God,

¹⁶⁹The Book of Mormon was published under that title in 1830 by Joseph Smith. In 1890, the Church of Christ, Temple Lot, published an edition under the name of *The Nephite Record*, an innovation that did not last long. The reasons are unclear, but two possible explanations are that changing the title would reduce the ridicule and persecution heaped upon the believers and that a title that did not feature the name of an individual would broaden the book’s appeal.

and heaped up as dung upon the face of the land” (Mormon 2:15). At one time, he refused to lead his people in battle because of their wickedness. The Lord had delivered them from the Lamanites three times; and instead of giving God credit, they boasted in their own strength. Whereupon the Lord told Mormon that because the people had refused to recognize that He had saved them, he would “cut them off from the face of the earth” (Mormon 3:15).

Later Mormon relented from his decision, and once again led the Nephites in battle: “But behold, I was without hope,” he wrote sadly but calmly, “for I knew the judgments of the Lord which should come upon them; for they repented not of their iniquities, but did struggle for their lives without calling upon that Being who created them” (Mormon 5:2).

One reads with great empathy, about the emotions which were warring in Mormon’s heart: a hatred for the wickedness which had possessed his people; sorrow for their departure from the Lord, and grief for the unholy vengeance which they had sworn to wreak upon the Lamanites. He wrote to his righteous son, Moroni, telling him of the depravity of both the Nephites and the Lamanites. Moroni read his father’s letter, and felt his heartache and anguish. He read how the Lamanites, after taking the Nephites prisoners, fed the flesh of the men to the women and children. Mormon wrote: “And notwithstanding this great abomination of the Lamanites, it does not exceed that our people in Moriantum,” recording as a solemn witness against his people that the Nephite soldiers first raped the Lamanite women, then tortured them to death, and finally devoured their flesh like wild beasts, doing this as a token of bravery (Moroni 9:8-10). And still, there was enough love in Mormon’s heart for his people that he chose to lead them and die with them.

Despite the horrors of wickedness, depravity, and cannibalism which Mormon witnessed, he still took time to record some beautiful prophecies which the Lord gave him. He wrote about the scattering of the seed of Joseph, and how the Gentiles would preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to them. He prophesied to future generations, both Gentiles and Israelites. He wrote about the judgment of the Twelve Tribes of Israel by the Twelve Apostles whom Christ had chosen and how the seed of Joseph would be

judged by the twelve Nephite disciples. He prophesied to the whole human family, but especially to the Jews, “the covenant people of the Lord.” They “shall have other witness besides him whom they saw and heard, that Jesus, whom they slew, was the very Christ and the very God,” he promised (Mormon 3).

Mormon’s epistle to Moroni contains a stirring and beautiful description of the power of faith, hope, and charity:

Behold I say unto you, Nay; for it is by faith that miracles are wrought; and it is by faith that angels appear and minister unto men; wherefore, if these things have ceased wo be unto the children of men, for it is because of unbelief, and all is vain.

For no man can be saved, according to the words of Christ, save they shall have faith in his name; wherefore, if these things have ceased, then has faith ceased also; and awful is the state of man, for they are as though there had been no redemption made.

But behold, my beloved brethren, I judge better things of you, for I judge that ye have faith in Christ because of your meekness; for if ye have not faith in him then ye are not fit to be numbered among the people of his church.

And again, my beloved brethren, I would speak unto you concerning hope. How is it that ye can attain unto faith, save ye shall have hope?

And what is it that ye shall hope for? Behold I say unto you that ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal, and this because of your faith in him according to the promise.

Wherefore, if a man have faith he must needs have hope; for without faith there cannot be any hope.

And again, behold I say unto you that he cannot have faith and hope, save he shall be meek, and lowly of heart.

If so, his faith and hope is vain, for none is acceptable before God, save the meek and lowly in heart; and if a man be meek and lowly in heart, and confesses by the power of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ, he must needs have

charity; for if he have not charity he is nothing; wherefore he must needs have charity.

And charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, If ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail—

But charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him.

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure. Amen. (Moroni 7:37-48)

Although hundreds of years separated Mormon from Paul the apostle, the Holy Spirit inspired both of them to write almost identically on faith, hope, and charity. Mormon's words should motivate all believers to make increased progress toward the ideals he sets forth so eloquently. Both Mormon and Paul emphasize that charity, the pure love of Christ, is the greatest of all gifts. It is imperative, however, that believers be in possession of all three components, faith, hope, and charity, to become true "sons of God" (Moroni 7:48).

Mormon's epistle to his son Moroni concerning the abominable practice of baptizing little children "who need no baptism as they are alive in Christ" is a masterpiece of instruction and direction discussed earlier (Moroni 8).

And so, the life of Mormon, a soldier-saint, came to an end. Despite the anguish, pain, and sorrow which harrowed up his soul

for the wickedness of his people, his faith, which was grounded on the Rock, Christ Jesus, never faltered, never failed. He always found time to pray, and was rewarded with revelation through the Holy Spirit. God certainly loved this man to whom He often disclosed Himself through His word and His will.

The Brother of Jared

Moroni abridged the twenty-four gold plates which were found by the people of Limhi, omitting the section that describes the creation of Adam down to the building of the Tower of Babel. When all the records are revealed, the people of God may anticipate reading at last the entire record of the Jaredites, which spans approximately nineteen centuries. The much-abbreviated version prepared by Moroni gave a very limited overview of the history but dwelt in more detail on important spiritual events and on the end of the civilization.

Words cannot be found to describe the faithfulness of the Brother of Jared (Ether chs. 1-4). It is recorded in the Book of Ether, that he was a “large and mighty man, and a man highly favored of the Lord.” The words, “highly favored of the Lord” reveal the lofty spirituality of the man. He stood in his day as a spiritual giant among other men. The book leaves no doubt about the respect he commanded among the people. Why his given name is never mentioned is a mystery.

