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The goal of the Interpreter Foundation is to increase understanding of scripture through careful scholarly investigation and analysis of the insights provided by a wide range of ancillary disciplines, including language, history, archaeology, literature, culture, ethnohistory, art, geography, law, politics, philosophy, etc. Interpreter will also publish articles advocating the authenticity and historicity of LDS scripture and the Restoration, along with scholarly responses to critics of the LDS faith. We hope to illuminate, by study and faith, the eternal spiritual message of the scriptures—that Jesus is the Christ.

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ELDER NEAL A. MAXWELL ON CONSECRATION, SCHOLARSHIP, AND THE DEFENSE OF THE KINGDOM

Daniel C. Peterson

The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, or FARMS, was organized by John W. Welch in California in 1979 and then moved to Provo when Professor Welch joined the law faculty at BYU the following year. In 1997, while I was serving as chairman of the FARMS Board of Directors, Gordon B. Hinckley, President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and chairman of the Board of Trustees of Brigham Young University (BYU), invited the Foundation to become a part of the University. “FARMS,” President Hinckley said at the time, “represents the efforts of sincere and dedicated scholars. It has grown to provide strong support and defense of the Church on a professional basis. I wish to express my strong congratulations and appreciation for those who started this effort and who have shepherded it to this point.”¹

In 2001, FARMS was rechristened as the Institute for the Study and Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts (ISPART), but then, mercifully, in 2006 we received permission to change its name to the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship. Elder Maxwell, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of the Church since July 1981, had passed away in late July 2004.

1 “FARMS Becomes Part of BYU,” *Ensign* (January 1998), 80; online at <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1998/01/news-of-the-church/farms-becomes-part-of-byu?lang=eng&query=hinckley,+%22FARMS+represent%22>.

On 27 September 1991—years before the Foundation’s affiliation with the University, a decade prior to the first of those name changes, and long before he became something of a patron saint to my Islamic Translation Series—Elder Maxwell addressed that year’s “FARMS Annual Recognition Banquet,” as it was then called, in the Wilkinson Student Center on the BYU campus.

I had joined BYU’s Department of Asian and Near Eastern Languages in the fall of 1985, and then, in 1988, had been invited to launch and edit the *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*—which eventually became the *FARMS Review of Books* and then, simply, the *FARMS Review*. Our first issue was published in 1989, and, for the first few years, the Review appeared only annually. In 1991, if I’m not mistaken, I was not yet a member of the FARMS board. I was very junior, and a very minor player.

Still, for what little it’s worth, I was present at that banquet, and, as it happens, I played a slightly embarrassing role, perhaps forgotten by the others who were there but still acutely memorable to me:

I had been invited to offer the invocation and the blessing on the meal. Immediately after I said “Amen,” Hugh Nibley called out “He didn’t bless the food!” A whispered but perceptible disagreement broke out among the audience about whether I had or hadn’t—I thought I had—and, after thirty seconds or so, a bit chagrined and determined to put the matter behind me, I took it upon myself to return to the lectern and offer a second prayer—an addendum, in which I most definitely *did* bless the food. For a still relatively new faculty member and associate of FARMS, the evening hadn’t begun altogether well. (At the conclusion of the program, though, Elder Maxwell sought me out and assured me that I had indeed blessed the food the first time. He was, among many other things, a remarkably gracious man, and I miss him very much.) But any embarrassment that

I felt was soon forgotten in the sheer pleasure of being in the presence of, and hearing from, a living apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have received permission from Elder Maxwell's family to reproduce here the transcription of Elder Maxwell's remarks at the banquet that was made from a recording by my friend and former Maxwell Institute colleague Matthew Roper on 5 October 1991, slightly more than a week after the event.² While a more polished version of the speech eventually appeared in *BYU Studies*, it was considerably shortened and the references to its specific audience were largely eliminated. So far as I am aware, Elder Maxwell's full banquet remarks have never before appeared publicly.³

I have, for clarity and exactness, modified some of the punctuation in the transcription and two or three cases of capitalization, but I have made absolutely no changes in its wording. I have also inserted a few footnoted references and explanations. (The scriptural references inserted into the text itself were supplied by Matthew Roper as he transcribed the talk.) In some cases, Elder Maxwell's quotations (very likely made from memory) vary slightly from his sources; I have not corrected these variations. Elder Maxwell was a sophisticated wordsmith, but the version of the speech reproduced here retains its informal, slightly rough, oral, off-the-cuff style. I did not feel that I had the right to alter that, and neither did I think it important to do so. The prophetic voice of this modern apostle can still be plainly heard through these transcribed remarks. Indeed, as I read these words, I can hear Elder Maxwell's literal

2 I also sought and received Matthew Roper's permission to reproduce his transcription in this introduction. Unfortunately, as far as we have been able to discover, the recording is no longer extant.

3 See Neal A. Maxwell, "Discipleship and Scholarship", *BYU Studies* 32, no. 3 (1992), 5-9.

voice again in my mind, and I hope that others who knew and loved him will have the same experience.

I believe that they are important historically, but also because of the light they shed on the position that this very reflective special witness took toward the kind of work that FARMS was then doing and that *The Interpreter Foundation* now seeks to further.

Thank you very much, Jack.⁴

I've never made any secret of my appreciation for FARMS. As I see you grow larger and become more significant, I'll never have any greater appreciation than I did a few years back when our enemies were lobbing all sorts of mortar shells into our Church encampment, and among the few guns that were blazing away were the guns of FARMS. That meant that Jack and Sister Welch and a few of you here were running mimeograph machines, pasting mailing labels on, yourself. I thank you and salute you for that kind of devotion. As big and wonderful as you will become—and I hope you do—my memories are always nurtured by those moments when so few stood up to respond, and among those who did were scholars who have taken the lead in FARMS. Really, that's why I've come to pay thanks to all of you, individually and collectively. This organization, independent as it is, is nevertheless committed, as I see it, to protect and to build up the Kingdom of God and I thank all of you who have any part in it.

4 Jack, here, refers to John W. Welch, the founder of FARMS. Immediately prior to Elder Maxwell's remarks, he had discussed where the Foundation was headed during the coming year. He is, at the present time, the Robert K. Thomas Professor of Law at Brigham Young University and the editor of *BYU Studies*. Professor Welch recently contributed an article entitled "Toward a Mormon Jurisprudence" to *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 6 (2013): 49-84, online at: <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/toward-a-mormon-jurisprudence/>.

I want to thank, while I'm here, also so many of you in this room who have contributed to the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*. Those like Jack and Dick Bushman and others not only wrote articles, but did yeoman service as editors. Of that project, people said it couldn't be done or, if it got done, it would take ten years. It took three. They said it couldn't be done. Ever so many things were issued in the way of jeremiads, but it's been done and will be off the press in November. Again, that could not have been accomplished without the men and women in this room and so many others.

I hope you don't underestimate the significance of what you do as articulators of the faith. In praising C. S. Lewis, Austin Farrer said the following (and, when I think of this quote, I think of FARMS), "Though argument does not create conviction, the lack of it destroys belief. What seems to be proved may not be embraced, but what no one shows the ability to defend is quickly abandoned. Rational argument does not create belief, but it maintains a climate in which belief is possible."⁵ An excellent quote.

One recent example of your being at the cutting edge, of course, is the discovery of certain passages in some papyri that bear a potentially significant relationship to the Book of Abraham and its facsimiles.⁶ So that you'll get a sense of my response to that, I've been in a little correspondence with the ambassador of Egypt to the United States. Having met him a few months ago and talked with him about Abraham and Egypt, he's quite fascinated by it, so off went one of your FARMS

5 Austin Farrer, "Grete Clerk," in *Light On C. S. Lewis*, ed. Jocelyn Gibb (New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1965), 26.

6 See "References to Abraham Found in Two Ancient Egyptian Texts," *Insights: An Ancient Window* 11/5 (September 1991); online at http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/publications/insights/11/5/S00013-Insights_An_Ancient_Window.html. At the time, *Insights* was the regular newsletter, aimed at a broad general audience of FARMS and of its successor organizations, ISPART and the Maxwell Institute.

newsletters to that ambassador. There's not been time for him to respond. And then an LDS man who works for a big bank in Saudi Arabia had presented me with a beautiful replication of the facsimile, framed and done in Cairo by an Egyptian artist. It's hanging on the wall in my office. The artist in Cairo said, "What are you Mormons doing with these things about Abraham?" We're in the middle of significant things, and at the cutting edge is FARMS, for which I express my appreciation.

What I see happening, brothers and sisters, is coming on the installment basis, in which there is vindication after vindication of the Prophet Joseph. And though he was not a perfect man, his bottom line about himself I read to you now: "I never told you that I was perfect, but there is no error in the revelations which I have taught."⁷ We will walk through a series of events, as we do now, in which, on issue after issue, he will be vindicated in terms of his prophetic mission. I remember, with many of you, years ago, having the Prophet criticized or at least disdained because he presumed to say that doctors had come to treat his leg when he was a boy. Doctors in rural New England? And then, as you remember, Dr. LeRoy Wirthlin researched the matter several years ago and discovered that the doctor who came to treat young Joseph was from Dartmouth and brought with him medical students. It turns out, as you recall, that this doctor was years ahead of the medical profession in his treatment of that particular ailment.⁸ So what the Prophet says is, for us, going to be incrementally vindicated, whether, in my judgment, it's a facsimile or who treated him, we will find

7 Joseph Fielding Smith, ed., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1977), 368.

8 LeRoy S. Wirthlin, "Nathan Smith (1762-1828): Surgical Consultant to Joseph Smith", *BYU Studies* 17, no. 3 (Spring 1977): 319-37; LeRoy S. Wirthlin, "Joseph Smith's Surgeon," *Ensign*, March 1978, 59-60. ; LeRoy S. Wirthlin, "Joseph Smith's Boyhood Operation: An 1813 Surgical Success", *BYU Studies* 21, no. 2 (1981): 131-54.

this is a remarkable man and we will see this occurring again and again.

I mention also to you, in the spirit of appreciation, that I believe much of the vindication that will come to the Prophet and to this work of the Restoration will come by scholars who are committed to the Kingdom, who are unequivocally devoted to it. His vindication will often occur through your articulation, you and others like you. So thank you for providing the climate that Austin Farrer describes so well.

By the way, I think you're helping another group. I don't know the demographics of this group. They are a most interesting group and it isn't your primary constituency, but George MacDonald, who was C. S. Lewis's mentor *in absentia*, had a quote I share with you: "It is often the incapacity for defending the faith they love, which turns men into persecutors."⁹ Defenders beget defenders and one of the significant side benefits of scholars who are devoted, such as the men and women who are represented here tonight, is that we will at least reduce the number of people who do not have the capacity to defend their faith and who otherwise might "grow weary and faint in their minds" (Hebrews 12:3).

Even the title of your organization seems to be important along with what you've done. I myself would be reluctant if you ever moved away from what had become your traditional role. Enterprises of scholarship may be like some businesses who fail at enlargement or lose the essence of what they have been successful at doing. I appreciate what Jack and Steve delineated tonight, that shows a faithfulness at doing what you do best—and I would hope that you would always do this.¹⁰

9 C.S. Lewis, ed., *George Macdonald: An Anthology* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), 108.

10 Steve refers, here, to Stephen D. Ricks, who was serving in 1991 as the president of FARMS. Earlier in the evening, he had reviewed the activities of the Foundation over the past year and presented awards to Lois Richardson, Michael

Now, I'm going to talk to you tonight because something has been on my mind, and it's not any more relevant to this audience than it would be to any other audience, but I speak, more than to you, rather to another audience, an audience of one. I'm talking to myself now, and I speak because it's on my mind.

It strikes me that one of the sobering dimensions of the gospel is the democracy of its demands as it seeks to build an aristocracy of saints. Certain standards and requirements are laid upon us all. They are uniform. We don't have an indoor-outdoor set of ten commandments. We don't have one set of commandments for bricklayers and another for college professors. There is a democracy about the demands of discipleship, which, interestingly enough, is aimed at producing an aristocracy of saints. The Church member who is an automobile mechanic doesn't have your scholarly skills and I'll wager you don't have his. But both of you, indeed all of us, have the same spiritual obligation, the same commandments and the same covenants to keep. The mechanic is under the same obligation to develop the attributes of patience and meekness as are you and as am I. What's different about this is that the world doesn't hold to such a view. Frankly the world would say, if one is a political leader or a scholar and is successful in politics or superb in his scholarship, that's enough, and no further demands are made. Thus one who is so gifted or so well regarded can then be as bohemian in behavior as he likes and it's excusable. But it's not so in the Kingdom, is it? Of course, we all enjoy the fruits of our secular geniuses and our world leaders, even when they are visibly flawed in some respect, and we would not diminish from

Lyon, and John Gee for their outstanding service to the organization. Dr. Ricks is Professor of Hebrew and Cognate Learning at Brigham Young University and is a member of the board of *The Interpreter Foundation* and a contributor to this journal. See <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/author/stephen/>. Dr. Gee has become a significant contributor to *Interpreter*, as well: <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/author/johng/>.

the significance of their contributions. A just God will surely credit them. However, God excuses no one, including us, from keeping his commandments, and, I think, most significantly no one is excused by him or his Son in the requirement they've laid upon us to become like them.

Recently, my wife took a friend to hear a presentation by a talented Latter-day Saint. The friend, who has had considerable grief and disappointment in her life, truly appreciated the presentation. When it was over, she said to Colleen, "I hope he's as good a person as he seems."¹¹ It's a shame, isn't it, that such reserve needs even to be expressed, but many have learned by sad experience that spiritual applause is sometimes given to the undeserving. (I hasten to add, from all I know in the case just cited, the applause was fully justified.)

Whatever our fields, including scholarship, the real test is discipleship. But how special, as in the case of so many of you here, when scholarship and discipleship can company together, blending meekness with brightness and articulateness with righteousness. But these desired outcomes happen only when there is commitment bordering on consecration.

I want to say, in closing, a few words about consecration.

You'll recall the episode in the fifth chapter of the book of Acts about how Ananias and his wife "kept back part" of the monetary proceeds from their possessions (Acts 5:1-11). We tend to think of consecration in terms of property and money. Indeed, such was clearly involved in the foregoing episode, but there are various ways of "keeping back part," and these ways are worthy of your and my pondering. There are a lot of things we can hold back besides property. There are a lot of things we can refuse to put on the altar. This refusal may occur even after one has given a great deal, as was the case with Ananias. We may mistakenly think, for instance, having done so much,

11 The reference is to Colleen Maxwell, Elder Maxwell's wife.

that surely it is all right to hold back the remaining part of something. Obviously there can be no complete submissiveness when this occurs.

Lately, as I have thought about consecration, it has seemed to me that, unsurprisingly, it's related to the Atonement in a way that is quite profound. I read to you three lines from that marvelous Book of Mormon which we rightly celebrate here tonight: "Yea, even so he shall be led, crucified, and slain, the flesh becoming subject even unto death, the will of the Son being swallowed up in the will of the Father" (Mosiah 15:7). Marvelous imagery, and perhaps the ultimate demand made by discipleship. Willingness to have our selves and our wills "swallowed up" in the will of our Father. When pondering this concept and reading quite a bit from Brigham Young this summer, I was unsurprised to encounter this quote: "When the will, passions, and feelings of a person are perfectly submissive to God and his requirements, that person is sanctified. It is for my will to be swallowed up in the will of God that will lead me to all good and crown me ultimately with immortality and eternal lives."¹²

Scholars might hold back in ways different from those of a businessman or a politician. There's an almost infinite variety in the number of ways you and I can hold back a portion. One, for instance, might be very giving as to money, or in even serving as to time, and yet hold back a portion of himself or herself. One might share many talents, but hold back, for instance, a pet grievance, keeping himself from surrendering that grievance where resolution might occur. A few may hold back a portion of themselves so as to please a particular gallery of peers. Some might hold back a spiritual insight through which many could profit, simply because they wish to have their ownership established. Some may even hold back by not

12 B. Young, *Journal of Discourses*, April 17, 1853, 2:123.

allowing themselves to appear totally and fully committed to the Kingdom, lest they incur the disapproval of a particular group wherein their consecration might be disdained. So it is in the Church that some give of themselves significantly, but not fully and unreservedly.

While withholding is obviously a function of selfishness, I'm rather inclined to think, brothers and sisters, that some of the holding back I see here and there in the Church, somehow gets mistakenly regarded as having to do with our individuality. Some presume that we will lose our individuality if we are totally swallowed up, when actually our individuality is enhanced by submissiveness and by righteousness and by being swallowed up in the will of the Father. It's sin that grinds us down to a single plane, down to sameness and to monotony. There is no lasting place in the Kingdom, the ultimate ranges of that Kingdom, for one who is unsubmissive, or for unanchored brilliance. It too must be swallowed up. And our obvious model is always Jesus himself, who allowed his will to be swallowed up in the will of the Father.

Those of you I know here tonight, I am so happy to say, seem to me to be both committed and contributive in an unusual degree. In any case, ready or not, you serve as mentors to a rising generation of Latter-day Saint scholars and students. Among the many things you will teach them and write for them, let them see the eloquence of your examples of submissiveness, and being swallowed up in the will of the Father. Just today, I was with someone who wanted me to know that he felt quite in tune with consecration and the concept of being swallowed up, "but," he said, "that doesn't apply to such and such," and then described to me what he had chosen to hold back. It's interesting how that happens so often.

May I close by citing to you what has become to me a focus for this summer's reading. In an attribute—cited again, unsurprisingly, in the Book of Mormon, as also Isaiah and

the one-hundred and thirty-third section of the Doctrine and Covenants—is the attribute of Deity which is laid upon us as something we are to develop, and it is described in the word *loving kindness*. Coverdale first used that, I think, in 1535, in time for it to make its way into our biblical literature. When Nephi describes why Jesus did what he did for us, he said it was “because of his loving kindness and his long-suffering towards the children of men” (1 Nephi 19:9). When David made his great plea for forgiveness, he appealed to God’s loving kindness (Psalm 51:1). When Jesus comes again (and in the one-hundred and thirty-third section, it details how he will descend from regions not known, in red apparel, obviously to remind us of his having shed his blood for our sins), we are told that there will be dramatic solar displays, that stars will be hurled from their places, and we will witness that, for he has told us that all flesh shall see him together, and those living then indeed will. What’s striking about that is, in verse fifty-two of the one-hundred and thirty-third section, the thing that we will remember, or at least which we will speak of, is not the dramatic solar display, but we will speak of his loving kindness. How long? “Forever and ever” (D&C 133:52). The more you and I know of him and his glorious atonement, the more marvelous it will become, and we will never tire of declaring how we feel about his loving kindness and we will do it forever and ever.

And I salute him as I do you for his great sacrifice for us, and the marvelous Prophet Joseph who was processing words and concepts and doctrines which were, bright as he was, beyond his capacity to immediately and fully comprehend. Indeed, there is no error in the revelations which he has taught to us. Thank you for what you do to articulate these precious things of the Kingdom to help us all, including those who are not able to defend the Kingdom and who might thereby turn against it, some of whom you will deflect and keep them, in the words of the Book of Mormon, “in the right way” (Moroni 6:4).

My salutation, my appreciation, to you all for what you do. May God continue to bless you. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Daniel C. Peterson (PhD, University of California at Los Angeles) is a professor of Islamic studies and Arabic at Brigham Young University and is the founder of the University's Middle Eastern Texts Initiative, for which he served formerly as editor-in-chief. He has published and spoken extensively on both Islamic and Mormon subjects. Formerly chairman of the board of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) and an officer, editor, and author for its successor organization, the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, his professional work as an Arabist focuses on the Qur'an and on Islamic philosophical theology. He is the author, among other things, of a biography entitled Muhammad: Prophet of God (Eerdmans, 2007).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from 1981 until his passing in 2004.

AN ESSAY ON THE ONE TRUE MORALITY AND THE PRINCIPLE OF FREEDOM

Alma Don Sorensen

Abstract: The author introduces the subject of the essay based on scripture by observing that one true morality governs the heavens and exists to govern mortality, which contains all possible ways to live in time and eternity and orders them into a hierarchy of rational preferability. In order to live their endless lives with enduring purpose and fullness, humankind must undertake two stages of probationary preparation, one as premortals and one that begins with mortality and concludes in the post-mortal world with the final judgment, in which they come to know for themselves the one morality and accept its ordering of the many never-ending ways of life and hence the ways they have proven themselves willing to receive. With that introduction in mind, in the next two sections of the essay the author explores what some latter-day scripture reveals about the moral facts that make possible knowledge of the one morality, about how humankind determines good from bad ways to live as they undertake the second stage of probationary preparation, about how they can come to a knowledge of the best way of life contained in that morality, and how in the end they have a perfect knowledge of it.

In the final section of the essay, the author investigates how it was that in the premortal world the hosts of heaven, knowing and accepting as they did the one true morality, nevertheless became deeply divided over two incompatible plans of salvation as they prepared for moral life and went to war over them. A major theme of the essay is that the one morality, and every way to live it contains,

center on persons becoming and living as agents unto themselves. The upshot is that the principle of freedom, which prescribes the full collective and personal realization of human agency and which belongs to all humankind at every stage of their endless existence, is the fundamental principle of that eternal morality.

I

The one true morality that governs the heavens and exists to govern mortality contains all possible ways to live in time and eternity and orders them into a hierarchy of rational preferability. This inclusion of ways to live is exhaustive. No way remains to be discovered or invented. Accordingly, in eternity there are numerous everlasting societal ways to live, all of which harbor varieties of particular ways of living, called degrees of glory, which include in descending order of rational preferability three celestial degrees, an unrevealed number of terrestrial degrees, and telestial degrees as numerous and varied as the stars of heaven. Very many indeed! The opposite of them is the one way of eternal death and misery (D&C 76). The many ways of life and happiness are organized by corresponding levels of law included in the one morality. The way of death and misery is a never-ending way to live ungoverned by moral law. The inhabitants of that way live as a law unto themselves. In time, the plurality of ways to live that have been or will be realized by mortals are also accounted for in the one morality, and to one degree or another they are either ways of life *and* happiness or ways of death and misery, depending on whether persons live them in accord with one level or another of moral law or in violation in part or altogether of that law (D&C 88:22-27, 34-38).

The one morality is prescriptive in nature. It directs and guides persons away from realizing the ways of death and misery toward realizing the ways of life and happiness and away from enjoying the lower degrees of life and happiness

toward enjoyment of the highest degree. It is also descriptive in nature. It contains a complete explanatory and predictive account of every way to live in time and eternity which serves its prescriptive purpose and design.

Humankind are beings with endless lives—a very long time to live. In order to live endless lives that have enduring purpose and fullness, they must come to know for themselves good from evil, as contained in the one morality, and learn to lay hold upon good and eschew evil (Moses 5:11; Moroni 7:16-26; Helaman 14:31). To gain this experience, they must undertake two stages of probationary preparation, one as pre-mortals and one that spans mortal life and a period of post-mortal life (Abraham 3:25-26, D&C 38). The Father has created many worlds on which his pre-mortal offspring undertake the second stage of probationary preparation. Our world is one of them (Moses 1:33, 39-40). When the time of probationary preparation ends, all humankind will stand before the judgment seat of God to accept the never-ending ways to live which they have proven themselves willing to receive, having a perfect knowledge of the one morality and hence of the justness of God's judgments (D&C 88:28-32; 2 Nephi 9: 13-14; Mosiah 16:1; 27:31).

The complex history of humankind from its beginning to its end, with its variety of cultures and societies and multiplicity of things good and evil, provides the circumstances in which humans collectively and individually undertake the second stage of probationary preparation. It unfolds as it centers on their coming to know, through their own experience, good from evil as contained in the one morality and on their learning to lay hold on good and eschew evil. So when that history comes to an end, both the collective experiences of all societies and the experience of each individual within them will comprise the rich pool of experiences on which all draw in order to come to a perfect knowledge of the one morality and accept the

never-ending ways to live which they have shown themselves willing to receive.

It seems that at the final judgment all persons will comprehend what Moses did when he beheld the unfolding of human history from beginning to end in light of the purpose of mortal life. He discerned through the Spirit of God all the doings of the world's inhabitants from beginning to end. All the nations of the earth were before him, and there was not one soul in them he did not behold (Moses 1:7-8, 27-39). It is having this comprehensive understanding of world and individual histories that explains why, at the end of this second stage of probationary preparation, both "every nation, kindred, tongue, and people will see eye to eye" and "every knee shall bow and every tongue confess" that the judgments of God are "just" (Mosiah 16:1; 27:31; Alma 12:15). Presumably, the veil of forgetfulness will be lifted so that the collective and individual experiences of the first stage of probationary preparation will be combined with the collective and individual experiences of the second stage so that persons can live their immortal lives with enduring purpose and fullness, having a perfect knowledge of the one true morality.

Of all the sociocultural differences that will have characterized human history on this world and figure into humankind undertaking the second stage of probationary preparation, the varieties of moral beliefs held by different peoples over time seem central. It stands to reason that such differences will be primary among the collective and individual experiences that culminate in a perfect knowledge of the one true morality.

Notably, moral diversity has led some to conclude during their brief time as mortals that there is and can be no one true morality, and this has allowed them to live lives inconsistent with it. For instance, some have concluded that justified moral beliefs about good and evil—about what is actually good and

evil, not what is believed to be so—can and do vary from one culture to another. So they claim there can be and are divergent moral truths and knowledge relative to different cultures; there is no universal moral truth and knowledge. There is no one true morality. Others have reached more radical conclusions in the face of what appears to them to be fundamental, incommensurable moral beliefs across some cultures. They argue there can be no justified moral beliefs, whether relativistic or not. They hold that moral beliefs count as knowledge only if they can be explained and justified by moral facts to which they refer. But no such facts exist, and hence there can be no possibility of moral knowledge, no possibility of one true morality. They conclude that the foundation of moral beliefs consists of acts of absolute freedom—choices of basic moral beliefs without the possibility of rational justification.

The views like those just noted are not only held from time to time in human history by a few intellectuals, sometimes they are views held (usually naively) by large numbers of the so-called masses. Notably in contemporary western societies, which seem to be undergoing moral decline, increasing numbers are embracing such views, which result in behaviors that help motivate that decline. They call good evil and evil good, as prophets have predicted (2 Nephi 15:20). But such basic challenges to the one true morality also contribute to the rich pool of collective and individual experiences on the basis of which humankind finally come to know that morality through their own experience as mortals and accept its exhaustive ordering of ways to live.

Having the above overview in mind, I will explore briefly in the following two sections some of what latter-day scriptures teach about moral facts that make possible knowledge of the one morality, about how humankind determine good from bad ways to live as they undertake the second stage of probationary preparation, about how they can come to a perfect knowledge

of the best everlasting way of life contained in the one morality, and about how in the end all will accept that morality and the never-ending ways to live which they have shown themselves willing to abide. This exploration will not be an exercise in contemporary philosophy aimed at settling questions about moral ontology and epistemology. Readers who expect this will be disappointed. Rather it will be a short examination of some scriptures on the subject, addressed to readers willing to take such scriptures seriously. Needless to say, given the extensive nature of the subject, every major part of the essay could be explored much further, and some important parts will be left unexamined. Of course, the essay is not a substitute for the scriptures themselves; it may contain mistakes.

First, I will examine in light of other scripture Lehi's concise explanation of how the normative opposites affixed to moral law make possible the numerous all-inclusive ways to live as alternatives of freedom contained in the one morality and how those opposites form and orient the nature of persons so that they undertake the second stage of probationary preparation by acting as free agents. With the teaching of Lehi as background, I will then consider the teaching of Alma on the universal experiment of the heart as the means by which humankind distinguish good from bad ways to live, contained in the one morality, as they undertake the second stage of probationary preparation, and hence the means by which they can come to know and enjoy the word in Christ as the best way to live in time and eternity. In the final section of the essay, I investigate how it was that in the pre-mortal world the hosts of heaven, knowing and accepting as they did the one true morality, nevertheless became deeply divided over two incompatible plans of salvation as they prepared for mortal life and went to war over them.

II

I begin, then, with an examination of Lehi's explanation of how the normative opposites "affixed" to the moral "law" (2 Nephi 2:5, 11) contained in the one morality made possible all ways to live in that morality and hence in time and eternity. I will consider how those opposites form and orient persons as free agents so they can undertake the second stage of probationary preparation. For easy reference, I will quote the main text to be analyzed.

For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so...righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad. Wherefore, all things must needs be a compound in one; wherefore, if it should be one body it must needs remain as dead, having no life neither death, nor corruption nor incorruption, happiness nor misery, neither sense nor insensibility. (2 Nephi 2:11)

This teaching consists of a series of conditionals ("if...then" statements) that progress in logical order to explain how the functional nonexistence of two interrelated kinds of normative opposites affixed to moral law make impossible the opposites referenced in the consequence of the last conditional, which would result in persons remaining forever "dead" as opposed to being forever alive. The fact that this explanation is highly compact requires that it be explicated step by step in light of other scripture. In preparation for determining how the series of conditionals must be understood in order to lead to the conclusion they do, I will first consider the meaning of the four pair of opposites referenced in the consequence of the last conditional. Each pair is a mode of being alive. The opposite of

the four pair of opposites describes the nonbeing of persons—the possibility of their remaining forever “dead.”

The opposites “life” and “death” must be distinguished from the opposites “dead” and by implication “alive” in Lehi’s explanation. “Life” and “death” comprehend all possible ways to live—all possible ways of being “alive” as persons—contained in the one morality and realizable in time and eternity. For if life and death did not include all possible ways to live contained in that morality, and hence in time and eternity, then the absence of those opposites could not describe the nonexistence of persons—the possibility of their remaining forever “dead.” In like manner, “corruption” and “incorruption” refer to the general distinguishing characteristics of the two possible kinds of physical bodies persons with endless lives can have, either a mortal body or an immortal (resurrected) body. Mortal physical bodies are “corrupt” in the sense that they are subject to deterioration and death, whereas immortal physical bodies are “incorrupt” in the sense that they are not subject to those changes (I Corinthians 15:42; Mosiah 16:10, Alma 40:2).

“Happiness” refers to all degrees of well-being inherent in the ways of life and “misery” to the state of being inherent in the way of death (Alma 40:15; 41:5; Helaman 12:25-26). The opposites “sense” and “insensibility” profile what persons can and cannot perceive and what positive and negative experiences they do and do not undergo associated with possible states of being alive. The profiles of “sense” and “insensibility” of those who realize one degree of life and happiness will differ somewhat from the profile of those who realize another such degree; and the profile of those who realize any degree of life and happiness will differ radically from the profile of those who suffer death and misery.

Since the many exhaustive ways of life and happiness and ways of death and misery comprehend all possible ways of being alive as persons in time and eternity, I can forego for

purposes of this essay further mention of the other two kinds of opposites that describe persons being alive in analyzing Lehi's explanation of how the normative opposites affixed to moral law make possible the existence of persons.

The first conditional in Lehi's explanation reads that if there were not an opposition in all things, then certain general moral opposites—good and bad (evil), righteousness and wickedness, holiness and misery—could not be brought to pass. They would not be possible. Good and evil (bad) are the basic moral opposites of the one morality. That is why good and evil alone are used in scripture to describe the basic function of the light of Christ in enlightening the lives of persons and to explain their moral state of being when they come forth in the resurrection after completing the second stage of probationary preparation (2 Nephi 2:5; Moroni 7:12,15-25; Alma 41:1-4). This being so, the other moral opposites referenced in the consequence of the first conditional can be explained as derivatives of good and evil (Alma 5:42; 40:11, 13; 41:3-7). Accordingly, righteousness and wickedness can be explained as ways of being and doing good and evil, holiness as a spotless state of righteousness, and misery as an inherent state of wickedness. So for purposes of this essay, the first conditional in Lehi's explanations can be simplified to say that the basic moral opposites good and evil (and hence their derivatives) could not be brought to pass if there were not an opposition in all things.

So the latter opposites function as a necessary constitutive condition in making it possible for the former opposites to function as basic normative components of the one morality and hence sociocultural reality in time and eternity. (To say that 'q' constitutes a necessary condition for the occurrence of 'p' means that 'p' will not occur in the absence of 'q'—in other words, "if not q, then not p.") By applying the logical rule of contraposition to the first conditional, it follows that if good and evil are functional components of the one morality and of

sociocultural reality, then an opposition in all things becomes functionally possible in both domains. (If “p, then q” is the contrapositive, or equivalent to, if not “q, then not p.”) The function of the former opposites is a sufficient condition for the function of the latter opposites. (To say that ‘p’ is a sufficient condition for the occurrence of ‘q’ means that ‘q’ will occur if ‘p’ does—in other words, “if p, then q.”) So the latter opposites as well as the former opposites are normative components of the one morality, and they are related to perform a common function in it and hence in the sociocultural realities of time and eternity.

To summarize, the opposition in all things functions as the evaluative opposites that give the basic moral opposites good and evil their vast extension in both domains. The function of the former opposites is a necessary condition for the full application (occurrence) of the latter opposites. And the function of the basic moral opposites good and evil makes it possible for the opposition in all things to function as the extensive evaluative opposites they are in those domains. The function of the former opposites is a sufficient condition for the function (occurrence) of the latter opposites.

But the functional relation between the two kinds of normative opposites in the one morality is more entailed than this. In the second to last conditional in Lehi’s explanation, it becomes apparent that they are functionally inseparable. That conditional says that if the basic moral opposites good and evil are nonfunctional because an evaluative opposition in all things is nonfunctional—if for that reason both kinds of opposites are nonfunctional—then “all things must needs be a compound in one.” “All things” mentioned in the consequence of this conditional are the opposition in “all things” mentioned in the antecedent of the first conditional and hence to “all things” good and evil mentioned in its consequence. The two kinds of normative opposites being “a compound in one” means

they would no longer exist as functionally related components of the one morality and of sociocultural reality. Their being a compound in one is by implication the opposite of their being a compound, meaning they exist in functional relation to one another. So the two kinds of normative opposites either exist in functional relation to one another in the one morality and in sociocultural reality or they do not exist to function at all in those domains. Which means that in those domains the functional relation between them is bi-conditional: The function of each kind of opposites is a necessary and sufficient condition for the function of the other kind of opposites in both domains. Their being inseparable in this bi-conditional way enables them to perform the common function they do in that morality and in that reality.

Lehi continues by indicating that if the two kinds of *normative* opposites did not exist to function inseparably as a compound in both realms, then “all things must needs be a compound in one; wherefore, if it should be one body it must needs remain as dead, having no life neither death,” etc. As noted at the beginning of Lehi’s teaching, it is apparent that he is concerned with explaining the function of the complex compound of normative opposites in making possible the existence of persons. But let me clarify this with a detailed examination of the part of Lehi’s explanation just cited. I begin with the consequence of the last conditional in that citation, which holds the key for understanding its antecedent and the first conditional. In that consequence, the pronoun “it” refers to that for which being “dead”—being deprived of all possible ways of “life” and “death”—is a possibility. So clearly “it” refers to the endless state of being of persons thus deprived. Thus deprived, they would “remain” forever a lifeless thing or “dead”—an “it”—the opposite of being forever “alive” as persons.

The “it” mentioned in the antecedent of the last conditional is the “it” mentioned in the consequence of that conditional. So both refer to the same endless deprived state of being of persons. The phrase “be one body” mentioned in the antecedent of the second conditional repeats in different words the phrase “compound in one” mentioned in the consequence of the first conditional. This sameness of meaning of the two phrases connects the two conditionals so the one follows the other in a logical way that makes possible the progressions of Lehi’s explanation. Furthermore, for the explanations to succeed, the meaning of all things being “one body,” or “a compound in one,” must have as its consequence the endless state of being of persons deprived of all ways to live—their being forever “dead.” As observed earlier, that compound of normative opposites functions as a necessary constitutive condition of all ways to live contained in the one morality and realizable in sociocultural reality both in time and eternity. So if those opposites were a compound in one, then all ways to live—all ways of persons being “alive” in time and eternity—would be impossible. They would be forever “dead,” the opposite of their being forever “alive.” This is a logical implication of all things being “one body” mentioned in the antecedent of the last conditional.

In 2 Nephi 2:12, Lehi draws out a series of implications from the meaning of the consequence of the last conditional just explained.

Wherefore, it must needs have been created for a thing of naught; wherefore there would have been no purpose in the end of its creation. Wherefore, this thing must needs destroy the wisdom of God and his eternal purposes and also the power, the mercy, and the justice of God.

A series of telling implications indeed that follow from persons being forever dead.

But the import of his explanation does not end here, it implies that in the absence of those opposites, God himself and hence all he created would not exist. Lehi makes this explicit in 2 Nephi 2:13, where he says that in the absence of moral opposites connected to moral law, “there is no God.” Those opposites function as a necessary constitutive condition in making possible his existence. He goes on to say that if there is no God, then “there is no creation of things,” and “all things vanish away.” In the Book of Moses we read: “And I, God, saw everything I had made, and, behold, all things which I had made were very good” (Moses 2:31). Understood in light of 2 Nephi 2:11, the creation of “all things” as very good things by God was made possible by the fact that moral opposites in combination with the evaluative opposition in “all things” function as a necessary condition in making possible his existence and the many things *he* created. But Lehi continues, “there is a God, and he hath created all things, both the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are, both things to act and things to be acted upon” (2 Nephi 2:14). The bottom-line implication here is this: The one true morality exists, and it contains all possible ways to live made possible by the constitutive function of the complex compound of normative opposites, and its operation is manifested in the perfect nature of God, as the supreme possibility of personhood contained in it, and hence in all things good created by him.

Though the two kinds of normative opposites are inseparable in forming a compound—the function of each is a necessary and sufficient condition for the function of the other—all other normative opposites center in the basic moral opposites good and evil and their derivatives. The former exist to serve the purposes of the latter, which means that the opposites good and

evil and their moral derivatives in their complexity function as the core normative constitutive components of every way to live included in the one morality and realized in time and eternity. So as should be expected, in scripture they appear among the defining characteristics of ways of life and happiness and ways of death and misery. Accordingly, the definition of eternal death includes a description of persons who have “perished from that which is good” and hence died “as to things pertaining to the things of righteousness” and hence are alive only to things evil and wicked (2 Nephi 2:5; Alma 5:42; 40:26). That state of being is inherently an awful state of misery (Alma 41:11; Helaman 13:38). Eternal life is the extreme opposite of eternal death. It includes a description of the state of being of persons who are fully alive to all things good and hence to all things pertaining to righteousness and dead to things evil and wicked. They naturally enjoy the highest possibility of everlasting happiness. What is true of eternal life and happiness is true of all lower never-ending ways of life and happiness. Each is a state of being in which persons are alive to a portion of things good and right and dead to all things evil and wicked, and they enjoy a corresponding degree of happiness.

As noted earlier, the many ways to live contained in the one morality represent all possible ways of persons being, and those ways exist as alternatives of free agency. Each way to live is a mode of agency, and together those ways describe the full scope of free agency. So those ways embody a concept of free agency which contains a variety of possible realizations. Since the moral opposites good and evil in their complexity function as the basic normative components that constitute ways to live, it follows that those moral opposites function as the constitutive components in forming the basic ability of persons as free agents and orienting them so they pursue their natural end. Their basic ability as free agents is to lay hold upon good and avoid evil. Their natural end as free agents is

to realize the happiness constituted by things good and hence righteous, and eschew the misery constituted by the things evil and hence wicked.

The core empowering feature in enabling persons to act as free agents oriented as they are is the “light of Christ,” who “quickeneth” and “enlighteneth” the “understanding” of everyone who “cometh into the world,” which includes enabling them to “know good from evil” and “to lay hold upon every good thing” to the exclusion of every evil thing (D&C 88:7-13; 90:2; Moroni 7:16-26). Lehi presumes that humankind are endowed with the light of Christ—this core empowerment of free agency—when he declares that “men are instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil”; and “knowing good from evil,” they can “act for themselves and not be acted upon” in the pursuit of their natural end (2 Nephi 2:5, 26-29). It is as free agents thus enabled and oriented that humankind undertake the second stage of probationary preparations for endless lives.

Implicit in Lehi’s teaching about the function of the basic moral opposites good and evil in forming and orienting human agency are definitions of free agency and unfree agency. Being a free agent or an unfree agent are the basic alternatives of being a free agent. Free agency is the ability of persons endowed with the light of Christ to act and not be acted upon in realizing life and happiness as their natural end by laying hold upon good and eschewing evil. Unfree agency is the inability of persons deprived of the light of Christ to act and not be acted upon in the realization of that end by laying hold upon good and eschewing evil. In Lehi’s teaching, the term “captivity” designates being unfree as one of two basic alternatives of free agency. The opposite of captivity is “liberty,” which designates being free as the other basic alternative of free agency.

The total set of alternatives of freedom is the numerous ways to live contained within the one morality. The never-

ending ways of life and happiness are ways of liberty—ways by means of which persons act and are not acted upon in the realization of their defining end as free beings. Since those many ways vary in the degrees to which they make possible the enjoyment of that end, ranging from the highest celestial degree to the lowest telestial degree, they vary in degrees of liberty. The one way of eternal death and misery is the way of captivity—the way lived by persons totally bereft of the light of Christ and hence of the ability to realize their natural end as free beings by laying hold upon good and eschewing evil. As I mentioned above, this understanding of free agency is implicit in Lehi’s teaching under consideration. It is presupposed by his explicit focus on the subject of freedom and provides the background for understanding it.

In his express teaching on the subject, Lehi focuses on the grand opposing alternatives of free agency while leaving unmentioned, no doubt deliberately, the many other alternatives included in the one morality. He says humankind are “free according to the flesh” to choose “liberty and eternal life through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and (eternal) death, according to the captivity and power of the devil” (2 Nephi 2:27 (26-29)). That this was his express focus is understandable, for his calling as a prophet requires that he be engaged exclusively in God’s work of bringing to pass the immortality and eternal life of humankind, which includes rescuing them from their fallen state as mortals and the eternal death and captivity that otherwise awaits them (Moses 1:39; 1 Nephi 10:6; 2 Nephi 2:5; Alma 9:11). But like prophets before and after him, Lehi knew that the one morality contained numerous degrees of life and liberty as well as the way of eternal death and captivity as alternatives of free agency. This became apparent earlier in an examination of his explanation of the function of the complex compound of normative opposites in

making possible as alternatives of freedom the many exhaustive ways to live in time and eternity.

The ways to live that with time bring death and misery are viable alternatives of free agency, even though the natural end of persons is to realize life and happiness and avoid death and misery. As prophets in every gospel dispensation lament, it is not unusual for mortals to seek life and happiness in ways that with time bring death and misery. In most cases, they do this out of ignorance or weakness of will, and sometimes because of mental illness. But it is unthinkable—it is psychologically impossible—for fully informed persons who are of sound mind and sufficiently strong of will to pursue—deliberately as an end in itself—death and misery rather than life and happiness. It is unthinkable that they would prefer for any reason being forever in “the gall of bitterness” and “the darkest abyss,” where they are “racked with eternal torment,” rather than enjoying even the lowest telestial degree of life and happiness (2 Nephi 2:5; Mosiah 27:29 (8-31); D&C 76:44-48, 89). The prophet Nephi, son of Helaman, presumed this basic fact of human nature when he asked the wicked among the people of Zarahemla, why “hurl away [your] souls to everlasting misery and wo”? Seemingly dumbfounded, he asked them: “Why will ye die?” Why bring upon yourselves the unthinkable? (Helaman 7:16-17; Jacob 6:6-12).

Given that the many all-inclusive ways to live contained in the one morality are viable alternatives of free agency, that morality contains two cardinal principles to direct persons as they undertake the two stages of probationary preparation for endless lives. Both are self-evident principles revealed by analysis that are implicit in the complex compound of normative opposites which function to make possible those numerous ways to live, which is to say they are latent in learned human nature itself. One says that persons ought to seek the highest celestial degree of life and happiness over lower

degrees and avoid altogether the ways of death and misery. The function of that principle depends on the function of the second principle and hence presupposes it. The latter principle says persons ought to choose a life of liberty—indeed, the life of liberty inherent in eternal life—and reject the life of captivity. This is the principle of freedom that belongs to all humankind at every stage of their endless existence (D&C 98:5; 101:77-78; Moses 4:3). As I explain further in the final section of the paper, it is the basic principle of the one morality.

III

I have examined Lehi's teaching on normative opposites affixed to moral law against a background of other scripture in order to expose the comprehensive set of facts that make possible moral knowledge and to prepare to examine Alma's teaching about how humankind acquire a perfect knowledge of those facts by completing the second stage of probationary preparation for endless lives. Those facts include all possible ways to live in time and eternity, constituted as they are by the complex compound of normative opposites attached to moral law, which the true morality identifies and orders in a hierarchy of rational preferability as alternatives of free agency. Alma's teaching about how humankind acquire that perfect knowledge is implicit in Lehi's teaching examined above and in light of other scripture. So understanding Lehi's teaching helps provide the scriptural context for understanding Alma's teaching.

In examining Lehi's teaching about the complex compound of normative opposites affixed to moral law, I observed that humankind undertake the second stage of probationary preparation by acting as free agents endowed with the light of Christ. Their being engaged in this undertaking may be described as the universal experiment of the heart. I draw this description from Alma's explanation of how to "prove"

(34:46) that the word in Christ is the true way to live in time and eternity. He describes that method as an experiment of the heart, and indicates that its use in proving the goodness, or truth, of the word is an instance of the universal means used by humankind to determine good from bad ways to live.

To explain how the universal experiment of the heart works, Alma uses an analogy about how planters in time distinguish bad from good seeds and how they act upon what they observe. The analogy represents how humankind in time distinguish good from bad ways to live and act upon what they experience by engaging in the universal experiment of the heart. He says, “Every seed bringeth forth unto its own likeness. Therefore, if a seed growth it is good, but if it growth not, behold it is not good, therefore it is cast away” (Alma 32:31-33). The analogy is simple but rich in implications when understood in light of the scriptural background now before us.