The first time that he appears on the scene is when the Lord began to confound the languages at the building of the Tower of Babel. Jared approached this great prophet and asked him to pray to the Almighty not to confound their language. The Brother of Jared cried unto the Lord, who had compassion on Jared, his family, and their friends, and did not confound their language. This chosen group of people relied heavily upon the Brother of Jared, who appeared to be their intercessor with God. The Lord commanded these people to depart from the site of the Tower and promised them, through the Brother of Jared, that He would take them to a land which was choice above all other lands. After traveling for a long period of time, the small colony came to

the sea and pitched their tents. They called the place Moriancumer and stayed there for four years.

At the end of four years, the Lord appeared to the Brother of Jared and chastened him for not calling upon the name of the Lord. This is indeed a strange situation. How could such a faithful man forget to call upon the Lord? It seems inconceivable that the Brother of Jared had totally forgotten to pray. It seems much more likely that the Brother of Jared, seeing that the place where they had pitched their tents was very lush and beautiful, thought that this was their promised land. Satisfied with his surroundings, he gratefully continued his daily life rather than inquiring whether their destination was elsewhere. Be it as it may, he sinned before the Lord. A great lesson is to be observed here. When God commands a person or people to do something or go somewhere, there should never be a stopping, or a detouring from a proposed destination until the Lord has verified that the location reached is His will. Promptly, the Brother of Jared repented and asked forgiveness for himself and the little colony. The Lord said, "I will forgive thee and thy brethren of their sins; but thou shalt not sin any more, for ye shall remember that my Spirit will not always strive with man; wherefore, if ye will sin until ye are fully ripe ye shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord" (Ether 2:15). The Lord then commanded the Brother of Jared and his company to build barges which would take them to the promised land.

The eight barges were built in a strange manner, yet according to the plan of God. When they were finished with the crafts, the Brother of Jared went to the Lord and explained that the barges were so tight that neither air nor light could enter into them. The Lord told him how and where to cut holes in strategic places in the barges. Next, the Brother of Jared solved the problem of lighting by laying sixteen stones before the Lord and imploring Him to touch them so they would provide light. Instantly, the Lord stretched forth his hand and touched the stones with His finger. At once they became luminous.

One can only surmise what great faith this holy man possessed. He spoke with the Lord as one man speaks to another. It reminds one of Moses, of whom God said that He spoke to him "mouth to mouth." Not only did the Lord speak to the Brother of

Jared, but he also showed Himself to him. This remarkable manifestation occurred because the Brother of Jared saw the Lord's finger, touching the stones, as though it was the finger of a man "like unto flesh and blood." Struck with fear, he fell to the earth. The Lord inquired:

... Arise, why hast thou fallen?

And he saith unto the Lord: I saw the finger of the Lord, and I feared lest he should smite me; for I knew not that the Lord had flesh and blood.

And the Lord said unto him: Because of thy faith thou hast seen that I shall take upon me flesh and blood; and never has man come before me with such exceeding faith as thou hast; for were it not so ye could not have seen my finger. Sawest thou more than this?

And he answered: Nay; show thyself to me.

And the Lord said unto him: Believest thou the words which I shall speak?

And he answered: Yea, Lord, I know that thou speakest the truth, for thou art a God of truth, and canst not lie.

And when he had said these words, behold, the Lord showed himself unto him, and said: Because thou knowest these things ye are redeemed from the fall; therefore, ye are brought back into my presence; therefore I show myself unto you.

Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son. In me shall all mankind have light, and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name; and they shall become my sons and my daughters.

And never have I showed myself unto man whom I have created, for never has man believed in me as thou hast. Seest thou that ye are created after mine own image? Yea, even all men were created in the beginning after mine own image.

Behold, this body, which ye now behold, is the body of my spirit; and man have I created after the body of my

spirit; and even as I appear unto thee to be in the spirit will I appear unto my people in the flesh. (Ether 3:7-16)

The Book of Ether records that Jesus Christ showed Himself to “this man in the spirit, even after the manner and in the likeness of the same body even as he showed himself unto the Nephites. And he ministered unto him even as He ministered unto the Nephites.” The Lord continued his explanation to the Brother of Jared:

And it came to pass that the Lord said unto the brother of Jared: Behold, thou shalt not suffer these things which ye have seen and heard to go forth unto the world, until the time cometh that I shall glorify my name in the flesh; wherefore, ye shall treasure up the things which ye have seen and heard, and show it to no man.

And behold, when ye shall come unto me, ye shall write them and shall seal them up, that no one can interpret them; for ye shall write them in a language that cannot be read.

And behold, these two stones will I give unto thee, and ye shall seal them up also with the things which ye shall write.

For behold, the language which ye shall write I have confounded; wherefore I will cause in my own due time that these stone shall magnify to the eyes of men these things which ye shall write.

And when the Lord had said these words, he showed unto the brother of Jared all the inhabitants of the earth which had been, and also all that would be; and he withheld them not from his sight, even unto the ends of the earth.

For he had said unto him in times before, that if he would believe in him that he could show unto him all things—it should be shown unto him; therefore the Lord could not withhold anything from him, for he knew that the Lord could show him all things.

And the Lord said unto him: Write these things and

seal them up; and I will show them in mine own due time unto the children of men.

And it came to pass that the Lord commanded him that he should seal up the two stones which he had received, and show them not, until the Lord should show them unto the children of men.

The Lord showed the Brother of Jared many more things of great interest, things which He had never revealed to any other man except, perhaps, to John the Revelator on the isle of Patmos. Moroni recorded many of the things which the Brother of Jared saw, including a wonderful blessing pronounced upon the Gentile believers:

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

Does this mean that the Gentile believers must have the same kind of faith as the Brother of Jared? Not so; it merely means that the righteous Gentiles (the church) must exercise their faith as the Brother of Jared exercised his faith, a faith without the least shadow of doubt, a faith which transcends the generic and/or prosaic belief in a Supreme Being.

Then, the people of Jared entered the barges. We do not know what powered their voyage or even whether they had sails. But the barges began to move. They sang praises to the Lord; and the record says that they did not cease to do so even when the night came. How they managed to communicate with each other, being in eight barges, is certainly a mystery, unless they did so while the holes (windows) on top of the barges were open, and they could see each other. The fact that the eight barges traveled together is only one of the miracles in this miraculous voyage. After traveling on the waters for three hundred and forty-four days, they landed

upon the shores of the promised land and immediately knelt in humble prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord, with tears of joy coursing from their eyes.

Like the Nephites they explored their new land and began to build up their civilization. Soon they desired to have someone anointed king over them. The Brother of Jared warned them that having a king to rule over them would lead them to captivity, a prophecy that fulfilled. Jared, however, consented to the wishes of the people, and they chose Orihah, the only one of the sons or nephews of Jared who would agree to become king.

How long the Brother of Jared lived after reaching the promised land is not known. But this is certain, that he was in constant communication with God. Countless generations may pass, with many wonderful prophets arising in the future; but history will record that no man will surpass the Brother of Jared, whose faith was so extraordinary that he could not be “kept within the veil” and thus saw the Lord in His “body of spirit” even as He would appear to His people in the flesh. So ended the chronicle of one of the greatest prophets of all time.

Moroni, the Son of Mormon

After finishing the abridgement of the twenty-four gold plates, Moroni wrote a short book of just ten chapters. Despite its length, it contains many things of great interest. He describes how the Holy Spirit should be bestowed after baptism, the proper ordination of priests and teachers, the correct mode of administering the bread and wine of the sacrament, and the conditions whereby men and women should be baptized.

Moroni was apparently the last of the Nephites after their complete annihilation on the Hill Cumorah. He was certainly the last custodian of the sacred records, having received them from his father. He was also one of the leaders of the Nephite armies. It was Mormon’s desire that his son survive the horrible destruction of the Nephites, so that he could record it and also testify of Jesus Christ (Words of Mormon 2). Moroni also completed the record of his father (Mormon 8:1).

Mormon's life was a lonely one, fleeing from the Lamanites, wandering alone wherever he could for fear of the enemies who were seeking to kill him. Still, he may have been visited by the Three Nephites, who had earlier visited him and his father; and still, he found time and means to write as he was directed by the Holy Spirit. He could not write as much as he desired because there was little room left on the plates and no ore with which to make more plates (Mormon 8:5).

Looking far into the future toward the coming forth of his record, he wrote:

And I am the same who hideth up this record unto the Lord; the plates thereof are of no worth, because of the commandments of the Lord. For he truly saith that no one shall have them to get gain; but the record thereof is of great worth; and whoso shall bring it to light, him will the Lord bless.

For none can have power to bring it to light save it be given him of God; for God wills that it shall be done with an eye single to his glory, or the welfare of the ancient and long dispersed covenant people of the Lord.

And blessed be he that shall bring this thing to light; for it shall be brought out of darkness unto light, according to the word of God; yea, it shall be brought out of the earth, and it shall shine forth out of darkness, and come unto the knowledge of the people: and it shall be done by the power of God.

And if there be faults they be the faults of a man. But behold, we know no fault; nevertheless God knoweth all things; therefore, he that condemneth, let him be aware lest he shall be in danger of hell fire. (Mormon 8:14-17)

The knowledge given to Moroni concerning Christ and the end-time was remarkable. To the believer, he writes with gentleness and enthusiasm; to the unbeliever and the wicked, he writes with urgency and sharpness: "Behold, I say unto you that ye would be more miserable to dwell with a holy and just God, under a consciousness of your filthiness before him, than ye would to

dwell with the damned souls in hell” (Mormon 9:4).

He rebukes the unbeliever who denies miracles, affirming that God is and will always be a God of miracles and that the only reason why God ceases to do miracles among the children of men is because they “dwindle in unbelief, and depart from the right way.” He censures sinners and advises them:

O then despise not, and wonder not, but hearken unto the words of the Lord, and ask the Father in the name of Jesus for what things soever ye shall stand in need. Doubt not, but be believing, and begin as in times of old, and come unto the Lord with all your heart, and work out your own salvation with fear and trembling before him.

Be wise in the days of your probation; strip yourselves of all uncleanness; ask not, that ye may consume it on your lusts, but ask with a firmness unshaken, that ye will yield to no temptation, but that ye will serve the true and living God.

See that ye are not baptized unworthily; see that ye partake not of the sacrament of Christ unworthily; but see that ye do all things in worthiness, and if ye do this, and endure to the end, ye will in no wise be cast out.

Behold, I speak unto you as though I spake from the dead; for I know that ye shall hear my words. (Mormon 9:27-30)

Moroni’s certainty communicates clearly in his words. He knew that his words would be heard through the labor of the future translator, Joseph Smith. He reminded the reader that his record was written in reformed Egyptian, and even that had been altered. He says (with a mild apology) that if the plates had been large enough, he and his predecessors would have written in the Hebrew language, although even Hebrew among them had been altered over the years. However, if they could have written in Hebrew, there would have been no imperfections in their record. With all its imperfections, the world has received a record that has been and shall be of great worth in these last days.

There are some religious ceremonies which Moroni wrote in

his book for the benefit of those who should read it in the future. Concerning baptism, he said that “none should be baptized except they brought forth fruit meet that they were worthy of it.” Moroni 6:1). He said that “none were received unto baptism save they took upon them the name of Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end.” In Moroni’s time, “the church met often to fast and to pray, and speak to one another concerning the welfare of their souls” (Moroni 6:5). The church also met often to partake of the bread and the wine in remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ. The people were also very strict to see that no iniquity took place among them. Those who committed sin were brought before the elders of the church; and if three members testified to their iniquity, they were condemned. If they did not repent and confess their sins, they were separated (blotted out) from the church. But if they repented and asked forgiveness, they were numbered again among the people of the church (Moroni 6:6-9).