Life is an essential property of a good seed. When planted and properly nurtured, a good seed grows in realization of the life in it. It brings forth “unto its own likeness” as a living thing. A bad seed appears to be a good seed, one having life in it; otherwise there would be no reason to plant and cultivate it. But when planted and cultivated, it fails over time to grow and bloom with life. It reveals its likeness—its actual quality of being—as a dead thing.

The two kinds of seed represent all ways to live contained in the one morality. Life is an essential property of every good way to live. When taken to heart and properly nurtured, a good way to live grows up and blooms with the quality of life inherent in it. Initially, a bad way to live appears to be a good way to live—a way that promises life. Otherwise there would be no reason for persons, having the natural aim they do, to pursue it. But when taken to heart and lived, it eventually fails to fulfill its promise, for there is no life in it. It will prove itself to be a way of death and misery.

It is natural for planters to cast away seeds they discover to be bad. It would be unthinkable for the capable among them to cultivate seeds they discover to be bad in order to bring them to fruition. Likewise, it is natural for persons to reject ways to live which they discover to be bad. It would be unthinkable for the capable among them to pursue ways to live which they know to be bad—to seek death and misery for their own sake.

However, it is apparent that Alma's purpose in using the analogy of planters was not to explain in detail how humankind naturally engage in the universal experiment of the heart in undertaking the second stage of probationary preparation. His objective is limited to explaining how that universal method is used to determine the goodness, or the truth, of the word in Christ. So he deliberately leaves unmentioned details about the behavior of planters which could illuminate analogically the universal engagement in that experiment. Notably, he does not mention that there exist many kinds of seed, that some good seeds of a kind are better than other seeds of that kind, and that for one reason or another some planters plant and cultivate to harvest the best seeds of that kind and others do not. So he leaves unilluminated that numerous possible ways to live exist, that some good ways are better than other good ways, and that for one reason or another, during mortality some persons pursue the best good way to live and others pursue less desirable such ways. He does this even though like other prophets—notably Lehi—he knew these things to be true.

Of course Alma had good reason to limit the analogy of planters to the extent he did. As a prophet of God, his calling was to persuade everyone he could to “cast away” the way of death and misery and embrace the word in Christ as the best possible good way to live in time and eternity. To do that, persons must apply the universal experiment of the heart to the word. Alma is not in the business of persuading anyone to apply that experiment to any of the many other possible good

ways to live. Hence, he limits his use of the analogy to explain how to apply the universal experiment of the heart to the word in Christ.

Alma begins his explanation by describing the minimum step persons need to take to begin the “experiment”: they need only to “exercise a particle of faith,” and have no more than a “desire to believe” the “words” of those who teach “the word” (Alma 32:27). To continue the experiment, persons must let the desire to believe work in them until they “believe in a manner” that gives “place” in their “hearts” for a “portion of the words” about “the word” (Alma 32:27-28). As persons live the word, the life inherent in it will bloom in them. It will “swell” their “breasts,” “enlarge” their “souls,” and “enlighten” their “understanding.” That experiment is naturally “delicious” to beings whose nature it is to desire that which gives life and eschews that which brings death (Alma 32:28). Because the word “swelleth and sprouteth, and beginneth to grow” in persons who live it, they “must needs know” that it “is good.” Their “knowledge is perfect in that thing.” It is perfect as far as it goes at each advance in the transformation (Alma 32:33).

The phrase “must needs know” is a strong epistemological phrase. It conveys the idea that persons necessarily know in some sense that the growth of the word in them is good. In talk about how and what we can know, there are different senses of necessity. In Alma’s teaching, the sense of necessity in the phrase “must needs know” is psychological. It means that individuals experience the goodness of the word’s growth in them directly and with complete certainty. That they could be mistaken is unthinkable to them. In this sense, the word’s goodness is self-evident.

Alma proceeds to explain in more depth the nature of the growing perfect knowledge of the experienced goodness of the word as persons continue the experiment. He first enumerates what they know for certain as a result of the growth of the

word in them. They “know” the word “swelleth” their “souls,” they “know” that it has “sprouted up” in them, they “know” their “understanding” has begun to be “enlightened” and their “minds doth begin to expand” (Alma 32:34). And then he asks: “O then, is not this real?” Is not the growth of the word and its experienced goodness an incontrovertible fact? Is not their knowledge “perfect in that thing”? The answer is “Yea”—an emphatic yes! In short, the growth of the word is experienced as self-evidently good (Alma 32:35).

Alma deepens his explanation of the self-evident experience of the goodness of the word’s growth by indicating that the light of Christ makes it possible. He explains that the goodness of its growth is “real” (an experienced, indubitable occurrence in fact) “because it is light, and whatever is light, is good, because it is discernible, therefore ye must know that it is good” (Alma 32:35). Needless to say, this is a compact explanation, but it can be unpacked in light of the scriptural background now before us.

Among its other functions, the light of Christ “quickeneth” and “enlighteneth” the “understanding” of “every man that cometh into this world,” so that all can come to “comprehend all things,” which includes coming to “know good from evil” and “to lay hold upon every good thing” contained in the word by undertaking the experiment of the heart (D&C 93:2; 88:7-13; Moroni 7:16-26). What the light does is make that which is good “discernible” in the sense that the experience of a good thing—e.g., the good of the word—carries its own unquestionable intelligibility. In other words, by means of the light, persons discern that which is good as “real” (an unmistakable occurrence in fact). Their knowledge of the goodness of that thing is perfect as far as it goes.

The word in Christ, and only the word in him, contains all that is good found in the one morality. By applying the universal experiment of the heart upon the word, persons by

means of the light of Christ can acquire finally a complete “perfect knowledge” of the good in the word. As Alma says, as the word grows in them they “must needs know (it) is good” at each progression in its growth (32:33). Notice that by explaining the undeniable experience of the goodness of the word’s growth in terms of the light of Christ, Alma both deepens the understanding of that self-evident experience while elucidating a function of the light of Christ. The explanatory relation is one of mutual illumination. The ways in which the word enlarges the soul and expands the mind (32:34) are ways of awakening to the good contained in word by means of the light (32:35). The coming to be by means of the word and the coming to a perfect knowledge of its truth by means of the light are one integral transformation that occurs as a result of carrying out the universal experiment of the heart upon it.

The universal experiment upon the word ends sometime after persons complete the second stage of probationary preparation, and the word has grown up in them “unto everlasting life,” meaning eternal life and happiness. Alma likens the enjoyment of eternal life and happiness made possible by the word to “feasting upon” the fully ripened “fruit” of the “the tree life,” a fruit “which is most precious, which is sweet above all that is sweet, and which is white above all that is white, yea, and pure above all that is pure.” He goes on: “and ye shall feast upon this fruit even until ye are filled, that ye hunger not, neither shall ye thirst” (Alma 32:40-43). The hunger and thirst referred to here represent the natural desire persons have for life and happiness. The fruit of the wholly grown word, and only its fruit, satisfies fully and everlastingly that desire. Endless lives will have enduring purpose and fullness in the highest degree. The evolving perfect knowledge of the truth of the word will be complete, which presupposes that knowledge of the one true morality will be perfect.

As I mentioned in the beginning of the essay, every major part of it could be explored much further. This is obviously true of my brief explanation of Alma's teaching on the universal experiment of the heart applied to the word in Christ. Though I covered generally the main parts of his specific teaching on the subject in light of other scripture, my coverage remains glaringly incomplete. Notably, I left out how in carrying out the universal experiment upon the word, persons are enlightened and guided by the light of Christ to where, through their faith, repentance, and obedience, they enjoy the sanctifying (lifegiving) powers of the Holy Ghost (Mosiah 27:24-25; Alma 36; Moroni 7:16, 32). And I left unmentioned how the Holy Ghost uses the light of Christ in administering its sanctifying powers in their lives (D&C 88:11-13; Moroni 10:17).

IV

This essay proceeds on the assumption accepted as true from scripture that there exists among the hosts of heaven one true morality conclusively grounded in reason which contains all possible ways to live in time and eternity. There is no rational possibility for fundamental moral disagreement to occur among them. Yet one occurred that escalated into war (Revelation 12:49). It was over which of two deeply incompatible plans of salvation was to be implemented during the second stage of probationary preparation for endless lives. One was the original plan of the Father and the other a basic modification of that plan sponsored by Lucifer (Moses 1:33, 39; 4:1-4).

The parties to the disagreement included pre-mortal beings of advanced intelligence and moral maturity as a result of having undergone a long period of probationary preparation called "the first estate" (Abraham 3:25-26). There were "many" among them who were "noble and great" (Abraham 3:22). The pre-mortal Christ himself, presumably assisted by capable

others, acted as the Father's chief engineer in the creation of many worlds (Moses 1:32-33). Lucifer, who was the leading architect of the modified plan, held the title of "a son of the morning" (Isaiah 14:12). His name, "Lucifer," and his title, "son of the morning," indicate that he was a person of high intelligence and moral standing who held a prominent position of authority among the hosts of heaven before his rebellion and fall (D&C 76:25).

In fact, a large number of pre-mortals were nearing the completion of a long period of probationary preparation by the time the two plans of salvation were under consideration, so no doubt they understood and accepted the one morality. What is more, the stakes at issue were very high indeed; the debates probably went on for some time and at times became intense, and so by the time war broke out, all must have been fully conversant with the arguments of both sides based on that morality.

So consideration of the two plans of salvation must have evolved for a time as a rational debate among intelligent and morally mature persons who had knowledge of and accepted the one morality. It would be a mistake to attribute irrational and immature motives to those who participated in that debate by drawing on current common-sense psychology about how some mortals think and behave. Presumably, rational debate did not reach the point where reason itself was logically exhausted, for that would mean that the one morality is not in the final analysis conclusively grounded in reason. It would mean that the order of heaven, with its numerous never-ending ways to live, hierarchically ordered as they are by that morality, would be without rational foundation. Still, rational debate broke down, war broke out, and Lucifer and his many followers were defeated and cast down from heaven to suffer the eternal death and misery they had brought upon themselves.

Taking into account how many among pre-mortals followed Lucifer to the point of rebellion and suffered the same awful fate he did helps give perspective to the magnitude of the discord that rocked the heavens. One-third of them did so, and the Lord told Abraham that was “many” (D&C 29:36-37; Abraham 3:28). How many were “many”? Just for fun, assume that the total number involved in the debate included the number of inhabitants who will have lived on this earth alone by the time mortal existence ends on it. About one hundred billion seems like a rough, reasonable estimate. They would be the two-thirds of the total number of premortals who did not follow Lucifer—those privileged to enter mortality. That would leave fifty billion who did follow him. Very “many” indeed! In any case, without knowing the exact number, I think it can be safely assumed it was many billions. And they did not dwindle in unbelief and ignorance. They followed Lucifer in support of the modified plan while knowing and accepting the one morality.

The fall of Lucifer and his many followers—their becoming an *evil* and wicked people—presupposes a time when they were a good and righteous people. The scriptural account of their fall lacks many critical details, and the timeline is highly condensed, and so it is open to more than one interpretation, each of which will be more or less incomplete. The most probable incomplete interpretation of this account is the one that, with the help of other scripture, makes the most sense of how billions of a once good and righteous people underwent a moral decline that resulted in their becoming an evil and wicked people and as a consequence suffered the unthinkable—eternal death and misery. That interpretation draws, as it must, on an understanding of how the one morality defines and orders the lives of pre-mortals.

So the place to begin is with the time when Lucifer and his followers were a good and righteous people and from

there trace to the extent possible the course of their moral degeneration. The most complete single text is found in the Book of Moses. Though very brief, it covers the three stages of the fall of Lucifer and by implication his followers. It begins with the time the Father met in special council with the Only Begotten and Lucifer when both plans of salvation were on the table, continues with the rebellion of Lucifer, and ends with his being cast down from heaven, where he and his followers labor to destroy the work of the Father. To aid in the examination of this text, I will quote it in full for future reference:

And I, the Lord God, spake unto Moses, saying: That Satan, whom thou has commanded in the name of mine Only Begotten, is the same which was from the beginning, and he came before me, saying-Behold, here am I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor. But, behold, my Beloved Son, which was my Beloved and Chosen from the beginning, said unto me-Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever. Wherefore, because that Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him, and also, that I should give unto him mine own power; by the power of mine Only Begotten, I caused that he should be cast down; And he became Satan, yea, even the devil, the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto my voice. (Moses 4:1-4)

It is not clear why Lucifer was privileged to sit in special council with the Father and the Only Begotten over matters so weighty. However, he did hold a prominent position of authority in the pre-mortal society (D&C 76:25). That would explain

why he was entitled to be in that meeting. Perhaps he and the Only Begotten were the Father's two counselors. Be that as it may, the explicit issue before them in the meeting was Lucifer's offer to serve as the redeemer. Of course there could be no call for a redeemer without a plan of salvation. By assuring the Father that if he were chosen to be the redeemer, all would be redeemed and none would be lost, Lucifer presupposed a plan that promised that outcome. It could not be the original plan—the one now being carried out in this world—for it did not and could not make this promise. So whether or not Lucifer was chosen to be the redeemer depended on which plan the Father implemented. If he chose the modified plan, presumably the door would be open for Lucifer to act as its redeemer, assuming he qualified, but if the Father chose the original plan, the Only Begotten would fulfill that calling.

God tells Moses that the Only Begotten was “chosen from the beginning” to be the redeemer called for by the original plan. That he was “chosen” to fulfill that calling means he was foreordained to do so and proved himself qualified during the first stage of probationary preparation. The phrase “from the beginning” refers to the beginning of the Father's life work as God. It does not refer only to the first moment in that work. Rather it refers to the early period of it, which began with the birth of the Only Begotten as the Father's firstborn spirit child (Moses 5:9; D&C 93:21), spanned the coming into being of many other offspring and their undertaking the first stage of probationary preparation, and ended when they began the second stage of probationary preparation on the first world or worlds created for that purpose. So during this early period of the Father's lifework as God, the Only Begotten stood ready to serve as the redeemer called for by the original plan.

This means, of course, that the original plan of salvation itself existed from the beginning as the plan to be implemented on the first and all subsequent worlds in order for the spirit

offspring of God to progress in their probationary preparation for endless lives. Given that there exists only one true morality, that plan must have been the one required by it from the beginning. That is why it may be called the *original plan*. It follows that the Only Begotten was “chosen”—called and qualified—“from the beginning” to serve as the redeemer on all the worlds yet to be created and populated by the Father.

From the beginning period of his lifework, the Father has created numerous worlds—worlds without number to mortals—on which his many spiritual offspring have the opportunity to progress in their preparation for endless lives. What is more, he created them by his Only Begotten and firstborn son (Moses 1:33-35). If this world is prototypical of all the other worlds created by him, then he performed the work of Jehovah on each of them. It seems fitting that he not only act as the creator of all worlds and hence rule as Jehovah on all of them but also that he fulfill the call of redeemer for them all.

In the text before us, God tells Moses that Lucifer also “was from the beginning” (Moses 4:11). In this scriptural context, the phrase that Lucifer was “from the beginning” refers to the same timeframe as the phrase the Only Begotten was “from the beginning.” Both men were present during the beginning period of the Father’s life work as God. Apparently it was at some point during the beginning of the Father’s life work that Lucifer “came before [him]” with his offer to serve as the redeemer called for by the modified plan.

This certainly would be the opportune time—the time preceding the implementation of a plan of salvation in any world—for the Father to meet in special council with his two prominent sons over such issues and for the pre-mortal hosts at large to debate them. Surely questions concerning which plan of salvation should be enacted and who should serve as the redeemer would not be up for serious consideration in preparation for populating this world after the Father

had already created “worlds without number” by the “Only Begotten Son” on which the original plan of salvation, calling as it does for him to serve as the redeemer, had been or was being implemented (Moses 1:33, 39). Of course the modified plan could not be enacted retroactively, so obviously Lucifer could not be the universal redeemer. What, then? Would Lucifer serve as the redeemer in this world in fulfillment of the modified plan, and the Only Begotten serve as the redeemer called for by the original plan on other worlds?? So it is apparent that the time at which the Father met in special council with his two prominent sons (as reported in Moses 4:1-4) was “in the beginning” of his life work as God.

That means Lucifer and his original followers were good and righteous persons sometime during that period, as their fall before it presupposes. But when during that time did it occur? It seems certain that Lucifer’s many followers were still such a people during the time that debates over the two plans occurred, and the Father met with his two sons over the two plans and who would serve as the redeemer. The most convincing explanation is that they became a fallen people—a thoroughly evil and wicked people—as a consequence of their unrepentant rebellion in response to the rejection of the modified plan they so strongly favored and not before it was rejected. As will be confirmed as I examine further the text from Moses before us in light of other scripture, Lucifer himself was also not yet a fallen man at this time.

Both plans of salvation were grounded in the one morality. The general purpose and design of each included enabling the Father’s pre-mortal offspring to attain eternal life and happiness, which is the final good of that morality, and each required a perfect redeemer to make this possible, which is a requirement of that morality. So both plans were benevolent in purpose and design and required that the calling of a redeemer be fulfilled by an altruist. Then what about Lucifer’s motive for sponsoring

the modified plan and volunteering to be its redeemer? If, as I suggested, he like his following was still a good and righteous man when he was privileged to meet in the beginning in special council with the Father and the Only Begotten, then his motive was also altruistic. However, the language Lucifer used in making his proposal can be interpreted so that it appears his motive was egoistic and unabashedly so: his conspicuous use of personal pronouns, his presumptuous declaration that he would surely succeed as the redeemer, and his upfront expectation that the Father grant him as a reward his honor (and hence his power) as God (Moses 4:1).

But an alternative interpretation of the text is possible which indicates that Lucifer was still a good and righteous man of high authority when he met with the Father and Only Begotten and hence that his motive in making the proposal he did was not egoistic. This interpretation can be strongly corroborated by taking into consideration features of the cultural environment, reflecting, as it did, the operation of the one morality, in which the pre-mortal hosts debated the two plans of salvation, and the special council between the Father and his two prominent sons took place.

First an alternative interpretation of the text in question (Moses 4:1-4): Notice in addressing the Father about serving as the redeemer called for by the modified plan, Lucifer implicitly acknowledged the Father's authority as God to accept his proposal. Furthermore, he said explicitly that he would serve as the redeemer, acting in the subordinate role of "son." The implication was that he would act subservient to the Father, who would oversee the enactment of the modified plan. Lucifer went on to observe that all humankind would be redeemed, and none would be lost if he served as the redeemer called for by that plan, which meant the Father would achieve his desire to bring to pass the eternal life of all his offspring in all future worlds (Moses 1:33, 39). He assured the Father in certain terms

that he could be counted on to perform this great service. According to this interpretation, his use of personal pronouns to speak such things was the normal use of such language in that situation. Before indicating what Lucifer wanted when he asked the Father to give him his honor and power as God for completing successfully the mission of redeemer, I need to provide further scriptural background.

To further corroborate this alternative interpretation up to this point, consider the following basic truths of the one morality, which ordered the cultural environment in which the society of pre-mortals deliberated over the two plans and the special meeting between the Father and his two sons took place. One truth is a basic requirement of anyone who would be the redeemer: That person must be a perfect being of love. This is a requirement of the modified plan as well as the original plan, grounded as they are in the one morality. An egoist cannot fulfill that calling under any circumstances. It is an absolute impossibility. Lucifer of course knew about this elemental requirement of the one morality, as did all pre-mortals, including the many who supported him. In order for the modified plan itself to be implemented with his acting as redeemer, he and everyone else knew that his motive for fulfilling that calling could not be egoistic.

Furthermore, it is a basic truth of the one morality that being an egoist results naturally and inevitably in eternal death and misery. The mind of the egoist is prototypical of the carnal mind, and “to be carnally minded is death” (2 Nephi 9:39). It is unthinkable for anyone to choose knowingly and willingly never-ending death and misery for its own sake over everlasting life and happiness. No doubt the hosts of heaven learned early in their long pre-mortal lives this elementary truth and hence chose to forego egoistic ways of being. Indeed, they would not have progressed in undertaking the first stage of probationary preparations if they had not.

This would have been true of Lucifer. Clearly, he could not have been the prominent person of authority he was among the heavenly hosts and been privileged to sit in special council with the Father and the Only Begotten if he had been an egoist at that time. Surely he could not have played the leading role he did in the debates over plans of salvation if he had been such a person. Certainly the many who backed him in his cause would not have done so if he had forthrightly expressed an egoistic motive for offering to be the redeemer called for by the modified plan—a calling everyone knew he could not possibly fulfill if he were an egoist. Assuming that the alternative interpretation of that text is correct, it also seems inconceivable that he could have disguised an egoistic motive for volunteering to be the redeemer called for by the modified plan and concealed the fact that he, being an egoist, could not perform that calling. The pre-mortal hosts were too well informed, and as a prominent person of authority and leading player in the ongoing debate, he was too well vetted to have carried off such a ruse even if he had attempted to do so. So surely Lucifer was not an egoist when he met with the Father and the Only Begotten in special council at the beginning of the Father's life work as God.

What then did Lucifer want when he asked the Father to “give me thine honor” for performing the work of redeemer, acting in the subordinate role as son, saying, “Surely I will do it”? He could not have wanted anything like the “honor of men” or “honor of the world” some persons foolishly aspire to and sometimes receive in the world of mortals (Alma 60:36; D&C 121:35). Obviously, this is not the kind of “honor” the hosts of heaven could possibly expect or receive from the Father for serving him in any capacity. Everyone who grew up in the premortal culture of heaven ordered by the one morality and knew their Father understood this perfectly well. As they looked toward their lives as mortals, they understood beforehand that no one who “aspires” to that kind of “honor” would be

the “chosen” by the Father to fulfill any calling in mortality, let alone the high calling of redeemer (D&C 121:34-36).

There is only one kind of honor any of the hosts of heaven could possibly expect and want from the Father. It is the kind of “honor” he confers on all who serve him in “righteousness” (D&C 76:5, 88:28-32). The supreme form of this honor is “the honor” with which “the faithful” who inherit “immortality and eternal life” shall be “crowned” by him (D&C 75:5; 124:55). The key phrase here is “shall be crowned,” for those who serve the Father in righteousness in mortality shall become “gods, even the sons (and daughters) of God” (D&C 76:24, 58). They will be perfect even as the Father is perfect (3 Nephi 12:48); they will receive “the fullness of the Father” and hence “all the Father hath shall be given them” (D&C 76:55; 84:38); and he will make them “equal in power, and in might, and in dominion” (D&C 76:95). This high honor—the honor of godhood—is an instance of the honor the Father himself enjoys as God.

The honor of godhood—the honor like unto the honor of the Father—can be attained only by the perfectly righteous. This qualification is dictated by the one morality which orders the heavens. To seek that honor egoistically would be to pursue the impossible. Lucifer and all involved in the debate over the plans of salvation knew this perfectly well. So the only “honor” Lucifer could possibly expect the Father to give him for performing the work of redeemer called for by the modified plan, when he assured the Father by saying “surely” he would “do it” acting in the subordinate role as “son,” was the honor of being “a god, even a son of god.” He could surely do it only if he was qualified to do it. There was no other way. This is the honor and the power that goes with it that the Only Begotten now enjoys, he having finished the work of redeemer as a mortal and ascended into heaven to sit down on the right hand of the Father (D&C 20:21-24, 36). This is the honor and power

Lucifer presumably expected the Father to bestow upon him for fulfilling successfully that calling.

The Father, sustained by two-thirds of his then pre-mortal family, rejected the modified plan and thereby denied Lucifer the opportunity to serve as the redeemer. The reason for his decision was not dependent on whether Lucifer was qualified to serve as the redeemer called for by that plan. These are two separate issues, for if in the beginning the modified plan had proven to be the better plan of salvation, then reason and hence the one morality would have required its enactment in all worlds to come, whether or not Lucifer was chosen to act as its redeemer. But it contained a critical defect that made it unacceptable to the Father and the very many of his early family who remained faithful to him. Its implementation would have violated the one morality in a major way.

The Only Begotten knew this, as did all the pre-mortal hosts of heaven, for as will become apparent shortly, the defect is not that difficult to detect. This being so, I believe that when the Only Begotten said to the Father, “Thy will be done” (Moses 4:2), he was not saying that he would sustain the Father whichever plan he chose to enact and whomever he called to be the redeemer. I think he had no doubt that the Father would stay with the original plan called for by the one morality, and so as expected, he expressed agreement with the Father’s stand and his unconditional willingness to sustain the Father in it. When he added “the glory be thine forever,” he knew that the glory of the Father emanates from his holiness—his perfect moral nature—which motivates all he does. So he declared his resolute intent to stand by the Father in his work and glory as God (Moses 1:39; 2 Nephi 9:10).

The defect in the modified plan was not in the end it promised to achieve, which was the realization of the final good of the one morality and the avoidance of its ultimate evil. That was the plan’s principal virtue, and presumably the primary

reason so many informed pre-mortals found it desirable. So its defect was in the means required to enact it. Two possibilities come to mind. Either the Father lacked the power to implement the plan, or he possessed the power to do so, but using it to that end would violate the one morality. There is *good* reason to believe the first alternative is false and the second is true.

In considering the two plans of salvation, all involved apparently believed that the Father, in his omnipotence, possessed the power to enact the modified plan. Otherwise it would not have been seriously considered in the first place. To support this conclusion, consider how the power of the Father has been exercised in implementing the original plan of salvation. For example, it has been used to “smite” the earth with a “great famine,” which caused “thousands to perish” and persuaded the remainder of “a people” to “remember the Lord their God” and “repent” (Helaman 11). It has been used to awaken “a very wicked and an idolatrous man” to his “carnal and fallen state,” revealing to him the “dark abyss” and “eternal torment” that awaited him if he did not “repent,” leading him to be “born of God” by the power of God (Mosiah 27). The power of the Father transformed at once, by means of the Holy Spirit, the natures of a large community of repentant people from a “carnal state” to a pure in heart state in which they had “no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually” (Mosiah 1-5). Such examples abound in scripture.

So the power of the Father to execute the modified plan existed, but using it to that end would have violated the one morality. Notably, he cannot, acting as the perfect being of love he is, use his power to save by overriding even “one whit” the “demands of justice,” though it is presumed he has the raw power to do so. He would “cease to be God”—he would not cease to exist, but he would cease to be the perfect being he must be according to the one morality in order to be God—if he failed to comply with the principle of justice in the exercise

of his merciful power to save. It is an unalterable precept of the one morality that mercy cannot rob justice (Alma 42).

The fatal flaw in the modified plan can be explained and evaluated by examining the main difference between the two plans. Recall that the modified plan promised that all who pass through mortality would receive eternal life and happiness; none would be lost. The original plan cannot guarantee this outcome. The main reason is that the original plan requires that persons be “permitted to act for themselves” and “not be acted upon” in the conduct of their lives during the second stage of probationary preparation. Their ability to do so is made possible by the redeeming work of the Only Begotten (2 Nephi 2:26; Helaman 14:30). So according to that plan, “as many as will” will be “redeemed” and “enjoy eternal life and happiness” (Moses 5:9). This leaves open the possibility that many could inherit the lesser never-ending ways of life and happiness, and some could suffer eternal death and misery—all of which is turning out to be the case (2 Nephi 2:28-29; D&C 76; 88:28-32). Apparently the modified plan would rule out this possibility by using divine power somehow to control the development and govern the exercise of free agency during mortality. But this use of power would violate the one morality.

To set the stage for examining the nature and significance of this violation, consider the one way acceptance of the modified plan with its promised outcome was in accord with respect for free agency, as required by the one morality. According to that plan, everyone destined to enter mortality would be asked to surrender voluntarily their free agency during that brief period of time. This is evidenced by the fact that the many who did accept that plan and refused to accept its rejection did so “because of their agency” (D&C 29:36). Likewise, the very many more who accepted the original plan and rejected the modified plan also did so because of their agency. The promised payoff for giving up voluntarily their freedom as agents during their

brief sojourn as mortals as required by the modified plan was that they would come to enjoy fully and forever their ultimate and defining ends as free beings.

It is not clear from scripture how divine power could be used to command the development and exercise of free agency so that all would be redeemed and none would be lost. Clearly, the use of authoritarian methods of control—methods that involve primarily the threat and use of severe sanctions—could not achieve this result. Quite simply, persons cannot be compelled by the use of blunt force and coercion to prepare for and receive eternal life and happiness. This end is the final good of humankind, and their defining end as free agents, and it can be enjoyed only as an uncoerced end—an end in itself.

There is another, more likely possibility. Perhaps extensive totalitarian methods of mind and behavior control could be employed by divinely empowered political rulers to form and orient the learned nature of their subjects so they lived willingly programmed lives that would result in their enjoying eternal life and happiness. Perhaps if properly devised and executed, totalitarian methods in conjunction with the labors and atoning sacrifice of the one chosen to be the Savior would work, but it remains unclear how. In any case, the bottom line is that the Father in his omnipotence possessed the raw power to implement the modified plan, which presumably could be conferred upon his chosen rulers in mortality.

So the fatal flaw in the modified plan was its requirement that free agency be voluntarily surrendered during mortality. To explain the significance of this defect, consider the two cardinal goods in the one mortality and the basic relationship between them. One is eternal life and happiness, which is the final good of immortal beings. The other is the great worth of persons, meaning that each and every person in continuing generations is a being of profound and equal, unique intrinsic worth. Hence, in accord with the one morality, eternal life and

happiness is “the greatest of all the gifts of God” and “the worth of souls is great” in his “sight” (D&C 14:7; 18:10). And this is a critical point: In the one true morality, the great worth of individual persons is prior to and takes precedence over their final good, though the two goods are inseparable.

This priority is manifest in the moral law of love. According to that law, the highest aim of pure love is to bring to pass the final good of persons for the sake of persons as beings of great individual worth. This defining relation between the two cardinal goods entailed by the law of love helps explain why it comprehends the other moral laws in the one morality (Matthew 22:36-40; Romans 13:20; Galatians 5:14; John 13:34; Moroni 7:47-48). The reason the Father and all who serve him labor in love to bring about the eternal life and happiness of continuing generations of humankind is because they have great individual worth. The root idea here is that the final good of persons exists for the sake of individual persons as beings of great worth; persons as beings of great worth do not exist for the sake of that final good. The bottom line is this: In the one morality the great worth of individual persons takes precedence over their final good in all circumstances. Which means that their final good can be brought to pass only in ways consistent with realizing their great individual worth, and the realization of their great individual worth can be limited only by itself.

The great worth of individual persons itself contains a core good. It is the great worth of each person in continuing generations as a free being. This core good reflects the basic, essential function that individual agency plays in making possible the existence of persons (D&C 93:30). In the one morality human agency receives its full moral recognition as the centering good in the great worth of persons, which means that it is the basic good of the one morality. It limits how the larger good of which it is the center part can be realized and hence limits how the final good of persons can be actualized.

Its full realization by continuing generations is limited only by itself.

The upshot is this: According to the one morality, free agency is inalienable, meaning, among other things, that it should not be morally surrendered voluntarily to anyone during any stage of existence. So it is that in performing the great work of love aimed at a realizing the final good of continuing generations of persons out of regard for their great individual worth, the Father and all who labor with him respect absolutely the freedom of persons to accept or not the saving message of the Gospel (Alma 4:27; Helaman 14:30). The justice of God's final judgment, which determines the never-ending ways to live that persons receive after completing the second stage of probationary preparation, depends on their having, in the course of time, a full and equal opportunity to exercise their freedom as agents (see, for example, D&C 88:32; 138).

Hence the first requirement of the one morality—its fundamental principle—is that persons become and live their lives as free agents during every stage of their endless lives. The Father himself ensures the eventual fulfillment of this requirement. It is in this sense that he “gave unto man his agency” first in the pre-mortal world (Moses 4:3), later in the Garden of Eden in preparation for mortal existence (Moses 7:32), and thereafter during the second stage of probationary preparation that ends sometime in the post-mortal world (Helaman 14:29-31; D&C 138). He guarantees that in the end all individuals in continuing generations of his offspring will have a full and equal opportunity to act as free agents in determining the outcome of their endless lives (2 Nephi 2:26; 26:28, 33; D&C 138; 1 Peter 4:5-6).

By requiring persons to surrender voluntarily their freedom as agents during mortality in order to realize their natural and defining end as free beings with endless lives, the modified plan was in violation of the fundamental principle—

the principle of freedom that belongs to all persons at every stage of their endless existence (D&C 98:5)—of the one true morality. It was not that Lucifer and his followers accepted on the basis of reason a different morality from the one true one. That was not rationally possible for them, since the one morality is true and was known by them to be so. They most likely accepted the major inconsistency between the modified plan and the one morality for what it was—a major inconsistency. They apparently believed that the full realization of the final good prescribed by the one morality justified the enactment of that plan despite its basic defect. It seems that in their minds the magnitude of the end justified the violation of the principle of freedom as the means of realizing it. That presumably was the primary reason so many of the Father’s informed early offspring preferred the modified plan over the original one.

But by being willing to accept the basic inconsistency between the modified plan and the one morality for what it was, Lucifer and his followers in effect exalted themselves above moral law itself. It was their first step in becoming a law unto themselves. Once they took that first big step, each further step became easier until they lived lives entirely ungoverned by moral law—lives in which they “altogether abide in sin” and suffer eternal death and misery (D&C 88:34-39, Alma 40:26). Ironically, they brought upon themselves the very fate which the modified plan they prized so highly was designed to prevent.

In response to the Father’s decision to reject the modified plan, Lucifer and his following rebelled and eventually were “cast down” to suffer the eternal death misery they brought upon themselves (Moses 4:4). The scriptural account of their fall is highly condensed and incomplete, leaving room for questions about the timeline that led to it and why they failed to avoid the unthinkable. But some inferences—some certain

and some more or less probable—can be drawn from what scripture does reveal.

The fall of Lucifer and his followers was a process of moral decline in which they died to all things good and righteous (Alma 5:42; 40:26; D&C 88:35). Their moral degeneration must have been an unintended, and for a time an unanticipated, consequence of their rebellion, for no one would seek knowingly and willingly for its own sake, as an end in itself eternal, death and misery. Also, there is no conceivable end that would motivate them to accept knowingly and willingly being “racked” with endless “torment”—a never-ending torment so harrowing that no one can fully imagine it except those who suffer it—in order to achieve that end (D&C 76:36, 44-47; Mosiah 27:29). Generalizing from how some foolish mortals in their ignorance behave, it might be thought that pride or lust for power compelled Lucifer, backed by many followers, to march willingly down the path to their inevitable destruction. But surely when they were still a good and righteous people, as they presumably were “in the beginning” when plans of salvation first came under consideration, they were not yet possessed by those vices. They became possessed of those vices—vices Lucifer and his followers knew perfectly well would inevitably result in their spiritual death and misery as a consequence of it—later some distance down the path of their moral decline.

It is worth repeating that the modified plan itself promised to prevent the very fate that befell Lucifer and his followers, which was a primary reason they so strongly favored it and refused to accept its rejection by the Father. So it seems unbelievable that from the first they underwent willingly and knowingly moral decline itself. Moreover, it stands to reason that in the beginning of their rebellion they thought they could succeed in getting the modified plan enacted. Given their strong commitment to that plan, they would not have given up easily on its implementation. But they lacked sufficient power to

achieve their purpose. The Father with his omnipotent power as God stood in their way.

So it was that under the leadership of Lucifer they sought to wrest power from the Father by means of rebellion (Moses 4:3; D&C 29:36). Presumably, they intended to use that power to compel universal compliance with the modified plan. This was a major move in their increasing willingness to commandeer the agency of persons in order to accomplish their ends. They were willing to do this even though it violated the basic precept of the modified plan itself, which required that pre-mortals surrender voluntarily their free agency during the second stage of probationary preparation. Their moral decline, their dying to things good and righteous, centered in their increasing willingness to violate the basic good of the one morality—the great worth of persons as free beings.

As Lucifer and his cohorts persisted unrepentant in their rebellion, their moral decline progressed to the point of no return. As it did, the purpose in their rebellion itself deteriorated. It was no longer a desire to wrest power from the Father in order to compel compliance with the modified plan. They walked away from the modified plan altogether. Their purpose devolved to where they sought to overthrow by force the kingdoms of God and exalt Lucifer as the supreme ruler of the heavens in a kingdom of his own making (2 Nephi 24:13-14; D&C 76:28).

The order of heaven, grounded as it is in the one morality, is an order of freedom. All ways to live contained in that morality are alternatives of freedom which persons prove themselves willing to live by undertaking as free agents the second stage of probationary preparation. If Lucifer and his cohorts had succeeded in overthrowing the kingdoms of God, the order of heaven would have been transformed from an order of freedom to an order of tyranny. Lucifer with his followers would have reigned in a kingdom of his own making in which he with

them commandeered the agency of all the hosts of heaven. As the Father tells Moses, before Lucifer was “cast down” in defeat he rebelled against him and sought his “power” as God in order to “destroy” (completely commandeer) “the agency of man” which he had “given him,” presumably by using his power to secure the order of heaven as an order of freedom (Moses 4:3). As is apparent, Lucifer and his gang reached the end point in their moral degeneration by exalting themselves above all moral law. As the timeline in the text from Moses seems to imply (Moses 4:3), they had become a “law unto [themselves]” (D&C 88:35), even before being “cast down” from heaven. So as indicated, Lucifer’s rule in the new order of heaven would have been an absolute rule unrestrained by moral law. It would have been a tyranny.

It can be inferred from scripture already considered that the honor Lucifer would have commanded as the supreme ruler of heaven would be radically different in meaning and significance from the honor he originally wanted the Father to give him for serving as the redeemer in the subordinate role of son. The latter feature of divine status is integral to the order of heaven, being grounded in the one morality. It takes its meaning and significance strictly from that morality. So it can be enjoyed only by persons who fulfill the requirements of godhood dictated by it. There is no other way. Perhaps the honor Lucifer would have enjoyed as the supreme ruler of heaven is like unto the honor that some carnally minded persons seek in the fallen world of mortals.

Defeated in war, Lucifer and his many followers were cast down from heaven to suffer the death and misery they had already brought upon themselves by undergoing moral degeneration during the course of their rebellion. Cast down, they continue living lives as a law unto themselves, lives ungoverned by moral law, hence lives which they “altogether abide in sin” (D&C 88:35). They now live as captives of their

own sinful natures, being totally bereft of their ability to realize their natural and defining end as free beings, and of Satan's (Lucifer's) tyrannical rule, an absolute rule unrestrained by moral law. As persons with endless lives, their only possible reason for being is to defeat the Father's work of salvation by bringing others down into misery and captivity (2 Nephi 2:18, 27).

Much like Nephi, son of Helaman, and Jacob, son of Lehi, I am perplexed by the rebellious behavior of Lucifer and his many followers, wondering why they persisted unrepentant in their rebellion until their souls were hurled down into everlasting misery and endless woe (Helaman 7:16; Jacob 6:6-10). It is understandable from scripture why, for instance, some ignorant or weak-willed mortals seek life and happiness in ways that eventually bring death and misery. The examples and explanations are aplenty. But why did billions of the Father's mature offspring, nearing as they were the successful completion of the first stage of probationary preparation for endless lives and having as they did knowledge of the one true morality on which the modified plan of redemption they so strongly favored was grounded—why did they willfully bring upon themselves the terrible fate they believed the plan would enable them to avoid?

A key part of the explanation is that they cut themselves off from the presence of God by violating the one morality and refused his standing offer to receive them back until it became everlastingly too late (see, for example, Helaman 13:38; 2 Nephi 9:6, 8; D&C 88:63). Being "cut off from the presence of God" is not only a relocation in space-time but a spiritual separation that involves being "cut off from the things pertaining to righteousness," which results in eternal death and misery (see Helaman 14:14-18; Alma 40:26). The implication is that being in the presence of God is necessary in order for persons to lay hold upon things good and righteous, enjoy life and happiness,

and avoid death and misery. This means that when left to follow their own wills, they cannot attain their final good and avoid their ultimate evil. Hence the teaching that persons become and remain saved by the grace of God after all they can do, in obedience to moral law (see, e.g., 2 Nephi 28:20; D&C 122:1; Moses 6:15).

So it was that Lucifer and the many who followed him cut themselves off from the presence of God to follow their own wills in pursuit of the final good of the one morality—their natural end as persons—in ways that increasingly violated the one morality until they lost altogether their ability to realize that end. As beings with endless lives, their only remaining reason for being is to be agents of evil. It is sobering how powerful a motivating force the work of evil can be when it becomes the only remaining reason for being. How it can give enduring and all-consuming purpose to endless lives.

To conclude, it is not entirely clear from scripture alone why Lucifer and the billions who followed him willingly and knowingly brought upon themselves the terrible fate they did. Like many others, I can commiserate with the fact that the “heavens wept over him,” crying out, “Lo, he is fallen! is fallen, even a son of the morning” (D&C 76:26-27). The exclamation that “even” he, “a son of the morning,” is “fallen” is twice repeated, emphasizing how extremely unlikely and sobering his fall was to those who knew him. Their weeping over his fall reveals how much they loved and respected the person he once was. How great must have been the weeping and astonishment of the heavens over the billions of their brothers and sisters who fell with him. And to think that their moral decline began with a willingness to violate the fundamental principle of the one true morality—the principle of freedom that belongs to all humanity at every stage of their endless existence—in order to realize their final good.

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Alma Don Sorensen was born in Hyrum, Utah. After serving a mission to the New England states, he earned his BA at Utah State University and his PhD at the University of Illinois in political science. His field of study is moral and political philosophy and the philosophy of the social sciences.

He taught at Indiana for six years and then came to BYU in 1970, where he taught courses in those subjects, garnering several teaching awards including an Alcuin Award. He retired in 1998 and taught occasional classes thereafter. He and his wife Necia make their home in Saint George, Utah.

I DO NOT THINK THAT WORD MEANS WHAT YOU THINK IT MEANS

Brant A. Gardner

Review of E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O'Brien, *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2012), 240 pp. \$16.00.

Of course, the correct quotation of Inigo Montoya's famous line in *The Princess Bride* is "You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means." Unfortunately, it made too long a title, though in homage to Richards and O'Brien's book, I have substituted the culturally defined Word for its more common reference. That is precisely the message of the book. You keep reading that Word. It doesn't mean what you think it means. From their introduction:

Christians always and everywhere have believed that the Bible is the Word of God. God spoke in the past, "through the prophets at many times and in various ways," and most clearly by his Son (Heb. 1:1). By the Holy Spirit, God continues to speak to his people through the Scriptures. It is important that Christ's church retain this conviction, even as it poses certain challenges for interpretation. We can easily forget that Scripture is a foreign land and that reading the Bible is a cross-cultural experience. To open the Word of God is to step into a strange world where things are very unlike our own. Most of us don't speak the languages.

We don't know the geography or the customs or what behaviors are considered rude or polite. And yet we hardly notice. (p. 11)

The importance of what they are examining is highlighted by that last sentence. This is perhaps even more prevalent among Latter-day Saint scripture readers, if only because we have more scripture to misread. However, we justify ourselves in the misreading because we “liken all scriptures unto us” (2 Ne. 19:23). Certainly the real value of scripture is when it affects our lives in meaningful ways. However, we can also assume certain mandates from scripture that are not really there. This happens when we miss the cross-cultural subtleties embedded in the text. The authors explain:

The most powerful cultural values are those that go without being said. It is very hard to know what goes without being said in another culture. But often we are not even aware of what goes without being said in our own culture. This is why misunderstanding and misinterpretation happen. When a passage of Scripture appears to leave out a piece of the puzzle because something went without being said, we instinctively fill in the gap with a piece from our own culture—usually a piece that goes without being said. When we miss what went without being said for *them* and substitute what goes without being said for *us*, we are at risk of misreading Scripture. (pp. 12-13)

One of the things I found most fascinating about reading the book is that Richards and O'Brien are writing for an assumed audience that isn't LDS. There is nothing wrong with that, but it creates some things that go without saying that become highlighted for an LDS reader. LDS readers know that other churches have missions, but we might not internalize the very

significant differences between what a mission means in the two different religious cultures. Thus, when Richards speaks of his mission in Indonesia, an LDS reader immediately hits a word that is being used in a different way than we would use it. His experiences are invaluable in clarifying that the issues of cross-cultural understanding can exist in the modern world as well as in the ancient. The unintended benefit is that LDS readers are given a concrete example of the slight disjunction that can exist between two very similar cultures (in this case, two U.S.-based Christian traditions).

It is, perhaps, the inclusion of modern examples that make the ancient ones seem both more real and more intelligible. It is easy to ascribe some level of difference to an ancient population. After all, they lived so long ago that they didn't have televisions, or even newspapers. To introduce different readings of the same text, Richards describes a situation brought to him by elders of a small village off the coast of Borneo. A young couple had eloped and the elders were concerned about their grievous sin. What was so terrible? Simply that they had eloped together rather than enter into the marriages that had been arranged for them. As he describes it:

“That’s it?” I blurted out. “What was the sin?”

Quite shocked, they stared at this young (and foolish) missionary and asked, “Have you never read Paul?”

I certainly thought I had. My Ph.D. was in Paul.

They reminded me that Paul told believers to obey their parents (Eph. 6:1). They were willing to admit that everyone makes mistakes. We don't always obey. But surely one should obey in what is likely the most important decision of his or her life: choosing a spouse.

I suddenly found myself wondering if I had, in fact, ever really read Paul. My “American Paul” clearly did not expect his command to include adult children deciding whom to marry. (p. 18)

When the Indonesian elders likened scripture unto themselves, it clearly supported arranged marriages. Richards’s “American Paul” didn’t believe in arranged marriages, so the counsel wasn’t even applicable. Certainly, it is important that we liken the scriptures to ourselves, but if we are interested in what Paul might have meant, we need to look beyond our unstated cultural assumptions. Richards and O’Brien spend a book trying to help us better understand the unstated culture that is behind our Bible.

The book is organized into sections that correspond to an iceberg analogy. Some of it is visible, and some of the more important parts are those that are not seen under the surface. Thus one section is “Above the Surface,” the next “Just Below the Surface,” and the last “Deep Below the Surface.” In each section, they treat three topics that illustrate the cross-cultural gaps where increased understanding might improve our biblical reading. At the end of each individual chapter the authors include a set of questions intended to continue thought along the lines of the material presented in the chapter.

The cross-cultural issues are often illustrated by their personal experiences. These references to experiences from modern life not only make the reading more interesting, but they highlight our own provincial thinking. They don’t hesitate to include examples where their own culture-bound assumptions put them at odds with people from other countries.

Of course, their intent is to help us understand the Bible, and they do not fail to find interesting examples of ways where culture can explain things that we easily misunderstand. For example, a significant difference between modern and ancient

cultures is the understanding of what it means to be wealthy. In a money economy, it seems that there is always more money to be made. For governments, sometimes that idea is taken literally. In contrast, wealth in the ancient world had much more to do with tangible goods and, particularly, the ownership of producing land. In such an atmosphere, wealth was a limited quantity. One could not “earn more money” just as one could not “make new farmland.” Richards and O’Brien note: “If you make your slice of the pie larger, then my slice is now smaller. In those cultures, folks are more likely to consider the accumulation of wealth to be immoral, since you can only become wealthy if other people become poor. Psalm 52:7 describes the wicked man who ‘trusted in his great wealth and grew strong by destroying others’ (p. 41).” Thus the opprobrium was not against wealth per se, but against the damage that accumulating wealth did to others.

Richards and O’Brien provide an interesting reading of Paul’s instruction that women must have their head covered in church (1 Cor. 11:5-6):

It is not immediately clear to us what the problem is, so we may assume something went without being said, which is a good instinct. So perhaps we assume that a woman’s hair was somehow sexually alluring to ancient people and that therefore a Christian woman needed to cover hers. We may then reason that since hair today is not a sexual turn-on, it is okay for a Christian woman to wear her hair down.

We are correct that something went without being said, but we are wrong about what that was.... Likely ... Paul was admonishing the hostess of a house church to wear her marriage veil (“cover her head”) because “church” was a public event and because respectable

Roman women covered their heads in public. These Corinthian women were treating church like their private dinner parties. (pp. 42-43)

They also provide an extended analysis of David and Bathsheba that I heartily recommend to any who have ever read, or even heard, that story. This is a new retelling that colors the same facts in new and richer colors. It makes for a very different picture, and for a very different moral to the story.

Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes is written in an engaging manner and sprinkled with modern anecdotes that drive home the fact that the differences setting us apart from the people of the Bible have more to do with cultures than with time. Nevertheless, there is enough discussion of the Bible to show how to apply that understanding to create a richer reading of the Bible itself. They suggest that “the question about how our cultural and historical context influences our reading of Scripture has practical and pastoral implications. If our cultural blind spots keep us from *reading* the Bible correctly, then they can also keep us from *applying* the Bible correctly.” (p. 17)

Of course, Richards and O’Brien are only concerned with reading the Bible correctly. For Latter-day Saints, we have the Book of Mormon and the Book of Abraham as further examples of ancient scriptures that come from different times and places. The principles they expound are applicable, though the particulars will necessarily change with the different locations of these other books. Richards and O’Brien’s work should remind us that there is much to learn about the books themselves by seeking to understand the cultural background that goes without saying behind those things that the text explicitly says. Personally, I look forward to more of that type of elucidation of our scriptural heritage.

Brant A. Gardner (M.A. State University of New York Albany) is the author of Second Witness: Analytical and Contextual Commentary on the Book of Mormon and The Gift and Power: Translating the Book of Mormon, both published through Greg Kofford Books. He has contributed articles to Estudios de Cultura Nahuatl and Symbol and Meaning Beyond the Closed Community. He has presented papers at the Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research conference as well as at Sunstone.

THE ORIGINAL TEXT OF THE BOOK OF MORMON AND ITS PUBLICATION BY YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Royal Skousen

An earlier version of the following paper was presented 5 August 2010 at a conference sponsored by FAIR, the Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research (now FairMormon). The text of this paper is copyrighted by Royal Skousen. The photographs that appear in this paper are also protected by copyright. Photographs of the original manuscript are provided courtesy of David Hawkinson and Robert Espinosa and are reproduced here by permission of the Wilford Wood Foundation. Photographs of the printer's manuscript are provided courtesy of Nevin Skousen and are reproduced here by permission of the Community of Christ. The text of the Yale edition of The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text (2009) is copyrighted by Royal Skousen; Yale University Press holds the rights to reproduce this text.

In this paper I discuss the work of the Book of Mormon critical text project and the attempt to restore and publish the original text of the Book of Mormon. I've been working on the critical text project from 1988 up to the present, and thus far ten books have been published as part of this project.

Major Findings of the Critical Text Project

There are two main goals in this critical text project. The first is to restore by scholarly means, to the extent possible, the original English-language text of the Book of Mormon. This original language text is, I believe, what Joseph Smith received

through a physical instrument – either the Nephite interpreters (later called the Urim and Thummim) or the seer stone – and read off to scribes. The second goal of the critical text project is to determine the history of the Book of Mormon text, in particular the kind of changes that it has undergone, both accidental and editorial. Most of the editorial changes have been of a grammatical nature.

The largest part of the work in recovering the original text involves two manuscripts. The most important of these is the original manuscript (O), the one that Joseph Smith dictated to his scribes. The other manuscript is called the printer's manuscript (P), and it is a copy of the original manuscript. This second manuscript is the one that was prepared to take to the Palmyra, New York, printer E. B. Grandin in 1829-30 to set the type. In addition to the two manuscripts, I have considered 20 printed editions of the Book of Mormon in the critical text project: 15 LDS editions, one private edition from 1858 (the Wright edition), and four RLDS editions (the RLDS Church is now known as the Community of Christ).

Approximately 28 percent of the original manuscript is extant. (In calculating this percentage, I exclude the 116 pages that were lost by Martin Harris in 1828.) In 1841 Joseph Smith placed the original manuscript in the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House, a hotel being built in Nauvoo. The manuscript lay there in the cornerstone for the next 41 years until in 1882 Lewis Bidamon, the second husband of Emma Smith's, after her death, retrieved the manuscript. Most of it was severely damaged by water that had seeped in; much of it had been eaten away by mold.

Bidamon gave most of the larger manuscript portions to LDS people. As a result, 25 of that 28 percent has ended up in the archives of the LDS Church. The LDS portions cover from 1 Nephi 2 to 2 Nephi 1, from Alma 22 to Alma 60, and from Alma 62 to Helaman 3, and include other minor fragments.

There is also half a leaf at the University of Utah (from 1 Nephi 14). And the equivalent of a leaf in fragments is held privately (from Alma 58 to Alma 60).

Of great importance for this project has been the discovery of two percent of the text that Wilford Wood, a collector from Bountiful, Utah, bought from Charles Bidamon, the son of Lewis Bidamon, in 1937. The majority of the Wilford Wood fragments are found in three parts of the text: from 2 Nephi 5 to Enos 1, from Helaman 13 to 3 Nephi 4, and from Ether 3 to Ether 15.

We will now have a look at some of the Wilford Wood fragments. We begin with the lump of fragments as they were observed on 30 September 1991, at the beginning of the conservation of these fragments:



At the time we couldn't be sure if this really was the original manuscript, or what it might be. But it turned out, for the most part, to be from the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon.

Next we see Robert Espinosa, then the head of conservation at BYU's Harold B. Lee Library, beginning the very difficult task of teasing apart these fragments:



Now consider one of the more interesting fragments found in this lump. This is how it appeared when first removed from the lump, all rolled up:

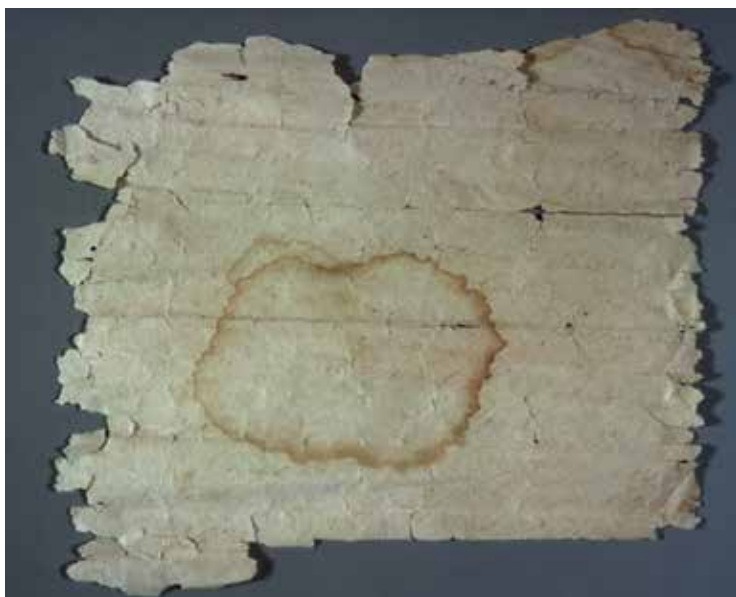


After it was unraveled, we could see the uneven edges where mold had eaten away parts of the leaf:

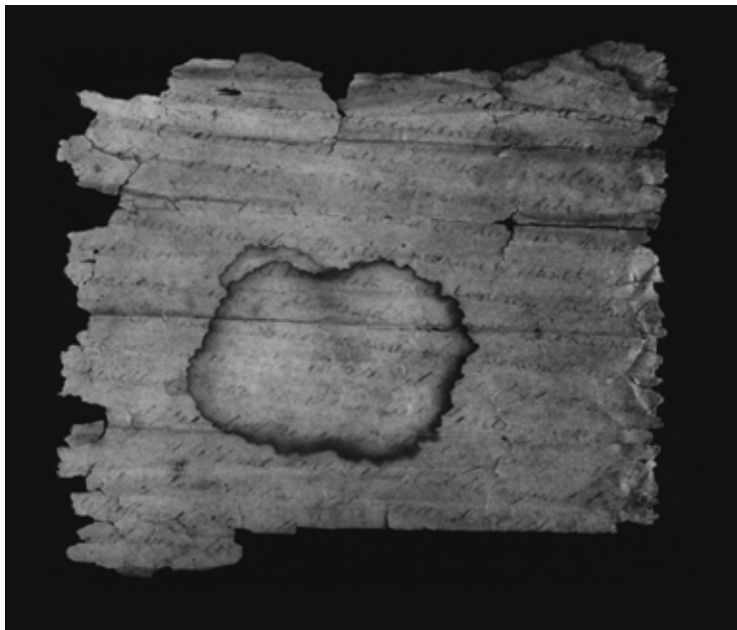


In addition, there was a large water stain in the center of the fragment, resulting from the water that had gotten into the cornerstone.

After the fragment was leveled and photographed, we could basically see what was there:



The text for this fragment is in the hand of Oliver Cowdery; the ink was originally black and has turned brown over time. We found that black and white ultraviolet photography brought out the text best of all:



This fragment of the original manuscript comes from 2 Nephi 7-8. When Oliver copied this particular portion of the text into the printer's manuscript, he made six changes, of which five were accidental. For this part of the text, he was copying an Isaiah quotation, which is difficult enough. Even so, the relatively high number of errors for this single page was unusual for Oliver; he was probably getting tired as he was making the copy here. But it also turns out that he made one conscious change here, a grammatical one, when he changed *they dieth* to *they die* as he copied the text into the printer's manuscript.

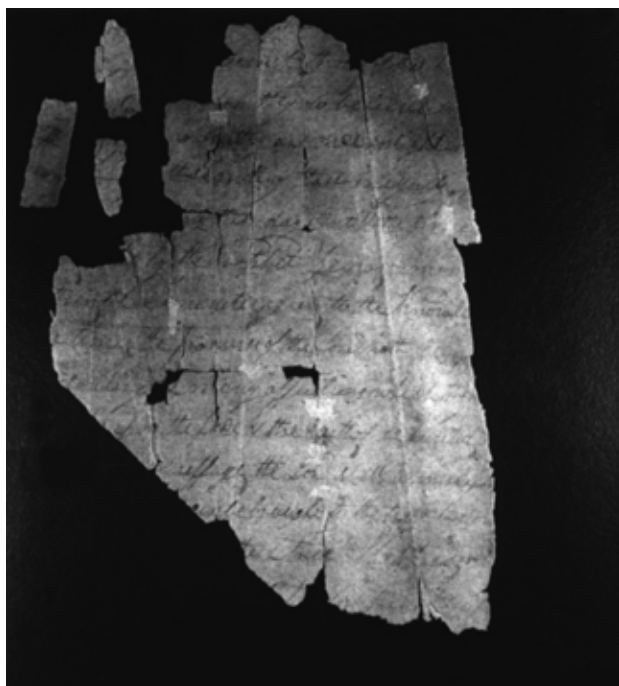
One of the biggest discoveries of the critical text project was to find that for one sixth of the Book of Mormon text the printer's manuscript was not the manuscript taken to the 1830 printer; instead it was the original manuscript. And we can see this quite well from the pencil marks in this color photograph of the original manuscript for Helaman 15:9-14:



The pencil marks were placed here by the 1830 typesetter, John Gilbert. About one third of the time Gilbert marked up his manuscript in advance of doing the typesetting. Overall the

evidence is that he used the original manuscript from Helaman 13:17 through the end of Mormon.

Here is the black and white ultraviolet photograph for the same part of Helaman 15; as one would expect, the pencil marks don't show up as well in a black and white photo:



This important finding about the textual transmission means that from Helaman 13:17 to the end of Mormon there are two firsthand copies of the original manuscript. Only a small percentage of the original manuscript is extant for this part of the text. Yet for this part we have two firsthand copies, which basically means that when those two copies – the printer's manuscript and the 1830 edition – agree, then that's probably what the original manuscript read. And when they disagree, then one of the readings is probably the correct one.

But trying to determine which reading is the correct one is sometimes quite difficult.

To give you an idea of what the printer's manuscript looks like, here's a photo of the first page:



Note that the bottom portion of the first leaf has been worn away; on each side of this leaf, about one and a half lines of text are missing. This page is in Oliver Cowdery's hand.

We now turn to a blown-up section from that first page of the printer's manuscript. For these lines there are a number of corrections:



On the third line, two words, *to be*, are crossed out. Written above the crossout is a grammatical correction that Joseph Smith made, namely, the word *is*. Joseph made this change from *to be* to *is* (and others like it) when he edited the printer's manuscript for the second edition of the Book of Mormon (published in 1837 in Kirtland, Ohio). On the next line – you can barely see it – after the word *knowledge* there is a capital letter *P* that was added by the 1830 typesetter. It's above the line, written in pencil, and it tells the typesetter to start a new paragraph at this point.

There are a couple of other corrections here that were made by Oliver Cowdery when he originally wrote down the text for the printer's manuscript. Sometimes he missed some words or wrote something wrong, which he then corrected, often by inserting words above the line. In the last line shown here, Oliver originally wrote the word *that*, then he crossed it out and wrote *the* above the crossout. These kinds of corrections in copywork were frequently made by the original scribe for the printer's manuscript. And we also find corrections like these in the original manuscript.

Next we have what is called a facsimile transcript (or typographical facsimile) for this part of the manuscript. As

I make a record in the language of my father which consists of the
 learning of the Jews & the language of the Egyptians & I know that
 the record which I make <to> <be> true & I make it with mine own
 (n)d & I make it according to my knowledge for it came to pass in
 HA first year of the P
 the commencement of the ^ reign of Zedekiah King of Judah my fa
 ther Lehi haveing dwelt at Jerusalem in all his days & in that same
 year there came many prophits prophesying unto the people that they must
 the
 repent or <tha^t> great City Jerusalem must be destroid wherefore it came to

part of the critical text project of the Book of Mormon, we have produced transcripts like this one in order to faithfully record what's actually on the manuscripts. Note, for instance, that in this case the word *prophets* was misspelled as *prophits* in the next-to-last line. And *destroyed* was spelled as *destroid* in the last line. In each instance, we leave it to the reader to figure out what the intended reading is. Most of the time there isn't any problem.

In 2001 the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS, now part of the Maxwell Institute at BYU) published the facsimile transcripts of the original and printer's manuscripts. These two volumes are made up of three large blue books, and they reproduce all the then-known portions of the original manuscript as well as the virtually complete printer's manuscript. From these books one can read what's in the actual manuscripts.

Since 2001 I have continued work on three other volumes. Volume 4 was completed in 2009. This volume is called *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon*. There are six maroon books in that volume. They represent my work on recovering the original text, going from verse to verse, looking at all of the variants (and potential variants) in the text as well as looking at all the textual evidence, in order to determine what the original reading might have been.

Volume 3 is called *The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon*. This is the volume that I am currently working on.

And volume 5 will be a computerized collation that will be made available with volume 3. Later in this paper, we'll consider what that collation looks like.

The Yale Edition of the Book of Mormon

As I got near the end of completing the six books of volume 4, I discovered some potential problems with the project as originally conceived. One of the problems was in getting people, even some academic people doing research on the Book of Mormon, to cite the findings of the critical text project. These books are very large and heavy; and as a complete set, they are also rather expensive. In any event, the result was that researchers were writing articles on the Book of Mormon but, it would seem, quite oblivious to what the actual reading should be – or at least what the critical text project had to say about the reading.

Another problem that became apparent was that with the completion of volume 4 anyone could go out and produce their own original-language version of the Book of Mormon by simply using the findings of volume 4 and referring to the resulting book as the original text. I decided that it would be better if I myself retained control over this process, and so I arranged with Yale University Press to publish, in August 2009, *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*. This book represents in one volume the original text, to the extent it can be determined. And if you take off the dust jacket of this book, you will see that the hard cover matches the maroon cover of volume 4. This was done intentionally, to show the connection to volume 4 of the critical text; in other words, the Yale edition derives from the decisions made in volume 4.

There are two important innovations in the Yale edition. The first is that it is set in sense-lines – not in small paragraphs where each verse is its own little paragraph, nor in narrow double columns. My idea, as originally conceived, was to break the

lines in the text so that they would represent in some general way how Joseph Smith dictated the text – namely, in phrases and clauses, but none so long that they could not be easily read.

One of the things I have been surprised about since the publication of the Yale edition is how much readers like this format. Many readers, including scholars of the text, have seen things in the text that they have never seen before, simply because it is laid out in sense-lines. Nor do readers get fatigued as they do when reading a two-column text that frequently breaks in the middle of words (by hyphenation) or in the middle of phrases and clauses, a process that puts a lot of stress on readers in negotiating the text. With the sense-lines, it's also much easier to keep on reading. Some readers have discovered they now read several chapters at a time instead of just the single chapter they were used to reading.

The second innovative aspect of the Yale text is that it is the first time anyone has attempted to publish the original English-language text, to the extent that it can be determined. The Yale text, it turns out, does not have what we call a copytext. It is not a revision of some particular edition of the Book of Mormon. Instead, everything has been done from scratch, so to speak; in fact, the text is directly derived from the computerized collation, as we shall see.

Below we see the title page of the Yale edition and of the Book of Mormon itself. The line breaks occur at places where you could reasonably pause, especially if you were reading the text off to someone else, as in dictation. You will note, by the way, that the traditional statement about the book being translated by Joseph Smith is not on the Book of Mormon title page. That's because it wasn't on the original title page of the Book of Mormon. Instead, I place that attribution on the preceding page, on what we call the half title. This is the appropriate place to acknowledge Joseph Smith as the translator.

The Book of Mormon THE BOOK OF MORMON

The Earliest Text

EDITED BY
Royal Skousen

YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS
New Haven and London

An account written by the hand of Mormon upon plates taken from the plates of Nephi.

Wherefore it is an abridgment of the record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites, written to the Lamanites, which 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 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 up by the hand of Moroni, and hid up unto the Lord, to come forth in due time by the way of 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, which 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 shew unto the remnant of the house of Israel how 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 be fault, it be the mistake of men. Wherefore condemn not the things of God, that ye may be found spotless at the judgment seat of Christ.

Next is the beginning of First Nephi. You'll notice that the text just says "The Book of Nephi" – that's because the manuscripts tell us that that was the original title for the book. There are, it turns out, four books of Nephi in the Book of Mormon. Later Oliver Cowdery and other editors added *first*, *second*, *third*, and *fourth* to the names of these individual books. The original text had no numbers for any of the books of Nephi. Since this is the way the original text read, we reproduce it that way in the Yale edition.

On the following page of the Yale edition you can clearly see the sense-lines. There are also extra lines of space that represent the paragraphs that I have broken the text into. You will note that overall this is a clear text, a plain text. There is not much editorial intrusion beyond the sense-lines and the paragraph breaks, although I did put the LDS chapter and verse

1 Nephi 1

THE BOOK OF NEPHI,
His Reign and Ministry

An account of Lehi and his wife Sarah and his four sons, being called, beginning at the eldest, Laman, Lemuel, Sam, and Nephi.

The Lord warns Lehi to depart out of the land of Jerusalem because he propheseth unto the people concerning their iniquity and they seek to destroy his life.

He saileth three days' journey into the wilderness with his family.

Nephi taketh his brethren and returns to the land of Jerusalem after the record of the Jews.

The account of their sufferings.

They take the daughters of Ishmael to wife.

They take their families and depart into the wilderness.

Their sufferings and afflictions in the wilderness.

The course of their travels.

They come to the large waters.

Nephi's brethren rebelleth against him.

He confoundeth them and buildeth a ship.

They cross the large waters into the promised land etc.

This is according to the account of Nephi, or in other words, 1 Nephi wrote this record.

- 1 | 1 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,

5

1 Nephi 1

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 to be 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.

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 noonday.

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: Woe was due unto Jerusalem,

numbers out in the left margin because readers need to reference where they are in the book. At the top of the next page you can see how the Yale edition shows a transition from one book to another, namely, from Mosiah to Alma.

As mentioned earlier, the Yale text was not derived from a copytext (that is, from a particular edition of the Book of Mormon) but instead from a computerized collation that gives all the textual variants. At the bottom of the next page, for instance, is the computerized collation for that portion of 1 Nephi as it goes from chapter 3 to chapter 4.

At the beginning of each line of this collation, before each textual variant, there is some indication in braces (that is, in curly brackets) of the kind of variant that will follow. Then in square brackets I give the actual variant. The very first variant in this sample from the collation is a number – in fact, it's a verse number. The two manuscripts are represented by the symbols 0 and 1; and since the manuscripts don't have any verse numbers, there is in this case no number assigned to the original and printer's manuscripts. In the rest of the textual

- his father having conferred the office upon him
and had given him the charge concerning all the affairs of the church.
- 43 And now it came to pass that Alma did walk in the ways of the Lord,
and he did keep his commandments,
and he did judge righteous judgments.
And there was continual peace through the land.
- 44 And thus commenced the reign of the judges throughout all the land of Zarahemla
among all the people which was called the Nephites;
and Alma was the first and chief judge.
- 45 And now it came to pass that his father died,
being eighty and two years old,
having lived to fulfill the commandments of God.
- 46 And it came to pass that
Mosiah died also, in the thirty and third year of his reign,
being sixty and three years old,
making in the whole five hundred and nine years
from the time Lehi left Jerusalem.
- 47 And thus ended the reign of the kings over the people of Nephi;
and thus ended the days of Alma,
who was the founder of their church.

THE BOOK OF ALMA

the son of Alma

*The account of Alma, who was the son of Alma,
the first and chief judge over the people of Nephi,
and also the high priest over the church.*

*An account of the reign of the judges
and the wars and contentions among the people.*

*And also an account of a war between the Nephites and the Lamanites
according to the record of Alma, the first and chief judge.*

- 1| 1 Now it came to pass that
in the first year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi,
from this time forward,

```
{num} [ 01ABCDEFGHIJ|30 IJLMNOQRT|76 K|96 PS]
{punctnum} [ 01ABCDEFGHIJKPST|. IJLMNOQR]
{&} {cap} [ & 01|And ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRST|and <accidentals>] after
{subst, gram, delete, subord, that>0, js} [ that 0A|
  that >js NULL 1| BCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRST]
{subst, anticipate, correct, $20} [ he > the angel 0|the angel
  1ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOQRST] had
{subst, gram, pastpart, spake>spoken, A}
  [ spake 01|spoken ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRST] unto us
{punct} [ 01|, ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRST] he departed
{punct} [ 01|. ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRST]
{punct, eoln, D; correct, F} [ 01ABCGIJKLMNOPQRST|- DEH|- > NULL F]
{num} [ 01ABCDEFGHIJ|31 IJLMNOQRT|77 K|97 PS]
{punctnum} [ 01ABCDEFGHIJKPST|. IJLMNOQR]
{&} {cap} [ & 01|And ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRST|and <accidentals>] after
{subst, gram, delete, subord, that>0, js} [ that 0A|that >js NULL 1|
  BCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRST] the angel had departed
{punct} [ 01|, ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRST] Laman
{&} [ & 01|and ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRST]
{cap, proper, $20} [ lemuel 0|Lemuel 1ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOQRST]
{spell, space, $20} [ a gain 0|again 1ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOQRST] began to
{spell, er/ur, $20} [ murmer 0|murmur 1ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOQRST]
{punct} [ 01|, ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRST] saying
{punct} [ 01EFH|, ABCDGIJKLMNOPQS|: RT]
{cap} [ how 01ABCDEFGHI|How HIJKLMNOQRST] is it
{spell, twin, s/ss, $20} [ possible 0|possible 1ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOQRST] that
the Lord will deliver Laban into our hands
{punct} [ 01|? ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRST]
```

variant we find the capital letters A through T, which stand for the printed editions of the Book of Mormon (from the 1830 edition to the 1981 edition). In this instance, the majority of the printed editions have a verse number (but the particular number varies). You can go down through the collation and consider in the same way each variant in turn.

The underlined text in the collation represents what I believe is the original text (but with the spelling we expect in today's standard English). The text in bold stands for the reading of the original manuscript. In other portions of the collation (not shown here), you won't find any bolding; that means that the original manuscript is not extant for those portions.

With the help of my colleague Deryle Lonsdale, a computer program was used to extract the underlined text from the computerized collation. This means that I did not key in the text for the Yale edition. Here is what you get when you extract the underlined text for that portion of the collation covering the transition between 1 Nephi 3 and 4:

... and after that the angel had spake unto us he departed and after that the
 angel had departed Laman and Lemuel again began to murmur saying
 how is it possible that the Lord will deliver Laban into our hands
 behold he is a mighty man and he can command fifty yea even he can
 slay fifty then why not us and it came to pass that I spake unto my
 brethren saying let us go up again unto Jerusalem and let us be faithful
 in keeping the commandments of the Lord for behold he is mightier
 than all the earth then why not mightier than Laban and his fifty yea or
 even than his tens of thousands therefore let us go up let us be strong
 like unto Moses ...

This is the proposed original text for this passage, but without any intended line breaks (that is, hard returns) or punctuation. This is much like what the 1830 typesetter was confronted with when he set the type – a long string of words with no breaks except when a new chapter begins.

From this long string of words, I then constructed the sense-lines and put extra lines in for where I thought there should be paragraph breaks:

...

and after that the angel had spake unto us he departed

and after that the angel had departed

Laman and Lemuel again began to murmur saying

how is it possible that the Lord will deliver Laban into our hands

behold he is a mighty man and he can command fifty

yea even he can slay fifty then why not us

and it came to pass that I spake unto my brethren saying

let us go up again unto Jerusalem

and let us be faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord

for behold he is mightier than all the earth

then why not mightier than Laban and his fifty

yea or even than his tens of thousands

therefore let us go up

let us be strong like unto Moses

...

In the next stage, I added the LDS chapter and verse numbers in the left margin:

...

30 and after that the angel had spake unto us he departed

31 and after that the angel had departed

Laman and Lemuel again began to murmur saying

how is it possible that the Lord will deliver Laban into our hands

behold he is a mighty man and he can command fifty

yea even he can slay fifty then why not us

4 1 and it came to pass that I spake unto my brethren saying

let us go up again unto Jerusalem

and let us be faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord

for behold he is mightier than all the earth

then why not mightier than Laban and his fifty

yea or even than his tens of thousands

2 therefore let us go up

let us be strong like unto Moses

...

One of the things you'll notice here is that chapter 4 comes in the middle of a paragraph. Reading this portion of the text, one sees that there probably shouldn't be a chapter break, not even a paragraph break, where chapter 4 begins.

And finally, after the chapter and verse numbers had been added, I put in the punctuation (as well as the necessary capitalization), but from scratch, without looking at the original

1830 punctuation or the current punctuation (which derives from the 1830 edition):

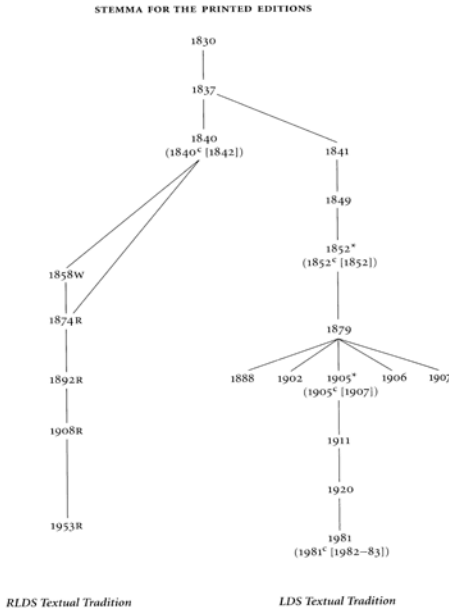
- ...
 30 And after that the angel had spake unto us, he departed.
- 31 And after that the angel had departed,
 Laman and Lemuel again began to murmur, saying:
 How is it possible that the Lord will deliver Laban into our hands?
 Behold, he is a mighty man and he can command fifty.
 Yea, even he can slay fifty, then why not us?
- 4 1 And it came to pass that I spake unto my brethren, saying:
 Let us go up again unto Jerusalem,
 and let us be faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord.
 For behold, he is mightier than all the earth.
 Then why not mightier than Laban and his fifty?
 Yea, or even than his tens of thousands?
- 2 Therefore let us go up.
- Let us be strong like unto Moses,
 ...

I found this last task to be the most difficult one in preparing the Yale edition. I'm frankly amazed of what John Gilbert, the 1830 typesetter, was able to do here, especially given the difficult syntactic structure of the Book of Mormon. It appears that for about two thirds of the text Gilbert determined the punctuation as he set the type. He did a really fine job, although he probably overpunctuated the text from our modern point of view (but this is what was expected in his day). What I wanted to do here was to determine anew the punctuation for the entire text. As far as I know, the Yale edition represents only the second time that the punctuation has been done completely from scratch – at least in a published edition.

The Yale edition also has an appendix that shows the significant changes in the text. There are 719 of these at the end of the book. In the Yale edition, I wanted the list of changes to appear in the appendix, not intruding upon the text itself. I should also point out that this appendix is not simply a comparison between the current standard LDS text and the Yale edition. Instead, it's a representation of important changes that have occurred in the history of the text. In many instances, the

Yale edition agrees with the current text. The appendix is not intended to be a listing of differences, but rather of significant variants in the history of the text.

At the beginning of the appendix there is a stemma that shows the textual relationship between the printed editions of the Book of Mormon:



You will notice here that there are two textual traditions that split off from the second edition (the 1837 Kirtland edition). One is the RLDS textual tradition – that’s on the left. And on the right is the LDS textual tradition. These stemma relationships show the copytext for each printed edition from 1830 on. If you consider, for instance, the 1920 LDS edition, the stemma shows that its copytext was the 1911 LDS edition. This means that the 1920 typesetter worked off a copy of the 1911 edition, one that was presumably marked up with changes. In other words, the stemma here shows the copytext relationships between the various editions.

Now let us turn to the actual list of the 719 significant textual changes.

EXTRACANONICAL TEXT

half title	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NULL (P, 1830, 1852^c, 1892R, 1906, 1920) ► The Book of Mormon (1840, 1849, 1908R, 1981[*]) Book of Mormon (1879) The Book of Mormon / Another Testament of Jesus Christ (1981^c [1982])
attribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► by Joseph Smith Junior / author and proprietor (P, title page copies, 1830) ► translated by Joseph Smith Junior (1837, 1858w) translated by Joseph Smith (1840^c [1842])

CANONICAL TEXT

title page	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► written and sealed and hid up unto the Lord (title page copies) written and sealed up and hid up unto the Lord (P, 1830) written and sealed up and hid up unto the Lord (1908R)
title page	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► sealed up by the hand of Moroni and hid up unto the Lord (title page copies) sealed by the hand of Moroni and hid up unto the Lord (P, 1830)
title page	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► to come forth in due time by the way of Gentile (P, title page copies, 1830) to come forth in due time by way of the Gentile (1920)
title page	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► how great things the Lord hath done (P, title page copies, 1830) what great things the Lord hath done (1837)
title page	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► if there be fault / it be the mistake of men (P, title page copies, 1830) if there are faults / they are the mistakes of men (1837)
end of title page	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► NULL (P, title page copies, 1830, 1879, 1908R) Moroni (1840, 1852^c)
1 Nephi title	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► The Book of Nephi (P[*]) The First Book of Nephi (P^a, 1830)
1 Nephi preface	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> they call the place Bountiful (P, 1830, 1852^c, 1908R) ► they call the name of the place Bountiful (1840, 1981) they called the place Bountiful (1841)
1 Nephi 1:9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► he saw one descending out of the midst of heaven (P, 1830) he saw One descending out of the midst of heaven (1981)
1 Nephi 2:5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► in the borders which was nearer the Red Sea (P, P^a, 1830) in the borders which were nearer the Red Sea (P^js, 1908R) in the borders which are nearer the Red Sea (1837, 1852^c) in the borders which are near the Red Sea (1841)
1 Nephi 2:5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► which consisted of my mother Sariah and my elder brethren (P, P^a) which consisted of my mother Sariah and my elder brothers (P^a, 1830)

For each set of alternative readings, I indicate with a pointer the one I have accepted as the original reading. For each case, I always list the reading of the original manuscript, if it exists, plus the reading of the printer's manuscript and the reading in the 1830 edition. I then list any other edition that deviates from its copytext – that is, any place where the editors or typesetters for that edition decided on some other reading, either an earlier one or perhaps a new conjecture. And so you can actually reconstruct the whole history in each case, providing you refer to the stemma that shows the copytext relationships for the editions.

Here's the second page of the list of significant changes:

- 1 Nephi 2:6 ▶ he pitched his tent in a valley **beside** a river of water (C, P*, 1830)
he pitched his tent in a valley **by the side of** a river of water (Pjs, 1837)
- 1 Nephi 2:10 ▶ and he also spake unto Lemuel **saying** (C)
and he also spake unto Lemuel (P, 1830)
- 1 Nephi 3:3 ▶ and also a genealogy of **my** forefathers (C, P*, 1830, 1840, 1981)
and also a genealogy of **thy** forefathers (Pjs, 1837, 1908R)
- 1 Nephi 3:10 ▶ when we had **come** up to the land of Jerusalem (C*, P, 1830)
▶ when we had **gone** up to the land of Jerusalem (C*, 1981)
- 1 Nephi 3:16 ▶ because of the **commandment** (C*)
because of the **commandment of the Lord** (Coc)
because of the **commandments of the Lord** (P, 1830)
- 1 Nephi 3:17 ▶ for he **knowing** that Jerusalem must be destroyed (C, P, 1830, 1908R)
for he **knew** that Jerusalem must be destroyed (1840, 1852*)
- 1 Nephi 4:21 ▶ and he **supposing** me to be his master Laban (C, P*)
and he **supposed** me to be his master Laban (P*, 1830)
- 1 Nephi 4:33 ▶ if he would go down **in** the wilderness with us (C, P, 1830)
▶ if he would go down **into** the wilderness with us (con)
- 1 Nephi 4:34 ▶ and shall we not be diligent in keeping the **commandment** of the Lord (C)
and shall we not be diligent in keeping the **commandments** of the Lord (P, 1830)
- 1 Nephi 4:35 ▶ that he would go down into the wilderness unto **our** father (C, P*, 1830, 1908R, 1981)
that he would go down into the wilderness unto **my** father (P*, 1837)
- 1 Nephi 7:1 ▶ the Lord spake unto him again (C)
the Lord spake unto him again **saying** (P, 1830)
- 1 Nephi 7:1 ▶ that his sons should take daughters to wife that might raise up seed (C)
▶ that his sons should take daughters to wife that **they** might raise up seed (P, 1830)
- 1 Nephi 7:2 ▶ that I Nephi and my brethren should again return **into** the land of Jerusalem (C, P)
that I Nephi and my brethren should again return **unto** the land of Jerusalem (1830)
- 1 Nephi 7:5 Ishmael and also his **hole** (C*)
Ishmael and also his **hole hole** (C*)
Ishmael and also his **household** (P, 1830)
▶ Ishmael and also his **whole household** (con)
- 1 Nephi 7:11 ▶ ye have forgotten **how** great things the Lord hath done (C, P*, 1830)
ye have forgotten **what** great things the Lord hath done (Pjs, 1837)
- 1 Nephi 7:17 ▶ according to my faith which is in **me** (C*)
according to my faith which is in **thee** (Coc, P, 1830)

The Yale edition, as already noted, derives from volume 4 of the critical text. In volume 4 there are 5,280 cases of variation that I considered. It turns out that 2,241 of these differences show up in the Yale edition. This last count, I should point out, excludes most cases of grammatical variation in the text. Nor is this number particularly important because most of these changes aren't earthshaking.

However, there are a couple of numerical counts that are important. One is that there are 606 changes in the Yale edition which have never appeared in any standard printed edition of the Book of Mormon, in neither the LDS nor the RLDS textual traditions. And if you look at those readings that account for

the number 606, you will see that the vast majority come from the manuscripts:

- 216 from O
- 88 from both O and P
- 2 from copies of the title page
- 187 from only P (in cases where O is not extant)
- 113 conjectural emendations

Over half of the new readings (304 of them) come from the original manuscript. And 187 come from the printer's manuscript (these are cases where the original manuscript is not extant). There are also two new readings in the title page that come from other early copies of that page. None of these 493 readings have ever been implemented in any of the standard printed editions. In addition, there are 113 conjectures. I will come back to conjectures in a moment.

What is important to note here is the significance of the original manuscript in restoring the original text. For the six books of volume 4 of the critical text, I recently went through the 491 new readings that come from the two manuscripts and I divided them up according to which book in volume 4 they are discussed. For three of the books (the first, fourth, and fifth), large portions of the original manuscript are extant (each of these books is marked below with an asterisk). And for each of those books, consider the number of new changes that show up:

	O	P	both
*1 Nephi 1 – 2 Nephi 10	95	6	38
2 Nephi 11 – Mosiah 16	2	34	5
Mosiah 17 – Alma 20	0	58	3
*Alma 21 – Alma 55	93	12	28
*Alma 56 – 3 Nephi 18	25	50	13
3 Nephi 19 – Moroni 10	1	27	1

For the first and the fourth book, about 75 percent of the original manuscript is extant, and we get almost 100 new changes for both of these books. For the fifth book, about 25 percent of

the original manuscript is extant, and we get a proportional amount of new changes. For the three other books of volume 4, we have hardly anything of the original manuscript, and it shows. What this really means is that by human endeavor we aren't going to recover as much of the original text for these parts of the text. It makes a real difference when we don't have the original manuscript.

A second numerical count that is quite important is that the Yale edition introduces 241 new readings that make a difference in meaning. By the phrase "difference in meaning" I mean that if we translate the reading into another language there will be a change in the words – that is, there will be some word difference, no matter what the language. For each of these 241 readings, the change makes a difference in meaning, not just in phraseology.

A good example of this kind of meaning change is found in 1 Nephi 12:18, which reads as follows in the original manuscript: "and a great and a terrible gulf divideth them / yea even the **sword** of the justice of the Eternal God". But Oliver Cowdery miscopied this into the printer's manuscript as "yea even the **word** of the justice of the Eternal God". In other words, Oliver replaced *sword* with *word*. And that's the reading that's been retained in the text ever since. Yet when we look at the rest of the Book of Mormon, we discover that there are seven references to "the sword of God's justice" but no examples of "the word of God's justice":

Alma 26:19	the sword of his justice
Alma 60:29	the sword of justice
Helaman 13:5	the sword of justice (2 times)
3 Nephi 20:20	the sword of my justice
3 Nephi 29:4	the sword of his justice
Ether 8:23	the sword of the justice of the Eternal God

In particular, note that the example in Ether 8:23 ("the sword of the justice of the Eternal God") is identical to the original

reading in 1 Nephi 12:18. In considering the translation of this change in words, I know of no language where *sword* and *word* are the same word. Every translation is going to end up making the change here. This is what I mean then by a change in meaning. Of course, this change doesn't make a huge difference in meaning. To be sure, one can accept a reference to God's justice being enacted by his word. But that isn't what the text originally read in 1 Nephi 12:18. It read *sword*.

Some people have asked whether any textual restoration ever alters doctrine – and the answer is, no. Whenever a change involves doctrine, we find that the original reading has the correct doctrine. An example of this is found in Alma 39:13, where Alma is talking to his son Corianton and tells him to go back to the Zoramites and, in the original manuscript, “acknowledge your faults and **repair** that wrong which ye have done”. When Oliver Cowdery finished writing this page in the original manuscript, he accidentally dropped some ink on the page. And on the letter *p* in *repair* a drop of ink fell right on top of the ascender for the *p*, which ended up making the *p* look like it's been crossed. In fact, the *p* ends up looking like a *t*. Moreover, Oliver's *r*'s and *n*'s often look alike, so when Oliver came to copy this part of the text into the printer's manuscript, he copied it as “acknowledge your faults and **retain** that wrong which ye have done”. That reading doesn't quite work, and so the 1920 LDS committee decided to just remove the word *retain* because it didn't make any sense. Thus they ended up having Alma say to Corianton that he should go back and “acknowledge your faults and that wrong which ye have done”. In other words, “go back and say you're sorry”. But the need for Corianton to repair his wrong had now been removed from this passage.

When we look at other parts of the Book of Mormon text, we indeed find that when people confess their sins, they do everything they can to repair the wrongs or the injuries they

have done. Here's one from Mosiah 27:35: "zealously striving to **repair** all the injuries which they had done to the church / **confessing** all their sins". And here's one from Helaman 5:17: "they came forth and did **confess** their sins ... and immediately returned to the Nephites to endeavor to **repair** unto them the wrongs which they had done". So by putting back the word *repair* in Alma 39:13, the correct doctrine of repentance is restored. The doctrine hasn't been changed.

In the Yale edition you will also find 15 new readings for Book of Mormon names. For me, the most interesting one is that the actual name for the surviving son of king Zedekiah was *Muloch*, not *Mulek*, the implication being that Zedekiah named this son after the pagan god Moloch that they sacrificed children to, thus suggesting a rather ominous aspect to king Zedekiah's character.

Conjectural Emendations in the Text

I pointed out above that the Yale edition has 113 new conjectural emendations, and some people have been critical of this. But I think it's worth noting that in every printed edition of the Book of Mormon there are numerous readings that are the result of conjectural emendation. A conjecture is introduced into the text whenever a typesetter, a scribe, or an editor doesn't like the particular reading of his copytext and doesn't like any of the other readings that might have appeared in earlier editions or in the manuscripts, and so he decides on a new reading. That's a conjecture. (Here I exclude emendations involving grammatical editing.)

What we find in the history of the Book of Mormon text is that conjectures have been quite common, and in many instances they are necessary. Sometimes the original manuscript has such a bad reading that no one is going to accept it. Consider, for instance, the reading of the original manuscript in 1 Nephi 7:5: "the Lord did soften the heart of Ishmael and

also his **hole hole**". That's the way the original manuscript reads, *hole hole*. In fact, this is the corrected reading in the original manuscript, which means that that is what that scribe, probably one of the Whitmers, finally decided on. When Oliver Cowdery copied this passage into the printer's manuscript, he just couldn't accept the reading of the original manuscript. He decided that *hole hole* was *household*, thus writing in the printer's manuscript "the Lord did soften the heart of Ishmael and also his household". My conjecture, on the other hand, is that the original text here actually read "the Lord did soften the heart of Ishmael and also his **whole household**". That would explain why the original manuscript ended up having two instances of *hole*, one standing for *whole*, the other for the *hold* of *household*.

In support of this reading, consider the rest of the text of the Book of Mormon: whenever a passage refers to a patriarch and his household, the text always refers to his entire household. In corresponding contexts, we have either "all his household" or "his whole household" (the latter reading occurs in Alma 22:23). The ultimate point here is that in 1 Nephi 7:5 one can't accept the reading of the original manuscript, *hole hole*. There must be a conjecture here, either *household* or *whole household* (or perhaps some other possibility). For that phrase, every text of the Book of Mormon is going to have to read as some kind of conjecture.

When we look at the current standard text, we find that there are 654 conjectured readings. On the other hand, there are 354 in the Yale edition. It turns out that the Yale edition accepts a lot of difficult readings that have otherwise been removed over time from the standard text. In volume 4 of the critical text, I considered 1,346 cases of conjectural emendation. About one fourth of them (26 percent) were accepted. It's also worth noting that when we compare the Yale edition with the current standard text there are 187 conjectures that both

texts agree on. So there is considerable agreement in conjectures between the two texts in addition to the differences.