One thing which Moroni wrote should be of special interest to the saints. He says that the church meetings were conducted according to the “workings” of the Holy Spirit and by the power of the Holy Spirit, whether to preach, exhort, pray, supplicate, or to sing. Hence, they did according as the Spirit led them. This is a marvelous manner in which to conduct meetings. If this was done, there would always be wonderful services in the church.

In Moroni’s writings, one can detect the spirituality of the man. Though he led a life of loneliness, his mind was always upon spiritual matters. One would think that his troubles would interfere with his devotion and service to God. It seems rather that it strengthened his determination to remember from whence his blessings came. As he was inspired, he wrote. Believers in the restoration of the gospel should be very thankful to the Almighty to have given such a faithful man this kind of dedication.

Like his father, Moroni, wrote passages comparable to the writings of Paul the apostle. Many anti-Book of Mormon writers have criticized this passage of scripture devoted to the gifts of God (Moroni 10), as being merely a copy of I Corinthians 12. I challenge them to explain how Micah 4:1-3 can be a copy of Isaiah’s prophecy concerning the mountain of the Lord’s house (Isaiah 2:1-4). What they fail to understand is that the Holy Spirit

can inspire more than one man to prophecy and write words and events that are similar one to another. God is to be praised that there are two witnesses—the Bible and the Book of Mormon—which contain His words.

Moroni also reiterated with emphasis the words of his father: “. . . if the day cometh that the power and gifts of God shall be done away among you, it shall be because of unbelief” (Moroni 10:24). He pronounced a terrible woe upon the children of men if this would be the case. I corroborate these words of Moroni. What is a church or people without the gifts of God? It is like a body without a soul, a tree without leaves, and a world without sunlight.

Moroni finishes his own book with wonderful words of exhortation:

Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in no wise deny the power of God.

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.

And now I bid unto all, farewell, I soon go to rest in the paradise of God, until my spirit and body shall again reunite, and I am brought forth triumphant through the air, to meet you before the pleasing bar of the great Jehovah, the Eternal Judge of both quick and dead. Amen. (Moroni 10:32-34)

Many Restoration groups hold the position that Moroni died but was a resurrected being when he appeared to Joseph Smith and gave him the plates. I do not believe that Moroni ever tasted the finality of death. I cannot imagine that the Lord would allow a man like Moroni to face the extinction of his physical life, alone, in

danger, without a friendly hand to give him water and be with him at that ultimate moment. He was a man who in the face of persecution, loneliness, and anguish, maintained to an incredible degree his stability, dedication, and faith. I rather believe that the Lord took him to Himself, translating him as he did Elijah and perhaps those other Book of Mormon prophets, Alma and Nephi. If his resurrection was necessary so that he could physically hand over the plates with their mass and weight, then that is also another argument for keeping him alive without tasting death.

Regardless of conflicting opinions on Moroni's fate, the fact is indisputable that he was the same person who hid the plates and later appeared to Joseph Smith. The Church of Jesus Christ (Bickertonites) also believes that Moroni was the same angel spoken of in Revelation 14:6-7.

Moroni's life concludes these brief sketches of many of the faithful and righteous men in the Book of Mormon. Unlike some leaders in biblical narratives who transgressed the commandments of the Lord, not one of the men of faith in the Book of Mormon committed sinful acts which brought the displeasure of God upon them. Rather their faith and righteousness was of such a caliber that it fully warranted the blessings of the Lord which were poured upon them in such abundance.

Chapter 17

PURPOSES OF THE BOOK OF MORMON'S COMING FORTH

There are many reasons why the Book of Mormon has come forth in the latter days. The original writers of the book understood these purposes and emphasized them. It was the divine plan of God that this record should be revealed in the latter days, to show the world that the Lord speaks to whatsoever nation He pleases and commands them to write their history as another testament of Jesus Christ. Here are some of these reasons.

1. The first purpose of the Book of Mormon is to be a second witness that Jesus is the Christ.

The Book of Mormon testifies abundantly that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Redeemer of the world. The writers themselves prophesy of Him with assured eloquence. Hundreds of years before His birth, Nephi, the son of Lehi, foretold the coming of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, which revealed to the prophet the reason for Jesus's coming to earth.

Behold, they will crucify him; and after he is laid in a sepulchre for three days he shall rise from the dead, with healing in his wings; and all those who shall believe on his name shall be saved in the kingdom of God. Wherefore, my

soul delighteth to prophesy concerning him, for I have seen his day, and my heart doth magnify his holy name. (II Nephi 25:13)

Jacob, the brother of Nephi, speaking to his descendants, hoping that they will read his words, writes:

For, for this intent have we written these things, that they may know that we knew of Christ and we had a hope of his glory many hundred years before his coming; and not only we ourselves had a hope of his glory, but also all the holy prophets which were before us. (Jacob 4:4)

The prophet Abinadi is very specific about Jesus being the Lord Christ. He says:

I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people.

And because he dwelleth in the flesh he shall be called the Son of God, and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son—

The Father, because he was conceived by the power of God; and the Son, because of the flesh; thus becoming the Father and the Son.

And they are one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of the heaven and of earth. (Mosiah 15:2-4)

Mormon writes that his writings “shall go unto the unbelieving of the Jews; and for this intent shall they go—that they may be persuaded that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. . .” (Mormon 5:14).

The Book of Mormon quotes the words of Jesus Himself when He appeared to the Nephites:

And it came to pass that he stretched forth his hand and spake unto the people, saying:

Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified

should come into the world.

And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning. (III Nephi 11:9-11).

The account of the resurrected Christ inviting the Nephites to touch Him is stirring and passionately breathtaking. The Savior invited the multitude:

Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world.

And it came to pass that the multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet; and this they did do, going forth one by one until they had all gone forth, and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands, and did know of a surety and did bear record, that it was he, of whom it was written by the prophets, that should come.