It's also instructive to consider the individuals who have had the most influence in introducing conjectural emendations into the text. Oliver Cowdery, the main scribe for both manuscripts, made 131 conjectures, of which the Yale edition accepts about 30 percent. For instance, in 1 Nephi 7:1 the original manuscript reads: "that his sons should take daughters to wife that might raise up seed". When Oliver copied this into the printer's manuscript, he added the pronoun *they*, thus "that his sons should take daughters to wife that **they** might raise up seed". In volume 4 of the critical text, I provide the arguments for why I think the pronoun *they* was in the original text. By the way, you won't find that discussion in the Yale edition, although the change is listed in the appendix. The arguments are all in volume 4 of the critical text.

On the other hand, here is one of Oliver Cowdery's conjectural emendations that I think he got wrong. In 1 Nephi 13:24 the original manuscript reads "it contained the fullness of the gospel of the **Land**", which seems impossible. When Oliver copied this passage into the printer's manuscript, he changed "the gospel of the **Land**" to "the gospel of the **Lord**". He obviously couldn't accept the word *land* here, and he thought *Land* looked like *Lord*. In actuality, the reading of the original text was very likely "the gospel of the **Lamb**". The original scribe apparently misheard *lamb* as *land* but without the *d* at the end being pronounced, which he then wrote as *Land* in the original manuscript. At every other place in the Book of Mormon (namely, in four places in 1 Nephi 13), the text consistently reads "the gospel of the **Lamb**", never "the gospel of the **Lord**". Of course, "the gospel of the Lord" is possible, but that isn't the way the Book of Mormon expresses it.

John Gilbert, the typesetter for the 1830 edition, made a total of 167 conjectures, of which a large percentage, 47

percent, are accepted in the Yale edition. The reason so many are accepted is that in many cases Gilbert was confronted with a manuscript reading that was unacceptable yet it was easy enough to figure out the correct reading. That's why the percentage of acceptance is so high for him. Here's an example from 1 Nephi 17:48 where I think he was right. His manuscript copy read "and whoso shall lay their hands upon me shall wither even as a dried **weed**". Gilbert interpreted the word *weed* as an error for *reed*, and thus he set the text as "even as a dried **reed**".

On the other hand, in Alma 5:35 Gilbert replaced the verb *put* with *hewn*, giving "and ye shall not be **hewn** down and cast into the fire" rather than "and ye shall not be **put** down and cast into the fire", the reading of the printer's manuscript. Normally the Book of Mormon text refers to people being hewn down and cast into the fire. Even so, the occurrence of *put down* was more likely an error for the visually similar *cut down*, so that the original text (and original manuscript, not extant here) probably read "and ye shall not be **cut** down and cast into the fire". The word *cut* was likely written with a capital C in the original manuscript, with the result that the scribe who copied the text into the printer's manuscript misread the capital C as a capital P, thus introducing *put* as the verb.

Joseph Smith made a large number of conjectures (198 of them) in his editing for the second edition of the Book of Mormon (published in 1837). For the third edition (published in 1840), he made 19 more conjectures. In most of these cases, Joseph was simply trying to remove difficult readings from the text. Many of these original, difficult readings are, nonetheless, acceptable. (Only about 16 percent of Joseph Smith's 1837 conjectures are accepted – and even less for the 1840 conjectures, about 11 percent.) I suspect Joseph often thought "That reading is difficult for people to understand, so let's change it to this." For instance, in Ether 3:9 there is a change in the 1837 edition where Joseph correctly inserted the word *not*, changing "for

were it so / ye could not have seen my finger” to “for were it **not** so / ye could not have seen my finger”. On the other hand, in Mosiah 21:28 Joseph Smith replaced *king Benjamin* with *king Mosiah* in order to deal with a perceived problem in chronology. I think, in this case, Joseph’s emendation was unnecessary. You can read the arguments in volume 4.

We can also consider the number of conjectures in the more significant editions since 1840 and identify how many of them are accepted in the Yale edition:

1849	Orson Pratt	8	2	25%
1852	Franklin and Samuel Richards	17	5	29%
1879	Orson Pratt	9	4	44%
1905-11	German Ellsworth	8	2	25%
1920	James E. Talmage	130	22	17%
1981	scriptures committee	10	4	40%

Note in particular the high number of conjectural emendations in the 1920 LDS edition, largely the result of James E. Talmage’s determination to emend difficult readings in the text. The large majority of these emendations were unnecessary, although they made the text easier to read. Only about one conjectured reading out of six in the 1920 edition is accepted in the Yale edition.

A number of LDS scriptural scholars have independently made suggested emendations prior to the critical text project. In many respects, these are good suggestions, and a rather high percentage, 48 percent, have been accepted:

Paul Cheesman	1	1
Stan Larson	7	3
Hugh Nibley	1	1
W. Cleon Skousen	1	1
Sidney B. Sperry	3	3
John Tvedtnes	10	2

In my work as editor of the critical text project, I have proposed 401 conjectures, 103 of which I have accepted – or 26 percent (about one reading out of four).

Of particular help in this project have been people who have independently sent me suggestions for change or

identified readings that seemed strange in some way. In all, 42 individuals have corresponded with me and have recommended 173 changes, of which 36 – or 21 percent (about one out of five) – have been accepted. Thus the Yale edition reflects a tremendous amount of input from careful readers of the text. Here I list eight people who basically went through the whole text of the Book of Mormon looking for readings that seemed problematic: David Calabro, Joanne Case, Lyle Fletcher, Ross Geddes, Heather Hardy, Paul Huntzinger, Brent Kerby, and Greg Wright. You will find their suggestions discussed in volume 4, and in many instances their suggested changes made it into the Yale text.

Word for Word Control over the Original Text

In this last section, I want to mention the evidence that the original text of the Book of Mormon is a precise English-language text, specified word for word, and that when it was given by means of the instrument to Joseph Smith, he could see that text and he read it off to his scribe. B. H. Roberts thought that reading off the text was too easy, but of course B. H. Roberts himself never received a text from the Lord in that way. There's a lot of evidence that the translated text of the Book of Mormon was controlled down to the very word, in fact, to the very letter (at least for the spelling of Book of Mormon names).

The first type of evidence involves the occurrence of Hebrew-like constructions that are unacceptable in English and have consequently been edited out of the text. One example is the extra use of the conjunction *and* that follows a subordinate clause and comes right before the main clause. Recently I've discovered that these extra *and*'s do not occur if the subordinate clause is simple. They only occur when there is some complexity in the subordinate clause, either an extra clause or a phrase that interrupts the flow of the text. When that happens,

the Hebrew-like *and* usually appears. Here are some examples involving various subordinate conjunctions:

1 Nephi 8:13

and **as** I cast my eyes around about
that perhaps I might discover my family also
and I beheld a river of water

Helaman 13:28

and **because** he speaketh flattering words unto you
and he saith that all is well
and then ye will not find no fault with him

3 Nephi 23:8

and **when** Nephi had brought forth the records
and laid them before him
and he cast his eyes upon them and saith ...

Mormon 3:4

and it came to pass that **after** this tenth year had passed away
making in the whole three hundred and sixty years
from the coming of Christ
and the king of the Lamanites sent an epistle unto me

Moroni 10:4

and **if** ye shall ask with a sincere heart with real intent
having faith in Christ
and he will manifest the truth of it unto you
by the power of the Holy Ghost

The last example is one of the most famous passages in the Book of Mormon.

All of these extra *and*'s have been removed from the Book of Mormon text – and that's because they are such bad English. But what does the occurrence of these extra *and*'s say about the translation? It says that Joseph Smith had to have seen the *and*'s. If he had just been getting ideas in his mind, there would have been no reason for him to have put these *and*'s in – they're non-English, and they haven't occurred in any known dialect of English or in the history of the language. And their occurrence isn't just an accident since there are so many examples of

the extra *and*. Moreover, there is this wonderful passage from Helaman 12:13-21 where seven of them occur in the original text, virtually one after another, beginning with this one in Helaman 12:13:

yea and **if** he saith unto the earth
 move
and it is moved

These extra Hebrew-like *and*'s were really there. Joseph could see them, and so he read them off.

Another type of evidence, one even more surprising (and controversial to some) is that the meanings of the words in the Book of Mormon come from the 1500s and 1600s. To be sure, there are examples of archaic Book of Mormon word usage that can also be found in the 1611 King James Bible, such as the phrase “to cast an arrow”, which means ‘to shoot an arrow’. This is found in Alma 49:4: “the Lamanites could not **cast** their stones and their **arrows** at them”. But we also find that expression in the King James Bible, in Proverbs 26:18: “as a mad *man* who **casteth** firebrands **arrows** and death”.

Another example that also occurs in the King James Bible is the verb *require* with the meaning ‘to request’. In Enos 1:18 the Book of Mormon text reads “thy fathers have also **required** of me this thing” – in other words, Enos’s fathers requested this thing of the Lord. Similarly, in the King James Bible, in Ezra 8:22, Ezra refrains from requesting troops from the Persian king: “for I was ashamed to **require** of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way”.

A third example is the use of the verb *wrap* with the meaning ‘to roll’, in 3 Nephi 26:3: “and the earth should be **wrapped** together as a scroll”. Compare this with the usage in 2 Kings 2:8: “and Elijah took his mantle and **wrapped** *it* together and smote the waters”.

All of these meanings can be found in the Oxford English Dictionary (referred to as the OED). For each of the three verbs already mentioned, their archaic meanings were typical of 1600s language and can therefore be found in the King James Bible. And one could argue, then, that they are in the Book of Mormon simply because Joseph Smith knew his Bible that well.

The problem with this proposal is that there is archaic 1500s and 1600s usage in the Book of Mormon text that is not found in the King James Bible. Consider the original occurrence of the conjunctive *but if* in Mosiah 3:19: “for the natural man is an enemy to God ... and will be forever and ever **but if** he yieldeth to the enticings of the Holy Spirit”. Here *but if* means ‘unless’, and that meaning occurred in Early Modern English (for this meaning the OED gives citations dating from 1200 to 1596). We have this 1580 example from Sir Philip Sidney: “He did not like that maids should once stir out of their fathers’ houses **but if** it were to milk a cow.” The editors for the 1920 LDS edition of the Book of Mormon decided to emend the reading in Mosiah 3:19, replacing *but if* with *unless*, which is semantically correct and makes the text understandable for modern readers.

Another Book of Mormon example uses the verb *commend* in a sentence with the meaning ‘to recommend’: “and now I would **commend** you to seek this Jesus” (Ether 12:41), which in today’s English would read “and now I would **recommend** you to seek this Jesus”. The OED gives a date in the 1600s for this usage, which has now died out.

Another very interesting example of archaic usage in the original text is the phrase “to counsel someone” with the meaning ‘to counsel with someone’. There are two examples of this usage in the original text (in Alma 37:37 and Alma 39:10), for which the 1920 LDS committee added the preposition *with* (which is correct as far as the meaning goes). But when we go back to Early Modern English, we get uses of the phrase “to counsel someone” with the meaning ‘to counsel with someone’,

as in this 1547 example from John Hooper: “Moses ... **counseled** the Lord and thereupon advised his subjects what was to be done.”

Another example is the original use of the verb *depart* with the meaning ‘to part, divide, or separate’. This meaning for *depart* was regularly used in English Bibles up to the 1611 King James Bible. But by then that meaning for *depart* had become archaic, so the King James translators systematically eliminated that use of *depart* from their translation, with the result that so there are no examples in the King James Bible of what had regularly occurred in earlier English translations. Yet the Book of Mormon has this particular use of *depart* in Helaman 8:11 in the printer’s manuscript: “to smite upon the waters of the Red Sea and they **departed** hither and thither”. The 1830 typesetter just couldn’t believe that *departed* was correct, so he replaced the word with *parted* (thus he set “to smite upon the waters of the Red Sea and they **parted** hither and thither”). We have examples from the 1557 New Testament of the Geneva Bible like “they **departed** my raiment among them” (John 19:24), translated in the 1611 King James Bible as “they **parted** my raiment among them”.

In the following example from Helaman 9:17, language usage from the 1500s and 1600s leads us to consider assigning the meaning of ‘to expose’ to the verb *detect*: “and now behold we will **detect** this man and he shall confess his fault”. Such usage can be found, for instance, in this example from Richard Hooker in 1594: “The gentlewoman goeth forward and **detecteth** herself of a crime.”

The adjective *extinct* now refers to the death of a species, but in Early Modern English it could refer to the death of a person, as we find in a 1675 English translation of Machiavelli’s *The Prince*: “the Pope being dead and Valentine **extinct**”. And we find such usage in the original (and current) text of the Book of

Mormon: “and inflict the wounds of death in your bodies that ye may become **extinct**” (Alma 44:7).

Here is an interesting example from Helaman 7:16 where the text uses the verb *hurl* but it more likely refers to dragging rather than throwing: “yea how could ye have given away to the enticing of him who art seeking to **hurl** away your souls down to everlasting misery and endless woe”. And the OED provides a 1663 citation from Robert Blair where *hurl* is assigned the meaning ‘to drag or pull with violence’: “The new creature was assaulted, **hurled**, and holed as a captive.” And this is what we expect in Helaman 7:16, that Satan will drag us down to hell.

The expression “to pitch battle” no longer exists as such in modern English; today we have it only in the set phrase “a pitched battle”. In fact, we generally think of a pitched battle as an intensively fought one, but originally what it referred to was a fully set battle. Interestingly, the Book of Mormon uses the original, now archaic, syntactic expression in Helaman 1:15: “and they came down again that they might **pitch battle** against the Nephites”. In Early Modern English there is Christopher Marlowe’s 1590 example in the passive, “Our **battle**, then, in martial manner **pitched**.” But such general use of the verb phrase “to pitch battle” no longer exists in English.

Finally, I give an example of an unexpected extension of the noun *rebellion* in Mosiah 10:6: “and he began to stir his people up in **rebellion** against my people”. In today’s English, we think of the word *rebellion* as hierarchical, that rebellion occurs in opposition to higher authority. But this example from the Book of Mormon refers to the Lamanite king as stirring up his people, the Lamanites, against the people of Limhi, a Nephite people that are in virtual slavery to the Lamanites. The meaning of the phrase “in rebellion” in Mosiah 10:6 seems to simply mean ‘in opposition’; there the phrase “in rebellion” lacks any kind of hierarchical implication. Thus far I have found only one example (and an early one at that) with this

more general meaning for the noun *rebellion* (used by Gilbert Haye in 1456, as cited in the OED): “if man should have this **rebellion** and contrariety, any against another, when they are of diverse complexions?”

The third type of evidence that shows the preciseness of the original text of the Book of Mormon deals with various set expressions and word forms that were consistently used in the original text but are no longer consistent in the standard text. In over a hundred different expressions and word forms, the text has developed various exceptions to its original consistency, exceptions that we might call “wrinkles in the text”. The original translated text is so consistent in this respect that it doesn’t look like it’s the result of a translator freely choosing how he should translate a given expression or word form each time he comes across it. Here are some examples; I first give the numerical count for usage in the current standard text, then in the original text:

whatsoever, never *whatever*

72 to 2 in the current text; 75 to 0 in the original text

conditions, never *condition*

12 to 2 in the current text; 14 to 0 in the original text

this time, never *these times*

60 to 1 in the current text; 61 to 0 in the original text

“observe **to keep** the commandments”, never “observe the commandments”

10 to 1 in the current text; 11 to 0 in the original text

“thus **ended** a period of time”, never “thus **endeth** a period of time”

43 to 4 in the current text; 47 to 0 in the original text

“to do **iniquity**”, never “**to do iniquities**”

21 to 1 in the current text; 22 to 0 in the original text

“if it **so be** that ...”, never “if it **be so** that ...”

36 to 2 in the current text; 38 to 0 in the original text

“to have **hope**”, never “to have **hoped**”

17 to 1 in the current text; 18 to 0 in the original text

“the Nephites and **the** Lamanites”, never “the Nephites and Lamanites”

14 to 1 in the current text; 15 to 0 in the original text

Thus the original text appears to be a fully controlled text. The Yale edition restores more than one hundred of these kinds of systematic phrases and word choices.

Another type of evidence for the systematic nature of the original text can be found in identical citations that come from completely different parts of the text. One well-known pair of citations involves a reference to Lehi’s vision of the heavenly scene. Originally identified by John W. Welch, this language is first quoted in 1 Nephi 1:8 as “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**”, then the same precise language, word for word, is used considerably later, in Alma 36:22: “yea and methought I saw – even as our father Lehi saw – **God sitting upon his throne surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God**”.

Another example of identical citation involves a liturgical expression found in Mosiah 3:8, which originally read as follows: “and he shall be called **Jesus Christ the Son of God / the Father of heaven and of earth / the Creator of all things from the beginning**”. Later, in Helaman 14:12, we get the same language, word for word: “and also that ye might know of the coming of **Jesus Christ the Son of God / the Father of heaven and of earth / the Creator of all things from the beginning**”. Interestingly, in Mosiah 3:8 the 1830 typesetter accidentally deleted the preposition *of* before the noun *earth*, giving “the Father of heaven and earth” rather than the correct “the Father of heaven and **of** earth”. So in the current text these two liturgical citations are no longer identical.

There is also evidence for letter for letter control over the spelling of Book of Mormon names. The witnesses of the translation process indicated that whenever the scribe had difficulty in spelling an unknown name correctly, Joseph Smith would spell it out for him. And we can find clear evidence of the spelling out of Book of Mormon names in the original manuscript. For instance, in Alma 33:15, when Oliver Cowdery had to spell the name *Zenoch* for the first time in the original manuscript, he initially spelled it as *Zenock*. Then he immediately crossed out the misspelling, *Zenock*, and wrote inline the correct spelling, *Zenoch*. Later on, in Helaman 1:15, Oliver originally spelled the first occurrence of the name *Coriantumr* as *Coriantummer*, a phonetic spelling. Again, he crossed out the misspelling and then wrote inline the correct *Coriantumr*. In this instance, Joseph would have been required to spell out the name letter for letter in order to get the otherwise impossible sequence *mr* at the end of the name.

Conclusion

There are three goals that have guided me in producing *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*. First of all, I wanted to present the text in an inviting format and provide a clear text with minimal editorial intrusion, one that would be fully accessible and easy to read – and for both LDS and non-LDS readers. Second, I wanted to publish the most accurate text possible, one with readings based on the two manuscripts and the earliest editions. And finally, I wanted to provide access to all the significant textual changes that the text has undergone over the years, from the manuscripts and early editions up to the current LDS and RLDS editions. But since I did not want these variants to intrude upon the text itself, I placed them in an appendix.

As I have studied the original text and the evidence of how it was transmitted, it's become very clear to me that this text

was revealed to Joseph Smith word for word and that he could actually see the spelled-out English words. We do not know the precise mechanism that allowed Joseph to receive the text in this way, but the evidence argues that the text was a specific English-language translation that was revealed through him. It is indeed a marvelous work and a wonder.

Royal Skousen, professor of linguistics and English language at Brigham Young University, has been the editor of the Book of Mormon critical text project since 1988. In 2009, Skousen published with Yale University Press the culmination of his critical text work, The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text. He is also known for his work on exemplar-based theories of language and quantum computing of analogical modeling.

WHERE SHALL WISDOM BE FOUND?

Zina Petersen

Review of *The Mother of the Lord, volume 1: The Lady in the Temple* by Margaret Barker, 2012, London: Bloomsbury.

Mormons who know about her are usually fans of Margaret Barker. Disclosure: I am one of them (Mormon who knows about her, and fan). For further disclosure, she paid attention and respect to the writings of Hugh Nibley, to whom I was and am filially devoted. So it isn't as if I am unbiased in appreciating Barker's work. I am also not alone; there are quite a few of us who read and love her. Indeed it may be said we love her because she first loved us—or at least unwittingly agreed with us. With her 2012 book, *The Mother of the Lord, volume 1: The Lady in the Temple*, she has once again written about ancient biblical events in ways that can cast Mormon scriptural claims as possible, if not consciously validated or proven. Barker is no Mormon apologist, after all, though she is sympathetic. Her Protestant views understandably color her writing, as do classical training and sympathies with Roman Catholic sensibilities, particularly about Mary. Of course it is not her book's project to engage Latter-day Saints and our issues specifically, even if we are enthusiastic about what Barker finds. Her discoveries and claims have a place for Mormon teachings, but the fit we see is many times an odd one, unexpected, sometimes uncomfortably not on our terms. My friend compared reading Barker to having a non-Mormon archaeologist discover absolute proof of New World Book of

Mormon cultures: a beautifully preserved city in the heart of, say, Guatemala, with road signs and a legible library of all the civic records of Zarahemlah—and having the discovery include copious affidavits describing the Dineh People’s tribulations crossing the Kamchatka Peninsula and down the Rockies. Topping it off, the documents are signed by Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, and Catherine of Sienna and are notarized by John Wesley. “Great! See, we were—wait, what?” My friend’s example is a little extreme, but the comparison works on the chuckle level.

A Bible scholar and Methodist minister who has been the president of *The Society for Old Testament Study* (1998), Barker studied at Cambridge and has written fourteen scholarly books on the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, including half a dozen on the Messiah’s role in ancient Israelite religions and more than that about ancient temple worship. She is frighteningly well-read, and her vast complex of source material is mind-boggling. Barker’s views are not always appreciated in all circles, and there might be a bit of an edge detected in some scholars’ pointing out that her doctor of divinity is a degree bestowed by the Archbishop of Canterbury instead of by an academic administrator.¹ But there is no question that she has an audience and a message both for that audience and for her detractors. And as messages go, hers are fascinating and important enough not to be ignored.

In her scholarship as a whole, Rev. Barker works from the assumption that the oldest biblical religions were different in type and degree from the ways in which they have been taught subsequently but that traces of the original ideas remain, revealed in textual and extra-textual clues. What those specific differences are is the subject of her books; the object is the evidence she finds in texts available from the Hebrew Bible, the

1 <http://rowanwilliams.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/1241/archbishop-of-canterbury-awards-lambeth-degrees>

Christian Testaments, and any extra-canonical contemporary accounts she can use to explore such a remote complex of cultures. Barker's interpretation assumes a dynamic, developing religion, beginning with Abraham's prophetic call and his rejection of Ugaritic traditions and evolving over centuries into the monotheism recognizable in most interpretations of the Old Testament.

Barker's Thesis for *The Mother of the Lord*

The Mother of the Lord builds on themes from Barker's previous work in *The Great High Priest* (2003) and *Temple Theology* (2004).² Her thesis for this volume is that worship in the first temple venerated not a monotheistic supreme Creator God, but a Family of divine beings within an even larger Council of Gods. This Family consisted of the Father, called the Highest; the Mother, identified with the consort-Goddess Asherah and known as the personification of Wisdom; and the Son, who was named the Lord. She presents arguments to show how the Son and Father were collapsed and convoluted into the One God of the Hebrew Bible we read now, and Wisdom the Mother was banished entirely, surviving only in clues and fragments. According to Barker, Abraham's earliest version of temple worship was deliberately changed, "purified" by King Josiah in the sixth century BCE, to align with *The Book of the Law*. This book, which was discovered as the temple was renovated, is arguably either a version of Deuteronomy or an extracanonical law code. Its adherents, aligned with Josiah's reform efforts or he with theirs, are referred to as the Deuteronomists. Their temple and worship overhaul caused the loss of what were likely many plain and precious things. Among these were the older ideas, symbols, possibly entire rituals, and

2 Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (London: T&T Clark, 2003); Margaret Barker, *Temple Theology* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004).

forms of words from the temple as its adherents had known it, including the Lady Wisdom. At the time of the purge, Barker notes, groups of traditionalist believers (we may think of Lehi and his family) left or were driven from Jerusalem, and in their exile they continued the older forms of Abrahamic worship (Barker, 75).

It is Barker's assertion that these older beliefs are discoverable both in the Bible and in texts such as *The Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sirach*, *The Book of Weeks* and *The Apocalypse of Enoch* (and LDS can see echoes in the Book of Mormon as well). In addition to extra-biblical texts recording descriptions of the Lady in the temple, Barker offers close readings and re-readings of the Bible itself, finding evidence for the older traditions in Ezekiel, Psalms, Micah, Amos, Hosea, Jeremiah, and parts of Isaiah. Many of the prophets are condemning not just foreigners, enemies, or invaders from without the kingdom but also the changes they saw from the religion of Abraham to that of Moses, and his Law.

One of Barker's tools for examining Bible texts involves suggesting alternate orthography for certain words and explaining possible scribal emendations to show how a few pen strokes could disguise one word as something subtly—or drastically—different from its original form or spelling. Sometimes a different reading is possible simply by applying different vowel values to the words, which is one of the ways Hebrew exploits its rich possibility for punning and polysemy, an integral feature of the written language and its literature. This interpretive methodology has been questioned by readers like Michael Heiser and Paul Owen as being too speculative.³ Certainly if cast in terms of a conspiracy-theorist style

3 See Michael Heiser, "Margaret Barker Manufactures a Goddess in Isaiah 7," *PaleoBabble*, October 31, 2008, <http://michaelsheiser.com/PaleoBabble/2008/10/margaret-barker-manufacturing-a-goddess-in-isaiah-7/> (accessed September 27, 2013); Paul Owen, "Monotheism, Mormonism, and the New Testament Witness," in *The New Mormon Challenge: Responding to the*

proof-texting, it's easy to see how that objection arises. If I selectively changed the word "whale" into the word "world" and "ship" into "shop" (they look and sound alike, after all) in Herman Melville's proof-copy of *Moby Dick*, I could create some fascinating readings myself and alter the history of American literature forever. But it isn't as simple as that.

To a non-specialist reader like me, the problems with the critics' rejecting out-of-hand what Barker has found are first, the sheer number of "speculations" that support her conclusions; second, the consistency and sensibleness of the patterns they reveal; and third, that there are extra-biblical texts and archeological evidence to support her claims. To refute a single word-change as fanciful is reasonable; to refute *all* of them and then reject the textual and archaeological external witnesses as well seems overwhelming and even a bit petulant. In *The Mother of the Lord*, Barker uses her methods of emendation and multiplying examples to show that the Deuteronomic and Josiah reforms resulted in the rejection of the council of gods idea and the expulsion of the divine family in favor of the One God, in an effort to maintain (or retroactively create) a "history" of consistent, correlated monotheism. To me, four hundred pages of example and explanation (*of volume 1!*) are convincing.

Though the specifics of Barker's methodology are challenging for some, especially traditionalist religious teachers preaching the orthodox tenets of their heritage, scholars of the ancient world are largely in agreement that religion of the Hebrews in its earliest iteration was closer to the polytheistic religion of the Canaanites and other neighbors/rivals than the Bible-as-received has allowed. They also acknowledge that

female deities, specifically Wisdom as expressed by Asherah, the Mother of the Lord, were lost after the sixth century BCE.⁴

Implications for Abrahamic Religions

This was an enormous change for the religion of Abraham. It was nothing less than the recasting of an entire cultural world view that had been based on belief in a divine multiplicity into a rejection of that multiplicity *per se*, including erasing the relationships among divine beings. If God is always and only One, then “other” gods are not only blasphemous but worthless, being newly nonexistent, and if God is always and only One, then God is not part of a Family. Thus, in its initial narration, the Bible recorded a society in transition, elevating one God above the other gods. But far more important, in its canonization with Deuteronomist editing, the Bible elevates that particular God to a supremacy resulting in the *obliteration* of all the other divine persons. This results in a complex collection of cultural and social changes, probably the most severe of which was the gendering of God.

MonoGod = Male God

For many readers, Barker’s description of worship of the Mother Goddess is one of her most radical claims (“radical” in the sense of “rootedness”—it is a “deep” claim). Historically, one of the most problematic sociocultural aspects of all the Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—has been their identification of a *single* and singular God with a

4 See William G. Dever, *Did God have a Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005); Michael D. Coogan, *The Old Testament: A Historical and Literary Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Susan Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen: Women in Judges and biblical Israel* (New York: Doubleday, 1998); Mark S. Smith *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2002); David E. Bokovoy, *Yahweh as a Sexual Deity in J’s Prehistory* (PhD dissertation, Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies, Brandeis University, 2012).

necessarily and immutably *male* God. Western culture has been breathing this air for so many millennia it seems outrageous to suggest any alternatives, but that sensibility is the very legacy Barker is exposing.

It is a truism among modern monotheistic religions that “primitive” or “unsophisticated” religions are too anthropomorphic, casting divine persons as far too human, including somehow en fleshed bodies with attendant drives and appetites. This is one reason polytheism and primitivism are usually coupled. In creedal Christianities, proper theology rejects the scandals of physicality and multiplicity and describes instead the One God as an impossibly remote, wholly Other, different-species, utterly-not-us, and ironically male but sexless divinity (see Bokovoy, 2012).⁵ Joseph Smith suggested a return (restoration) to a family model with a physicalized and thus sexualized model of God, God as a Father along with a Mother. At this point, some LDS may holler loudly and polysyllabically about our claims to her, about our exclusive, deeply ecclesiastically problematic and schizophrenic recognition/avoidance of a “Mother in Heaven.” They will quote from Doctrine and Covenants 10 and sing Eliza Snow—all four verses; others will mutter and change the subject. Quickly. Though I would love nothing better than to count myself among the hollers, I must save that for later; Barker’s identification of the temple goddess is quite independent from our own intranecine squabbles.

One of the Gods of the Council was the female figure of Asherah. There are archeological as well as textual references to her throughout the geographical area claimed by biblical history, datable to the times before Josiah’s purge (Barker, 154 ff.). Asherah was known mostly as either a consort of the Highest or of the Lord, or she was the Mother of the Lord;

5 See Bokovoy, *Yahweh as a Sexual Deity in J’s Prehistory*.

Barker argues for her role as Mother of the Lord (hence the title of the book). From thence Barker makes a case for Mary the Virgin as Wisdom's manifestation in the mystery of the Incarnation. As Wisdom, the goddess was the female element of divine nurturance, and when Old Testament prophets reference Wisdom, it is almost always a reference to her (Barker, 234). Without Wisdom, worshippers were left in the hands of the Law without consideration, without mercy or understanding (Barker, 364-65). She was the recognizable sign of God's presence among the people, though her identity was obscured by her many manifestations; she was Wisdom, *Khokhmah*; she was the presence of God, *Shekinah*, Pillar and Shadow; her iconic symbols were indicative of her being the *Mater*-matter of life: the Breath of God; the Spirit; Holy Fire (she speaks to Moses from a burning, unconsumed fruit bush); fertile fields; high places (mountains or hills; the proto-temples of Abraham, Moses, etc.); the abundance and faithful generosity of fruit-bearing trees (including their derivatives, wooden totems); and the vessel that bears the Lord, sometimes represented as a dish or bowl but often symbolized as the Throne (see chapter 5).

These symbols are named as idolatrous in Josiah's reforms, and they were cast out of the temple (Barker, 7) and identified with "the Harlot." But according to Barker's postscript, the actual "harlot," the usurping imposter, was the religion that replaced the Lady: "Jerusalem was burned by the Romans in 70 CE, and the heavens rejoiced that she had been destroyed with fire, the prescribed punishment for a priestly harlot (Rev. 19:1-5; Lev. 21:9). Only when the harlot had gone could the Lady of Jerusalem return. The Bride of the Lamb appeared, the heavens opened, and the Warrior came forth to bring judgement on evil and to establish His kingdom" (375). This Lady is identified in John's Revelation as both the oldest temple Asherah *and* the Blessed Virgin Mary; both are allegorically tied to the covenant of the True Church, and both retain feminine grammatical

forms as well as personified feminine divinity. In the Revelation, there is no way to interpret the Lady with the Child as anything other than godly, honored for herself as well as her child. The allegorical depth of the imagery and symbolism is striking, and no single interpretation can dismiss others. Barker sees the polyvalence of John's imagery as complementary: she is Mary, she is the Holy Covenant; she is God's Wisdom and Presence and Spirit; she is the Mother.

We need to be open to seeing the overlap of such ideas and symbols, of entertaining many names for the Heavenly Family to whom we have always belonged. They are not far from us, but we foolish mortals have drifted far from them. Barker says "It has become customary to translate and read the Hebrew Scriptures as an account of one male deity, and the feminine presence is not made clear. Had it been the custom to read of a female Spirit or to find Wisdom capitalized, it would have been easier to make the link between the older faith in Jerusalem and later developments outside the stream represented by the canonical texts. At the beginning of Genesis, there would have been, and *should be*, 'the Spirit of God, she was fluttering over the face of the deep' (Gen. 1:2) and in the Psalms, that the Lord made all his works with Wisdom (Ps. 104:24). The problem is not just one of the modern translations; there are gender ambiguities even in the Hebrew text of the Pentateuch" (Barker, 331-332; emphasis Barker's).

Aside from (yet rooted to) religious understanding of the nature of the divine, the cultural heritage of these changes has been harsh. To muddy even symbolic representations of the feminine deity (all the way down to confusing grammatical gender of the nouns) into debatable forms and further to disparage the feminine divine to the designation of harlot is reductive and damaging. And then further still to purge the temple of female-associated iconography and restrict the Lady from the realms of the divinely possible is to reject the potential

goodness of anything female and the femaleness of anything good. And despite efforts to counteract the harm, this has been the result of a solely male God for hundreds of years of Western history.

An exclusively male God-idea assigns gender to the qualities of humanity that differentiate mortal (male) men from everything Other and places males on the side of God, which is now ontologically *opposed* to the side where mortal women find themselves. In a structuralist sense, the masculinization of God implies and inevitably assigns females down its slippery slope either to earthly realms, to “natural” realms, or to some equivalent of Hell, Gehenna, or Sheol. God is in the image of Man, rather than the other way around, and again in a structuralist configuration, “man” does *not* include all humans. Rather, “man” becomes what he is by contrast to all that is not “man”; this includes the inanimate world, the “natural” world, or brute reality, the state of childhood (a “man” is not a “boy”) and of course the “female.”

Fortunately, the universe is not necessarily structuralist.

Unfortunately, that doesn't matter.

The preponderance of human civilizations have developed codified expectations of gendered behavior, and rarely (never) are the expectations “fair” to the actual individual persons trying to meet them. Ancient Judaism is no exception. Bringing religion into this mix—or bringing this mix into religion; they are usually inseparable—always adds fuel to all fires set by such unfairness, and no one living on this planet is spared the repercussions of the resulting imbalances. (For far too many examples, see thousands of years of commentary on the Adam and Eve story.)

[Urgent aside: This is the point in the essay where we pretend to have already had the “battle-of-the-sexes” conversation. We did it brilliantly and courteously, using well-supported claims and not insisting on our own anecdotes as data but also not

dismissing others' personal experience as irrelevant, raising salient points and disagreeing with respect nigh unto reverence for each others' viewpoints, life stories, and opinions. Not a single logical fallacy was committed, no harsh words were exchanged, no guilt trips or traps laid or sprung, no names called and no offense meant or received. It was breathtaking, really, how intelligently our difficult but sensitive and nuanced conversation about problematic non-absolute biological sexual dimorphism, Cartesian dualism, and gendered socialization unfolded, and we all came out of it enlightened, refreshed, and feeling all the more fond of each other, affectionate, heard, understood, and loved. Because we are amazing like that. Practically *Saints*.]

The Mediterranean ancient world was undeniably sexist, with advantages accruing disproportionately to the men and the disadvantages to the women (see: all of human history). Judaism was far from alone in either its antifeminism (the belief that women cannot and should not be equal in legal status or standing to men) or its misogyny (the belief that females as females are ontologically inferior to males and possibly irredeemably evil). Most all civilizations have had varying degrees of power imbalances based on questions of sex (biological morphology) and gender (social codes of expected behavior). Historically there have been long, tedious arguments as to whether and how much of this difference-produced philosophical quandary is legitimate, including the perennial question of women having souls (I am not making this up). Since the answer is "none of it," and we have already sorted the problem ourselves (so well!), we'll not revisit the generalities but consider where Barker's observations contribute.

Typical readings of the Books of Moses set God's religion as monotheist and the Children of Israel as reformed polytheists who keep backsliding into old traditions with other gods. The Deuteronomist system is absolute. Since other gods are not the

One God, then recognition of all other gods must be sinful. The equation becomes this: if not the One God, then polytheist; if polytheist, then pagan; if pagan, then condemned/condemnable. Then: if *not* pagan, then monotheist. If monotheist, then the One God; if the One God, then no Goddess. These are all dualist propositions; in this syllogism there are no options “C.”

But if Barker (and, coincidentally, Joseph Smith) is correct, there is an option “C.” If the non-pagan, respectable divine can possibly include a variety rather than a singularity, the problem of half of humanity as intrinsically less than the other half simply doesn’t exist as such, and we can toss out the horrible debates of pagan, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim philosophers about “whether” women have souls or not and get right down to the far more serious theological question of whether they can or should wear trousers to church.

I kid. I wink, I try to lighten the mood. Because the Barker thesis is a light in darkness, irrespective of trivial mortal concerns (like clothing-in-context), this is Woman being “returned” to the Heavens. The fact that Barker’s compelling description of Mother Goddess coincides (once again) with one of the more outrageous propositions of LDS thought gives us pause as well as hope. I am not quite sure what to do with such an idea coming from Barker’s studies because, in the absence of latter-day prophetic instruction on the matter, I am also not quite sure what is to be done with our own LDS version of it. Our version is not Catholic. The Protestant version is not Catholic. But the two not-Catholics are not-Catholic in slightly different ways.

Catholics venerate Mary as the Mother of God and therefore holy, so she can be an intercessor with God. Though not God herself, Mary is blessed among women and holds a unique place in the religion. Veneration of Mary is unacceptable to Protestants, because they see Mary as merely a human whom God chose to be the mortal mother of Jesus;

worshipping her or praying to her (or any intercessory other than Christ) is somewhere on the spectrum from useless to blasphemous. Though Catholic and Protestant understanding of trinitarianism settles the problem of polytheism by making the three persons into One God, some Protestants see Catholicism's veneration of Saints, and particularly of Mary, as creeping polytheism. Mormonism does not venerate Mary, and the reasons given are usually the same as those in Protestantism but for different reasons. LDS objection to venerating Mary is not a rejection of polytheism in the guise of Mary since we do not accept trinitarianism. And it is not a rejection of the female possibilities of the divine since we do continue to admit to "Heavenly Parents" even publicly. It may simply be that, absent a prophetic revelation in this dispensation, we do not know the identity of our Mother in Heaven. Speculation does not help because it leads in very uncomfortable directions: toward Joseph Smith's polygamy ("We don't know who 'she' is because there are many mothers"), or Brigham Young's Adam-God theory (which does make Eve the Mother of all living, but also makes Adam God.) Without more information about either, both are more than problematic. Barker's proposition that Mary does not merely represent an older Goddess but is, as the mother of Jesus, the true Mother of the Lord and as such a Goddess in her own right, confounds both trinitarianism and traditionalist monotheism. Even the part Mormonism has become comfortable with.

Implications for Latter-day Saints

The ways of ancient Abrahamic temple worship and modern Mormon temple worship, for all their apparent or reputed similarities, are also substantially different. And when it comes to Mother in Heaven and the temple, if she is correct in claiming the Goddess of Israel a place of veneration in temples of antiquity, then Barker's book widens that gap, rather

than narrowing it. There is no cause for anyone inside the LDS Church or out of it to claim that our temples are places where we consciously, communally worship any female deities as Barker describes the oldest Israelites doing. Though LDS doctrine allows and even requires a Heavenly Mother, the American Christian context Mormonism was born into included anti-pagan, anti-polytheist, and anti-woman implicit and explicit assumptions. In America at the time of the Restoration of the Gospel, the bickering Protestant communities were in agreement about one thing at least: they were all pleased not to be Catholic. Roman Catholicism is the only one of the mainstream Western descendants of Abrahamic religions to make a place for a woman to be revered, in the person of Mary, Mother of Jesus. For many early Protestants, Catholic veneration of Mary was one of the reasons to protest (Calvin rejected any praise for anyone other than God; Luther called a belief in intercessory saints idolatry). “Popery” as the early Protestants called the Catholic church, tipped into idolatry (polytheism) in its inclusion of the intercessory powers of patron saints, and none was more to be feared than the Saint whose Motherhood threatened monotheism and whose femaleness was not male.

That Barker and other scholars have had to defend the possibility of an ancient Abrahamic religion with a Goddess is telling. Like a paranoid dream coming true, it seems that Josiah’s redactions and insistence on absolute male monotheism as *de rigueur*, rather than being a scandal itself, has *worked!* It succeeded in creating a history and subsequently an entrenched tradition of reverence for its monotheist status quo wherein any polytheist counter-thought is heresy and our Mother is the scandal: No! A God, a God; we have a God and there can be no more God.

Centuries of theologizing God have removed the divine impossibly far from us, yet we would not want to return to God if there were not something in common between God’s “good”

and our mortal experience of “good.” Which always, always, includes love. In their book *The God Who Weeps*, Fiona and Terryl Givens say, “God’s nature and and life are the simple extension of that which is most elemental, and most worthwhile, about our life here on earth. However rapturous or imperfect, fulsome or shattered, our knowledge of love has been, we sense it is the very basis and purpose of our existence.”⁶ Heaven is not joyless, and joy is not solitary, exclusive, exclusively male, or even aspirationally male (sorry, Paul; sorry, Phillip; sorry, Timaeus). Joseph Smith had the audacity to suggest a re-anthropomorphized God who is (blasphemously, for the creeds) like us in more ways than even we, Joseph’s followers, are comfortable admitting. The history of religion informing social constructs is almost the entire history of history, so when religion split humanity along gender lines, elevating half and discarding the other half, the results were tragic. When our lives are controlled not by striving to conform to God’s will but to conform to a seriously flawed social expectation, there is something fundamentally broken, fallen, wrong with all of us, requiring enlightenment, repentance, and Atonement. Joseph Smith wanted Zion, where the Last shall be First. He wanted Zion, where there are no poor (no class divisions based on *anything*) among us. Where “all are alike unto God, black and white, bond and free, male and female” (2 Ne. 26:33). Zion is not a solitary place of stark silent sterility or a shame-based hierarchy of good and better but an ever-expanding community of sloppy, sentimental joy, where “they will fall upon our necks, and we shall fall upon their necks, and we shall kiss each other” (Moses 7:63)

One other important tenet of the Protestant Reformation was to reject overt priestly and papal interference with the sacred bond of God and mortal child, a sentiment the LDS

6 Terry Givens and Fiona Givens, *The God Who Weeps: How Mormonism Makes Sense of Life* (Ensign Peak, 2012), 109.

can certainly sympathize with. In Barker's English Protestant heritage is the poet-preacher George Herbert, who writes not on a stone altar but offers himself as the locus of worship, makes of his own heart a temple altar.⁷ If Josiah's changes can so harshly throw the Mother of the Lord—our Mother—out of the temple and out of the religions that descended from it, perhaps we can quietly, defiantly strike back. Taking a leaf from the Protestants who so graciously blessed us with the likes of Margaret Barker, we Mormons could each carry our Mother back into the temple, giving her back her place, beside Father, on the altars of our hearts.

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⁷ George Herbert, "The Altar," in *George Herbert: The Country Parson, the Temple*, John N. Wall, ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 139.

SOPHIC BOX AND MANTIC VISTA: A REVIEW OF *DECONSTRUCTING MORMONISM*

Kevin Christensen

A review of *Deconstructing Mormonism: An Analysis and Assessment of the Mormon Faith* (Cranford, N.J., American Atheist Press: 2011) by Thomas Riskas and of *Myths, Models and Paradigms: A Comparative Study of Science and Religion* (New York, Harper & Row: 1974) by Ian J. Barbour.

Abstract: Riskas's Deconstructing Mormonism claims that believers are trapped in a box for which the instructions for how to get out are written on the outside of the box. He challenges believers to submit to an outsider test for faith. But how well does Riskas describe the insider test? And is his outsider test, which turns out to be positivism, just a different box with the instructions for how to get out written on its outside? Ian Barbour's Myths Models and Paradigms provides instructions on how to get out of the positivistic box that Riskas offers, and at the same time provides an alternate outsider test that Mormon readers can use to assess what Alma refers to as "cause to believe."

The important thing, however, is that we are dealing here not with the old donnybrook between science and religion but with the ancient confrontation of Sophic and Mantic. The Sophic is simply the art of solving problems without the aid of any superhuman agency, which the Mantic, on the other hand, is willing to solicit or accept.¹

¹ Hugh Nibley, "Paths that Stray: Some Notes on the Sophic and Mantic" in Stephen Ricks, ed., *The Ancient State, Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, vol. 10 (Salt Lake City and Provo: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), 380--381.

This started as a review of *Deconstructing Mormonism* but soon changed into a double review, since reading Riskas reminded me just how good a book Ian Barbour's *Myths, Models, and Paradigms* is. Riskas claims that believers are trapped in a box for which the instructions on how to get out are on the outside. He challenges believers to submit to an "outside test for faith." But how well has he described the insider test? Are the instructions for how to get out really hidden from those on the inside? Is there anything important that an insider test considers that his outsider test overlooks? Is his outsider test, which turns out to be off-the-rack positivism, valid? Is his outsider test just a different box with the instructions for how to get out written on *its* outside? And what happens if we submit his outsider test to another test outside of that? Riskas provides no clue as to where a person might go to find a test of his outsider test. Happily, Ian Barbour's brilliant little book provides just that: clear instructions on how to get out of the box that Riskas asks believers to climb into, and at the same time it presents a different outsider test that Mormon readers can use to reexamine their own "cause to believe."

The introduction to Riskas's thick, densely written book is provided by one Kai Nielson, a professor of philosophy who assures us that what is to come "is both impartial and religiously sensitive." Further it is "balanced, firmly argued, clearly articulated and fair minded."²

Is it any of these things? And if it is not, why bother? Impartial?

At a more specific and personal level, my reasons for challenging and criticizing the Mormons in particular (as well as my reactive attitude to them and other theistic believers) are rooted, it would seem, in the affront that they are (in virtue of what they stand for,

2 Kai Nielson, Foreword to *Deconstructing Mormonism*, xi.

espouse, and aspire to be) to my basic humanity. They are painful reminders, through their own adherence to their faith, of the systematic, institutionally and theologically administered shame inflicted upon me, and experienced over many years as a practicing Mormon. To these two personal reasons, I would add a third: at a general, collective level, there is the very real danger their beliefs pose to society, and the damage and indignities their beliefs and attitudes so often inflict on the minds, body, and intellect of believers, unsuspecting investigators, and more importantly, innocent and defenseless children.³

The impartiality displayed here was preceded by this statement of personal experience:

The Mormons and other mostly Christian believers I have known over the years, have, for the most part, been pleasant enough people (at least socially), and have done not intentional harm to me personally that I know of.⁴

How do such pleasant people become an affront to humanity? Riskas refers to “programs and methods of authoritarian conditioning” and “*the shaming discipline of the inherent moralistic core of their faith; a discipline that requires them to abide by the oppressive, life-negating rules of their faith’s implicit code of patriarchy and to never give head-room to real doubt concerning their fundamental religious beliefs.*”⁵

Is this how a philosopher defines “impartial”? If so, how many people entering the legal system would, or should, trust

3 Riskas, 385.

4 Riskas, 384.

5 Riskas, xix—xx

their cases to this kind of impartiality when displayed by the prosecution?

Religiously sensitive? Here is a sample of Riskas's religious sensitivity in describing how LDS children are taught:

Such brainwashing for Mormon children, as we shall explore in more depth in the *Personal Postscript*, continues in earnest with the use of religious language in the home and teaching of faith in a factually unintelligible, supernatural being (or Heavenly Father), and continues through the teaching and encouraged superstitious practice of prayer as actual, two-way communication with this invisible, incomprehensible, and factually non-existent being...

As Mormon children approach the age of eight years, they are then encouraged by their parents to superstitiously participate in religious "ordinances" which somehow magically bless them and enable them to be saved and return to Heavenly Father and live together as a family forever.⁶

The use of such emotionally laden and rhetorically loaded language, such as "brainwashing," "unintelligible," "superstitious," "magically," and "factually non-existent being" strike me as something other than "religiously sensitive." But Riskas extends the same degree of (in)sensitivity to people of all faiths:

To be sure, *all* theistic religions are, in my view, an affront to man's rationality and intellect as incoherent belief systems built on superstition and metaphysical nonsense. *All* theistic religions are also an affront to man's humanity. Because of the irrational faith they

6 Riskas, lxxii.

require and the inhuman, performatory and behavioral demands they make, they shamefully and shamelessly exhibit a disguised disdain for human reason, human nature, and human dignity through various forms of abusive boundary violations, including mind-control, and moralistic intrusion into the personal lives and choices of its adherents in the name of love and concern for their temporal and eternal welfare.... Such, in part, is the personal price believers pay for their stupidity and *ersatz* or illusory happiness.⁷

Balanced? How about Riskas as balanced?

In his personal introduction, Thomas Riskas refers to his two decades in Mormonism as providing his personal warrant to comment with authority, and observes that “Most [Mormons] have likely only a superficial knowledge of Mormon theology as taught in our scriptures or by the more renowned Church theologians and General Authorities of the Mormon Church, such as Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, Orson and Parley P. Pratt, John A. Widtsoe, James E. Talmage, Brigham H. Roberts, Joseph Fielding Smith, to name a notable few.”⁸

This is true enough. Later however, he claims that “I was, by any standard within the church dedicated and theologically well informed through my extensive and continuous study of all the Standard Works (scriptures) of the Mormon church, as well as the scriptural commentaries, doctrinal teachings, writings, and official discourses...”⁹

His “by any standard” may be correct with respect to his personal dedication while a member, but it strikes me as naïve and as a bit of wishful thinking with respect to his being

7 Riskas, 382

8 Riskas, xvii. He could better explain that “renowned Church theologians” and “General Authorities” are not necessarily the same category. A person can be, one or the other, or both, or neither.

9 Riskas, lxv.

theologically well informed. To me it is clear from his personal accounts in *Deconstructing Mormonism* and the content of his bibliography that Riskas spent most of his Mormon years as one whose knowledge was rather superficial. And it remains so despite his adding a handful of contemporary LDS thinkers, such as Robert Millet, Dallin Oaks, and Blake Ostler to those he mentions before. He makes statements about fundamental LDS claims that strike me as wrong in the way that people who never bother to think or read seriously on those issues tend to get them wrong. (I'll get to a few of these later.) In his introduction, he lays down a spread of Robert D. Anderson, Fawn Brodie, Dan Vogel, and Grant Palmer as four Aces, an unbeatable hand that demonstrates "very serious historical problems concerning the claim that Joseph Smith was who he said he was and is who he is believed to be by faithful Mormon believers."¹⁰ It is permissible for Riskas to bring these books and others like them to a discussion. But if you want to claim subsequently that the discussion is "balanced," I should expect an honest, fearless, well-informed critic to mention that these books have been critically reviewed by people who strike me as being far more informed than Riskas.¹¹ And I would expect a mention of important books by Richard Bushman, Richard L. Anderson, Larry Morris, John Sorenson, John Welch, Terryl Givens, and Hugh Nibley, among others, in the name of honesty and fairness. It is easy to walk up to a balance scale, drop some weights on one side, and smile with pleasure at the

10 Riskas, xlvi. He is referring to Robert D. Anderson; Anderson's *Inside the Mind of Joseph Smith: Psychobiography* and the Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999); Fawn M. Brodie's, *No Man Knows My History: The Life of Joseph Smith*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945); Dan Vogel's, *Joseph Smith: The Making of a Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004); and Palmer's *Grant Palmer, An Insider's View of Mormon Origins* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002).

11 You can find reviews of all four here: http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/publications/review/?reviewed_books&vol=14&num=1&id=410

“clunk” sound produced as the unopposed weight dramatically tilts the scale. But you have to be quite naïve to expect that any wide-awake person would conclude that what they have seen in such a one-sided display has anything to do with balance.

The imbalance that Riskas displays in passing here continues through the book and into the bibliography. In reading through Riskas’s lengthy bibliography, I notice a great many books on psychology and militant atheism, a sampling of prominent anti-LDS books, a light smattering of conventional though mostly dated LDS texts, but no real balance. We see Brodie but no Bushman, Southerton but no Sorenson, Palmer but no Ashurst-McGee. His LDS books, for the most part, do not come from those I would consider as the prime representatives of contemporary LDS intelligentsia. He offers some Blake Ostler, *Mormon Doctrine* (and only that) from Bruce R. McConkie, one book by Robert Millett, some Widtsoe, one essay by Truman Madsen on B. H. Roberts’s “The Way the Truth and the Life,” and one book from Sterling McMurrin. We get the expected titles from Signature Books, that is, the most negative ones in the recent catalogue. He lists nothing from Nibley, Welch, Peterson, Gardner, Bushman, Givens, Paulson, Falconer, Goff, Roper, Morris, etc. We do get a list of the reports of the Mormon Alliance, a recommendation of the Tanners’ work, directions to the IRR website, and a range of stock anti-LDS sources of the kind that Mosser and Owen described as characteristically neglecting current LDS scholarship.¹² Where Riskas’s bibliography demonstrates overwhelming bias, it is actually more balanced than his *Appendix B, To Those Who Are Investigating “Mormonism,”* provided by Richard Packham, which demonstrates total bias. “By proving contraries,” Joseph

12 Carl Mosser and Paul Owen, “Mormon Scholarship, Apologetics and Evangelical Neglect: Losing the Battle and Not Knowing it? *Trinity Journal* n.s. 19 (Fall 1998): 179-205.

Smith said, “truth is made manifest.” By suppressing contraries, ideology is made manifest.¹³

Firmly Argued? Let’s look at Riskas’s method.

How does he go about deconstructing Mormonism? Not the way Jacques Derrida would. (Derrida is not listed in the bibliography, a fact that may matter only to those with enough background with the term to wonder about the significance of a title promising to “deconstruct” something.)

Riskas builds on a metaphor, taken from M. Scott Peck, of believers “being trapped inside a box, and the instructions on how to get out of the box are written on the outside of the box.” Riskas says that “this dilemma pertains, of course to all believers—of all religions—who suppress or deny their doubts and refuse, for whatever reasons to seek after the best justified knowledge they can acquire.”¹⁴

In the *World and the Prophets*, Hugh Nibley quotes Payne:

There is always danger of a metaphor once adopted becoming the master instead of the servant¹⁵

Approaching the issue of deconstruction from the perspective of an English major and as an LDS believer, I have to offer dissent over the controlling generality that Riskas gives to the metaphor of the box with instructions on the outside. As a believing LDS, I’ve never been as isolated from inside controversies and issues, outside perspectives, and alternative views regarding faith as the Riskas “box” metaphor implies. Even as a teenager growing up in a Utah suburb during the ’60s, I easily found and considered a whole range of detailed instructions on how to get outside of the box of LDS faith.

13 *History of the Church*, 6:428.

14 Riskas, xxxi–xxxii.

15 E. A. Payne, cited in Hugh Nibley, *Mormonism and Early Christianity Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, vol 4 (Salt Lake City and Provo: Deseret Book and Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1987), 194, note 2.

Though involved in LDS culture, I was not boxed in to the exclusion of books, films, radio, music, school, textbooks, TV, newspapers, and magazines as well as non-LDS people and views on a daily basis. While inside the box of LDS culture, I have been exposed to a wide range of alternative cultures and belief systems. In my twenties and thirties, I got more and more interested in the notion of testing belief systems, and I sought to understand why different people came to such different conclusions while looking at the same things. Indeed, I've read several of the books that Riskas recommends as particularly destructive for LDS faith. For my part, I found them wanting, largely because of my readings in sources that do not appear in his bibliography. I've lived not so much in an isolating box but in among overlapping cultures and societies, each offering competing sets of values, and many of them eagerly pressing into my hands just the kind of instructions that the box metaphor suggests are totally unavailable to me as a consequence of my participation in LDS society.

How well does Riskas actually describe the LDS insider test for faith? Not well. He writes that "revelation is considered true if it is sought with a 'sincere heart, and with real intent, having faith in Christ,'" citing Moroni 10:4.¹⁶ The actual text refers to sincerity, real intent, and faith as *conditions* for a manifestation by the power of the Holy Ghost (Mor. 10:4-5), *not as the validation* of revelation. The "if-then" structure should make that clear. He then cites a few of the more commonly known verses, including D&C 9, on the burning of the bosom, feeling that it is right, and the stupor of thought. He mentions D&C 121:33 on "pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul." The D&C 121 passage does not talk about revelation but the means by which priesthood holders can have any power or influence, that is, by obtaining and applying "pure knowledge,"

16 Riskas, 169.

which characteristically “enlarges the soul without hypocrisy and without guile.” By implication, the passage does raise the question of what kind of influence impure knowledge has, by implication—a contraction of the soul, and the presence of both hypocrisy and guile. (Let’s not go there now.)

Riskas briefly mentions Alma 32 but does not comprehend what is happening in that chapter.¹⁷ I’ve several times compared it to the epistemology for paradigm choice developed in Thomas Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.¹⁸ Though Riskas uses the term “paradigm” here and there, he does not cite Kuhn. I’ve compiled a detailed list of LDS scriptures that describe the different ways that prayers are answered, dividing them into those that address thinking and those that address feeling, which work through the mind and heart.¹⁹ Riskas doesn’t work that hard, sticking to a few commonplace verses and trying to reduce it all to a subjective over-reliance on feeling.²⁰

Before talking about the Mormon concept of revelation, he says, “Since there are no reliable objective and generally accepted human criteria for validating claimed revelations, the claims that ‘true revelation exists’ and that ‘Revelation is the Ultimate Source and arbiter of God’s truth are both incoherent.’”²¹ He does not seem to notice the positivism at work here, something that is not a generally accepted human criterion due to the self-referential nature of its workings. As Kuhn observes, “When paradigms enter, as they must, into a debate about paradigm choice, their role is necessarily circular. Each group uses its

17 Riskas, 170.

18 Kevin Christensen, “Paradigms Crossed” in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 7/2 (1995) 144-218.

19 Kevin Christensen, “A Model of Mormon Spiritual Experience,” Appendix A, http://dl.dropbox.com/u/22100469/model_of_experience.pdf.

20 Riskas, 153.

21 Riskas, 167.

own paradigm in that paradigm's defense."²² Riskas defends his positivism via positivism, blind to the circularity of his own position.

"Further," Riskas says, "if the concept of 'God' and the use of the term 'God' are in fact incoherent, unintelligible, and factually or cognitively meaningless, then it logically follows, that the very concept of revelation is incoherent—even without the need for validation."²³ Why bother? Sterling McMurrin was more succinct than Riskas when he famously told Blake Ostler that he had concluded "at a very early age, earlier than I can remember, that you don't get books from angels and translate them by miracles; it is just that simple."²⁴ But without a reading of the book, this is trial by ideology, not by investigation. Joseph Smith provided the book, and McMurrin never bothered to read it. Should the book be tried by ideological dismissal or serious investigation? As Kuhn says, "There are also, however, values to be used in judging whole theories: they must, first and foremost, permit puzzle formulation and solution."²⁵ Think of the contrast to McMurrin in Margaret Barker's approach to the Book of Mormon: "What I offer can only be the reactions of an Old Testament scholar: Are the revelations to Joseph Smith consistent with the situation in Jerusalem in 600 BCE?"²⁶ Whereas McMurrin dismissed the problem, Barker formulated a puzzle based on her expert knowledge, grounded in study and sources unavailable to Joseph Smith, and offered her solution.

Are there significant pieces of evidence that the insider test explores which Riskas's outsider test might completely overlook?

22 Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 94.

23 Riskas, 167–168.

24 Sterling McMurrin, "An Interview with Sterling McMurrin," interview by Blake Ostler, *Dialogue* 17/1 (1984): 25.

25 Kuhn, 185.

26 Margaret Barker, "Joseph Smith and Preexilic Religion," *BYU Studies* 44/4 (2005), 69.

Kuhn reports that “led by a new paradigm, scientists adopt new instruments and look in new places. Even more important, during revolutions, scientists see new and different things when looking with familiar instruments in places they have looked before.”²⁷ The implication for Riskas is that the outside the box and inside the box approaches may be considering very different sets of information. One of the things that my reading of Riskas provides for me is a look at his view from inside of his box. From that vantage, I see that a great many things which I think are important do not show up there. Kuhn comments that “particularly persuasive arguments can be developed if the new paradigm permits the prediction of phenomena that had been entirely unsuspected while the old one prevailed.”²⁸ That is, a reader of Riskas’s book and bibliography might not suspect that LDS scholars (or anyone else) have come up with any cause to believe or that they had responded in detail to books that Riskas uses to pave his way. He mentions FARMS once, in a footnote discussion of the Roberts Study, reporting that John Welch had argued that B. H. Roberts had not lost his faith.²⁹ But he does not trouble to specify exactly what Welch had written, where, or what sources he had employed.³⁰ More importantly, Riskas does not mention that Welch had written a detailed essay called “Answering B. H. Roberts Questions and an ‘Unparallel.’” There is a pattern of ideological selectivity throughout *Deconstructing Mormonism*. Riskas cites Quinn

27 Kuhn, 111.

28 Kuhn, 154.

29 Riskas, 112, after Reviewer’s notes, in the continuation of a long footnote quoting Joel Groat of IRR on Brigham D. Madsen and B. H. Robert, *Studies of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992). He does not mention the existence of John Welch’s detailed paper, “Answering B. H. Roberts Questions and an Unparallel” (Provo: FARMS Preliminary Report, 1984).

30 See John W. Welch, ed., *Reexploring the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City and Provo: Deseret Book and FARMS: 1992) 83–91; and John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne, eds., *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon* (Provo: FARMS, 1999), 289–292.

when it suits him to challenge traditional LDS histories but ignores his defense of the First Vision narratives.³¹ He cites John Bradshaw on “toxic shame” but ignores him when it comes to the efficacy of prayer and the value of spirituality.³²

Does a Mormon insider test for faith exclude consideration of the results or methods of outsider tests? Joseph Smith thought not. “By proving contraries,” he wrote to Daniel Rupp, “truth is made manifest.” Riskas argues for the necessity of relying on an “outside test for faith,” though not so much on how to go about testing his outside test for faith. Given a choice of different outsider tests for faith, which ones apply best to any theistic or LDS truth claims? Is the positivistic approach that Riskas offers the only outsider test to consider?

Much of Riskas’s argument stands on his use of this metaphor of believers being trapped inside a box. One of the most important things I learned about the process of literary deconstruction is to pay close attention to the metaphors a person uses. No matter how much a person claims to depend entirely on reason and rationality, much of the person’s reason, data selection, and valuing operate within the constraints of his or her metaphors. These metaphors, in a powerful way, reveal any writer’s boxes and the accompanying set of instructions that operate to keep a person inside. Riskas’s own box is obviously positivism, and he seems unaware of the existence of instructions that describe the way out of that box, let alone that positivism as a box has come in for a great deal of criticism over the past seventy years. It is not only a well-known box but an obsolescent one at that. I’ll say more about positivism as we go.

31 D. Michael Quinn, “Joseph Smith’s Experience of a Methodist ‘Camp-Meeting’ in 1820,” *Dialogue Paperless*, E-Paper 3, Expanded Version (Definitive), 20 December 2006, online at <http://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/QuinnPaperless.pdf>.

32 Frequent reference to “toxic shame” in Riskas derives from John Bradshaw, *Healing the Shame that Binds You*, (Dearfield Beach: Health Communications, Inc., 1988).

A useful text I got while working on my English degree was Madan Sarup, *Post-Structuralism and Post Modernism*. He has this to say about Derrida and deconstruction:

Derrida has provided a method of “close-reading” a “text” very similar to psychoanalytic approaches to neurotic symptoms. Deconstructive “close reading,” having “interrogated” the text breaks through its defenses and shows that a set of binary oppositions can be found “inscribed” within it. In each of the pairs, private/public, masculine/feminine, same/other, rational/irrational, true/false, central/peripheral, etc. the first term is privileged. Deconstructors show that the “privileged” term depends for its identity on excluding the other, and demonstrate that primacy really belongs to the subordinate term instead.³³

Sarup explains how Derrida strives to locate “a moment that genuinely threatens to collapse that system.”

One of the ruling illusions of Western metaphysics is that reason can somehow grasp the world without close attention to language and arrive at a pure, self-authenticating truth or method. Derrida’s work draws attention to the ways in which language deflects the philosopher’s project. He does this by focusing on metaphors and other figurative devices in the texts of philosophy...

His method consists of showing how the privileged term is held in place by the force of the dominant

33 Madan Sarup, *Post-Structuralism and Post Modernism* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993), 50.

metaphor, and not, as it might seem, by any conclusive logic.³⁴

Riskas privileges his positivism by means of the closed box metaphor as applied to believers not by means of any conclusive logic or consideration of any outside tests of positivism.

In Appendix A, Riskas reports that he was raised in a “patriarchal family culture by a loving but strict Greek mother and a loving but authoritarian, superstitious (‘God-fearing’), and at times abusive Greek father. I was conditioned from childhood to feel at home in the familiar, superstitious Mormon patriarchal culture.... And underneath the God of my parents were my ‘parent-gods’; the unconscious, idealized (i.e., ‘god-like,’ or powerful, magical, loving, nurturing, protecting and favoring) parent images internalized as a young, pre-verbal infant and child unknowingly projected onto all the fictitious gods I admired and followed throughout my life.”³⁵ Before his LDS conversion, he reports a period of late-sixties rebellion in response to “the suppressive authoritarian control imposed by my parents, particularly, my father.”³⁶

Just over one hundred years earlier, Brigham Young had commented to a Mormon audience on the effects of such a repressive parenting style:

For example, we will take a strict, religious, holy, down country, eastern Yankee, who would whip a beer barrel for working on Sunday, and never suffer a child to go into company of his age, never suffer him to have any associates, or permit him to do anything or know anything, only what the deacon, priests, or missionaries bring to the house; when that child attains to mature age, say eighteen or twenty years, he is very

34 Sarup, 51–52.

35 Riskas, 408

36 Riskas, 408.

apt to steal away from his father and mother; and when he has broken his bands, you would think all hell was let loose, and that he would compass the world at once.

Now understand it, when parents whip their children for reading novels, and never let them go to the theatre, or to any place of recreation and amusement, but bind them to the moral law, until duty becomes loathsome to them; when they are freed by age from the rigorous training of their parents, they are more fit for companions to devils, than to be the children of such religious parents.³⁷

Here is another point where Derridian deconstruction comes in. Despite his chronic complaints about the toxic effects that such authoritarian parenting and religious instruction can cause, Riskas asks why God does not “use his putative power to more *directly*, *efficiently*, and *tellingly* to accomplish his alleged purposes and promote the required and necessary knowledge of his existence as theologically conceived?”³⁸ And why, he asks “the absence of divine intervention by notably and consistently stopping or even significantly reducing or eliminating and/or at least explaining, through personal revelation, this god’s specific reasons for allowing such human and natural evil.”³⁹ “Later he asks rhetorically, “Wouldn’t he unquestionably and irrefutably, beyond all doubt, establish up front – through demonstration, coherent explanation, and facilitated understanding, – god’s

37 Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* 2:34, cited in Ben Spackman, “Brigham Young, Studying Evil, Living in a Bubble” at Patheos, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/oneeternalround/2010/08/brigham-young-studying-evil-and-living-in-a-bubble/>.

38 Riskas, 133.

39 Riskas, 336–337.

and his [Christ's] existence and divinity, god's gospel, and god's mind and will and word once and for all to all mankind?"⁴⁰

Why, Riskas seems to be asking – without realizing either the fact or the implications – why does God not behave like a suppressive, authoritarian, controlling parent of the sort that he himself rebelled against during the 1960s? A parent, a society, or a religion that behaves that way, Riskas says, is toxic, and a God who does not behave that way somehow demonstrates non-existence. Imagine living in a universe, or for that matter with a parent, for whom efficiency and not love was the first and great value upon which all else stands, before which every other concern must be compromised. In a conflict of values, freedom and love bow to efficiency. Does that sound like paradise? From my perspective, his system deconstructs.

But Riskas does not consider Derrida. Riskas's method involves accepting an uncritical adoption of positivism and being hypercritical from that stance.⁴¹ Mote-eye considerations (Matthew 7:3-5) don't enter in before making judgments. He demands absolute precision in language, absolute verification for any assertion, potential falsification for any belief;⁴² and he behaves as though his rhetorical questions and blanket assertions provide irrefutable falsification. He also demands that wide social consensus should uphold any interpretation, as though anything that is not popularly believed could not be true (think Great and Spacious Building). He spends a chapter on a Socratic dialogue with himself in which he interrogates a sock-puppet Mormon on the notion of God, demanding that the believer be required to unambiguously define God in terms that are precise and testable according to positivist notions of verification and falsification.⁴³ One might as well ask

40 Riskas, 337.

41 Riskas, 24–25.

42 Riskas, 115.

43 Riskas, 24.

a philosophy student in a cafeteria to specify why the food that she claims had once been visible on her lunch tray is nourishing, claiming that if she cannot on the spot explain via pure logic the full detail of the Krebs cycle, he can conclude that nutrition is an incoherent illusion. If she responds that the food tasted good and made her feel better and gives her energy, it's easy to dismiss "tastes good" as subjective, "feel better" as emotional, and "gives energy" as incoherent rationalization.

Clearly articulated? Here is Riskas's own description of his mode of articulation:

The style of the analytical parts of this book is, for the most part, more formal and scholarly, with at times extensive footnoting and quotations and, in places, the use of elaborate sentences and redundancy. This is so both deliberately, and necessarily, given the nature of and implications of the arguments made, the conclusions reached, and their importance to the overall purpose of this book. More specifically in this regard, the nature of this work is necessarily complex, and the central argument made is sophisticated and, in certain aspects, nuanced, even counterintuitive. These facts required a necessary level of detail, and again, redundancy, not only to offer as clear and unambiguous an explication as I could economically provide, but also to anticipate and forestall, as best I could, inappropriate generalizations and irrelevant counter arguments. In taking this approach I realize that I have taken the very different risk of perhaps losing a certain group of readers who either do not enjoy such writing, or who might find this style of writing too cumbersome, difficult, or demanding, given the level

of interest, or perhaps, given their need for an excuse not to engage the necessary work required.⁴⁴

Forgive me, but I find this bit of writing both hilarious and accurate, especially with regard to redundancy, the tendency to being “difficult, and cumbersome” and “again, redundancy.” In his *Anatomy of Criticism*, Northrop Frye says, “We may observe that much of the *difficulty* in a philosophical style is rhetorical in origin, resulting from a feeling that it is necessary to detach and isolate the intellect from the emotions.”⁴⁵ When I was working on my English degree many years ago, I chanced upon a book called *Simple and Direct* by Jacques Barzun. No one who reads Riskas would conclude that he had read Barzun. I also read *Language in Thought and Action* by S. I. Hayakawa, who observed that much academic, legal, and philosophical writing is dreadfully dull and difficult because it tends to get stuck at single levels of abstraction, rather than moving from general concepts, down to increasingly to specific details, and back up again to general principles. Reading Riskas reminded me again how I am grateful for what I learned from Hayakawa.

Fair minded?

Riskas reports that Mormonism “multiplies both actual and potential harm, abuse, and danger”⁴⁶ in several ways, the first being through its “*meta-belief* that it *alone* is the *only* truth faith, that *all* other faiths, because of an alleged Great Apostasy, are false, and ‘an abomination before God’... This meta-belief

44 Riskas, lxi.

45 Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 330.

46 Riskas, 383. The reference to “potential harm” reminds me of Nibley’s discussion of the “unfulfilled condition” as a useful rhetorical technique. See Hugh Nibley, *Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, Vol. 11: Tinkling Cymbals and Sounding Brass* (Salt Lake City and Provo: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), 501. “Rule 19: Use the unfulfilled condition to make out a case against Mormons where there is neither evidence, nor absence of evidence, i.e., where nothing at all has happened” (501).

is what I regard as the first multiplier of negative effects. It is this meta-belief of *exclusive*, *absolute*, and *actual* Truth because of, and in virtue of *apostasy*, and *restoration* through divine revelation.⁴⁷

Thomas Kuhn explains that

Anomaly appears only against the background provided by the paradigm. The more precise and far-reaching that paradigm is, the more sensitive an indicator it provides for of anomaly, and hence, an occasion for paradigm change.⁴⁸

The more precise and far reaching Riskas can make LDS claims appear, the easier it is to generate anomaly and thereby leverage. An insistence on perfection, for example, has the effect of making any imperfection, and only imperfection, decisive. But is his rigid and brittle paradigm of LDS belief accurate and fairly representative? Has Riskas here unknowingly misused a “multiplier of negative effects?” Is Mormonism the “only true faith”? Are all other faiths “an abomination before God”? Are LDS truth claims exclusive of all other truth? Do Mormons possess absolute and actual truth? By this I presume he means utterly static and changeless doctrines and histories. Are these a valid set of expectations against which a fair-minded investigator should view the LDS church?

The first section of the Doctrine and Covenants was received in Hiram, Ohio on November 1, 1831, as a formal statement of “mine authority, and the authority of my servants.” (v 6). The leading verses describe how people have “strayed from mine ordinances and have broken mine everlasting covenant.” Verse 17 describes the calling of Joseph Smith in response, and verse 18 describes how God also gave commandments to unspecified

47 Riskas, 383.

48 Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 65.

“others.” Later, God explains that “I the Lord am willing to make these things known unto all flesh; for I am no respecter of persons.” (v 34-35). Truth and revelation here are important for LDS claims, but both are expressly non-exclusive.

Speaking of the LDS leaders against the notion of absolute and actual truth as static and unchanging, see verses 24-28:

These commandments are of me, and were given unto my servants in their weakness, after the manner of their language, that they might come to understanding.

And inasmuch as they erred, it might be made known;

And inasmuch as they sought wisdom they might be instructed;

And inasmuch as they sinned, they might be chastened that they might repent;

And inasmuch as they were made humble they might be made strong, and blessed from on high, and receive knowledge from time to time.

The truth the LDS possess is here explicitly imperfect and incomplete rather than absolute and final. Because the formal claims made for LDS authorities include incompleteness and imperfection, the presence of such should not diminish their authority any more than the imperfections and incompleteness of science diminishes the authority of science. By formal definition, both societies offer not static absolute truths but self-correcting processes.

My reading of verse 30, regarding the distinction of the church, suggests that the word “only” applies to the phrase “with which I, the Lord am well pleased.” (Consider a sentence about the “only blue and idling car upon the face of the whole parking

lot, with which I, the attendant, am well pleased.” That is not just a florid and emphatic way to say “only blue car” but provides a very different thought.) The “well-pleased” designation in D&C 1 applies to the church and is relative to what “true and living” means as descriptive qualities for church. It happens that the Biblical occurrences of *true* and *living* cast light on the meaning: “true vine,” “true treasure,” “truth and life,” “tree of life,” “living bread,” “living waters,” “new and living way through the veil” (Hebrews 10:20); and “true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb. 10:22). The Bible imagery of “true and living” has to do with the voice of warning (Jeremiah 10:10, and D&C 1:2), priesthood (true vine, John 15:1-5), living bread and living waters (sacrament and baptism, Holy Spirit inspiration, scripture; that is, ordinances and covenants and revelation), and finally, tree of life and “living way through the veil,” which both point to the temple and Christ’s role as the Melchizedek High Priest who enters the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement⁴⁹. The themes that go with Biblical “true and living” imagery parallel the themes of D&C 1 point for point, verse for verse. Collectively all of these Bible images based on “true and/or living” center on the ongoing revelation and the distinctive priesthood ordinances and covenants, scriptures and temple worship that do, in actual fact and practice, distinguish the LDS from other faiths. But the designation is expressly non-exclusive and incomplete relative to truth, revelation, and human virtue. Riskas refers to “‘the only true Church’ on the face of the earth today,” but he has not considered the fact of his misquotation⁵⁰ and consequent inaccuracy of thought, and therefore he has not considered the implications of his own misreading as a “multiplier of negative

49 See Margaret Barker, “The Great High Priest” *BYU Studies* 42/3&4 (2003): 64–84.

50 Riskas, 174. Contrast D&C 1:30.

effects.”⁵¹ My point is that the expectations that I get from a close reading of D&C 1 are far more tolerant and robust than the expectations that Riskas uses to test LDS truth claims. I can matter-of-factly expect many of the same things that he sees as decisive anomalies. My assumptions make a different set of predictions for Mormonism. Different predictions direct me to different methods, problem fields, and standards of solution.

Of course, it’s easy to object that many LDS think and behave as though D&C 1 says exactly what it does not say. There happens to be a very good reason for the common misreading that goes beyond repetition and commonplace thinking. Brigham Young commented that “there is one principle I wish to urge upon the Saints in a way that it may remain with them—that is to understand men and women as they are, and not understand them as you are.”⁵² One of the ways that has helped me better understand “men and women as they are” has been the Perry Scheme for Cognitive and Ethical Growth. The Perry Scheme is based on a study of the way students develop during their college years in moving from provincial communities to a diverse university environment.⁵³ Here are *Positions 1* and 2 of 9:

Position 1 - Basic Duality. (Garden of Eden Position:
All will be well.)

The person perceives meaning divided into two realms—Good/Bad, Right/wrong, We/They, Success/Failure, etc. They believe that knowledge and goodness are quantitative, that there are absolute answers for every problem and authorities know them and will

51 Riskas, 383.

52 *Journal of Discourses* 8:37.

53 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_G._Perry#Perry.27s_scheme

teach them to those who will work hard and memorize them.

Position 2 - Multiplicity Prelegitimate. (Resisting snake)

Now the person moves to accept that there is diversity, but they still think there are *true* authorities who are right, that the others are confused by complexities or are just frauds. They think they are with the true authorities and are right while all others are wrong. They accept that their good authorities present problems so they can learn to reach right answers independently.⁵⁴

The point here is that the attitude toward a group's authorities that Riskas sees as a distinctive Mormon claim applies to a position of human development that everyone faces regardless of their cultural background. Because Mormons are human, these positions will always be found among Mormons. But it is not a binding Mormon doctrine, simply an expected expression of human attitude toward their chosen society at a particular level of personal growth. As I have shown, D&C 1 expressly contradicts the assumptions of these initial positions and thereby encourages further growth. Later, I'll return to the Perry Scheme and show how Joseph Smith compares to the later positions, demonstrating cognitive and ethical growth in the prophet that Riskas, who is clearly stuck at *Position 2*, does not show. Riskas has merely exchanged the locations of

54 I was introduced to the Perry Scheme by this emailed summary from Veda Hale. <http://dl.dropbox.com/u/22100469/Perry%20Scheme.pdf>. She had written a study of Levi Peterson's Canyons of Grace, using the Perry Scheme as a framework to understand the character arcs. I prefer the Perry Scheme to Fowler's Stages of Faith, since Fowler's model is concerned more with the conclusions a person comes to, whereas the Perry Scheme deals more with how a person processes information.

his labels for those who he sees as TRUE authorities and those who are confused and are frauds.

Though Riskas puts quotation marks around “an abomination before God” as a Mormon attitude about all other faiths, he does not provide a source. Joseph Smith famously did use a different phrase in the 1838 account of his first vision. His actual statement is of a declaration that “all their creeds were an abomination in his sight” (Joseph Smith, *History*, 19). Having misread the evidence, and therefore, missed the crucial clue, Riskas does not seek out Joseph Smith’s clear explanation of the problem with creeds even though he does list in his bibliography the source where I first read it, *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. Joseph Smith opposed creeds, not because they are false teachings (“all of them have some truth”), but because “creeds set up stakes, and say, ‘Hitherto thou shalt come, and no further’; which I cannot subscribe to.”⁵⁵ Joseph Smith also explained that “the most prominent difference in sentiment between the Latter-day Saints and sectarians was that the latter were all circumscribed by some particular creed, which deprived its members of the privilege of believing anything not contained therein, whereas the Latter-day Saints have no creed, but are ready to believe all true principles that exist, as they are made manifest from time to time.”⁵⁶ The real problem with creeds is not their content⁵⁷ but their function. When in place, creeds place a person and a society beyond repentance, beyond change. Creeds box a person in and throw away the keys to further light and knowledge. If that is not abominable, what is?

55 Joseph F. Smith, ed. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 327.

56 Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 5:215.

57 “I want the liberty of believing as I please, it feels so good not to be trampled. It doesn’t prove that a man is not a good man because he believes false doctrine.” Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center Monograph, 1980), 183–84, spelling modernized.

Joseph Smith's Mormonism celebrates the notion that if we come across new information or new ideas that don't fit with our preconceptions, we have the option to change rather than shatter. When the word sprouts, grows and swells our souls, as Alma 32:34 says, our understanding can be enlightened, and our minds can expand. If our leaders have been wrong about something, that is no big deal. D&C 1 matter-of-factly declares, "Inasmuch as they have erred, it shall be made manifest." If no one asks the right questions, why expect the answers?⁵⁸ When we do ask questions we have not asked before, why not be open to the new information and understandings that result?

Riskas further attempts to shore up his brittle background expectations when he quotes the infamous 1945 Home Teaching Message that reads, "When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done."⁵⁹ He does not report the letter from President George Albert Smith that stated, "I am pleased to assure you that you are right in your attitude that the passage quoted does not express the true position of the Church.

58 See, for example, 3 Nephi 15:14–22.

59 Riskas, 300. He cites a source which claims that "the message has never been rescinded in any official way" (fn 169). Since it is contradicted by D&C 1 which officially declares "the authority of servants," why would it need to be? And of course there is President George Albert Smith's direct rebuttal. That Riskas qualifies his remarks as referring to "any official way," it suggests to me that he knows about President Smith's letter, and prefers to suppress the information. Incidentally, official statements like this won't be truly 'heard' by those at a *Position 2* understanding of LDS authorities because comprehension and acceptance of such statements is contingent on developing an advanced understanding of human authorities. The transition cannot be forced by statements from authorities. As President Smith's full letter and D&C 1 shows, such statements have been made by the highest LDS authorities on several occasions. One might think that those who most depend on authority figures for guidance would have noticed, but the issue is not the thoughts expressed, but the thinking about authority that filters perception and guides thinking at those positions. The best we can do is to nurture those in transition, and the best way to nurture individuals through transitions is to understand the individual types and developmental positions for what they are. It also helps to look up "sustain" in a good dictionary.

Even to imply that members of the Church are not to do their own thinking is grossly to misrepresent the true ideal of the Church, which is that every individual must obtain for himself a testimony of the truth of the Gospel, must, through the redemption of Jesus Christ, work out his own salvation, and is personally responsible to His Maker for his individual acts. The Lord Himself does not attempt coercion in His desire and effort to give peace and salvation to His children. He gives the principles of life and true progress, but leaves every person free to choose or to reject His teachings.”⁶⁰

Riskas reports that the Mormon view of truth as “knowledge of things as they [really] are, as they [really] were, as they are to come,” based on D&C 93:24 and Jacob 4:13,⁶¹ which is correct. But then he goes on to assert that we must hold that “fundamental religious truths are considered or believed to be objective literal realities which are both ‘absolute and eternal,’” for which he cites D&C 1:39 and D&C 88:66, which *do not contain the words* he puts in quotes. These absolute and eternal truths, Riskas says “can be known with certainty by faith,” and he cites Mormon 10:3-5, which *does not mention absolute and eternal truths*. Truth is simply “what is real.” Can we know what is real with an absolute perfect knowledge? Or can a Mormon read and take seriously the distinction that Alma 32:18–19 makes between those who yearn to “know” with final certainty,⁶² and those who simply have enough “cause to believe” to support ongoing faith that falls short of perfect knowledge? Riskas does not seem interested in or even aware of the concept of “cause to believe” in support of faith as a preferable alternative to perfect and final “knowing.”

60 See <http://www.fairlds.org/authors/misc/when-the-prophet-speaks-is-the-thinking-done> and *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 19:1 (Spring 1986), 35-39.

61 Riskas, 48.

62 Riskas, 115

His program of deconstruction of absolute certainty directs attention in a very different way than would an attempt to seek increased understanding in support of an open-ended “cause to believe.” His misreading of fundamental claims functions as a “multiplier of negative effects.”⁶³

When I was a small child, my dad drove us to the Cleveland Lloyd dinosaur quarry in Central Utah. There, out in the desert, under a hot sun, in the dusty wind, I saw bones in the rocks. As a child, I knew those bones were real. Nothing I have learned since then has changed that. But a great deal of what I have learned about those bones has changed over the past fifty-five years. Such changes in science, some not just incremental but revolutionary, have done nothing to undermine the authority of science because science is a process, not a static body of knowledge. And D&C 1 expressly describes LDS community knowledge as being in process, just as Alma 32 describes a process for individuals. Just because I do not know everything at once or know perfectly at all does not mean that nothing I know is real. It is my knowledge of reality that changes, my knowledge of truth, not the reality itself, not truth. As long as I fall short of omniscience, I have room to learn. My faith is based on dynamic “cause to believe” based on the contents of a wine skin, not the temporary skins I use at different times to keep it in. What Riskas wrestles with at length is not a fundamental LDS truth claim, as formally stated in D&C 1, but an unreasonable demand for absolute certainty as the only viable grounds for faith. Measured against the Perry Scheme, a relevant outsider test, it reflects *Position 2* thinking. There is something wonderfully ironic about someone who says, in effect, “How can I have faith in God without Absolute certainty?” And of course, he also declares, without any awareness of the irony, absolute certainty with respect to his disbelief.

63 Riskas, 383.

Kuhn talks about a moment when “the issue is which paradigm should in the future guide research on problems many of which neither competitor can yet claim to resolve completely. A decision between alternate ways of practicing science is called for, and in the circumstances that decision must be based less on past achievement than future promise. The man who embraces a new paradigm at an early stage must often so do in defiance of the evidence provided by problem solving. He must, that is, have faith that the new paradigm will succeed with the many large problems that confront it, knowing only that the old paradigm has failed with a few. A decision of that kind can only be made on faith.”⁶⁴

Many of the problems that Riskas finds insoluble for LDS derive not from the facts and statements that he wrestles with but the unreasonable expectations against which he attempts to process them and his obvious selectivity. Jesus explains, in the parable of the sower, how the same seed can yield a completely different harvest, depending on the soil and nurture given.⁶⁵ “Know ye not this parable?” he asks. “How then will ye know all parables?” (Mark 4:13) I find that the value of a seed is most evidenced in the work of those who have demonstrated the most impressive yields. Riskas offers one thick book claiming that the Word yields exactly “nothing,” whereas the *Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*, to cite one author missing from his bibliography, offers nineteen volumes of exuberance as the barest glimpse of the potential harvest. Comparison with those who claim different yields from the same seed always demonstrates obvious differences in the soil, patience, expectations, interests, and nurture.

64 Kuhn, *Structure*, 158.

65 Mark 4:3–20.

Riskas and His Outsider Test for Faith

One obvious feature of the Outsider test for faith which Riskas offers is that it amounts to positivism.

This is worth repeating again and again: an *actual* fact is what an actually true statement states...For a statement to *be justified*, it must be *justifiable*. For a statement to be justifiable, it must be minimally intelligible and coherent conceptually. It must have truth conditions that can be possibly empirically confirmed or disconfirmed. That which is not factual cannot possibly be empirically known or considered as knowledge of objective reality. In other words, that which cannot be empirically known is a *non-reality*.⁶⁶

Riskas frequently refers to the need for empirical verification and the potential for falsification behind all statements. He refers to *spiritual* experience as “subjectively interpreted, unverifiable, and unfalsifiable in principle and can be justifiably and more economically explained naturalistically.”⁶⁷ The frequency with which he makes the standard claims demonstrates how fully enmeshed he is in positivistic thinking. He seems unaware of the social history, the potent criticism of positivism made during the past 60 plus years nor of the predictable implications for his own patterns of thought and behavior in adopting such thinking. Writing in 1974 Ian Barbour paints a vivid picture of what it might mean to build one’s case on positivism.

To rehearse the inadequacies of positivism now would be whipping a dead horse, but some of the reasons

66 Riskas, 115, note 80.

67 Riskas, 225.

for the rejection of the idea of verification in science should be mentioned.⁶⁸

Here is some social history from Ian Barbour's wonderful book, *Myths, Models, and Paradigms: A Comparative Study in Science and Religion*. Comparison with Barbour's observations makes it clear that Riskas's thought straddles a positivist mount that is not in the best of health.

During the 1930's and 1940's the positivists had taken science as the norm for all meaningful discourse. Religious language was considered neither true nor false, but meaningless. The positivists had declared the famous Verification Principle, which states that, apart from tautologies and definitions, statements are meaningful only if they can be verified by sense data.⁶⁹ Accepting an oversimplified view of science as the prototype for all genuine knowledge, they dismissed religion as "purely emotive."

During the 1950's positivism came under increasing attack, but many of its assumptions were perpetuated in the empiricism which came to replace it as the dominant interpretation of science. Among the empiricist claims were the following. (1) Science starts from publicly observable data which can be described in a pure observation-language independent of any theoretical assumptions. (2) Theories can be verified or falsified by comparison with this fixed experimental data. (3) The choice between theories is rational,

68 Ian G. Barbour, *Myths, Models, and Paradigms: A Comparative Study in Science and Religion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 98. The chapter is conveniently online here: <http://www.religion-online.org/showchapter.asp?title=2238&C=2079>

69 Compare Riskas, 115.

objective and in accordance with specifiable criteria. Philosophers under the sway of such empiricism continued to say that religion can legitimately make no cognitive claims.⁷⁰

Riskas talks like the empiricist philosophers that Barbour discusses here, in part because Riskas has missed out on the more recent developments. Barbour observes that:

These ideas came under increasing attack in the late 1950's and early 1960's, and three counter-claims were advanced. (1) *All data are theory-laden*; there is no neutral observation-language. (2) *Theories are not verified or falsified*; when data conflict with an accepted theory, they are usually set to one side as anomalies, or else auxiliary assumptions are modified. (3) *There are no criteria for choice between rival theories of great generality*, for the criteria are themselves theory-dependent.

The attack on empiricism was carried a step further in Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962). Kuhn held that the thought and action of a scientific community are dominated by its *paradigms*, defined as 'standard examples of scientific work which embody a set of conceptual, methodological and metaphysical assumptions'. He maintained that observational data and criteria for assessing theories are paradigm-dependent.⁷¹

All of this raises several issues for the positivism that Riskas holds up as a presumably unbiased outsider test. Think about his repeated calls for empirical verification. Barbour explains:

70 Barbour, 3.

71 Barbour, 93

Let us look next at the debate as to whether or not theories can be verified or falsified. To the positivists, *verification* had seemed a clear-cut and straight-forward process. It was assumed that theories are verified by their agreement with experimental data. Knowledge, it was said, consists of proven propositions established by the hard facts. The famous ‘Verification Principle’ went on to assert that, apart from formal definitions, the only meaningful statements are empirical propositions verifiable by sense-experience...

No scientific theory can be *verified*. One cannot prove that a theory is true by showing that conclusions deduced from it agree with experiment, since (1) future experiments may conflict with the theory, and (2) another theory may be equally compatible with present evidence. From a finite set of particular observations one cannot derive a universal generalization with certainty (the much debated logic of induction can provide no inferential grounds for making assertions about *all* cases when only a particular group of cases has been examined).⁷²

Riskas’s book shows me that he has (1) neglected a great many important experiments, and (2) he has neglected many important theories. And the fact that his bibliography is selective and limited shows that his universal generalizations and certainty lack complete support.