And when they had all gone forth and had witnessed for themselves, they did cry out with one accord, saying:

Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God! And they did fall down at the feet of Jesus, and did worship him. (III Nephi 11:14-16)

Moroni affirms the Lordship of Christ by saying, “And now, I would commend you to seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have written, that the grace of God the father, and also the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of them, may be and abide in you forever. Amen” (Ether 12:41). Many more passages testify that Jesus is the Lord and Redeemer, but sufficient has been given to inform the reader that the Book of Mormon is a second special witness to this glorious Being who

was, is, and shall be forever and ever.

Other scriptural references in the Book of Mormon about the divinity of Christ include II Nephi 25:13, 16; 33:8-11; III Nephi 17:25; 29:4-6; Ether 12:38-41; and Moroni 10:32-34. Nor should Moroni's precise and graphically descriptive words on the title page of the Book of Mormon be overlooked. He emphasizes the divinity of Christ with an assurance born of divine revelation for those who would read it in the latter days:

Wherefore, it is an abridgment of the record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites—Written to the Lamanites, who are a remnant of the house of Israel; and also to Jew and Gentile—Written by way of commandment, and also by the spirit of prophecy and of revelation—Written and sealed up, and hid up unto the Lord, that they might not be destroyed—To come forth by the gift and power of God unto the interpretation thereof—Sealed by the hand of Moroni, and hid up unto the Lord, to come forth in due time by way of the Gentile—The interpretation thereof by the gift of God.

An abridgment taken from the Book of Ether also, which is a record of the people of Jared, who were scattered at the time the Lord confounded the language of the people, when they were building a tower to get to heaven—Which is to show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever—And also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that JESUS is the CHRIST, the ETERNAL GOD, manifesting himself unto all nations—And now, if there are faults they are the mistakes of men; wherefore, condemn not the things of God, that ye may be found spotless at the judgment-seat of Christ.

2. The second purpose of the Book of Mormon is to prophecy of the scattering and gathering of the house of Israel.

In the Book of Mormon are many passages which refer to the scattering and the eventual gathering of the House of Israel.

History records that about 721 B.C. the kingdom of Israel was conquered by Shalmaneser of Assyria, and the ten tribes of Israel were led away into captivity (II Kings 17). By tradition, about a year after they were led away, the ten tribes escaped and fled toward the north. Since then, they have been referred to as the Ten Lost Tribes.¹⁷⁰

About three years before Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia conquered the kingdom of Judah (circa 587 B.C.), the Lord warned Lehi (600 B.C.) to flee from Jerusalem to escape the approaching war and destruction (I Nephi 1:4, 13; II Nephi 1:4). Nebuchadnezzar carried his Israelites into Babylon (II Kings 25); but approximately fifty years, after Babylon was conquered by Persia, Cyrus, king of Persia, allowed the Israelites to return to their homeland, where they rebuilt the temple and lived under the rule of four separate groups: Persian, Greeks, Asmonaeana, and the Romans. In 70 A.D., the Roman legions destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the temple. Thereafter, people of the kingdom of Judah were scattered among the nations of the world.¹⁷¹

Lehi predicted both the scattering and the gathering of the Jews:

After they should be destroyed, even that great city Jerusalem, and many be carried away captive into Babylon, according to the own due time of the Lord, they should return again, yea, even be brought back out of captivity; and after they should be brought back out of captivity they should possess the land of their inheritance" (I Nephi 1:3). And after the house of Israel should be scattered they should be gathered again; or, in fine, after the Gentiles had received the fulness of the Gospel, the natural branches of the olive tree, or the remnants of the house of Israel, should be grafted in, or come to the knowledge of the true Messiah, their Lord and their Redeemer. (I Nephi 11:14)

Mormon severely warned those who would criticize the

¹⁷⁰ *Companion to the Syllabus for Religion 121 and 122: An Introduction to the Book of Mormon and Its Teachings* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1967), 26.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*, 26.

decree of the Lord with respect to the gathering of the house of Israel:

And now behold, I say unto you that when the Lord shall see fit, in his wisdom, that these sayings shall come unto the Gentiles according to his word, then ye may know that the covenant which the Father hath made with the children of Israel, concerning their restoration to the lands of their inheritance, is already beginning to be fulfilled

And ye may know that the words of the Lord, which have been spoken by the holy prophets, shall all be fulfilled; and ye need not say that the Lord delays his coming to the children of Israel.

And ye need not imagine in your hearts that the words which have been spoken are vain, for behold, the Lord will remember his covenant which he hath made unto his people of the house of Israel.

And when ye shall see these sayings coming forth among you, then ye need not any longer spurn at the doings of the Lord, for the sword of his justice is in his right hand; and behold, at that day, if ye shall spurn at his doings he will cause that it shall soon overtake you.

Wo unto him that spurneth at the doings of the Lord; yea, wo unto him that shall deny the Christ and his works!

Yea, wo unto him that shall deny the revelations of the Lord, and that shall say the Lord no longer worketh by revelation, or by prophecy, or by gifts, or by tongues, or by healings, or by the power of the Holy Ghost!

Yea, and wo unto him that shall say at that day, to get gain, that there can be no miracle wrought by Jesus Christ; for he that doeth this shall become like unto the son of perdition, for whom there was no mercy, according to the word of Christ!

Yea, and ye need not any longer hiss, nor spurn, nor make game of the Jews, nor any of the remnant of the house of Israel; for behold, the Lord remembereth his covenant unto them according to that which he hath sworn.

Therefore ye need not suppose that ye can turn the

right hand of the Lord unto the left, that he may not execute judgment unto the fulfilling of the covenant which he hath made unto the house of Israel. (III Nephi 29)

Jesus Christ Himself spoke of the gathering of the house of Israel after their scattering:

And verily I say unto you, I give unto you a sign, that ye may know the time when these things shall be about to take place—that I shall gather in, from their long dispersion, my people, O house of Israel, and shall establish again among them my Zion;

And behold, this is the thing which I shall give unto you for a sign—for verily I say unto you that when these things which I declare unto you hereafter of myself, and by the power of the Holy Ghost which shall be given unto you of the Father, shall be made known unto the Gentiles that they may know concerning this people who are a remnant of the house of Jacob, and concerning this my people who shall be scattered by them;

And when these things come to pass that thy seed shall begin to know these things—it shall be a sign unto them, that they may know that the work of the Father hath already commenced unto the fulfilling of the covenant which he hath made unto the people who are of the house of Israel. (III Nephi 21:1-2, 7)

The Book of Mormon contains much more information on the scattering and gathering of the house of Israel than is appropriate for treatment here, but relevant references include: I Nephi 1-2; I Nephi 10:3, 12-14; I Nephi 13:14-15; I Nephi 19:15-16; I Nephi 22:3-5, 7-8, 11-12, 25; II Nephi 6:8, 11; II Nephi 9:2; II Nephi 10:5-9, 22; II Nephi 25:14-18; II Nephi 29:13; Jacob 5-6; III Nephi 5:23-26; III Nephi 10:7; III Nephi 16:1-5; III Nephi 17:4; III Nephi 20:21-22, 27, 29-46; III Nephi 21:1-7, 14-29; Mormon 5:9, 14, 20; Ether 13:4-11; Genesis 49:22-26; Leviticus 26:33, 44; Deuteronomy 4:25-28; 28:25, 37, 64; 30:1-6; II Kings 17:18-23; 18:9-11; II Chronicles 36:11-20; Psalms 14:7; Isaiah 2:2-4; 5:25-

27; 11:11-13; 14:1; 35:1-10; 54:7; 61:4; Jeremiah 12:14-15; 13:19; 16:14-16; 29:16-19; 30:3; 31:7-12; 32:37-38; 33:7-11; Ezekiel 11:17; 20:23-24, 33-36; 22:15; 28:25-26; 34:13; 36:19; 37:21-27; Amos 9:9, 14-15; Zechariah 7:13-14; 10:6, 9; Matthew 24:31; James 1:1.

3. The third purpose of the Book of Mormon is to prophesy of the return of the Jews to Jerusalem.

According to the revelations of Lehi, the Jews would be dispersed among all the nations. History bears this out conclusively; they have wandered as outcasts among the people of the world, hated and despised, simply because they were Jews. However, God also held out the comfort that they would eventually return to their homeland and Jerusalem. Nephi attested: "And notwithstanding they have been carried away they shall return again, and possess the land of Jerusalem; Wherefore, they shall be restored again to the land of their inheritance" (II Nephi 25: 11)

It is certainly a fact that the Jews have returned to form a nation in the land of Palestine. At the time of the publication of the Book of Mormon, no one seriously proposed such an absurd idea. Palestine had become practically a desert, and the idea that it would flourish once more agriculturally, economically, and scientifically was beyond the imagination. Before the return of the Jews, McClintock and Strong's old encyclopedia says of Palestine:

Eighteen centuries of war, ruin and neglect have passed over it. Its valleys have been cropped for ages without the least attempt at fertilization. Its tattered walls have been allowed to crumble, and its soil has washed down its ravines, leaving the hillsides rocky and sterile. Its trees have been cut down and never replaced. Its fields have been desolate, its structures pillaged and all its improvements ruthlessly destroyed. A land of ruins without man or beast. Everywhere, on plain or mountain, in rocky desert or on beetling cliff the spoiler's hand has rested.¹⁷²

¹⁷² McClintock and Strong's *Encyclopedia*, as quoted in Roy E. Weldon, *Book of Mormon Deeps* 3 vols. (Independence, Missouri: n.pub., 1978), 3: 301.

Another description, quoted from the 1830 *Edinburgh Encyclopedia*, corroborates:

*The beauty and fertility of the Holy Land, so much celebrated in ancient times both by sacred and profane writers, are scarcely discernable in its present desolate and neglected condition. The culture of its finest plains has long ceased. Its springs are buried beneath heaps of rubbish. The soil of the mountains formerly kept up by terrace and covered with vines, is washed down into the valleys, and its eminences, once covered with woods, have been stripped bare, and parched into barrenness.*¹⁷³

But the Lord had promised that the land of Palestine would one day thrive and develop. So a series of activities were set in motion, which were in the will and plan of God. Roy E. Weldon, says that “within months after publication of the Book of Mormon the French Parliament passed an act granting certain civic rights to the Jews, the first such act by any nation. By 1887 all nations except Russia and Romania had granted civil rights to the Jews.” This was a remarkable state of affairs, reversing discrimination that had existed for 1500 years.¹⁷⁴

What is the reason for this extraordinary development? Unbeknownst to mankind, the hand of God began to work in the latter days to have the Jews return to their land again. Yet the Book of Mormon, published in 1830, had already given to the world this magnificent knowledge.

Then in 1948, the tiny nation of Israel was born facing a future of immediate attempts at annihilation from its Arab neighbors. In early June 1967, thousands of Egyptians were elated over the imminent destruction of Israel. Nasser and other Arab leaders were clamoring for the extermination of Israel. Russia had furnished two billion dollars of armaments. Fourteen Arab nations with a total population of 110 million were challenging little Israel with a population of only 2.5 million. Like many others who had read the Book of Mormon promises to Israel, I prayed for Israel’s

¹⁷³ As quoted in *ibid.*, 301-2.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 301.

deliverance. In six days, the war was over! Israel had destroyed hundreds of Arab planes. All the newspapers in the country were calling this a spectacular event.