Riskas can’t get very far in his book without repeating his call for falsifying conditions. Barbour has this to say:

Cannot theories at least be *falsified*, then? Even if many instances of agreement with experiment do not

72 Barbour, 98.

prove that a theory is true, it would seem that even a single counterinstance of data which disagrees with theory should conclusively prove it false. Karl Popper, acknowledging that scientific theories are never verifiable, contended that they must be in principle falsifiable. Science advances by bold conjectures and stern attempts to refute them. Popper dwelt on the importance of “crucial experiments” through which an hypothesis is definitively eliminated. Intellectual honesty, he said, requires the scientist to specify in advance experiments whose results could disprove his theory. Statements which are in principle unfalsifiable have no place in science.

But Popper’s view has in turn received considerable criticism. Discordant data *do not always falsify a theory*. One can never test an individual hypothesis conclusively in a “crucial experiment”; for if a deduction is not confirmed experimentally, one cannot be sure which one, from among the many assumptions on which the deduction was based, was in error. A network of theories and observations is always tested together. Any particular hypothesis can be maintained by rejecting or adjusting other auxiliary hypotheses.⁷³

Riskas doesn’t see that his network of theories and observations can be questioned on many issues that control his background expectations. He demands absolute perfection, absolute consistency from Mormonism and absolute certainty for himself. His assumptions about the rigidity of LDS claims underlie his conditions for verification and falsification. Change those assumptions, and ask for evidence of real inspiration rather than perfect, publicly repeatable and verifiable inspiration, and

73 Barbour, 99.

that makes differences that ripple through the entire network of assumptions. My own very different expectations provide me with a different set of predictions and direct my attention to a different set of observations, which I measure against Alma's tentative and open "cause to believe" (Alma 32: 18) rather than a demand for absolute and final "knowing." Riskas lives in a thought-world in which the critique of verification and falsification has not so much as knocked at the door, let alone completely undermined the foundations.

Barbour discusses the way that the debates about verification and falsification spill over into debates about science and religion.

My complaint ... is that they treat "falsifiability" and "unfalsifiability" as absolute and mutually exclusive categories. I have urged that even within science there are degrees of resistance to falsification, with paradigms and metaphysical assumptions most resistant but by no means totally invulnerable in the long run to cumulative empirical evidence. I would assign scientific paradigms a position near the middle of the "falsifiability" spectrum—not at the extreme of "objectivity" or "falsifiability."... Religious paradigms I would assign towards the "subjective" or "unfalsifiable" end of the spectrum, because of the influence of interpretation on experience—but not at the extreme of 'subjectivity' (in the sense of immunity to evidence)... Thus in comparing science and religion on a spectrum of degrees of resistance to falsification, I can point to *both* similarities and contrasts—whereas those who use only two boxes, labeled "falsifiable" and "unfalsifiable," have no option but to view science and religion either as *similar* (assigned to the same box, whichever it is), or *contrasting* (assigned to different

boxes). I believe that recent work in the philosophy of science here casts significant light on the protracted debate about falsifiability in religion.⁷⁴

Riskas claims that “*The open-minded person follows where the evidence leads*,”⁷⁵ which also assumes that you have not misread or overlooked the evidence in front of you. Alan Goff observes that “Naturalism is a circular position, for it will accept as evidence only historical claims that can be verified in naturalistic ways; when the researcher talks about those verificationist methods of validation, he or she then turns into a positivist.”⁷⁶ Kuhn points out that “paradigms provide not only a map, but some of the directions for map making.”⁷⁷

It’s the ideology that tells a person what counts as evidence. Against a demand for perfection, only imperfection is decisive. Against a demand for absolute certainty, any open question is decisive. I take a different ideology to the problem. Asking whether Joseph Smith’s inspiration is real calls for an entirely different method, problem field, and standard solution, than asking whether it is perfect. For example, I’ve tested the Book of Mormon account of Alma’s conversion against contemporary near-death experience research. I’ve tested the Book of Mormon against Margaret Barker’s reconstruction of First Temple theology. I’ve tested B. H. Roberts’s questions against subsequent research by John Welch, John Sorenson, and many others. My paradigm leads me into countless fruitful lines of inquiry that leave no trace of existence, let alone nurture and experiment, in the thought world that Riskas offers. As Kuhn observes, “Particularly persuasive arguments can be developed

74 Barbour, 132–133.

75 Riskas, 74.

76 Alan Goff, “Dan Vogel’s Family Romance and the Book of Mormon as Smith Family Allegory,” *FARMS Review of Books* 17/2 (2005): 329.

77 Kuhn, *Structure*, 109.

if the new paradigm permits the prediction of phenomena that had been entirely unsuspected while the old one prevailed.”⁷⁸

Look at the way Riskas approaches the evidence in the Doctrine and Covenants and Alma 32 as part of his “Deconstruction of the Mormon Concept of Revelation.” He emphasizes the D&C 9 passage that Oliver would “feel that it is right,” and in Alma 32, how a planted seed will “swell within the breast” of the recipient of the word, and by such a swelling sensation, a person shall then “feel” and thereby know the word is good. He focuses on the overtly metaphoric description in verse 28 rather than the more prosaic verses 34–35. He mentions “enlarge my soul” without pausing to explain what that means. (Enos demonstrates the process during his conversion, in his expanding circles of human concern. It follows that contracted souls do the opposite, a phenomenon most clearly seen under the influence of propaganda.) Riskas neglects his own mention of Alma’s “enlighten my understanding” to conclude, “Many other instances of revelation and conversion by revelation are in the Book of Mormon, all of which emphasize the primary role of *affect* (or feelings and emotion) in revelatory experience.”⁷⁹

Having become interested in how prayers are answered in the LDS scriptures, I determined to go past the commonplace references, and examine all the evidence. The results led me to conclude that “mind and heart” (D&C 8:2) are equally involved.⁸⁰ Further, in considering Bible passages describing what person must do to find truth, it became evident that those actions and attitudes have the effect of putting at risk what a person thinks and requires that each person be willing to risk what they most desire.⁸¹ The direct consequence of not taking

78 Kuhn, 154.

79 Riskas, 153.

80 See Kevin Christensen, “A Model of Mormon Spiritual Experience,” 19–21, http://dl.dropbox.com/u/22100469/model_of_experience.pdf.

81 See Kevin Christensen, “Biblical Keys for Discerning True and False Prophets.” http://en.fairmormon.org/Biblical_Keys_for_Discerning_True_and_False_Prophets/Seeing_the_truth

these actions means that arguments against biblical prophets by biblical peoples always reduce to their saying, in effect, “it’s not what I think” and/or, “it’s not what I want.”⁸²

In a discussion of naturalism, Alan Goff says that “the positivist has to intervene to deny the claims the historical actor provides in order to supply ones that accord with his own epistemology and ontology. The religious language has to be replaced with a naturalistic one, and that translation is done under the aegis of a metaphysical conception of reality.”⁸³ Riskas displays this process in his appendix as he reinterprets his LDS conversion in positivistic terms.⁸⁴ Goff goes on to say:

The primary function of an ideology is to conceal from the person who adheres to it the fact that he or she is operating under the influence of that ideology. The creed works, in other words, by convincing the subject that he or she knows how the real world works and that the others who disagree are apologists or are otherwise operating under a false set of beliefs.⁸⁵

Riskas claims to follow the evidence with an open mind, but he looks for evidence only of the kind and from the sources that his ideology allows. That is why he overlooks Nibley, Sorenson, Welch, Gardner and Peterson, Givens, and countless others. It’s not just a matter of being open-minded and following the evidence as though any random bit of evidence anthropomorphically knows not only where it should go, but why he or I should follow it there. What questions do you ask? What procedures do you follow to resolve them? Where do you look? What methods, problem field and standard of solution

82 See Christensen, http://en.fairmormon.org/Biblical_Keys_for_Discerning_True_and_False_Prophets/Rejecting_true_prophets

83 Goff, 335.

84 Riskas, 394–396

85 Goff, 335.

does a person hold in defining what counts as evidence? Are you willing to risk what you currently think and desire, to offer as a sacrifice a broken heart and a contrite spirit?

What Riskas's choice of paradigm provides is neatly predicted in Nibley's "Notes on the Sophic and Mantic."⁸⁶ For example:

Proposition 2. The foundation of Sophic thinking was *the elimination of the supernatural or superhuman*, i.e., anything that could not be weighed, measured, or sensed objectively from a description of the real world.⁸⁷

From start to finish, Riskas marches to the tune of this ancient drum beat.

Proposition 3. Having dismissed the Mantic, the Sophic becomes impatient of its lingering survival, which it views with *uncompromising hostility*.⁸⁸

"Uncompromising hostility" is a far better description of Riskas's attitude than "balanced" "religiously sensitive," and "fair-minded."

Proposition 4. *Claiming magisterial authority*, the Sophic acknowledges *no possibility of defeat or rivalry*. In principle it can never be wrong. *Its confidence is absolute*.⁸⁹

As an example of his own open-mindedness, Riskas says, "It would seem that the honest answer to the question of what

86 Hugh Nibley, *The Ancient State*, 380–478.

87 Nibley, 383

88 Nibley, 388

89 Nibley, 391

would convince me that there is a god (or to return to a god) could be reduced to a one word answer: ‘Nothing.’”⁹⁰

Proposition 9. The world without the Mantic offers the best test of the Sophic. It is marked by (A) piteous disappointment, (B) a puzzling deadness of spirit, and (C) a world plagued by doubt, insecurity, cynicism, and despair.⁹¹

Riskas sees believers as striving to avoid “the clear cosmic meaningless and ultimate extinction that weighs on them despite their adamant denials and claimed beliefs and attestations to the contrary.”⁹²

Riskas includes a section that weighs on the “Problem of Evil”⁹³ and repeats the stock protests and claims throughout his book. He starts by stating, “The classic, perennial problem of evil entails the apparent incoherence of the claimed existence of a god who is a sufficiently-to-all-knowing, powerful, loving, and morally perfect being, given the extent of nonsensical and extreme human and animal suffering and premature death in the world that can be attributed to both *natural* and *immoral human* causes.”⁹⁴ After sixteen pages of quoting some LDS sources and scriptures, he winds down by declaring that “the existence of evil is a real, vexing, and I think, irresolvable problem—philosophically, empirically, and experimentally.”⁹⁵

Overall, Riskas strikes me as tone deaf to the quality of the LDS answers in comparison to philosophical issues. Ian Barbour has a concise and enlightening chapter on various models of God.

90 Riskas, 338.

91 Nibley, 431.

92 Riskas, xxxi.

93 Riskas, 241.

94 Riskas, 241.

95 Riskas, 257.

Four models of God's relation to the world have been mentioned, patterned respectively after an absolute monarch and his kingdom, a clockmaker and a clock, a dialogue between two persons, and an agent and his actions. In the process thought of Alfred North Whitehead, a fifth model is presented: a society of which one member is pre-eminent but not absolute. The universe is pictured as a community of interacting beings, rather than as a monarchy, a machine, an interpersonal dialogue or a cosmic organism.⁹⁶

Process thought provides distinctive analyses of the problems of *freedom* and *evil*. The ways in which freedom is built into process metaphysics from the outset have already been indicated. If the classical ideas of omnipotence and predestination are given up, God is exonerated of responsibility for natural evil. If no event is the product of God's agency alone, he works with a world, given to him in every moment, which never fully embodies his will. The creatures, and above all man, are free to reject the higher vision. Suffering is inevitable in a world of beings with conflicting goals. Pain is part of the price of consciousness and intensity of feeling. In an evolutionary world, struggle is integral to the realization of greater value. As Teilhard de Chardin maintained, evil is intrinsic to an evolving cosmos as it would not be to an instantaneous creation. Suffering and death are not punishments for sin but structural concomitants of what he called "the immense travail" of a world in birth.⁹⁷

96 Barbour, 161.

97 Barbour, *Myths, Models, and Paradigms*, 168–169.

From my LDS perspective, I find this picture of process thought resonates beautifully not only with the description of the council in Abraham 3, but also with emerging scholarship on the importance of the council in the ancient world.⁹⁸ I'm also very impressed by the way that Joseph Smith anticipated Whitehead's Process Model.⁹⁹ And Hugh Nibley has pointed out how much can change when we consider this life as though the middle act of a three-act play.¹⁰⁰ Even if we do not fully grasp the meaning of much of what happens, the notion that life extends beyond this life means that many issues that seem troubling from one perspective might be resolved in the next. For Riskas, the moment of death is the final answer and end of meaning.

Riskas complains about the "very existence of different faiths, each with different and conflicting concepts of gods and revelations from them."¹⁰¹ Alma realizes that his own wish to speak with a voice of thunder and resolve everything by forceful demonstration is wrong and that "the Lord doth grant unto all nations of their own nation and tongue, to teach his word, all that he seeth fit that they should have" (Alma 29:8). Nephi remarks that God "speaketh unto men according to their language, unto their understanding" (2 Nephi 31:3), which explains how "he remembereth the heathen, and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile" (2 Nephi 26:33), how "all things which have been given of God from the beginning of the world unto man are the typifying of him," (2 Nephi 11:4), and

98 For example, David Bokovoy, "Ye Really Are Gods': A Response to Michael Heiser Concerning the LDS Use of Psalm 82 and the Gospel of John," *FARMS Review of Books* 19/1 (2007): 267–313.

99 Floyd Ross, "Process Philosophy and Mormon Thought" *Sunstone* 7/1 (January-February 1982): 17–25, with a reply by Sterling McMurrin, 25–27.

100 Hugh Nibley, "Three Shrines: Mantic, Sophic, and Sophistic" in *The Ancient State*, 370–371.

101 Riskas, 260.

how there are “divers ways that he did manifest things unto the children of men which were good” (Moroni 7:24).

Riskas complains about prayer’s “*incoherence, non-necessity, and unreliability*”¹⁰² in ways that all derive primarily from his positivistic stance and his demand for absolute certainty. If you expect God to behave as predictably as an Omniscient Vending Machine that provides for you on request without your even needing to ask, since He should know already, you may frame the issues, test, and conclude as Riskas does. But if you view God as an Agent operating under wide range of other considerations besides the need to pander to the whims of skeptical philosophers, the different expectations can lead to a different method, problem field, and standard of solution, and a very different interpretation of experience. I can be very impressed by a few personal examples of answer to prayer, and have a context in which to consider seeming silences.

Riskas includes a postscript that describes his de-conversion experience during his crisis of faith: prayer brought a thought “just like all the others that came merely, and *exclusively* from *my* brain.”¹⁰³ Consider how Riskas would or could describe how his own statement could be verified or falsified with absolute, final, popularly accepted certainty. Take your time.

In considering the interpretation of experience, Ian Barbour observes:

There is, in short, no *uninterpreted* experience of the sort which the positivist posits. We don’t simply see; we “see as.” In the act of perception, the irreducible “data” are not isolated patches of colour or fragmentary sensations, but total patterns in which interpretation has already entered. Our experience is organized in the light of particular interests. Language itself also

102 Riskas, 264.

103 Riskas, 395.

structures our experience in specific ways. Conceptual presuppositions are transmitted by culturally-provided words which give form to experience. What we count as “given” depends on our conceptual framework and the interests which it serves. The positivist’s quest for the certainty of an incorrigible foundation for knowledge cannot be satisfied.¹⁰⁴

In *The Anatomy of Criticism*, Northrop Frye comments that “to defend the right of criticism to exist at all, therefore is to assume that criticism is a structure of thought and knowledge existing in its own right with some measure of independence from the art it deals with.”¹⁰⁵ He’s talking about literature, but the point applies to any criticism. For instance, the omnipresent term “politically correct” comes from Marxist thought, and its use presupposes a dependence on the Marxist thought through which it deals with everything. He’s talking about the need for a way for a critic to provide independent criticism, remembering here that *discernment* is another word for *criticism*, and that discernment is listed as one of the spiritual gifts.¹⁰⁶ “Not politically correct” originally meant “not Marxist.” It is a dependent form of criticism. It functions in the same way that “not orthodox” does in any society. It means “not us,” and it is dependent on the originating society. It is one thing to test Mormonism by an outside ideology, as Riskas does, and as all of the sources in his Appendix B do, but quite another thing to test Mormonism in an independent way by religiously sensitive criteria that are not ideologically dependent. It is also one thing to try to validate Mormonism by an inside approach, as our own pedagogical texts tend to

104 Barbour, 120. Also <http://www.religion-online.org/showchapter.asp?title=2238&C=2080>.

105 Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 5.

106 D&C 46:23.

do, or to criticize outside faiths in terms of being “not us.” That sort of criticism has no independence. It works at *Position 2* of the Perry Scheme. We need to find a mode of criticism (that is, discernment) that answers the question, “Why us?”

Frye argues that a critic should “let his critical principles shape themselves out his knowledge of that field.”¹⁰⁷ That is just the sort of thing that Barbour does in his discussion of religion. Barbour provides an alternate Outsider Test that has a measure of independence because it takes its critical principles from a survey of the field of religion, rather than by adopting a ready-made ideology outside of religion, as Riskas does, or inside a specific religion, as most people tend to do. Barbour proposes to evaluate religions by means of criteria that are not paradigm dependent. He offers a Mantic approach, rather than a Sophic one.

How does he manage? Ian Barbour offers a position that I accept and endorse, which he calls *critical realism*.

To summarize: the scheme I have outlined accepts the three “subjective” theses that (1) all data are theory-laden, (2) comprehensive theories are highly resistant to falsification, and (3) there are no rules for choice between research programmes. It also preserves Kuhn’s most distinctive contributions concerning paradigms: the importance of exemplars in the transmission of a scientific tradition, and the strategic value of commitment to a research programme. At the same time I have made three assertions which seem to me essential for the objectivity of science: (1) rival theories are not incommensurable, (2) observation exerts some control over theories, and (3) there are criteria

107 Frye, 6–7.

of assessment independent of particular research programmes.¹⁰⁸

In order to permit a meaningful degree of communication between rival paradigms, Barbour argues for the need to retreat to issues where the basic observations are not in as much dispute because they are less paradigm-dependent.

I would conclude that *interpretive beliefs* are brought to religious experience as much as they are derived from it. There is a greater influence in religion than in science “from the top down”: from paradigms, through interpretive models and beliefs, to experience. But the influence “from the bottom up,” starting from experience, is not totally absent in religion. Although there is no neutral descriptive language, there are degrees of interpretation. Therefore religious beliefs, and even paradigms, are not totally incommensurable. There can be significant communication between paradigm communities. One cannot prove one’s most fundamental beliefs, but one can try to show how they function in the interpretation of experience.¹⁰⁹

If the kinds of basic experience that underlie religious belief can be approached without reference to any particular doctrinal interpretation, Ian Barbour suggests that such experiences can serve as a common ground for discussion, a place of solid footing, a point of little disputed reference from which to examine the varied interpretations and traditions. Those that I see as most interesting (generally following Barbour¹¹⁰) can be seen as generally framing a movement:

108 Barbour, 118. Also here: <http://www.religion-online.org/showchapter.asp?title=2238&C=2079>.

109 Barbour, 124.

110 Barbour, 53–55.

(a) From responses to external impressions regarding:

- *Order and creativity* in the world
- The *common mythic symbols and patterns* underlying most religious traditions¹¹¹
- *Key historical events* that define separate traditions and bind individuals

(b) Through the innermost experiences of the individual:

- *Numinous awe and reverence*
- *Mystical union*
- *Moral obligation*
- *Reorientation and Reconciliation* with respect to personal sin, guilt, and weakness, the existence of evil, suffering, and death, and tensions between science and faith.

(c) Then returning to the external world as human action:

- *Interpersonal dialogue*, in which you begin interpret external events as God speaking to you, and you answer through your own actions.
- *Social and Ritual* behavior

111 Though Barbour has useful observations on myth (21–22), he does not include the patterns among his basic evidences. I think it belongs and brings a complementary symmetry to “key historical events.” That is, we should appreciate both the temporal and the spiritual.

These matters cannot objectively prove the existence of a God (whether personal or impersonal), but, as I hope to demonstrate, they do constitute the core of religious experience for believers of all faiths. They provide the ground of experience on which reasoned and feeling assessments of the validity and worth of faith are based. They encompass the ways in which spirituality is manifest in history and symbol. They are the wine—and doctrine the wine-bottles. To argue and contend about doctrine rather than these kinds of experience is to emphasize the wine skin over the wine. In Alma's terms, it is to emphasize what you think you "know" over what ultimately gives "cause to believe" (Alma 32:18).

If we have a body of observations upon which disputants can agree to at least begin discussion, the next issue involves the recourse to criteria for judgments that are not paradigm dependent. Barbour says, "As outlined earlier, the most important criteria are simplicity, coherence, and the extent and variety of supporting experimental evidence (including precise predictions and the anticipation of the discovery of novel types of phenomena). But there are no rules, no specific instructions, that is, for the unambiguous application of the criteria; there is, in Kuhn's words, 'no systematic decision procedure which must lead each individual in the group to the same decision.' Yet the criteria provide what Kuhn calls 'shared values' and 'good reasons' for choice; they are 'important determinants of group behaviour, even though the members of the group do not apply them in the same way.'"¹¹² That is, we do not have recourse to a set of objective rules that coerce everyone to the same conclusion, but we can turn to a set of constraints that can give weight to our judgments. As Kuhn says, "It makes a great deal of sense to ask which of two actual and competing theories fit the facts better."¹¹³

¹¹²Barbour, 115.

¹¹³Kuhn, 147.

As Barbour explains:

I am not claiming that moral and religious experience or particular historical events can constitute a proof for the existence of a personal God. I am only saying that it is reasonable to interpret them theistically and that it makes a difference whether one does so or not. It makes a difference not only in one's attitudes and behaviour but in the way one sees the world. One may notice and value features of individual and corporate life which one otherwise might have overlooked.¹¹⁴

When I look through the LDS culture for evidence of these kinds of experience, I can find all of them. For instance, in the 1832 account of Joseph Smith's vision we find this account of his response to Order and Creativity in the world:

For I looked upon the sun the glorious luminary of the earth and also the moon rolling in their majesty through the heavens and also the stars shining in their courses and the earth also upon which I stood and the beast of the field and the fowls of heaven and the fish of the waters and also man walking forth upon the face of the earth in majesty and in the strength and beauty whose power and intilgence in governing the things which are so exeding great and marvilous even in the likeness of him who created them and when I considered upon these things my heart exclaimed well hath the wise man said it is a fool that saith in his heart there is no God my heart exclaimed all all these bear testimony and bespeak an omnipotent and omnipresent power a being that makith Laws and decreeth and bindeth all things in their bounds who

114 Barbour, 55–56. <http://www.religion-online.org/showchapter.asp?title=2238&C=2077>.

fillet Eternity who was and is and will be from All Eternity to Eternity.¹¹⁵

The vision itself is a key historical event for us as are the translation and publication of the Book of Mormon, and the pioneer exodus. We share appreciation of other key historical events, such as the life of Jesus, with Christianity as a whole.

Barbour's comments on myths have obvious relevance to LDS temple worship. For instance:

Myths offer ways of ordering experience. Myths provide a world-view, a vision of the basic structure of reality. Most myths are set at the time of creation, or in a primordial time, or at the time of key historical events—times in which the forms of existence were established, modified or disclosed. The present is interpreted in the light of the formative events narrated in the myth, as Mireca Eliade has shown.¹¹⁶

We can also look at Joseph's vision and the vision of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price and see distinctive numinous qualities. Barbour summarizes the numinous as "a sense of mystery and wonder, holiness and sacredness, in a variety of contexts. Rudolf Otto's classic study finds in numinous experience a combination of fascination and dread. Often there seems to be a sense of otherness, confrontation and encounter, or of being grasped and laid hold of. Correspondingly, man is aware of his own dependence, finitude, limitation and contingency."¹¹⁷

Mark Koltko's insightful essay, "Mysticism and Mormonism," explores parallels between various Mormon

115 Dean C. Jessee, *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 6; cf. Alma 30:44 and D&C 88:42–50.

116 Barbour, 20.

117 Barbour, 53–54.

scriptures and certain characteristics of mystical experience.¹¹⁸ Koltko's "eight central qualities of the mystical or transcendent experience" are the "ego quality" (cf. D&C 88:6; Moses 7:41); the "unifying quality" (cf. D&C 88:41); the "inner and subjective quality" (cf. Moses 7:48); the "temporal/spatial quality" (cf. Moses 1:27–29); the "noetic quality" (D&C 38:1–2), the "ineffable quality" (3 Nephi 19:19); "the positive emotion quality" (2 Nephi 4:21); the "sacred quality" (3 Nephi 11:15; Moses 1:11).

According to Ninian Smart, the numinous and mystic poles of experience influence patterns of doctrine.

If you stress the numinous, you stress that our salvation or liberation (our becoming holy) must flow from God the Other. It is he who brings it to us through his grace. You also stress the supreme power and dynamism of God as creator of the cosmos. If, on the other hand, you stress the mystical and non-dual, you tend to stress how we attain salvation and liberation through our own effort at mediation, not by the intervention of the Other.... If we combine the two, but accent the numinous, we see mystical union as a kind of close embrace with the other—like human love, where the two are one and yet the two-ness remains. If the accent is on the mystical rather than the numinous, then God tends to be seen as a being whom we worship, but in such a way that we get beyond duality.¹¹⁹

Here, I believe, is an essential distinguishing characteristic of Mormonism—the blend of the numinous and the mystic. This explains the Orthodox discomfort with the Mormon idea

118 Mark E. Koltko, "Mysticism and Mormonism: An LDS Perspective on Transcendence and Higher Consciousness," *Sunstone* 13/2 (April 1989): 14–19.

119 Ninian Smart, *Worldviews: Cross Cultural Explorations of Human Belief* (New York, Charles Scribners: 1983), 71–72.

of deification (something quite unthinkable to one caught up in a purely numinous tradition), as well as the Eastern discomfort with our literalism and personal God (again, something quite unthinkable to one caught up by the emptiness of pure mysticism). For the same reason, the blend in Mormonism explains Nephi's insistence on combining grace and works—"By grace we are saved after all we can do."¹²⁰ Our need for grace offends the self-reliant mystic, and our effort toward perfection offends those who depend on pure grace. By pointing out the experiential roots behind such doctrinal disagreements, I feel that we have much to gain. Against the background of comparative world religion, Mormonism appears as the more comprehensive and inclusive faith.

For one thing, it becomes apparent that by treating numinous and mystic experience as contraries, we can solve various problems that come up in other traditions because one or the other aspect of the sacred has been excluded. Benjamin deliberately strives to awaken in his people a sense of their nothingness (Mosiah 2:25, 4:5), in contrast to the numinous majesty of the Almighty. But when that necessary awareness has done its work, he describes his people as "the children of Christ" (Mosiah 5:7).¹²¹ The danger in a strictly numinous tradition is that humankind tends to be seen as depraved and contingent. For example, Barbour comments on how "Luther's outlook, with its undue respect for power and authority, and its sense of the complete sinfulness and evil in the human being when left alone"¹²² can be seen as unhealthy to the human psyche. On the other hand, a mystic like Emerson can

120 2 Nephi 25:23.

121 A similar shift occurs in the account in Moses 1:10, 18 as he reports his sense of nothingness, and then asserts "I am a son of God, in the similitude of his Only Begotten;... and I have other things to inquire of him."

122 Smart, *Worldviews*, 76.

preach an admirable “Self Reliance.”¹²³ But even the memory of an experience of unity with an impersonal Oversoul turns out to be altogether inadequate when he had to confront the terribly personal implications of the death of his son, Waldo.¹²⁴ Mormonism provides the strength gained from the union of complementary experiences.¹²⁵

One example of moral obligation deserves mention here because of its unusual complexity and intensity, as well as its vivid presence in the Book of Mormon. Sociologist Terrence Des Pres made a study of the experiences of individuals who have survived extreme horrors created by fellow humans.¹²⁶ A striking type of survival behavior that emerged from Nazi and Soviet death camps came as certain persons developed a will to “survive as witness” and to create a specific genre of survival literature. These Survivor-Witnesses can be described as follows:¹²⁷

1. The will to remember and record anchors the survivor in the moral purpose of bearing witness, thus maintaining his own integrity in conscious

123 See Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Self Reliance” in Carl Bode and Malcom Cowley, *The Portable Emerson* (New York: Penguin, 1981), 138–164.

124 See *The Portable Emerson*, 269, and “Threnody,” 656–664.

125 Smart’s examples of the blend of the numinous and mystic in *Worldviews* come from Hinduism, which, compared to Mormonism, lacks a balancing historical orientation (something distinct from a historical tradition) to complement its rich exploration of symbolism.

126 Lisa Bolin Hawkins and Gordon Thomasson, “I Only Am Escaped Alone to Tell Thee: Survivor-Witness in the Book of Mormon,” FARMS Preliminary Report, 1984. Their paper is based on Terrence Des Pres, “Survivors and the Will to Bear Witness,” *Social Research* 40 (1973): 668–69, and Terrence Des Pres, *The Survivor: An Anatomy of Life in the Death Camps* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

127 I am quoting the summary in the Hawkins–Thomasson paper, “I Only Am Escaped Alone to Tell Thee,” and am parenthetically adding references to appropriate passages from the experiences of the key figures of the final chapters of the Book of Mormon.

contradiction of the savagery around him (Mormon 3:11–16; Moroni 9:6–25).

2. Witnessing of his experience is viewed as a duty, even a sacred task (Mormon 4:16; 8:14; 9:31).
3. It is instinctively felt, an involuntary outburst of feeling, born out of the horror that no one will be left (Mormon 6:17–22; 8:1–3).
4. The task is often carried out despite great risks; often in secret or by depositing the record in a secret archive (Mormon 6:6; 8:14).
5. Survivors do not witness to inflict guilt or to rationalize their own survival. Their mission transcends guilt and their irrepressible urge to witness arises before any thought of guilt surfaces and at the initial stages of adjustment to extremity (Mormon 9:30–31; Moroni 9:3–6).
6. They speak simply to tell, to describe out of a common care for life and for the future, realizing that we all live in a realm of mutual sacrifice (Mormon 4:17–22; 8:37–40; Moroni 7:45–48).
7. Survival in this sense is a collective act; the survivor has pledged to see that the story is told (Mormon 4:16).
8. The survivors speak to the whole world, as a firsthand eyewitness, one whose words cannot be ignored (Mormon 4:16–22; 9:30).

9. The view themselves as a necessary connection between the past and the future (Mormon 4:17–22; 5:12; 7:1–10; 9:30).
10. They perceive that “out of horror... the truth will emerge and be made secure,” that “good and evil are only clear in retrospect,” for wisdom only comes at a terrible price. Thus their mission is to display the “objective conditions of evil” (Mormon 5:8–9; 9:31; Moroni 9–10).

In discussing reorientation and reconciliation, Barbour observes that “In individual life, acknowledgment of guilt and repentance may be followed by the experience of forgiveness. Persons unable to accept themselves are somehow enabled to do so. Such reorientation may lead to a new freedom from anxiety, an openness to new possibilities in one’s life, a greater sensitivity to other persons. Grace is experienced in the healing power of love at work in our midst when reconciliation overcomes estrangement.”¹²⁸

The account of Alma’s conversion (Alma 36) is a remarkable description of reorientation and reconciliation with respect to sin. Reorientation is a change of thinking. And reconciliation is a change of feeling. This is why it is important to recognize that answer to prayer in LDS scriptures balance thinking and feeling processes and why the search for truth must involve a willingness to risk preconceptions, and a willingness to put aside personal desires.

Barbour explains Interpersonal Dialogue in these terms:

The interaction between two persons is sometimes characterized by directness, immediacy, mutuality and genuine dialogue. In an “I-Thou” relationship,

128 Barbour, 54.

as Martin Buber describes it, there is availability, sensitivity, openness, responsibility, freedom to respond; one is totally involved as a whole person. Buber suggests that one can interpret the neighbour's need as a divine summons. Encounter with the human Thou is a form of encounter with the eternal Thou. One understands oneself to be addressed through events. "The sound of which the speech consists are the events of personal every-day life." A person replies through the speech of his life; he answers with his actions. Events in daily life can be interpreted as dialogue with God.¹²⁹

Richard Bushman provides an account that illustrates this kind of experience in an LDS context:

I had been a branch president and Bishop, and was then president of the Boston Stake. Those offices required me to give blessings in the name of God and to seek solutions to difficult problems nearly every day. I usually felt entirely inadequate to the demands placed upon me and could not function at all without some measure of inspiration. What I did, the way I acted, my inner thoughts, were all intermingled with this effort to speak and act righteously for God. I could no longer entertain the possibility that God did not exist because I felt His power working through me Only when I thought of God as a person interested in me and asked for help as a member of Christ's kingdom did idea and reality fit properly. Only that language properly honored the experiences I had day after day in my callings.¹³⁰

129 Barbour, 54–55, as Interpersonal Dialogue.

130 Richard Bushman, "My Belief," in *A Thoughtful Faith: Essays on Belief by Mormon Scholars*, ed. Philip L. Barlow (Centerville, UT: Cannon, 1986), 24.

Barbour had commented that while such experiences do not constitute coercive proof, theistic interpretation is reasonable, and given that interpretation, “one may notice and value features of individual and corporate life which one otherwise might have overlooked.”¹³¹ Riskas deals with nothing of what I have discussed here. When he describes his own LDS spiritual experiences, he devalues them as nothing but the workings of his own mind. Many of Riskas conclusions and methods have been predicted and undermined by both Nibley and Barbour. Yet nothing whatsoever in Riskas’s book predicts any of the notions and evidences that I have just briefly touched upon.

An evaluation of competing accounts of these kinds of religious experience based on criteria that are not paradigm dependent means we should look to the values that Barbour summarized as “simplicity, coherence, and the extent and variety of supporting experimental evidence (including precise predictions and the anticipation of the discovery of novel types of phenomena).” I’ve compared these things with Alma 32’s reference to “delicious,” an effect of “enlightening the understanding” of demonstrable growth in response to experiment, and “expansion of the mind.”

Another interesting effect of Barbour’s approach in considering the LDS experience in this way is that we have a wide range of experiences to consider that combine as strands in a rope, rather than links in a logical chain. No one strand holds all of the weight. The presence of one strand does not require the presence or absence of another. But the presence of many strands means greater strength. The significance of this reality should not be lost when we consider the significance of key historical events. Barbour observes that “every community celebrates and re-enacts particular historical events which are crucial to its corporate identity and its vision of reality.”¹³²

131 Barbour, 56.

132 Barbour, *Myths, Models, and Paradigms*, 55.

“What distinguished Mormonism,” writes Richard Bushman, “was not so much the Gospel Mormons taught, which in many respects resembled other Christians’ teachings, but what they believed had happened—to Joseph Smith, to Book of Mormon characters, and to Moses and Enoch [and later to the pioneers, during their archetypal Exodus to the west]. . . . The core of Mormon belief was a conviction about actual events. . . . Mormonism was history, not philosophy.”¹³³

It is these key historical events that define our community, but even if these events did not exist, the other strands may remain independently of them. We all too often fall into a pattern of all or nothing rhetoric and thinking that overlooks the full range of experience that exists. While it is dramatic, I don’t think it is necessary because those under the spell of such thinking run the risk of unnecessarily ending up with nothing. If many strands of different kinds of experience exist in support of personal faith, any individual strand might be expendable. If the number and quality of strands tends to increase over time, then one possesses a stronger “cause to believe.”

In contrast to Riskas’s claims to have offered a definitive falsification of Mormonism, Barbour says, “Though no decisive falsification is possible in religion, I have argued that the cumulative weight of evidence does count for or against religious beliefs. Religious paradigms, like scientific ones, are not falsified by data, but are replaced by promising alternatives. Commitment to a paradigm allows its potentialities to be systematically explored, but it does not exclude reflective evaluation.”¹³⁴

Given these kinds of resources, Barbour can say this:

133 Richard Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 187–88.

134 Barbour, 172.

I would submit that religious commitment can indeed be combined with *critical reflection*. Commitment alone without enquiry tends to become fanaticism or narrow dogmatism; reflection alone without commitment tends to become trivial speculation unrelated to real life. Perhaps personal involvement must alternate with reflection on that involvement, since worship and critical enquiry at their most significant levels do not occur simultaneously. It is by no means easy to hold beliefs for which you would be willing to die, and yet to remain open to new insights; but it is precisely such a combination of commitment and enquiry that constitutes religious maturity.

If *faith* were simply the acceptance of revealed propositions or assent to propositions, it would be incompatible with *doubt*. But if faith means trust and commitment, it is compatible with considerable doubt about particular interpretations. Faith does not automatically turn uncertainties into certainties. What it does is take us beyond the detached speculative outlook which prevents the most significant sorts of experience; it enables us to live and act amid the uncertainties of life without pretensions of intellectual or moral infallibility.¹³⁵

Riskas, it seems to me, offers his text with just such pretensions. I've mentioned the Perry Scheme and how Riskas displays *Position 2* thinking, something that, truth be told, everyone displays at some point. And this brings in the opportunity to take this outside test a bit further. Where do Ian Barbour and Joseph Smith end up as measured by the Perry

135 Barbour, 136.

Scheme? And what might that imply as to the value of their work?

Originally, the Perry scheme was meant to be descriptive, but the possibility is that it can be pedagogical, that if students and teachers become more self-aware about their own thinking processes, they might be able to move through the nine positions more easily. Alma 32 puts forward the idea of a final, static “knowing” versus an open ended “cause to believe.” Alma clearly favors an orientation towards “cause to believe” in a which a person is fully aware that their knowledge is “not perfect”, and that they are engaged in an ongoing process of learning, in which experiment is ongoing, knowledge and understanding expanding, and yet in which they can have faith. “Is this not real?” even though your knowledge is not perfect.

If a person can move along through to *Position 6: Commitment Foreseen*, they come to this point:

He starts to see how he must be embracing and transcending of: certainty/doubt, focus/breadth, idealism/realism, tolerance/contempt, stability/flexibility. He senses need for affirmation and incorporation of existential or logical polarities. He senses need to hold polarities in tension in the interest of Truth.¹³⁶

This puts me in mind of 2 Nephi 2 on opposition in all things, the temple, and Joseph Smith’s comment that “by proving contraries, truth is made manifest,” remembering that “truth is knowledge of things as they are, as they were, and as they are to come” (D&C 93:24).

He begins to maintain meaning, coherence, and value while conscious of their partial, limited, and contradictable nature. He begins to understand

136 Veda Hale, email to Kevin Christensen on the Perry Scheme, Position 6.

symbol as symbols and acknowledges the time-place relativity of them. He begins to affirm and hold absolutes in symbols while still acknowledging them to be relativistic.¹³⁷

This puts me in mind of Nephi's comment that we cannot understand the Jewish prophets without knowing the cultural context (2 Nephi 25:1-5). It's why I continue to find enlightenment from learning more about other cultures. It goes back to my discovery that what the English meant by "biscuit" is much like what I thought of as a cookie, and was different than what I might make from a box of Bisquick. "Cookie" as a word is merely a social convention relative to a specific time and place that points to something else, but that something is not merely figurative but real. I should know, because I bake them regularly. That someone from Liverpool might call them biscuits does not make them less real.

He begins to embrace viewpoints in conflict with his own.¹³⁸

Think of Alma 29, where Alma says that even though he might want to speak with a voice of thunder and coerce everyone into repentance, yet he knows that is a sin, and that God gives unto men all that he sees fit for them to have. This does not mean that Alma takes his vision as merely symbolic, merely figurative. It's real and binding, but not the same thing as instant omniscience, and not binding on anyone else. It does not give the right to coerce or judge, though it does drive his need to testify. He knows he has room to grow. Joseph Smith is the same. He's not a fanatic, saying "Submit or die!" but says, "If I cannot convince you that my way is better," we'll work with your way.

137 Veda Hale. Position 6.

138 Veda Hale, Perry Scheme summary. Position 7.

Perry's *Position 7*: Commitments in Relativism developed, includes this:

He senses need to be: wholehearted—but tentative, to be able to fight for his own values—yet respect others.¹³⁹

Joseph Smith's later discourses are full of this attitude.¹⁴⁰ He doesn't condemn other people for not having had his experiences, yet he accepts his own experience as binding on him, and worth offering to others.

Now the person has a field-independent learning style, has learned to scan for information, accepts that hierarchical and analytic notes are evidence of sharpening of cognition. He is willing to take risks, is flexible, perceptive, broad, strategy-minded, and analytical.¹⁴¹

Here I think of the passages about seeking out of the best books words of wisdom (D&C 88:118), preparing our minds to understand more tomorrow (3 Nephi 17:1-3), of searching the scriptures, of recognizing the need to study others and cultures and times to understand as they understood (2 Nephi 25:1-5), and not presume it's just a matter of memorizing our favorite proof-texts, ignoring context, and calling that "scripture mastery."

Perry's *Position 9*: Commitments in Relativism further developed, has this:

The person now has a developed sense of irony and can more easily embrace other's viewpoints. He can accept life as just that "life," just the way *it* is! Now he holds the commitments he makes in a condition of Provisional

139 Veda Hale, Perry Scheme summary, Position 7.

140 For example, *TPJS*, 313.

141 Hale, Position 7.

Ultimacy, meaning that for him what he chooses to be truth IS his truth, and he acts as if it is ultimate truth, but there is still a “provision” for change. He has no illusions about having “arrived” permanently on top of some heap, he is ready and knows he will have to retrace his journey over and over, but he has hope that he will do it each time more wisely. He is aware that he is developing his Identity through Commitment. He can affirm the inseparable nature of the knower and the known—meaning he knows he as knower contributes to what he calls known.¹⁴² He helps weld a community by sharing realization of aloneness and gains strength and intimacy through this shared vulnerability. He has discarded obedience in favor of his own agency, and he continues to select, judge, and build.

Compare this from Joseph Smith:

The great designs of God in relation to the salvation of the human family, are very little understood by the professedly wise and intelligent generation in which we live. Various and conflicting are the opinions of men concerning the plan of salvation, the requisitions of the Almighty, the necessary preparations for heaven, the state and condition of departed spirits, and the happiness or misery that is consequent upon the practice of righteousness and iniquity according to their several notions of virtue and vice.

But while one portion of the human race is judging and condemning the other without mercy, the Great

142 Think of Joseph Smith’s remarkably post-modern statement that “the different teachers of religion understood the same passages so differently as to destroy all confidence in settling the question by an appeal to the Bible” (Joseph Smith–*History*, 1:12).

Parent of the universe looks upon the whole of the human family with a fatherly care and paternal regard; He views them as His offspring, and without any of those contracted feelings that influence the children of man, causes “His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” He holds the reins of judgment in His hands; He is a wise Lawgiver, and will judge all men, not according to the narrow, contracted notions of men, but, “according to the deeds done in the body whether they be good or evil,” or whether these deeds were done in England, America, Spain, Turkey, or India. He will judge them, “not according to what they have not, but according to what they have,” those who have lived without law, will be judged without law, and those who have a law, will be judged by that law. We need not doubt the wisdom and intelligence of the Great Jehovah; He will award judgment or mercy to all nations according to their several deserts, their means of obtaining intelligence, the laws by which they are governed, the facilities afforded them of obtaining correct information, and His inscrutable designs in relation to the human family; and when the designs of God shall be made manifest, and the curtain of futurity be withdrawn, we shall all of us eventually have to confess that the Judge of all the earth has done right.¹⁴³

Joseph Smith, it seems to me, operates here at *Position 9* of Perry’s Scheme of Cognitive and Ethical Growth, whereas Riskas is stuck at *Position 2*. Who should I take as a guide on issues of cognitive and ethical growth, based on this outside test?

143 *History of the Church* 4:595.

Well, Riskas has argued at length with a few Mormon philosophers and claims that he has deconstructed the basis of our faith. Back in 2001, Daniel Peterson addressed a gathering of philosophers and made this comment:

I love philosophy. But philosophy is not a primary mode of religious reflection for Latter-day Saints. Nor is systematic theology. Not even a secondary mode. Nor a tertiary one.

We tell stories.¹⁴⁴

Here is Blake Ostler telling a story from an essay that Riskas lists in his bibliography.

Now, I want to talk a bit about this experience. At that point in my life I was merely a spiritual neophyte like we all begin... I was going into the gymnasium and a girl that I barely knew came and sat down by me. She was a Senior and I was a Sophomore, and she was pretty and I was intimidated. Now normally I would have never said anything to her because to speak to a pretty Senior girl when you're a lowly Sophomore is just simply *verboten*. But there was nothing I could do to stop from saying, "I know this is going to sound really strange, but I have a message to you from our Heavenly Father. He wants you to stop thinking about suicide." And her eyes got real big and her jaw dropped and she said, "How did you know?" And I told her as honestly as I could, mustering all the courage I had, "I don't know; I simply know." And she explained to me that she had laid out on her bed stand a whole bottle of pills that she was going to go home and take right after

144 Daniel Peterson, "Historical Concreteness or Speculative Abstraction?" *FARMS Review of Books* 14/1-2 (2002): xii.

that assembly. In fact, the next day she came and told me that I'd literally saved her life. And it dawned on me at that moment in my life, "What if I hadn't listened?" What if, instead, I had gone to my head and thought it through? What if I had relied on my own noggin? Well, the answer's very simple, she would be dead. She's not, she's a mother and she's doing well.¹⁴⁵

Riskas refers to this essay but says nothing about this particular story in his text.¹⁴⁶ The recurrence of that kind of nothing in Riskas to me says everything. Ian Barbour observes that

Participation in a religious tradition also demands a more total *personal involvement* than occurs in science. Religious questions are of ultimate concern, since the meaning of one's existence is at stake. Religion asks about the final objects of a person's devotion and loyalty, for which he will sacrifice other interests if necessary. Too detached an attitude may cut a person off from the very kinds of experience which are religiously most significant. Reorientation and reconciliation are transformations of life-pattern affecting all aspects of personality, not intellect alone. Religious writings use the language of actors, not the language of spectators. Religious commitment, then, is a self-involving personal response, a serious decision implicating one's whole life, a willingness to act and suffer for what one believes in.¹⁴⁷

145 Blake Ostler, "Spiritual Experiences as the Basis for Belief and Commitment" at <http://www.fairlds.org/fair-conferences/2007-fair-conference/2007-spiritual-experiences-as-the-basis-for-belief-and-commitment>. This is listed in his bibliography and is the only mention of FAIR in Riskas's book.