If the Lord's protection lies upon his covenant people in Israel even before their acceptance of Jesus Christ, what shall it be like when the Jewish people believe in Jesus, and accept Him as their Lord? It is written of the Jews:

And after they have been scattered, and the Lord God hath scourged them by other nations for the space of many generations, yea, even down from generation to generation until they shall be persuaded to believe in Christ, the Son of God, and the atonement, which is infinite for all mankind—and when that day shall come that they shall believe in Christ, and worship the Father in his name, with pure hearts and clean hands, and look not forward any more for another Messiah, then, at that time, the day will come that it must needs be expedient that they should believe these things.

And the Lord will set his hand again the second time to restore his people from their lost and fallen state. Wherefore, he shall proceed to do a marvelous work and a wonder among the children of men. (II Nephi 25: 16-17)

All the dispersed of God's people, which includes the ten lost tribes, will be gathered back to the land of Jerusalem. The prophet Ether says: "And then also cometh the Jerusalem of old; and the inhabitants thereof, blessed are they, for they have been washed in the blood of the Lamb; and they are they who were scattered and gathered in from the four quarters of the earth, and from the north countries, and are partakers of the fulfilling of the covenant which God made with their father Abraham" (Ether 13:11).

No other passages of scripture are as forceful and compelling regarding the return of the Jews to Jerusalem as the words of Jesus Himself. While the following scripture suggests that the whole house of Israel will be gathered back to Jerusalem, it refers only to the tribe of Judah (the Jews) and the other "lost tribes." The tribe of Joseph will be established on this land, America, the "land of

their inheritance” (Ether 13:8). The words of the Savior are irresistible in their power and compassion:

And I will remember the covenant which I have made with my people; and I have covenanted with them that I would gather them together in mine own due time, that I would give unto them again the land of their fathers for their inheritance, which is the land of Jerusalem, which is the promised land unto them forever, saith the Father.

And it shall come to pass that the time cometh, when the fulness of my gospel shall be preached unto them,

And they shall believe in me, that I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and shall pray unto the Father in my name.

Then shall their watchmen lift up their voice, and with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye.

Then will the Father gather them together again, and give unto them Jerusalem for the land of their inheritance.

Then shall they break forth into joy—Sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem; for the father hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem.

The Father hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of the Father; and the Father and I are one.

And then shall be brought to pass that which is written: Awake, awake again, and put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city, for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean.

Shake thyself from the dust; arise, sit down, O Jerusalem; loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.

For thus saith the Lord: Ye have sold yourselves for naught, and ye shall be redeemed without money.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, that my people shall know my name; yea, in that day they shall know that I am he that doth speak.

And then shall they say: How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings

unto them, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings unto them of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion: Thy God reigneth!

And then shall a cry go forth: Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch not that which is unclean; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.

For ye shall not go out with haste nor go by flight; for the Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel shall be your rearward. (III Nephi 20:29-42)

4. The fourth purpose of the Book of Mormon is to prophesy of the second gathering of Israel.

Some may think that, when the scriptures speak of Israel and its gathering, they refer only to the return of the Jews to their homeland. It must be remembered that the tribe of Judah represents but one of the twelve tribes of Israel. The twelve tribes were divided into two nations; Judah, comprising the smaller group, and Israel, comprising the larger group. Judah's group was called the southern kingdom with Jerusalem as its capital, and Israel was called the northern kingdom with Samaria as its capital.

Isaiah prophesied that the Lord would gather His people, the house of Israel, a "second time." It is written, "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the Islands of the sea" (Isaiah 11:11).

The Book of Mormon record of Isaiah's prophecy from the Brass Plates reads:

They shall not hunger nor thirst, neither shall the heat nor the sun smite them; for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.

And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted.

And then, O house of Israel, behold, these shall come

from afar; and lo, these from the north and from the west; and from the land of Sinim.

Sing O heavens and be joyful O earth; for the feet of those who are in the east shall be established; and break forth into singing, O mountains; for they shall be smitten no more; for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.

But, behold, Zion hath said: The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me—but he will show that he hath not.

For can a woman forget her suckling child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee, O house of Israel.

Behold, I have engraven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me. (1 Nephi 21:10-16)

Speaking of the second gathering of Israel, the prophet Jeremiah says:

Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no longer be said, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt;

But, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them; and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers.

Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the Lord, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks. (Jeremiah 16:14-16)

In conjunction with Jeremiah, the prophet Isaiah says:

And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though

fools shall not err therein.

No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there:

And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away (Isaiah 35:8-10).

According to these scriptures, the return of Israel, or the “second gathering” of the covenant people of God, shall be a glorious event. The “scattering” of the house of Israel, or their “casting away,” as Paul the apostle writes, is a sad story indeed (Romans 11:15). The Gentiles have profited because of it. They have been chosen first in this last dispensation, and Israel last. While the Gentiles have been blessed by the Lord in receiving the gospel in these latter days, a greater blessing is in store when God gathers Israel again. Paul writes, “For if the casting away of them [Israel] be the reconciling of the world, what will the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?” (Romans 11:15).

The Book of Mormon indicates that the old Jerusalem shall be built up again as “a holy city unto the Lord” (Ether 13:5). The record also speaks of a material New Jerusalem that shall be built on this land of America by the seed of Joseph.

The important thing that must be understood is that not only shall the Gentiles (the believers, or the church) assist the seed of Joseph in the building of the New Jerusalem, but “as many of the house of Israel as shall come” (III Nephi 21:23). This means that all of the house of Israel will be represented on this land. “And then shall the power of heaven come down among them; and I also will be in the midst” (III Nephi 21:25). What a glorious time that shall be!

5. The fifth purpose of the Book of Mormon is to let the world know about the tribe of Joseph and its record.

Another purpose for the coming forth of the Book of Mormon in the latter days is to let the world know that the aborigines of this land, the American Indians, are of the tribe of Joseph, one of the sons of Jacob. It also reveals that out of the seed of Joseph shall

come forth a choice seer who may be likened unto Moses, to whom also would be given a spokesman, as Aaron was Moses' spokesman (II Nephi 3:7, 18).