146 Riskas, 158.

147 Barbour, 135–136.

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PASSING UP THE HEAVENLY GIFT (PART ONE OF TWO)

Gregory L. Smith

Review of Denver C. Snuffer, Jr., *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, Salt Lake City: Mill Creek Press, 2011. 510 pp., no index. \$25.97.

The Basic Thesis

...the Latter-day Saint church was predicted to fail, and in all likelihood has failed to secure the fullness of the priesthood (Denver Snuffer¹).

Denver C. Snuffer, Jr. claims to have had a vision of the resurrected Jesus Christ.² A convert to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, he is the author of eight books (509). The thesis of the most recent—*Passing the Heavenly Gift*—is summarized by his book’s cover photo: a snuffed out candle, smoke curling upward, with a dim ember persisting at the tip of the wick.

1 Denver C. Snuffer, Jr., *Passing the Heavenly Gift* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Mill Creek Press, 2011), 447. All future citations to this work will be in the form of page numbers in parentheses. I will refer to the book as *PTHG* for brevity.

2 “The Lord does still personally appear to mankind. I am a witness to that fact. He first appeared to me February 13, 2003. I have written a book about the topic.... That book does not contain any details about the Lord’s ministry to me, but affirms it took place” (452). See also Denver Snuffer, “Current Events,” from the desk of Denver Snuffer (blog), 26 August 2013, <http://denversnuffer.blogspot.ca/2013/08/current-events.html>, and John Dehlin, “321-322: Denver Snuffer – A Progressive, Fundamentalist, Non-Polygamist Mormon Lawyer Who Claims to Have Seen Christ,” Mormon Stories Podcast, 12 February 2012 at <http://mormonstories.org/321-322-denver-snuffer-a-progressive-fundamentalist-non-polygamist-mormon-who-claims-to-have-seen-christ/>.

Snuffer claims that Joseph Smith was an inspired prophet, but Joseph's commands and revelations were not heeded adequately. As a result, Joseph was betrayed by Church members and murdered prior to the completion of the Nauvoo Temple (104). This made it impossible, in Snuffer's view, for Joseph to pass on all the necessary ordinances and doctrines, notwithstanding the endowment and other ordinances given to the Twelve prior to Joseph's death (105–110). Brigham Young, the Twelve, and their ecclesiastical heirs did not, therefore, perpetuate the fullness of Joseph's mission (87–89, 268, 272–276, 283). Some of their acts, and the changes that Snuffer believes they have made to Church doctrine, practice, or administration, were not sanctioned by God, and constitute the “passing of the heavenly gift” (287, 400). This loss was, in Snuffer's telling, predicted by Joseph Smith, and the time is now ripe for members of the Church to reclaim these blessings (315–317, 400–402, 447–499).

Prophecy and Historical Claims

If you can control people's ideas of the past, you control their ideas of the present and hence the future. (Hugh Nibley³)

Snuffer provides a reading of Joseph Smith's statements and the Book of Mormon's prophecies that accords with his opinions. One could—and perhaps should—contest these interpretations vigorously. As Hugh Nibley once noted, though, the uninspired interpretation of prophecy is a notoriously fickle and inexact science—and Snuffer would doubtless consider my

³ Hugh Nibley, “The Way of the Church,” in *Mormonism and Early Christianity* (Vol. 4 of *Collected Works of Hugh Nibley*), edited by Todd Compton and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company; Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1987), 217.

interpretation as uninspired as I regard his.⁴ Since we disagree about which authorities might be appealed to—for I have a much higher regard for LDS prophets after Joseph Smith than he does—only divine revelation could settle the issue. Such divine endorsement or reproof is not, however, amenable to citation here.

Snuffer's claims rest, however, on a foundation of historical interpretation and reconstruction. He insists that his work was provoked because "among friends of mine there is an increasing unease with official accounts of the history of the church" (xii). "A great deal of what is regarded as 'well settled' [in Church history] is, upon close investigation, merely a series of inconsistent leaps of faith unwarranted by the record" (xiii). Snuffer tells "faithful Latter-day Saint" readers that they therefore "will need to be open-minded" (xiii). Open-mindedness is a virtue, and yet, as many wits have warned, we should not be so open-minded that our brains fall out.⁵

Snuffer is somewhat dismissive of previous efforts to recount Latter-day Saint history. "History does not belong to the historians. Their techniques only permit them to offer an interpretation of events. Your own opinion is as valid as theirs" (38). This is an excellent example of *PTHG*'s tendency to make statements that are absolutely true, and then couple them with a conclusion that is dubious. It is certainly true that all history is an interpretation; no historian is infallible, nor are only professional historians allowed to "do history." But it is absurd

4 "Nothing is easier than to identify one's own favorite political, economic, historical, and moral convictions with the gospel. That gives one a neat, convenient, but altogether too easy advantage over one's fellows.... This is simply insisting that our way is God's way and therefore, the only way. It is the height of impertinence." [Hugh Nibley, "Beyond Politics," *Mormon Studies Review* 23/1 (2011): 150.]

5 The earliest variant that I've found of this aphorism is Max Radin, "On Legal Scholarship," *The Yale Law Journal* (May 1937), as cited by Peter Olausson, factoids, http://www.faktoider.nu/openmind_eng.html.

to claim that any opinion is as valid as any other opinion. If I am firmly of the view that the Church was first organized in Japan in 1930, instead of New York in 1830, my opinion is simply wrong, however sincerely I hold it. Snuffer continues:

I am a lawyer, not an historian. This book is a view of the events as I have come to understand them. Any historian will offer only his editorial opinion dressed in an academic discipline to pretend it is more than mere opinion. But history written by the academics suffers from all the bias, blindness and foolishness of the one who writes (5).

He is certainly correct that authorial bias cannot but contaminate any work. Elsewhere, however, he seems to declare himself above or immune to such concerns. There is not much intellectual caution in his self-portrait:

Taking this scriptural framework, (not as an historian but as a believer in the prophetic insight about us) I then tracked through our history. I used a lot of primary sources, including journals and diaries of church leaders. What I found was that the events in our history could be viewed as an exact match for the prophetic warnings given us in scripture (Book of Mormon/D&C). *The result was not history, but truth.* If the book is true (and I am persuaded it is the most correct account of our dispensation written so far) then we need to awaken to our present peril and repent.⁶

Not only is Snuffer's work "truth" (rather than biased history), and not only is it the best account of our dispensation, but "I think I understand [Joseph Smith] as well as any person who has reviewed the written record about him" (40). But

6 Snuffer, "Current events," italics added.

even if this lofty self-portrait is true, if anyone's opinion about history is as valid as anyone else's, it is not clear why we ought to listen to Snuffer at all.

Snuffer claims that “the problem with *Passing the Heavenly Gift* has not been its accuracy. The issue raised in the notice I received from the stake president does not say the book is false, contains errors or makes mistakes in history.”⁷ His stake president may not have said it—priesthood leaders are generally not tasked with evaluating the accuracy of history—but I will. The book makes many false statements and conclusions, contains errors, and makes mistakes in history—and it is difficult to believe that some of those mistakes are made by oversight.

I therefore propose to first outline the various *historical* claims upon which Snuffer's reconstruction of the Restoration rests. I will then consider each point in detail—we will see that Snuffer's reconstruction is simply implausible or in error. It ignores documents that do not match the story he tells and it distorts or misrepresents some documents that he cites. He does not interact with previous scholarship in a responsible way. It certainly cannot pretend to pure “truth,” and often shades into frank error.

Summary of Snuffer's Historical Reconstruction

One searches in vain for a succinct summary of *PTHG*'s argument.⁸ The book wanders, repeats itself, and usually does not include the author's entire argument in a single place—it is scattered throughout. The claims do not always seem entirely

7 Snuffer, “Compliance (So Far As Possible).”

8 Snuffer's blog summarizes it in one sentence, however: “We are not now the same church restored by Joseph Smith.” See Denver Snuffer, “Contentment,” from the desk of Denver Snuffer (blog), 7 September 2013, <http://denversnuffer.blogspot.ca/2013/09/contentment.html>.

self-consistent. The following points, however, provide the framework for his interpretation of LDS scripture and history.

1. Priesthood conferred by ordination is just a potential (“many are called”) and not actual bestowal of power (“few are chosen”). To truly receive priesthood power, a type of divine theophany is necessary (36).
2. Oliver Cowdery gave a charge to the original twelve apostles requiring them to seek to behold the face of God. This charge was discontinued in the early 1900s because so few had a theophany-type experience (88–89).
3. Brigham Young, many other post-Joseph Smith leaders, and modern apostles sometimes explicitly deny having had theophany-type experiences, “parsing” [*sic*] their words carefully to give false impressions to their unwary listeners (61, 65, 87–88, 243).
4. Brigham Young was ordained an apostle by the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, not Joseph Smith, and so he did not receive priesthood keys or authority from Joseph Smith (87).
5. Brigham appealed to his ordination as an apostle as the ground for his right to lead the Church following Joseph’s death. Brigham could not have received all the necessary keys from Joseph (especially the sealing keys), since traditional LDS history dates their receipt to 1836, a year following Brigham’s ordination to the apostleship (87–89, 105–110). Furthermore, Joseph did not ordain the apostles (see point #4) and so could not have given his keys to Brigham and the Twelve.
6. Joseph Smith did not receive the ultimate sealing powers in 1836 from Elijah in the Kirtland temple, but instead had received them by 1829 in association with the receipt of the revelations that later became D&C 132. This 1829 receipt of authority met the criteria outlined in point #1 above (75, 327).

7. Despite the apostles' claims, the necessary authority from Joseph could only be fully transmitted in a temple—since Joseph died before the temple was finished, it was impossible for them to receive everything God wanted them to receive (268, 272–276, 283).

8. The Saints sinned in Missouri, and Joseph Smith had to offer God his life in order to get them another chance (98–101, 104, 285, 404).

9. God commanded the Saints to build the Nauvoo temple, but warned them of dire punishment if they did not do so with enough speed or zeal. The Saints' sufferings subsequent to Joseph's death are evidence that God was punishing them for not building the temple quickly enough, as he had warned them he would (197, 202–206, 268–270).

10. There were no divine, Pentecostal-type experiences in the Nauvoo temple as there were in the Kirtland temple. This demonstrates that God did not fully accept the temple because of the Saints' delay in building it (381).

Snuffer's Conclusion: The apostles' lack of full authority, and God's displeasure with the Church subsequent to Joseph's death, means that since Joseph the leaders have been misguided. They have introduced inappropriate innovations in practice or doctrine. Mormonism has lost some vital truths which members, independent of the institutional Church and its leadership, can reclaim if they are faithful.

Undergirding everything is Snuffer's claim to have seen Jesus Christ, and to therefore have his "calling and election made sure." A large portion of his critique focuses on the supposed absence of this blessing among post-Joseph Smith leaders of the Church. Furthermore, Snuffer has portrayed himself as an expert on the topic in books and elsewhere.⁹

9 *The Second Comforter: Conversing with the Lord Through the Veil* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Mill Creek Press, 2006). On Snuffer's public claims about

The books I have written do not ever touch upon Calling and Election, nor discuss the Second Anointing. But they will tell you what is required to go and learn from the Lord about these things directly. If you want answers about that, then follow the same path as the ancients did, as Joseph Smith did, and as Abraham did. I'm only interested in helping you understand the path.... Most people who spend time writing about second anointings and calling and election don't know what they're talking about. The best treatment of that subject is something which ought to come from the Lord directly. Or an angel assigned by Him to minister to the person who has prepared.

The challenge is preparation. I'm all about that. That is what I write to explain and what I encourage all to do.¹⁰

These doctrines and the experiences that go with them are among the things that Snuffer sees the post-Joseph Smith Church as minimizing and rejecting, in part because of what Joseph could not pass on and in part because of the failings or inadequacy of subsequent leaders. Because Snuffer claims

having seen Christ, see note 2 herein. Snuffer says (51 n. 46) that the results of the Second Comforter are discussed in his book *Beloved Enos* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Mill Creek, 2009). The introduction of the Father by Christ is “not appropriate to set out except through symbols and allegory,” and Snuffer claims to have done so in his *Ten Parables* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Mill Creek, 2008). Snuffer’s grandiose characterization of his work (see note 6 and subsequent main text herein) is not absent from these books’ promotional material either: “This commentary sheds light on Enos in a way which has not been provided by any previous writer. It will reveal to the reader some of the deepest and most profound messages of the Gospel of Jesus Christ” (*Beloved Enos*). *Ten Parables* tells us that “this collection of parables weave together symbols to illustrate profound truths. While meaningful in a single read, you will discover layers of meaning with careful review.”

10 Denver Snuffer, “Clarification” and follow-up comment, *from the desk of Denver Snuffer* (blog), 2 May 2010, <http://denversnuffer.blogspot.ca/2010/05/clarification.html>.

experience and expertise in a matter about which he says the modern leaders are either ignorant or inappropriately silent, this forms the implicit basis for his effort to steady the historical and ecclesiastical ark. “The culminating ordinances of Joseph Smith’s restoration... [is that w]e are to be prepared in all things to receive” direct revelation from God.¹¹ “The real thing is when a person actually obtains an audience with Jesus Christ, returns to His presence, and gains the knowledge by which they are saved. This was the topic I first wrote about, and has *remained the underlying theme of everything I have written*” (53, italics added).

In a sense, Snuffer is more right than he knows when he claims to be a lawyer, not a historian. He is also absolutely correct when he says that he has not provided us with history. What we have, rather than the unadulterated “truth” he claims to provide, is simply a type of legal brief. In this case, however, the lawyer does not address—or even mention—evidence that does not support his client’s case. And so, we must proceed to cross-examine his presentation.

Claim #1: Power in the Priesthood Requires Theophany

Writes Snuffer:

Any person who has priesthood conferred upon him will need to go into God’s presence, and receive it through the veil for power in their priesthood. That is, for any person who has priesthood conferred upon them, they will not gain power in the priesthood until they come to God from whom this power comes through the veil. Not as a mere ceremony delivered by the church, but through contact directly with God. It is

¹¹ Snuffer’s text is more explicit, but since it quotes language from the LDS temple ceremony, I have elected not to reproduce it.

the voice of God, through the veil, which activates the dormant power conferred by ordination (36).

Snuffer here falls prey to all-or-nothing thinking: If one does not have the fullness, then Snuffer declares that one does not have anything at all: “They will not gain power in the priesthood until they come to God....through contact directly with God.”

Power versus Authority of the Priesthood

Snuffer quotes President Packer:

We have done very well at distributing the *authority* of the priesthood. We have priesthood authority planted nearly everywhere. We have quorums of elders and high priests worldwide. But distributing the *authority* of the priesthood has raced, I think, ahead of distributing the *power* of the priesthood. The priesthood does not have the strength that it should have and will not have until the *power* of the priesthood is firmly fixed in the families as it should be.¹²

Snuffer couples such remarks with a repeated appeal to D&C 121:36, which rightly notes that “the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness.” Snuffer takes this vital observation, however, and then concludes, “The power of the priesthood comes only one way, and, as the revelation to Joseph Smith states, men do not have any right to either confer it, or prevent it from being conferred” (28). This, however, is a distortion of what the text says: it speaks of conferring the priesthood, but it says nothing about having priesthood power without ordination. Surely whether power comes is dependent upon God’s will—in that

¹² Boyd K. Packer, “The Power of the Priesthood,” General Conference, April 2010; cited by Snuffer on p. 27.

Snuffer is correct—but this does not mean that ordination is of no real importance.

In addition to the all-or-nothing view of power that we see above, part of the confusion arises because Snuffer falls victim to the *fallacy of equivocation*. This logical error involves a word or expression that has more than one meaning. The fallacy occurs when differences in meaning are blurred or ignored. Snuffer does so repeatedly with the term “authority.” President Packer speaks of distributing the authority of the priesthood (i.e., the legal right to carry out priesthood ordinances). He also speaks of how those with *authority* do not always measure up and receive *power*. So far so good, and he and Snuffer agree that power is contingent upon God’s approbation, not mere ordination. (That is, it seems to me, President Packer’s point.)¹³

Snuffer, however, draws repeatedly on D&C 121:37, which warns that “when we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness,” then “Amen to the *priesthood* or the *authority* of that man” (D&C 121:37, emphasis added). Snuffer concludes (sometimes implicitly) that this use of the term *authority* means the “legal right to carry out priesthood ordinances.” If this is so, then he sees a grave problem—since we cannot know that a priesthood holder is worthy, if real priesthood power and authority are contingent, then ordinances performed by priesthood authority must be of relatively little importance: otherwise, members would forever be at risk of receiving ordinances that are null and void because “Amen” has been said to the authority of the man performing them (319–324, 336).

This is, however, only a problem because of Snuffer’s fallacy of equivocation around *authority*. In D&C 121, the scripture is

13 Compare with his earlier discussion in Boyd K. Packer, “The Aaronic Priesthood,” General Conference, October 1981.

not speaking about the right to perform ordinances. Instead, the “power” and “authority” to which it refers is power and authority over other people. The scripture is concerned with those who “aspire to the honors of men,” because they will interpret their ordination as a right “to exercise unrighteous dominion,” but “no power or influence can” be exercised on anyone by virtue of priesthood office. This says nothing about the right or authority to provide necessary ordinances—it is a simple declaration that any authority over a person that one presumes to have based upon priesthood ceases to exist. The only “dominion” that one gets now or in the future because of priesthood comes “without compulsory means” (D&C 121:35–46).

To distinguish these two uses of the term “authority,” I will refer to the right to officiate in priesthood ordinances as “right of legal administration” or “being a legal administrator.” As we will soon see, Joseph used such expressions and indicated that such rights were absolutely essential.¹⁴ It is in this sense that President Packer uses the term “authority”—we have not done well in distributing the right to have *authority or dominion* over people (because such a right does not exist), but have rather done well in creating many *legal administrators*. Whether those legal administrators receive any power in their own lives is, of course, entirely up to them—just as whether recipients of the ordinances receive any power or benefit is dependent upon their personal righteousness.¹⁵

14 See note 25 herein.

15 See note 22 herein.

Authority Not Vital for Ordinances?

Snuffer insists elsewhere, with some justification, that

The ceremonies and ordinances of the church all point to [God]. They are not the end of the search but instead teach you how to conduct the search. If all you receive are ordinances, you have nothing of real value. They are dead without a living, personal connection with God. God alone can and will save you (55).

This is certainly true. Yet, Snuffer seems determined to always deny the importance of the Church's role as the sole authorized source of the necessary ordinances.¹⁶ "God wants you to know Him," Snuffer tells us, "You can know Him. You do not need another person to speak to Him for you. You should speak to Him directly" (55). This is all true—but Snuffer ignores another theme that is equally prominent in Joseph Smith's revelations and thought: an authorized representative is also necessary to perform vital and non-negotiable ordinances. This is something that *cannot* be done by oneself—the priesthood officer must play a role. But Snuffer says, "Since the language of the baptismal covenant was given by revelation, it has been approved by the Lord. Using the language for the ceremony authorizes the covenant to be performed" (421). "If the Holy Ghost will visit you even without an authoritative ordinance," Snuffer declares, "then the responsibility to live so as to invite the Spirit is all you need to have that same companionship the ordinance could confer" (460, compare 33). This view contradicts Joseph Smith:

There is a difference between the Holy Ghost and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Cornelius received the Holy Ghost before he was baptized, which was the convincing

¹⁶ Snuffer concedes that "baptism continues to be essential to salvation for any soul" (421), but doesn't believe a legal administrator is necessary (418, 421).

power of God unto him of the truth of the Gospel, but he could not receive the gift of the Holy Ghost until after he was baptized. Had he not taken this sign or ordinance upon him, the Holy Ghost which convinced him of the truth of God, would have left him.¹⁷

“Even if you give the most optimistic assessment of the restoration and current condition of the church,” declares *PTHG*, “it can do nothing for the individual Latter-day Saint. We must all find salvation for ourselves” (305). Yet, in contrast, D&C 121:19 regards being “severed from the ordinances of the Lord’s house” a grave consequence—suggesting that they offer something which cannot be had (despite Snuffer’s insistence) outside of the Church. Less than two months before his death, Joseph would declare: “I advise all to go on to perfection and search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of Godliness—a man can do nothing for himself unless God direct him in the right way, and *the Priesthood is reserved for that purpose.*”¹⁸

As an example of this neglect of priesthood authority, in an extensive list of what Joseph Smith accomplished, *PTHG* says that Joseph restored “Understanding of Aaronic...Priesthood [and]...of Melchizedek Priesthood....[and] [k]nowledge of a third order of priesthood referred to as Patriarchal Priesthood” (58) but completely omits Joseph’s role as *restorer* of that priesthood authority. The omission is telling, given that the author regards priesthood ultimately as something that comes

17 Joseph Smith, cited in “For the Times and Seasons. SABBATH SCENE IN NAUVOO; March 20th 1842,” *Times and Seasons* 3/12 (15 April 1842): 752; see Joseph Smith, Jr, *Manuscript History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Documentary History)*. 7 vols. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1978, 4:555. Hereafter cited as *Manuscript History of the Church*.

18 Thomas Bullock report, discourse of 14 May 1844; cited in Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, BYU, 1980), 365, emphasis added. (This work cited as *WJS* hereafter.)

only from God direct to each individual, and unnecessary for ordinances. *PTHG* later downplays the ordinances:

Rather than trust ordinances which may have become invalid, blessings which may have been unauthorized, and messages which may have become tainted, I will seek for Christ and His presence. I want to know my standing before Him, not whether a man has recommended me (344).

We again see an example of *PTHG* taking a true statement and drawing a false conclusion. The necessity of Christ's approval is certainly paramount—but, *PTHG* then claims (contrary to Joseph Smith and the scriptures he gave) that one can seek Christ's approval and acceptance without the necessity of ordinances performed by authorized administrators, promising the reader that “the required priestly authority is still available through the veil” (468). Yet, Joseph taught that there were now authorized mortal administrators upon the earth, and said that any claim to ordination by divine messengers was evidence of either lying or deception:

The angel told... Cornelius that he must send for Peter to learn how to be saved: Peter could baptize, and angels could not, so long as there were legal officers in the flesh holding the keys of the kingdom, or the authority of the priesthood. There is one evidence still further on this point, and that is that Jesus himself when he appeared to Paul on his way to Damascus, did not inform him how he could be saved. He had set in the church firstly Apostles, and secondly prophets for the work of the ministry... and as the grand rule of heaven was that nothing should ever be done on earth without revealing the secret to his servants the prophets.... [S]o Paul could not learn so much from the

Lord relative to his duty in the common salvation of man, as he could from one of Christ's ambassadors called with the same heavenly calling of the Lord, and endowed with the same power from on high—so that what they loosed on earth, should be loosed in heaven; and what they bound on earth should be bound in heaven.¹⁹

Orson Pratt reported Joseph's attitude toward one who claimed angelic ordination:

One Francis G. Bishop, an Elder in our church, was very anxious to be ordained a High Priest, but he was not considered a proper candidate to fill the office at that time; and his urgent solicitations to be promoted to the High Priesthood, confirmed the Saints in the opinion that he wanted a high station without meriting it, or without being called by the Spirit of God to that work. He was sent forth into the world to preach in capacity and calling of an Elder; but he was not long out before he declared himself to be a High Priest—and that he was ordained from heaven. This made much stir in the branches of the church and also in the world. But when the news of his proceedings reached the prophet Joseph, he called Bishop home forthwith. He was introduced into the school of the prophets, and there closely questioned upon his course. He said he was ordained by an angel to the High Priesthood; yet, on a more close examination, he crossed his own testimony and statements—became confused, and blushed with

19 Joseph Smith, "Baptism," *Times and Seasons* 3/21 (1 September 1842): 905. Snuffer tries elsewhere to defuse these statements as they apply to the sealing power (300), but here we apply them to matters such as baptism and confirmation.

shame and guilt—he fell down upon his knees and confessed that he had lied in the name of the Lord—begged to be forgiven and cried aloud for mercy. We all forgave him, but we could not give him our confidence, for he had destroyed it.... Brother Joseph observed to [Bro.] Bishop that he knew that he had lied before he confessed it; that his declarations were not only false in themselves, but they involved a false principle. An angel, said Joseph, may administer the word of the Lord unto men, and bring intelligence to them from heaven upon various subjects; but no true angel from God will ever come to ordain any man, because they have once been sent to establish the priesthood by ordaining me thereunto; and the priesthood being once established on earth, with power to ordain others, no heavenly messenger will ever come to interfere with that power by ordaining any more.... [Joseph tells the story of Cornelius as above.] *You may therefore know, from this time forward, that if any man comes to you professing to be ordained by an angel, he is either a liar or has been imposed upon in consequence of transgression by an angel of the devil, for this priesthood shall never be taken away from this church.*²⁰

Thus, Snuffer's view cannot—despite his strenuous efforts—be squared with Joseph Smith's approach, nor that of later prophets and apostles. The Doctrine and Covenants insists upon the ordinances as vital, and as a good gauge for judging the religious pretensions of others:

20 Orson Hyde, "Although Dead, Yet He Speaketh: Joseph Smith's testimony concerning being ordained by angels, delivered in the school of the prophets, in Kirtland, Ohio, in the Winter of 1832–3," *Millennial Star* 8/9 (20 November 1846): 138–139, emphasis added.

Wherefore he that prayeth, whose spirit is contrite, the same is accepted of me *if he obey mine ordinances*. He that speaketh, whose spirit is contrite, whose language is meek and edifieth, the same is of God *if he obey mine ordinances* (D&C 52:15–16, emphasis added).

To those who sought to be right with God without rebaptism by authority, the Lord said:

Wherefore, although a man should be baptized an hundred times it availeth him nothing, for you cannot enter in at the strait gate by the law of Moses, neither by your dead works. For it is because of your dead works that I have caused this last covenant and this church to be built up unto me, even as in days of old. Wherefore, enter ye in at the gate, as I have commanded, and seek not to counsel your God (D&C 22:2–4).

And Joseph Smith insisted that John the Baptist’s legitimate Aaronic priesthood required even Jesus to submit to him:

There was a legal administrator, and those that were baptized were subjects for a king; and also the laws and oracles of God were there; therefore the kingdom of God was there; for no man could have better authority to administer than John; and our Savior submitted to that authority Himself, by being baptized by John; therefore the kingdom of God was set up on the earth, even in the days of John.²¹

Snuffer concedes that “it would be good to have an authorized minister to perform the ordinance,” but insists that “it does not matter whether there is an officiator with authority

21 *Manuscript History of the Church*, 5:258; this entry is based on Wilford Woodruff’s diary for 22 January 1843, also reproduced in *WJS*, 156–158.

from God on the earth or not” (418). He justifies this distortion of Joseph’s teaching by claiming:

The language of Section 20 [of the Doctrine and Covenants] is not contingent upon authority. Rather, it is the faith of one receiving baptism which determines the ordinance’s validity. The church offices described in Section 20 are not dependent on priesthood authority. Nor is authority given to the church dependent upon a man. The direction to organize the church is all that was required (418).

It is certainly true that faith is necessary for the baptismal ordinance to be valid—without faith, even with a legal administrator, Heber C. Kimball said, one might as well give all the ordinances to “a bag of sand,” “if you do not live up to your profession and practice your religion... except through faith and obedience.”²²

However, *PTHG* again draws a false inference from a true statement. If an authorized minister is not necessary, why did John the Baptist ordain Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery prior to their baptism (D&C 13:1) and then promise that this authority “would never be taken again from the earth”? The same D&C 20 to which he appeals declares that “an Apostle is an Elder & it is his calling to Baptize & to ordain other Elders, Priests, Teachers & Deacons...The Priests duty is to... baptize...& ordain other Priests, Teaches & Deacons,” while “neither the Teachers nor the Deacons have authority to

22 Heber C. Kimball, in *Journal of Discourses* 3:124 (6 October 1855). Kimball would agree with Snuffer’s uncontroversial claim that “if all you receive are ordinances, you have nothing of real value. They are dead without a living, personal connection with God. God alone can and will save you” (55). No Latter-day Saint apostle or informed member has ever presumed otherwise.

baptize,”²³ which makes it clear that not every member (or even every priesthood holder) may baptize.

Joseph Smith’s revelations also taught that “they who are of the High Priesthood, whose names are not found written in the book of the law, or that are found to have apostatized, or to have been cut off from the church, as well as the lesser priesthood, or the members, in that day shall not find an inheritance among the Saints of the Most High” (D&C 85:11). “Wo unto them,” declares the Lord elsewhere to Joseph, “who are cut off from my church, for the same are overcome of the world” (D&C 50:8). Snuffer’s doctrines contradict Joseph Smith’s. Contrary to *PTHG*, both the Book of Mormon (1 Nephi 11:35, 36) and the Doctrine and Covenants seem to condemn his approach: “They who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants, neither give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles, shall be cut off from among the people; For they have strayed from mine ordinances, and have broken mine everlasting covenant” (D&C 1:14–15).

If Snuffer is correct, why did Joseph teach that there was “no salvation between the two lids of the bible without a legal administrator”?²⁴ Why does the Book of Mormon place such great emphasis on the necessity of valid priesthood authority for baptism and other ordinances (Mosiah 21:33, Moroni 2–5), including a concerted effort by the resurrected Christ to make this perfectly clear (3 Nephi 11:21–28)? Christ did so precisely so no one would dispute—as Snuffer is doing—over the proper form or requirements for baptism. Joseph Smith taught:

Whenever men can find out the will of God & find an Administrator legally authorized from God there is the Kingdom of God but *whare these are not, the*

23 Dean Jessee (editor), *Revelations and Translations: Manuscript Revelation Books*, The Joseph Smith Papers, Facsimile ed. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Church Historian’s Press, 2009), 85; see D&C 20:38–60.

24 *Joseph Smith Diary* (23 July 1843); cited in *WJS*, 235.

*Kingdom of God is not[.] All the ordinances Systems, & Administrations on the earth is of no use to the Children of men unless they are ordained & authorized of God for nothing will save a man but a legal Administrator for none others will be acknowledge either by God or Angels.*²⁵

Snuffer's reading is idiosyncratic and smacks of desperation. This muddled thinking leads Snuffer to compare the LDS "dilemma" to that faced by the Catholics during the Donatist heresy (321). He quotes Daniel C. Peterson²⁶ and notes that "the winning side in the dispute decided priestly authority was not dependent on the officiator's worthiness" (319). He concludes that this would mean that "Catholics could not have forfeited priesthood" in the Great Apostasy since "wickedness, error, and foolishness would never be a reason to remove their authority" (320). (In all these cases, "authority" is being used in my sense of *legal administration*.)

But Snuffer is mistaken—if one is authorized to perform an ordinance by those holding the keys, then one may act as a legal administrator. But once the keys have been lost—with, for example, the passing of the apostles—then even a legal administrator has no right or authority to call new leaders, pass on priesthood authority, and so on.²⁷ A legal administrator

25 *Wilford Woodruff Journal* (22 January 1843), cited in *WJS*, 158.

26 Daniel C. Peterson, "Authority in the Book of Mosiah," *FARMS Review* 18/1 (2006): 149–185. Snuffer claims that Peterson "even cites to [*sic*] the Catholic precedent to justify Mormon claims!" (322, citing Peterson's footnote 40). This is false, as can be seen from the section cited by Snuffer. Peterson merely draws an analogy between the two traditions, where both faced the same issue and came to the same conclusion "for good reason" (322), because the alternative is utter chaos and uncertainty about which ordinances are valid or legal. Peterson has confirmed to me that I have read him correctly.

27 It is also dubious to suggest that the Catholic Church ever held divine authority, from the perspective of LDS doctrine. The formation of Catholicism post-dated the passing of the apostles and their keys. See Noel B. Reynolds (editor), *Early Christians in Disarray: Contemporary LDS Perspectives on*

cannot create more legal administrators without the approval of those who hold the keys, nor can he perform essential ordinances without that same approval—and so the authority comes to a halt because such administration would not be legal. The legal administrator is not constrained only by death as Snuffer claims (320) because no one can grant him the right to use his authority in a *legal* way without keys.²⁸ But Snuffer is determined to reject the idea of apostolic stewardship and guidance based upon the keys, so he sees a dilemma where there is none.²⁹ Yet he accuses *others* of shoddy reasoning because “the result you want to avoid absolutely CANNOT be true” (322, emphasis in original). His treatment of these concepts is unintentional evidence for this proposition, applied to his own reasoning.

Perhaps the most deadly argument against Snuffer’s reading is simply that Joseph Smith didn’t embrace the conclusions to which *PTHG*’s confusion leads. I am aware of no evidence—and Snuffer cites none—to suggest that Joseph Smith or the early Mormons ever repeated ordinances that were performed by priesthood holders who subsequently proved to be unworthy. Given the apostasies and dissident groups which formed throughout Joseph’s prophetic career, considerable attention ought to have been given to this matter *if* Snuffer’s conclusion is the proper one. But the early Mormons seem to have agreed with Peterson—one’s status as a lawful administrator was not

the Christian Apostasy (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2005), particularly Reynolds’ introductory essay. *PTHG*’s command of early Christian history seems as muddled as its version of LDS history.

28 Snuffer shortchanges the LDS view: “It does not matter how wicked or evil a man is who holds the priesthood power, the keys of the church will guarantee it cannot be lost” (336). In fact, the LDS claim is that one can remain a legal administrator of essential ordinances despite sin if one is authorized by those who hold the keys. Ultimately those key holders are the apostles, who despite their weaknesses the Saints do not concede to be “wicked or evil” or deprived of that authority.

29 For further discussion, see Part Two, Conclusion.

contingent on righteousness, though one's personal status before God certainly was, as was the true power or authority to influence others that one could wield in his behalf.

Necessity of Theophany?

With respect to the sealing power, Snuffer cites a long list of prophets in an effort to demonstrate that “this kind of covenant is established between God and man in the first person; never through another” (85). The prophets mentioned include Nephi, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He then concludes that “Brigham Young’s [claim] that Joseph Smith had the capacity to confer such power independent of the Lord’s direct involvement is a marvelous, even unprecedented claim” (87). No Latter-day Saint would dispute the idea that the sealing power must come from God, and that he is personally involved. It is not clear, though, why another prophet cannot be involved in the transfer of that authority or power (which transfer God would, of course, have to ratify and endorse). However, Snuffer insists that Joseph cannot have transferred it to Brigham.

PTHG also makes a link between having one’s calling and election made sure and the sealing power:

Nephi [the son of Helaman] received his calling and election. Calling and election is connected with holding the sealing power... Sealing power is always connected to calling and election... Only through that personal contact with heaven were their calling and election, sealing power and covenant established (81, 85, 86).

It is not entirely clear to me exactly what *PTHG* is arguing—do all who have their calling and election made sure receive the sealing power? Are a sure election and the sealing power interchangeable terms? These readings of *PTHG* seem unlikely given that “there is never but one on the earth at a time on

whom this power and the keys of this priesthood [sealing] are conferred” (D&C 132:7). I think he means that having one’s calling and election made sure is a necessary prerequisite to receiving the sealing power, or that they must at least happen at the same time.

In any case, we should not be surprised that many prophets granted the sealing power had a theophany experience—those in scripture are often the founding prophet of a dispensation or for a specific group of people. A theophany is their only option, since no legal administrator is to be found.

In scripture receiving one’s calling and election does not require that one see God or Christ personally. Alma the Elder, for example, was one of the wicked priests consecrated by King Noah (Mosiah 17:2). Converted by Abinadi’s preaching, he escaped the king’s court and taught while in hiding (Mosiah 18). He eventually led a group of believers to Zarahemla (Mosiah 23–24), where King Mosiah made him the supreme head of the Nephite Christian church, giving him “power to ordain priests and teachers over every church” (Mosiah 25:19, 26:8). Later, when troubled by a matter of internal dissention, Alma received a revelation:

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 alone of my servant Abinadi.... Thou art my servant; and I covenant with thee that thou shalt have eternal life; and thou shalt serve me and go forth in my name, and shalt gather together my sheep (Mosiah 26:14–15, 20).

Alma is the head of the church. He here has his calling and election made sure—he is promised eternal life. Yet, God

explicitly points out that Alma has believed simply because of Abinadi's words. Until now, he has had no theophany, seen no angels, nor seen the face of God. Even now, he only hears God's words. Enos likewise hears a voice, but reports no vision (Enos 1:5, 10).

The death knell for *PTHG*'s claim that mortals cannot be involved in the transfer of the highest priesthood power occurred on 27 August 1843 when Joseph spoke of Abraham's receipt of "a blessing under the hands of Melchizedek even the last law or a fulness of the law or priesthood which constituted him a king and preist after the order of Melchizedek or an endless life."³⁰ This is significant for two reasons—(1) it defines precisely how Joseph saw the "fulness of the priesthood," the last and final power that could be given on earth: he spoke of it in the same terms used to describe the higher temple ordinances; and (2) Joseph declares that *Abraham received it by ordination under the hands of another mortal*.³¹ The Prophet offers this as a paradigmatic example—for who can be a greater disciple than Abraham?—something that Snuffer declares to be impossible. If Joseph is an authority, then Snuffer's thesis is false.

Could Brigham Young Qualify to Claim Sealing Power?

Despite this, Brigham Young also meets Snuffer's criteria for receiving the sealing power: "by the calling of [God's] own voice" (314, citing JST-Gen. 14:29). Orson Hyde described a heavenly manifestation given to all the Twelve. It has close affinities with Alma's account:

In the month of February, 1848, the Twelve Apostles met at Hyde Park, Pottawattamie County, Iowa, where a small Branch of the Church was established.... We

³⁰ James Burgess Notebook, discourse of 27 August 1843, cited in *WJS*, 245–246.

³¹ The mortal Melchizedek is also one whom Snuffer agrees held the sealing power—see 295–296.

were in prayer and council, communing together; and what took place on that occasion? The voice of God came from on high, and spake to the Council. Every latent feeling was aroused, and every heart melted. What did it say unto us? “Let my servant Brigham step forth and receive the full power of the presiding Priesthood in my Church and kingdom.” This was the voice of the Almighty unto us at Council Bluffs, before I removed to what was called Kaneshville. It has been said by some that Brigham was appointed by the people, and not by the voice of God. I do not know that this testimony has often, if ever, been given to the masses of the people before; but I am one that was present, and there are others here that were also present on that occasion, and did hear and feel the voice from heaven, and we were filled with the power of God. This is my testimony; these are my declarations unto the Saints—unto the members of the kingdom of God in the last days, and to all people.

We said nothing about the matter in those times, but kept it still.³²

Of note is the reluctance of the Twelve to talk too freely about a divine manifestation. Hyde went on to describe the earth shaking, which led non-members to believe there had been an earthquake. Brigham confirmed the account, adding:

Brother Hyde, in his remarks, spoke about the voice of God at a certain time. I could tell many incidents relating to that circumstance, which he did not take time to relate. We were in his house, which was some ten or twelve feet square. The houses in the neighbourhood

32 Orson Hyde, in *Journal of Discourses* 8:233–34 (7 October 1860).

shook, or, if they did not, the people thought they did, for they ran together and inquired whether there had been an earthquake. We told them that the voice of God had reached the earth—that they need not be afraid; it was the power of God. This and other events have transpired to satisfy the people—you, and all who belong to the Church and kingdom of God upon the earth.³³

Snuffer claims that “this higher priesthood... comes from God’s own voice declaring it to the man” (295). Well, in addition to ordination by Joseph, here we have the voice of God declaring before all the Twelve that Brigham should have “the full power of the presiding priesthood.”

Snuffer also quotes Brigham Young denying that he can “commune in person with the Father and the Son at my will and pleasure” (90) and not having been “able to talk with some Being of a higher sphere than this” (91). Snuffer interprets this to mean that Brigham denied having “any being, angelic or otherwise, from a higher sphere speak to him” (90). This presumes too much. Brigham reported a vision of and instructions from the martyred Joseph Smith at least twice—Joseph himself would thus be acting in an angelic role, though Brigham apparently did not regard him as being of “a higher sphere.”³⁴ Brigham likewise reported visions on several occasions.³⁵ Brigham may not, then, be ruling out all such contacts as absolutely as Snuffer believes—denying that one can speak with the Godhead at one’s “will and pleasure” is not the same as denying one has ever been spoken to by them at

33 Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses* 8:197 (7 October 1860).

34 *Manuscript History of the Church* 7:435–436 (17 August 1845); *Manuscript History of Brigham Young* (23 February 1847), 528–530; reprinted in *Juvenile Instructor* (15 September 1883): 283–284.

35 *Journal of Discourses* 1:132–133 (6 April 1853); 3:208–209, 212 (17 February 1856); 12:153 (12 January 1868); 18:241, 243–245 (23 June 1874).

Theirs: “I hold myself in readiness that he can wield me at his will and pleasure” (90).

Brigham also said that he received revelation on Church organization as soon as he was back in Nauvoo following Joseph’s death:

When I met Sidney Rigdon, east of the temple in Nauvoo, I knew then what I now know concerning the organization of the Church, though I had told no man of it. I revealed it to no living being, until the pioneers to this valley were returning to Winter Quarters. Brother Wilford Woodruff [p.198] was the first man I ever spoke to about it. Said he—“It is right; I believe it, and think a great deal of it, for it is from the Lord; the Church must be organized.” It then went to others, and from them to others; but it was no news to me, for I understood it then as I understand it now.³⁶

We also have Joseph Smith’s witness of Brigham’s worthiness to enjoy the divine presence. Heber C. Kimball reported Joseph’s anxiety for the Twelve on their mission to England:

He saw the Twelve going forth, and they appeared to be in a far distant land. After some time they unexpectedly met together, apparently in great tribulation, their clothes all ragged, and their knees and feet sore. They formed into a circle, and all stood with their eyes fixed upon the ground. The Savior appeared and stood in their midst and wept over them, and wanted to show Himself to them, but they did not discover Him.³⁷

Snuffer might conclude from this section that he is correct—that the Lord would have unveiled himself to the Twelve, but

36 Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses* 8:197.

37 Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Co., 1988), 93–94.

they failed to be ready because they did not realize they were in his presence. Yet this was not Joseph's conclusion, as the vision continued:

He (Joseph) saw until they had accomplished their work, and arrived at the gate of the celestial city; there Father Adam stood and opened the gate to them, and as they entered he embraced them one by one and kissed them. He then led them to the throne of God, and then the Savior embraced each one of them in the presence of God. He saw that they all had beautiful heads of hair and all looked alike. The impression this vision left on Brother Joseph's mind was of so acute a nature, that he never could refrain from weeping while rehearsing it.³⁸

Brigham would report that Joseph had told him that his and the apostles' "calling and election" had been made sure:

Before Joseph's death he had a revelation concerning myself and others, which signified that we had passed the ordeal, and that we should never apostatize from the faith of the holy gospel; "and", said Joseph, "if there is any danger of your doing this, the Lord will take you to Himself forthwith, for you cannot stray from the truth." When men and women have traveled to a certain point in their labors in this life, God sets a seal upon them that they never can forsake their God or His kingdom; for rather than they should do this, He will at once take them to Himself.³⁹

38 Whitney, 94. See note 42 herein regarding the identity of these apostles.

39 Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses* 12:103 (17 November 1867); cited in Andrew F. Ehat, "Joseph Smith's Introduction of Temple Ordinances and the 1844 Mormon Succession Question," (Master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1981), 138. (Note that this section of the thesis includes a reference to the Joseph Smith III blessing, now known to be a Hofmann forgery.)

In like manner, Heber C. Kimball's diary of 6 April 1839 noted:

The following words came to my mind, and the Spirit said unto me, "write," which I did by taking a piece of paper and writing on my knee as follows:.... "Verily I say unto my servant Heber, thou art my son, in whom I am well pleased; for thou art careful to hearken to my words, and not transgress my law, nor rebel against my servant Joseph Smith, for thou hast a respect to the words of mine anointed, even from the least to the greatest of them; therefore thy name is written in heaven, no more to be blotted out for ever, because of these things."⁴⁰

Heber too could have this privilege, despite also saying "I know this. I know it by revelation by the Spirit of God, for in this way my Heavenly Father communes with me, and maketh known unto me his mind and will. I have never seen him in person, but when I see my brethren I see his image, and I discover the attributes of God in them."⁴¹ This ought to call into question Snuffer's tidy conclusion:

Those who fall short of [receiving the Holy Spirit of promise], and *do not receive this witness from Christ in mortality* but receive it afterwards, will be Heirs of the Terrestrial Kingdom. These good but deluded souls trusted in men, rather than in Christ (432, emphasis added).

40 Heber C. Kimball, *Journal*, Library-Archives, the Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah; cited in *WJS*, 17–18 n. 6.