The book also states that the seed of Joseph would leave a record that would grow together with the Bible "unto the confounding of false doctrines, the laying down of contentions, and establishing peace among the fruit of thy loins [seed of Joseph] and bring them to a knowledge of their fathers in the latter days, and also to the knowledge of my covenants saith the Lord" (II Nephi 3:12).

Nephi the son of Lehi, describes how the Lord esteems both the Bible and the Book of Mormon:

And also, that I may remember the promises which I have made unto thee, Nephi, and also unto thy father, that I would remember your seed; and that the words of your seed should proceed forth out of my mouth unto your seed; and my words shall hiss forth unto the ends of the earth, for a standard unto my people, which are of the house of Israel;

And because my words shall hiss forth—many of the Gentiles shall say: A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible.

But thus saith the Lord God: O fools, they shall have a Bible; and it shall proceed forth from the Jews, mine ancient covenant people. And what thank they the Jews for the Bible which they receive from them? Yea, what do the Gentiles mean? Do they remember the travels, and the labors, and the pains of the Jews, and their diligence unto me, in bringing forth salvation unto the Gentiles?

Thou fool, that shall say: A Bible, we have got a Bible, and we need no more Bible. Have ye obtained a Bible save it were by the Jews?

Wherefore murmur ye, because that ye shall receive more of my word? Know ye not that the testimony of two nations is a witness unto you that I am God, that I remember one nation like unto another? Wherefore, I speak the same words unto one nation like unto another.

And when the two nations shall run together the testimony of the two nations shall run together also.

And I do this that I may prove unto many that I am the same yesterday, today, and forever; and that I speak forth my words according to mine own pleasure. And because that I have spoken one word ye need not suppose that I cannot speak another; for my work is not yet finished; neither shall it be until the end of man, neither from that time henceforth and forever.

Wherefore, because that ye have a Bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written.

For I command all men, both in the east and in the west, and in the north, and in the south, and in the islands of the sea, that they shall write the words which I speak unto them; for out of the books which shall be written I will judge the world, every man according to their works, according to that which is written.

For behold, I shall speak unto the Jews and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the Nephites and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the other tribes of the house of Israel, which I have led away, and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto all nations of the earth and they shall write it.

And it shall come to pass that the Jews shall have the words of the Nephites, and the Nephites shall have the words of the Jews; and the Nephites and the Jews shall have the words of the lost tribes of Israel; and the lost tribes of Israel shall have the words of the Nephites and the Jews. (II Nephi 29:2-4, 6, 8-13)

Incomparable wisdom and knowledge are found in these words of Nephi:

1. The Gentiles are chastened because they have not given credit to the Jews for the Bible.
2. God causes more than one nation to keep a record.
3. God has inspired the lost tribes to keep a record.
4. The lost tribes shall have the records of the Jews and the

- seed of Joseph
5. The Lord's work is never finished; it will continue even after the world.
 6. The Bible does not contain all of His words.
 7. God commands all men from the east to the west, and in the isles (countries, continents) to write books (records).

An entire book could be written on the purposes of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, but this discussion should be sufficient. It is my earnest desire that the readers will weigh with careful and prayerful scrutiny the beautiful and inspiring words found in its pages. A close analysis of its contents will reveal even more reasons and purposes for the Book of Mormon's coming forth in these latter days. In very reality, it is another witness of the Lord Jesus Christ, the self-disclosure of God to the ancient American aborigines, who are the seed of Joseph, and other people besides those in the land of Palestine.

Anti-Book of Mormon critics will come and go, but the words of this revealed record to the world shall stand as a witness that the Lord has not ceased to speak to the human family through His Holy Spirit. What a shock it will be to the unbelievers when the record of the Brother of Jared retained by Moroni and the records of the lost tribes come forth as witnesses to the Bible and the Book of Mormon. Conversely, the blessings upon those who have believed that the Book of Mormon is a divinely translated record will be indescribable.

Here are the very words which Jesus Christ spoke concerning the record that he commanded be written:

And he that will contend against the word of the Lord, let him be accursed; and he that shall deny these things, let him be accursed; for unto them will I show no greater things, saith Jesus Christ, for I am he who speaketh.

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

And he that believeth not my words believeth not my

disciples; and if it so be that I do not speak, judge ye; for ye shall know that it is I that speaketh, at the last day.

But he that believeth these things which I have spoken, him will I visit with the manifestations of my Spirit, and he shall know and bear record. For because of my spirit he shall know that these things are true; for it persuadeth men to do good.

And whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do good is of me; for good cometh of none save it be of me. I am the same that leadeth men to all good; he that will not believe my words will not believe me—that I am; and he that will not believe me will not believe the Father who sent me. For behold, I am the Father, I am the light, and the life, and the truth of the world.

Come unto me, O ye Gentiles, and I will show unto you the greater things, the knowledge which is hid up because of unbelief.

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

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

And then shall my revelations which I have caused to be written by my servant John be unfolded in the eyes of all the people. Remember, when ye see these things, ye shall know that the time is at hand that they shall be made manifest in very deed.

Therefore, when ye shall receive this record ye may know that the work of the Father has commenced upon all the face of the land.

Therefore, repent all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me, and believe in my gospel, and be baptized in my name; for he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned; and signs shall follow them that believe in my name.

And blessed is he that is found faithful unto my name at the last day, for he shall be lifted up to dwell in the kingdom prepared for him from the foundation of the world. And behold it is I that hath spoken it. Amen. (Ether 4:8-19)

This book can conclude in only one way—with the exhortation given by Moroni, the final keeper of the sacred records and the last survivor of the Nephites. He not only wrote to the Lamanites (the seed of Joseph) but to all who would have the privilege of reading the Book of Mormon:

And I seal up these records, after I have spoken a few words by way of exhortation unto you.

Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down unto the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts.

And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

And by the power of the Holy Ghost, ye may know the truth of all things. (Moroni 10:2-5)