41 Heber C. Kimball, "Men Ought to Practise What They Teach, etc.," *Journal of Discourses* 11:82 (19 February 1865).

Alma, Heber, Brigham, and the Twelve could claim God’s power and authority—all had heard the voice of God. Callings and elections could be made sure without a dramatic vision.⁴² Might it not be sign-seeking for Brigham to insist upon a theophany when Joseph had already given him a revelation regarding his status? “Blessed are they,” said the risen Lord, “that have not seen, and yet have believed” (John 20:27). Snuffer ought not to ignore these historical and scriptural witnesses, or the implications of the promise which described the ways in which God would unveil himself:

Sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, and the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you, and it shall be *in his own time, and in his own way*, and according to his own will (D&C 88:68, emphasis added).

Claims #2 and #3: Brigham Young and Subsequent Apostles Were Not Personal Witnesses of Christ

The first apostles were charged by Oliver Cowdery with the “necessary” duty of their being able to “bear testimony... that you have seen the face of God.... Never cease striving until you

42 It is of note that the members of the Twelve who were in England, and thus were the subject of Joseph’s vision regarding their salvation, did not experience any apostasy: Heber C. Kimball, Orson Pratt, Parley P. Pratt, Willard Richards, George A. Smith, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and Brigham Young. Two quorum members who did not attend the mission as commanded would apostatize after Joseph’s death (John E. Page and William B. Smith), while the third went west to Utah (Orson Hyde). One spot in the quorum was vacant at the time. [James B. Allen and Malcolm R. Thorpe, “The Mission of the Twelve to England, 1840–41: Mormon Apostles and the Working Classes,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 15/4 (Summer 1975): 502–503.] All eight of the English missionaries plus Hyde would also receive the full temple ordinances from Joseph at Nauvoo, including the second anointing—see claim #7 herein. Page would receive nothing, and William Smith only the endowment (Ehat, 194).

have seen God face to face,” for “your ordination is not full and complete till God has laid His hand upon you” (89).⁴³

In Snuffer’s view, the apostles and their successors failed in this charge, which “was rarely realized, and that failing gave rise to feelings of inadequacy among Apostles who were never able to obtain such a blessing” (243). (Snuffer relies here upon D. Michael Quinn’s *Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power*⁴⁴ for documentation, and his account suffers from some of the same flaws.⁴⁵) As a result, claims Snuffer:

The first phase of Mormonism was dominated by visions, angels, and direct involvement by God. Those experiences are still celebrated and taught. However, they are only used as a legitimizing credential for a demystified church. The current phase of Mormonism is missing the direct appearance or involvement of God, angels, and visions. There is a disconnect between the miraculous events upon which Mormonism is based, and current church events (47).

All of this is part of Snuffer’s view that “Mormonism has become increasingly less mystic, less miraculous, and even less tolerant of ‘gifts’ of the Spirit. Although it retains an emphasis on personal revelation, there is no continuing expectation of new scripture, new commandments, or Divine visitation” (45). Snuffer ignores all the documents that prove otherwise, including Elder Bruce R. McConkie’s extensive discussion

⁴³ *Manuscript History of the Church*, 2:195–196. I have omitted PTHG’s boldface emphasis to the original.

⁴⁴ D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power*. Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 1997. Hereafter cited as *Extensions of Power*.

⁴⁵ The misleading claims and citations in the opening pages of Quinn’s mammoth work are reviewed in Duane Boyce, “A Betrayal of Trust (Review of: *The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power*, by D. Michael Quinn),” *FARMS Review of Books* 9/2 (1997): 147–163. For another example of Quinn’s shoddy work and dishonest footnotes, see *Extensions of Power*, 363 cited in Part Two, Conclusion.

of apostolic witness, where he not only quotes Cowdery with approval, but indicates that both the present-day Twelve and all Church members have the same privilege and duty.⁴⁶

Snuffer's claims are simply false—and I do not mean false in the sense that I have a differing interpretation or reading of the history. They are false because there is evidence that directly contradicts them, which we will now examine.

Modern examples—New Scripture

Snuffer provides no evidence that new scripture is not anticipated—though he does reject the authority of the apostles and prophets who could provide such scripture. Elder Neal A. Maxwell told an assembled Book of Mormon symposium:

The day will come, brothers and sisters, when we will have other books of scripture which will emerge to accompany the Holy Bible and the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price. Presently you and I carry our scriptures around in a “quad”; the day will come when you’ll need a little red wagon.⁴⁷

Elsewhere, Elder Maxwell promised that “many more scriptural writings will yet come to us,” mentioning those of Enoch, John, the ten tribes, and the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon.⁴⁸ If new scripture is not anticipated, why would an apostle say this to a roomful of scripture scholars? Snuffer's claim is false.

46 Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah: The First Coming of Christ* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Co., 1978), 592–595.

47 Neal A. Maxwell, “The Children of Christ” in *The Book of Mormon: Mosiah, Salvation Only Through Christ* eds. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr. (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1991), 1.

48 Neal A. Maxwell, *Wonderful Flood of Light* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1990), 15.

Modern Examples—Angels

Revelation continues with us today. The promptings of the Spirit, the dreams, and the visions and the visitations, and the ministering of angels all are with us now. And the still, small voice of the Holy Ghost “is a lamp unto [our] feet, and a light unto [our] path.” (Ps. 119:105.) Of that I bear witness. —Elder Boyd K. Packer⁴⁹

Despite Snuffer’s claim (45, 47), the expectation and experience of angels is not lacking in the modern Church. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland has spoken extensively about angels, quoting Moroni 7:35–37 on the persistence of angelic visions “as long as time shall last... or there shall be one man upon the face thereof to be saved.”⁵⁰ In a 1982 BYU devotional address, he taught that “when we’ve tried, really tried, and waited for what seemed never to be ours, *then* ‘the angels came and ministered unto him.’ For that ministration in your life I pray in the name of Jesus Christ.” “Angels and ministers of grace to defend us?” he asked in 1993 general conference, “They are all about us, and their holy sovereign, the Father of us all, is divinely anxious to bless us this very moment.”⁵¹ “Our defense,” he told a CES audience in 2000, “is in prayer and faith, in study and fasting, in the gifts of the Spirit, the ministration of angels, the power of the priesthood.”⁵² In 1993, he taught the following:

49 Boyd K. Packer, “Revelation in a Changing World,” *Ensign* (November 1989): 16.

50 Jeffrey R. Holland, “For Times of Trouble,” Brigham Young University devotional (18 March 1980). See also Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Inconvenient Messiah,” BYU devotional address (15 February 1982).

51 Jeffrey R. Holland, “Look to God and Live,” *Ensign* (November 1993): 13

52 Jeffrey R. Holland, “Therefore, What?” CES Conference on the New Testament, Brigham Young University (8 August 2000), 1–2.

May I suggest to you that one of the things we need to teach our students, and one of the things which will become more important in their lives the longer they live, is the reality of angels, their work, and their ministry. Obviously I speak here not alone of the angel Moroni, but also of those more personal ministering angels who are with us and around us, empowered to help us, and who do exactly that....

I believe we need to speak of and believe in and bear testimony to the ministry of angels more than we sometimes do. They constitute one of God's great methods of witnessing through the veil, and no document in all this world teaches that principle so clearly and so powerfully and so often as does the Book of Mormon.⁵³

These are not the words of someone convinced angels are safely in the past, useful only for "legitimizing...a demystified church." Snuffer is simply wrong.

"When we keep the covenants made," by baptism and the sacrament, said Elder Dallin H. Oaks, "we are promised that we will always have His Spirit to be with us. The ministering of angels is one of the manifestations of that Spirit."⁵⁴ "Visions do happen," he said, "Voices are heard from beyond the veil. I know this."⁵⁵ "I feel compelled, on this 150th anniversary of the Church, to certify to you that I know that the day of miracles has not ceased. I know that angels minister unto men," said Boyd K.

53 Jeffrey R. Holland, "A Standard Unto My People," CES Symposium on the Book of Mormon, Brigham Young University, 9 August 1994, 10-11.

54 Dallin H. Oaks, "The Aaronic Priesthood and the Sacrament," General Conference, October 1998.

55 Dallin H. Oaks, "Teaching and Learning by the Spirit," *Ensign* (March 1997), 14.

Packer.⁵⁶ Elsewhere, he said, “The Lord reveals His will through dreams and visions, visitations, through angels, through His own voice, and through the voice of His servants.”⁵⁷

Modern Examples—the Necessity and Reality of Ongoing Revelation

Snuffer declares that “unless there is a constant stream of revelation coming to the latter-day gentiles then they do not have the gift they claim” (342). This is certainly true. But he then decides that this warning applies to the Church of Jesus Christ—and not to just some *members* of the Church, but to all those who are leaders as well. But how does he know this?

He is not privy to the councils of Church leaders. And to maintain this stance he must dismiss repeated testimony that such revelation guides the Church. Examples abound—Brigham Young: “Now, be sure to get the spirit of revelation, so that you can tell when you hear the true Shepherd’s voice, and know him from a false one; for if you are the elect, it would be a great pity to have you led astray to destruction”;⁵⁸ Joseph F. Smith: “Christ is the head of his Church and not man, and the connection can only be maintained upon the principle of

56 Boyd K. Packer, “A Tribute to the Rank and File of the Church,” *Ensign* (May 1980): 65. Snuffer also quotes Elder Packer’s talk “The Mantle is Far, Far Greater Than the Intellect”, 5th annual CES Religious Educator’s Symposium, 22 August 1981 (reproduced in *BYU Studies* 21/3 (Summer 1981): 259–278) as evidence that Packer advocates the view that “though He did not appear, speak or send angels, God was not absent” (256 n. 318). As demonstrated by the main text, Snuffer distorts Elder Packer’s views—he refers in the August 1981 talk to those to whom “the hand of the Lord may not be visible.” He does not deny that God speaks, appears, or sends angels, and in fact urges those who write history to be those who “believe that the successors to the Prophet Joseph Smith were and are prophets, seers, and revelators; that revelation from heaven directs the decisions, policies, and pronouncements that come from the headquarters of the Church” (p. 13 in online reprint).

57 Boyd K. Packer, “Personal Revelation: The Gift, the Test, and the Promise,” General Conference, October 1994.

58 Brigham Young, “Source of True Happiness—Prayer, Etc.,” *Journal of Discourses* 6:45 (15 November 1857).

direct and continuous revelation”;⁵⁹ Marion G. Romney: “The guidance of this Church comes, not alone from the written word, but also from continuous revelation, and the Lord gives that revelation to the Church through His chosen leaders and none else”;⁶⁰ Joseph Fielding Smith: “The remark is sometimes made by thoughtless and unobserving persons that the spirit of revelation is not guiding the Latter-day Saints now as in former times.... I say to you that there is revelation in the Church.... We have revelations that have been given, that have been written; some of them have been published; some of them have not”;⁶¹ James E. Faust: “I can testify that the process of continuous revelation comes to the Church very frequently. It comes daily”;⁶² and Gordon B. Hinckley:

There has been in the life of every [prophet and apostle I have known] an overpowering manifestation of the inspiration of God. Those who have been Presidents have been prophets in a very real way. I have intimately witnessed the spirit of revelation upon them.... Each Thursday, when we are at home, the First Presidency and the Twelve meet in the temple, in those sacred hallowed precincts, and we pray together and discuss certain matters together, and the spirit of revelation comes upon those present. I know. I have seen it.⁶³

On a fundamental level, Snuffer is engaged in a form of sign-seeking. He will not sustain the prophets—and induces

⁵⁹ Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine: Selections from the Sermons and Writings of Joseph F. Smith*, edited by John A. Widtsoe (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Co., 1919), 104–105.

⁶⁰ Marion G. Romney, *Conference Report* (April 1942): 17–18.

⁶¹ Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1954–1956), 1:281–282.

⁶² James E. Faust, “Come Out of the Darkness into the Light,” CES Fireside for Young Adults (8 September 2002).

⁶³ Gordon B. Hinckley, *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1997), 71, 555.

others to disregard them—because they will not satisfy his demand for the sensational. As Elder Oaks cautioned, “It is usually inappropriate to recite miraculous circumstances *to a general audience that includes people with very different levels of spiritual maturity*. To a general audience, miracles will be faith-reinforcing for some but an inappropriate sign for others.”⁶⁴

Snuffer also ignores the warning and witness given by President Kimball:

Expecting the spectacular, one may not be fully alerted to the constant flow of revealed communication. I say, in the deepest of humility, but also by the power and force of a burning testimony in my soul, that from the prophet of the Restoration to the prophet of our own year, the communication line is unbroken, the authority is continuous, and light, brilliant and penetrating, continues to shine. The sound of the voice of the Lord is a continuous melody and a thunderous appeal. For nearly a century and a half there has been no interruption.... Every faithful person may have the inspiration for his own limited kingdom. But the Lord definitely calls prophets today and reveals his secrets unto them as he did yesterday, he does today, and will do tomorrow: that is the way it is.⁶⁵

Elder Packer’s observation should be taken to heart: “There has come, these last several years, a succession of announcements that *show our day to be a day of intense revelation, equaled, perhaps, only in those days of beginning*, 150 years ago. But then, as now, the world did not believe.”⁶⁶

64 Dallin H. Oaks, “Miracles,” CES Fireside in Calgary, Canada, 7 May 2000, 3, italics added. Reprinted in “Miracles,” *Ensign* (June 2001).

65 Spencer W. Kimball, “Revelation: The Word of the Lord to His Prophets,” General Conference, April 1977.

66 Packer, “A Tribute to the Rank and File of the Church,” italics added.

Modern Examples—Theophany or Divine Visitation

I approach this section with some trepidation. Such matters are sacred, and Snuffer strikes me as far too glib in his criticism of leaders who do not measure up to his views about how apostles ought to undertake their witness. I have taken as my guide the statement of President Packer:

I made a rule for myself a number of years ago with reference to this subject [of keeping spiritual experiences sacred]. When someone relates a spiritual experience to me, personally or in a small, intimate group, I make it a rigid rule not to talk about it thereafter. I assume that it was told to me in a moment of trust and confidence, and therefore I never talk about it. If, however, on some future occasion I hear that individual talk about it in public in a large gathering, or where a number of people are present, then I know that it has been stated publicly and I can feel free under the right circumstances to relate it. But I know many, many sacred and important things that have been related to me by others that I will not discuss unless I am privileged to do so under the rule stated above. I know that others of the Brethren have the same feeling.⁶⁷

I will, then, confine myself to published reports, though I am aware of other less-public accounts. A year after his call to the apostleship, Elder Packer said:

Occasionally during the past year I have been asked a question. Usually it comes as a curious, almost an idle, question about the qualifications to stand as a witness for Christ. The question they ask is, “Have you seen Him?”

67 Boyd K. Packer, *Teach Ye Diligently* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1975), 326.

That is a question that I have never asked of another. I have not asked that question of my brethren in the Quorum, thinking that it would be so sacred and so personal that one would have to have some special inspiration, indeed, some authorization, even to ask it.

There are some things just too sacred to discuss.⁶⁸

Elder Packer later expanded on these ideas, writing:

Though I have not asked that question of others, I have heard them answer it—but not when they were asked. I have heard one of my Brethren declare, “I know, from experiences too sacred to relate, that Jesus is the Christ.” I have heard another testify, “I know that God lives, I know that the Lord lives, and more than that, I know the Lord.” I repeat: they have answered this question not when they were asked, but under the prompting of the Spirit, on sacred occasions, when “the Spirit beareth record.” (D&C 1:39.)

There are some things just too sacred to discuss: not secret, but sacred; not to be discussed, but to be harbored and protected and regarded with the deepest of reverence.⁶⁹

Elsewhere, Elder Packer warned, “Do not mistake our reverent hesitation to speak glibly or too frequently of Him to mean that we do not know Him. Our brethren of Judah knew Him in ancient times, our brethren of Ephraim also. He is no stranger to His Saints, to His prophets and Apostles now.”⁷⁰

68 Boyd K. Packer, ““The Spirit Beareth Record,”” General Conference, April 1971.

69 Packer, *Teach Ye Diligently*, 86–87.

70 Boyd K. Packer, “Scriptures,” General Conference, October 1982; reproduced in Boyd K. Packer, *Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled* (Salt Lake City, Utah:

And, he gave clear insight into the nature and burden of the modern apostleship:

*We do not talk of those sacred interviews that qualify the servants of the Lord to bear a special witness of Him, for we have been commanded not to do so. But we are free, indeed, we are obliged, to bear that special witness.... I am a witness to the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Only Begotten of the Father; that He has a body of flesh and bone; that He knows those who are His servants here and that He is known of them. I know that He directs this Church now, as He established it then, through a prophet of God. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.*⁷¹

Elder Packer referred again to such instructions: “I bear witness that the Lord lives, that Jesus is the Christ. This I know. I know that He lives. I know that He directs this Church. *Sometimes I wish that there were the authorization to say more, say it plainer, but that is the way we say it—the same as a Primary child would say it, that He lives, that we know.*”⁷² Elder Oaks made similar observations:

Why don’t our talks in general conference and local meetings say more about the miracles we have seen? Most of the miracles we experience are not to be shared. Consistent with the teachings of the scriptures, we hold them sacred and share them only when the Spirit prompts us to do so...In bearing testimonies and in our public addresses we rarely mention our

Bookcraft, 1991), 11.

71 Packer, “Tribute to the Rank and File,” 65, italics added.

72 Boyd K. Packer, Address at Ricks College Faculty and Staff Dinner, 24 August 1988; cited in Boyd K. Packer, “I Have That Witness,” in *Mine Errand from the Lord*, compiled by Clyde J. Williams (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Co., 2008), chapter 28.

most miraculous experiences, and we rarely rely on signs that the gospel is true. We usually just affirm our testimony of the truthfulness of the restored gospel and give few details on how we obtained it.⁷³

Marion G. Romney likewise observed, “I don’t know just how to answer people when they ask the question, ‘Have you seen the Lord?’ I think that the witness that I have and the witness that each of us [apostles] has, and the details of how it came, are too sacred to tell. I have never told anybody some of the experiences I have had, not even my wife. I know that God lives. I not only know that he lives, but I know him.”⁷⁴

For those with ears to hear, the message is clear. The apostles speak and testify as they do by divine instruction. Who is Snuffer to gainsay them? Would he have them disobey God to satisfy standards which he has imposed?

Despite the cautions and commandments referred to by Elders Oaks and Packer, sacred manifestations have been reported throughout the post-Joseph Smith period of the Church. I include a selection below.

Wilford Woodruff

- President W[ilford] Woodruff told some of the Saints that our Saviour had appeared unto him in the East Room in the Holy of Holies, & told him that He had accepted of the [Salt Lake] Temple & of the dedication services, & that the Lord forgave us His Saints who had assisted in any manner towards the erection and completion of the Temple—that our sins were forgiven us by the Lord Jesus Christ.... Pres[iden]t Woodruff said the House had been full of revelation, more so than he had ever witnessed at

73 Oaks, “Miracles,” 3.

74 Marion G. Romney, cited in F. Burton Howard, *Marion G. Romney: His Life and Faith* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1988), 222.

any dedication of the previous Temples and he had been present at all of them from Kirtland to this present one.⁷⁵

- I feel at liberty to reveal to this assembly this morning what has been revealed to me since we were here yesterday morning. If the veil could be taken from our eyes and we could see into the spirit world, we would see that Joseph Smith, Brigham Young and John Taylor had gathered together every spirit that ever dwelt in the flesh in this Church since its organization. We would also see the faithful apostles and elders of the Nephites who dwelt in the flesh in the days of Jesus Christ. In that assembly we would also see Isaiah and every prophet and apostle that ever prophesied of the great work of God. In the midst of these spirits we would see the Son of God, the Savior, who presides and guides and controls the preparing of the kingdom of God on the earth and in heaven.⁷⁶

We note that President Woodruff emphasized that he “felt at liberty” to disclose some of what he had seen by divine manifestation. Were he not at a temple dedication, he might well have been more reticent. Snuffer, by contrast, claims that “it was as if the church labored under Divine disapproval. It was as if the Lord’s ire was on display [given] nature’s reaction to the Salt Lake Temple dedication” (206). Snuffer does not accept Woodruff’s witness of divine approval, so he seeks to appeal to the weather for insight into the divine mind.⁷⁷

75 Wilford Woodruff, in *Collected Discourses Delivered by: President Wilford Woodruff, His Two Counselors, the Twelve Apostles, and Others*, edited by Brian H. Stuy, 5 vol. (BHS Publishing, 1987–1992), 5:225.; citing John Lee Jones biography (no date) and Minutes of Salt Lake Temple dedication on 6–24 April 1893, 16th session, 13 April 1893.

76 Woodruff in Stuy, *Collected Discourses* 3:274; citing third dedicatory session and Archibald Bennett, *Saviors on Mount Zion*, 142–143.

77 “To many who witnessed it,” noted Brian Stuy, “the raging storm stood as a manifestation of the anger and fury of Satan and his angels.... This event took on added significance when sea gulls were sighted hovering over the Temple.... Thus the symbols of the Gulls and the Gales became a powerful indicator to the

- I know what the will of God is concerning this people, and if they will take the counsel we give them, all will be well with them.... Speaking of the administration of angels. I never asked the Lord in my life to send me an angel or to show me any miracle.... I have had the administration of angels in my day and time, though I never prayed for an angel. I have had, in several instances, the administration of holy messengers....The room was filled with light. A messenger came to me. We had a long conversation. He laid before me as if in a panorama, the signs of the last days, and told me what was coming to pass. I saw the sun turned to darkness, the moon to blood, the stars fall from heaven. I saw the resurrection day. I saw armies of men in the first resurrection, clothed with the robes of the Holy Priesthood. I saw the second resurrection. I saw a great many signs that were presented before me, by this personage; and among the rest, there were seven lions, as of burning brass, set in the heavens. He says, "That is one of the signs that will appear in the heavens before the coming of the Son of Man. It is a sign of the various dispensations.".... Now, I have had all these testimonies,

observant Saints that the Lord was indeed pleased with the labor of His people, but that the adversary was angry with the completion of the Temple" [Brian H. Stuy, "Come, Let Us Go Up to the Mountain of the Lord: The Salt Lake Temple Dedication," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 31/3 (1998): 107–108]. One participant wrote, "It is claimed that Heber C. Kimball once predicted that when the Salt Lake Temple should be dedicated the power of Satan should be loosed and the strongest wind storm ever witnessed in Utah should be felt on that occasion. In pursuance and fulfillment of this prediction, a strong breeze began blowing upon our entering the grounds at 9 a.m. and increased to a hurricane of great violence at the precise time the dedicatory prayer was being offered by Pres. Wilford Woodruff" [John Franklin Tolton, *Autobiography*, 6 April 1893; cited in Stuy, 108.

The *Deseret News* was also grateful for the wind's effects, noting that it dried up some of the early spring melt that threatened to cause flooding ["'It's An Ill Wind,' Etc.," *Deseret News* (7 April 1893): 7]. Snuffer does not consider the contemporaneous reaction before seeking to divine God's opinions.

and they are true. But with all these, I have never had any testimony since I have been in the flesh, that has been greater than the testimony of the Holy Ghost. That is the strongest testimony that can be given to me or to any man in the flesh. Now, every man has a right to that, and when he obtains it, it is a living witness to him.... I know what awaits this nation. I know what awaits the Latter-day Saints. Many things have been shown to me by vision and by revelation.⁷⁸

George Q. Cannon

- I know that Jesus lives; for I have seen Him.⁷⁹
- I would not dare to tell all that the Lord has shown unto me.⁸⁰
- I have been greatly favored of the Lord. My mind has been rapt in vision and have saw the beauties and Glory of God. I have saw and conversed with the Savior face to face. God will bestow this upon you.⁸¹

Lorenzo Snow

Lorenzo Snow's granddaughter related his witness:

One evening while I was visiting grandpa Snow in his room in the Salt Lake Temple, I remained until the door keepers had gone and the night-watchmen had not yet come in, so grand-pa said he would take me to the main front entrance and let mc out that way. He got his bunch of keys from his dresser. After we left his

⁷⁸ Wilford Woodruff, "Administration of Angels," (3 March 1889); in Stuy, *Collected Discourses* 1:216–218.

⁷⁹ George Q. Cannon, "Supporting Church Leaders," (6 October 1896), reported in *The Deseret Weekly* 53 (31 October 1896): 610; reproduced in Stuy, *Collected Discourses* 5:225.

⁸⁰ Cannon, in Stuy, *Collected Discourses*, 3:277, citing twenty-first session of dedication, 15 April 1893.

⁸¹ Cannon, in Stuy, *Collected Discourses*, 3:285, citing Francis Asbury Hammond, Journal, 20 April 1893.

room and while we were still in the large corridor leading into the celestial room, I was walking several steps ahead of grand-pa when he stopped me and said: “Wait a moment, Allie, I want to tell you something. It was right here that the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to me at the time of the death of President Woodruff. He instructed me to go right ahead and reorganize the First Presidency of the Church at once and not wait as had been done after the death of the previous presidents, and that I was to succeed President Woodruff.”

Then grand-pa came a step nearer and held out his left hand and said; “He stood right here, about three feet above the floor. It looked as though He stood on a plate of solid gold.”

Grand-pa told me what a glorious personage the Savior is and described His hands, feet, countenance and beautiful white robes, all of which were of such a glory of whiteness and brightness that he could hardly gaze upon Him.

Then he came another step nearer and put his right hand on my head and said: “Now, grand-daughter, I want you to remember that this is the testimony of your grand-father, that he told you with his own lips that he actually saw the Savior, here in the Temple, and talked with Him face to face.”⁸²

82 LeRoi C. Snow, “An Experience of My Father’s,” *Improvement Era* 33/11 (September 1933): 677.

Joseph F. Smith

His vision of Christ and the redemption of the dead (D&C 138) is well-known to every member. “There is no reason why we should not have the ministrations of angels if we were worthy.”⁸³

George Albert Smith

Recalling a time of great sickness, President Smith said:

I became so weak as to be scarcely able to move. It was a slow and exhausting effort for me even to turn over in bed. One day, under these conditions, I lost consciousness of my surroundings and thought I had passed to the Other Side.... I saw a man coming towards me. I became aware that he was a very large man, and I hurried my steps to reach him, because I recognized him as my grandfather.

When Grandfather came within a few feet of me, he stopped. His stopping was an invitation for me to stop. Then—and this I would like the boys and girls and young people never to forget—he looked at me very earnestly and said:

“I would like to know what you have done with my name.”

Everything I had ever done passed before me as though it were a flying picture on a screen—everything I had done. Quickly this vivid retrospect came down to the very time I was standing there. My whole life had passed before me. I smiled and looked at my grandfather and said:

83 Joseph F. Smith in Stuy, *Collected Discourses* 3:380, citing fifteenth session of Salt Lake Temple dedication (12 April 1893).

“I have never done anything with your name of which you need be ashamed.”

He stepped forward and took me in his arms, and as he did so, I became conscious again of my earthly surroundings. My pillow was as wet as though water had been poured on it—wet with tears of gratitude that I could answer unashamed.⁸⁴

David O. McKay

Brethren, I know as I know I am looking into your faces that the gospel of Jesus Christ is true and that he is my Savior, as real as he was when Thomas said, with bowed head, “My Lord my God!”⁸⁵

As David O. McKay approached Samoa in 1921, he reported:

I then fell asleep, and beheld in vision something infinitely sublime. In the distance I beheld a beautiful white city. Though far away, yet I seemed to realize that trees with luscious fruit, shrubbery with gorgeously-tinted leaves, and flowers in perfect bloom abounded everywhere. The clear sky above seemed to reflect these beautiful shades of color. I then saw a great concourse of people approaching the city. Each one wore a white flowing robe, and a white headdress. Instantly my attention seemed centered upon their Leader, and though I could see only the profile of his features and his body, I recognized him at once as my Savior! The tint and radiance of his countenance were glorious to

84 George Albert Smith and Preston Nibley, *Sharing the Gospel with Others* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Co., 1948), 111–112; also available in Leon R. Hartshorn, *Classic Stories from the Lives of Our Prophets* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Co., 1971), 239.

85 David O. McKay, Conference Report (April 1949): 182.

behold! There was a peace about him which seemed sublime — it was divine!

The city, I understood, was his. It was the City Eternal; and the people following him were to abide there in peace and eternal happiness.

But who were they?

As if the Savior read my thoughts, he answered by pointing to a semicircle that then appeared above them, and on which were written in gold the words:

“These Are They Who Have Overcome The World — Who Have Truly Been Born Again!”

When I awoke, it was breaking day over Apia harbor.⁸⁶

Harold B. Lee

I know that this is the Lord’s work. I know that Jesus Christ lives, and that he is closer to this Church and appears more often in holy places than any of us realize, excepting those to whom he makes personal appearance.⁸⁷

Elsewhere he said:

⁸⁶ David O. McKay world tour diary, 10 May 1921; cited in Clare Middlemiss and David O. McKay, *Cherished Experiences from the Writings of President David O. McKay* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Co., 1955), 102; also available in Hartshorn, 286–287.

⁸⁷ Harold B. Lee, “Everlasting Covenant,” MIA conference address, 29 June 1969, 9–10; cited in *Living Prophets for a Living Church* (Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1973), 119; also in *Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, 11 and portion in *Ye Are the Light of the World* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1974), 10.

I shall never forget my feelings of loneliness the Saturday night after I was told by the President of the Church that I was to be sustained the next day as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. That was a sleepless night....

And then one of the Brethren, who arranged for Sunday evening radio programs, said, “Now you know that after having been ordained, you are a special witness to the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ. We want you to give the Easter talk next Sunday night.”

The assignment was to bear testimony of the mission of the Lord concerning His resurrection, His life, and His ministry, so I went to a room in the Church Office Building where I could be alone, and I read the Gospels, particularly those that had to do with the closing days and weeks and months of the life of Jesus. And as I read, I realized that I was having a new experience.

It wasn't any longer just a story; it seemed as though I was actually seeing the events about which I was reading, and when I gave my talk and closed with my testimony, I said, “I am now the least of all my brethren and want to witness to you that I know, as I have never known before this call came, that Jesus is the Savior of this world. He lives and He died for us.” Why did I know? Because there had come a witness, that special kind of a witness, that may have been the more sure word of prophecy that one must have if he is to be a special witness.⁸⁸

88 Harold B. Lee, Joint Nottingham and Leicester Conference Nottingham Stake, England, 2 September 1973; cited in “Speaking for Himself—President Lee’s Stories,” *Ensign* (February 1974): 18; also in Hartshorn, 337.

President Lee also addressed the very charge which Snuffer raises—that an apostle must be a personal witness of Christ’s resurrection:

May I bear my own testimony. Some years ago two missionaries came to me with what seemed to them to be a very difficult question. A young Methodist minister had laughed at them when they had said that apostles were necessary today in order for the true church to be upon the earth. They said that the minister said, “Do you realize that when the apostles met to choose one to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Judas, they said it had to be one who companied with them and had been a witness of all things pertaining to the mission and resurrection of the Lord? How can you say you have apostles, if that be the measure of an apostle?”

And so these young men said, “What shall we answer?”

I said to them, “Go back and ask your minister friend two questions. First, how did the Apostle Paul gain what was necessary to be called an apostle? He didn’t know the Lord, had no personal acquaintance. He hadn’t accompanied the apostles. He hadn’t been a witness of the ministry nor of the resurrection of the Lord. How did he gain his testimony sufficient to be an apostle? And the second question you ask him is, How does he know that all who are today apostles have not likewise received that witness?”

I bear witness to you that those who hold the apostolic calling may, and do, know of the reality of the mission of the Lord. To know is to be born and quickened in the inner man.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Harold B. Lee, *Stand Ye in Holy Places* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Co., 1974), 64–65.

Spencer W. Kimball

Said President Kimball:

“I know that God lives. I know that Jesus Christ lives,” said... my predecessor, “for I have seen him.” I bear this testimony to you brethren in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.⁹⁰

Brethren and Sisters, we come now to the close of this great conference. You have heard from most of the Brethren, as I have said and their testimonies have been inspiring. What they have told you is true. It has come from their hearts. They have this same testimony, and they know it is true. They are true servants sent to you from our Heavenly Father. I pray that you will be listening, that you will be remembering, that you will take these many truths with you to your homes and in your lives and to your families. Brethren and Sisters, I want to add to these testimonies of these prophets my testimony that I know that He lives. And I know that we may see him, and that we may be with him, and that we may enjoy his presence always if we will live the commandments of the Lord and do the things which we have been commanded by him to do and reminded by the Brethren to do.⁹¹

90 Spencer W. Kimball, “Strengthening the Family—the Basic Unit of the Church,” General Conference, April 1978. President Kimball attributed this quote to John Taylor. The actual quote is from George Q. Cannon (see note 78). See discussion in Dennis C. Davis, Letter to the editor, *Sunstone* 15:5/8 (November 1991).

91 Spencer W. Kimball, “The Cause is Just and Worthy,” *Ensign* (May 1974): 119.

Ezra Taft Benson

As one of those called as special witnesses, I add my testimony to those of fellow Apostles: He lives! He lives with resurrected body. There is no truth or fact of which I am more assured, or know better by personal experience, than the truth of the literal resurrection of our Lord.⁹²

PTHG simply does not fairly or accurately characterize the record on this point. It ignores explicit discussion and explanation of the issue, and remains silent about many exceptions to its claims. We will conclude by considering the case of Heber J. Grant, upon whom *PTHG* expends considerable ink.

Heber J. Grant

Snuffer treats President Grant as a prototype of the new type of Church leader (245–264). *PTHG* claims that “spiritual manifestations were effectively eliminated from the church president’s office in the third phase, as demonstrated by President Grant’s diary” (256)—as we will see (and as even readers of Snuffer’s book can see if they are alert) the diaries do nothing of the sort. The record shows that Grant did not have many of the types of experience which Snuffer has declared to be vital—but there are reasons for this observation that are unique to Grant, including a personal request he made to God. Despite *PTHG*’s claim, Grant was very clear that he believed in, sought, and received “spiritual manifestations.”⁹³

92 Ezra Taft Benson, “Five Marks of the Divinity of Jesus Christ,” University of Utah fireside, 9 December 1979. Published in *New Era* 10 (December 1980): 48 and *Ensign* (December 2001).

93 For example, Grant once prayed to be able to speak beyond his natural ability in order to help his brother develop a testimony of the Church. When Grant sat down, President George Q. Cannon was urged to conclude. He declined, but when pressed rose and said, “There are times when the Lord Almighty inspires some speaker by the revelations of His Spirit, and he is so abundantly blessed by the inspiration of the living God that it is a mistake for anybody else to speak

A key bit of Snuffer's evidence is Grant's supposed admission that he did not know of anyone who had seen Christ since Joseph Smith. Snuffer bemoans the fate of members who learn this, only to "lose faith in the church" (65):

[Grant's 1926 letter reads:] "I know of no instance where the Lord has appeared to an individual since His appearance to the Prophet Joseph Smith." It is the gap between the misconception held by many Latter-day Saints of Christ's regular appearances to church leaders, and the reality of His absence that creates distress (65).⁹⁴

Since this reading matches Snuffer's thesis, he apparently does not challenge it. But, just one page earlier, Snuffer has cited Heber J. Grant from fifteen years later:

I have never prayed to see the Savior, I know of men—Apostles—who have seen the Savior more than once. I have prayed to the Lord for the inspiration of his Spirit to guide me, and I have told him that I have seen so many men fall because of some great manifestation to them, they felt their importance, their greatness (64).⁹⁵

following him, and one of those occasions has been today, and I desire that this meeting be dismissed without further remarks." The subject of Grant's address was "a testimony of my knowledge that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, and to the wonderful and marvelous labors of the Prophet Joseph Smith, bearing witness to the knowledge God had given me that Joseph was in very deed a prophet of the true and living God." [Heber J. Grant, *Conference Report* (October 1922): 188–190.]

94 The citation is from Heber J. Grant to Mrs. Claud Peery, 13 April 1926, in First Presidency letterbooks, Vol. 72; Snuffer cites it from Quinn, *Extensions of Power*, 4. A typescript copy is also reported in the Lester Bush papers, University of Utah archives.

95 Snuffer cites from *The Diaries of Heber J. Grant, 1880–1945*, abridged (Salt Lake City, Utah: Privately Published, 2010), 468, entry for 4 October 1942. See also Snuffer, 256 for repeat citation.

President Grant's 1926 letter says he knows of no one that has seen "the Lord"—and Snuffer reads this as a reference to Christ. Yet, this 1942 statement says that he has seen "so many men fall," because of pride in spiritual manifestations, and he knows of apostles who have had a Christ theophany more than once. If we put aside the possibility of Grant lying in one or both instances, there remain two options—either he has suddenly learned of such events in the intervening years, or his letter in 1926 refers to something else.⁹⁶ I suspect that it refers to the Father, rather than to Christ as Snuffer mistakes it—Grant says he has prayed to "the Lord," and it seems unlikely that he was praying to Jesus, since LDS practice has always been to pray to the Father.⁹⁷

And if apostles did not seek out and have such theophanies, why would Grant feel it necessary to explicitly pray to God and ask not to receive one, and also explain why he had done so? This evidence does not match *PTHG*'s picture of a leadership disinterested in heavenly gifts.

Grant described his sense of inadequacy on being called as an apostle:

There are two spirits striving with us always, one telling us to continue our labor for good, and one telling us that with the faults and failings of our nature we are unworthy. I can truthfully say that from October, 1882, until February, 1883, that spirit followed me day and night, telling me that I was unworthy to be an apostle of the Church, and that I ought to resign. When I

⁹⁶ Grant also knew of Lorenzo Snow's theophany; see Snow, "An Experience of My Father's," 677.

⁹⁷ John Taylor also showed some ambiguity in his use of the title "Lord": "The Lord appeared unto Joseph Smith, both the Father and the Son" (*Journal of Discourses* 21:65). Joseph Fielding Smith wrote that "it is well for those who address the congregations of the people to use these holy names [of Deity] sparingly when other expressions will suffice. The term Lord whether applied to the Father or the Son is permissible" (*Doctrines of Salvation* 3:121).

would testify of my knowledge that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Redeemer of mankind, it seemed as though a voice would say to me: “You lie! You lie! You have never seen Him.”⁹⁸

It is troubling to see *PTHG* adopt and repeat the evil spirit’s message. A year later, Grant described the same events:

I was a very unhappy man from October until February. For the next four months whenever I would bear my testimony of the divinity of the Savior, there seemed to be a voice that would say: “You lie, because you have never seen Him.” One of the brethren had made the remark that unless a man had seen the Lamb of God—that was his expression—he was not fit to be an apostle. This feeling that I have mentioned would follow me. I would wake up in the night with the impression: “You do not know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, because you have never seen Him,” and the same feeling would come to me when I would preach and bear testimony. It worried me from October until the following February.⁹⁹

PTHG cites another entry in Grant’s diary from 1890 that touches the same themes:

Heber J. Grant. Stated that he had never had an inspired dreaming his life and that although he had always desired to see his father in dream or vision that he had never been allowed to enjoy this great privilege. He had at all times been afraid to ask for any great

98 Heber J. Grant, “Opening Conference Message,” General Conference Address, 4 April 1941; reproduced in *Improvement Era* 44/5 (May 1941): 267 and *Conference Report* (April 1941): 4–5. Also in G. Homer Durham (editor), *Gospel Standards: Selections from the Sermons and Writings of Heber J. Grant* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Co., 1941), 194.

99 Heber J. Grant, *Conference Report* (October 1842): 26.

spiritual manifestation as he would then be under greater obligations and he had feared that he might become unfaithful as others had done who had been blessed with great manifestations.... I have always felt that I am greatly deficient in spiritual gifts.¹⁰⁰

However, less than a year later, Grant would, in a private meeting with his fellow apostles, describe how his mind was put at ease:

When I was called to the apostleship I felt so unworthy that I desired to decline the honor. Even after my ordination this feeling continued until about three months later while on a mission with Brigham Young Jr. in Arizona. I was one day riding alone and thinking of my unworthiness, when the Spirit impressed me just as though a voice had spoken, “You were not worthy but the Prophet Joseph to whom you will belong in the next world, and your father, have interceded for you that you might be called, and now it remains for you to prove yourself worthy.”¹⁰¹

It is perhaps significant that Grant’s call to the apostleship happened while he was young and, by his own report of what the Spirit told him, unready. His maturation and further preparation would happen *during* the apostleship, rather than prior to it.

100 *Diaries of Heber J. Grant, 1880–1945*, 115; cited by PTHG, 246–247.

101 Heber J. Grant, quoted in Abraham H. Cannon Journals, L. Tom Perry Special Collections Department, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, entry for 2 April 1891; reproduced in Dennis J. Horne (editor), *The Journals of Abraham H. Cannon* (Clearfield, Utah: Gnolaum Books, 2004), 179. In the same meeting, Grant also spoke of a spiritual manifestation concerning his deceased brother: “When my brother George accidentally shot and killed himself I felt very sad, because he was a most faithful Latter-day Saint. I brooded over his death until the Spirit impressed me that my father desired his services on the other side. I then felt easy.” Again, where is the Church leader disinterested in spiritual manifestations? Only in PTHG’s fanciful reconstruction.

Snuffer also tells of how Grant's mother reported that some believed her son "filled with pride" and that he ought to be relieved of his apostleship (250). It is worth asking—as Snuffer does not—whether Grant's protestations of inadequacy, his sense that he was weak in spiritual gifts compared to others, and his acute awareness of the dangers of pride were actually evidence of a deep humility. Snuffer notes that "recording criticism from his own mother proves that record is an authentic and candid source. He is not trying to hide himself in its pages," (250) but misses the obvious corollary—if Grant is indeed authentic, candid, and not trying to hide himself, that too is excellent evidence of his deep humility. And so, his protestations of spiritual weakness and inadequacy must be read in that light. Many early members described revelations in which Grant's role as an apostle was foretold,¹⁰² but Grant tended to focus instead on his weakness and downplay the possibility of holding high office.¹⁰³ "I think I am safe in saying," he wrote, "that about half of the Latter-day Saints if not two-thirds of them were simply dumbfounded when I was chosen to be a member of the Apostles."¹⁰⁴ Soon after his call, he wrote another friend:

102 Many of those who knew him believed he was destined to the apostleship. These included: Edwin D. Woolley, Heber C. Kimball, Eliza R. Snow, Zina D. Young, his mother Rachel R. Grant, Charles Savage, Anthony W. Ivins, and Richard W. Young. See Ronald W. Walker, "Young Heber J. Grant's Years of Passage," *Brigham Young University Studies* 24/2 (Spring 1984): 131–132, 149 (reprinted in *BYUS* 43/1 (2004): 41–60) and "Young Heber J. Grant and His Call to the Apostleship," *Brigham Young University Studies* 43/1 (2004): 167 (reprint of *BYU Studies* 18/1 (1977): 121–126).

103 "Heber often brushed these [claims about his future] off as being the illusory yearnings of a widow for her only son." [Francis M. Gibbons, *Dynamic Disciples, Prophets of God: Life Stories of the Presidents of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Co., 1996), 155.

104 Heber J. Grant to Willard Young, 1 February 1892, Grant Letterpress Copybook 12:240, LDS Church Archives; cited in Ronald W. Walker, "Young Heber J. Grant: Entrepreneur Extraordinary," *Brigham Young University Studies* 43/1 (2004): 111 n. 41.

You know the true sentiments of my heart on this subject... I did not, nor do I now, feel that my knowledge, ability, or testimony are of such a character as to entitle me [168] to the position of an Apostle, The Lord knows what is for the best and I have always trusted in Him for aid and assistance in the past and shall continue to do so in the future.¹⁰⁵

When reassured of his capacities by a friend, Grant responded with a long list of his inadequacies, concluding that only God could help him qualify.¹⁰⁶ As a young stake president, Grant was given a blessing by the patriarch who said “I saw

105 Heber J. Grant to Anthony W. Ivins, 22 October 1882, Grant Letterpress Copybook 5:7–10, LDS Church Archives; cited in Walker, “Call to the Apostleship,” 168–169. Again, the disinterest or suspicion of spiritual manifestations is simply not in evidence.

106 “With reference to my new calling and my abilities to magnify the same, I must say that I consider my position much in advance of my knowledge—I regret very much that I have not a better knowledge of grammar, as I murder the ‘Queens English’ most fearfully—my orthography is perfectly Emense to say the least—I have not a good memory, or if I have it has been so badly neglected that I have not found it out that it is good, My information on subjects relating to the advancement of a community am[oun]ts to nothing, I know little or nothing of History—and were it not that I have from 15 to 25 yrs. in which to study to overtake such men as Lyman, Jos. F. Smith and others, and knowing that I have the right to call upon our Heavenly Father for assistance I assure you that I should feel almost like backing out—A knowledge, of grammer and orthography is necessary for a public speaker and one that has more or less writing to do,—I naturally dislike both of these studies and have not much faith in becoming proficient in either—Your inventory of my abilities is ‘way up.’ I should like to have you get someone to accept of your ideas but think it would be a difficult task, I may have a little common sense—In fact I know that I have, I also know that my first ideas, impressions, or quickness to see a point which ever you see fit to call it, is not bad, but this really am[oun]ts to but very little when you are looking for a substantial leading man. Reasoning powers and depth of thought are the qualities that count—There is one thing that sustains me, however, & that is the fact that all powers, of mind or body, come from God and that He is perfectly able & willing to qualify me for His work provided I am faithful in doing my part—This I hope to be able to do faithfully.” – Heber J. Grant to Richard W Young, 16 November 1882, Grant Letterpress Copybook 5:62–63; cited in Walker, “Call to the Apostleship,” 172–173.

something I dared not mention.’ President Grant said later it was made known to him at that moment he eventually would become the President of the Church. He never divulged this to anyone until it became a fact.”¹⁰⁷

Snuffer grants to Joseph Smith the right to have an expanded and increased understanding of his First Vision experience: “Often, Prophets do not understand what God shows them the instant it is revealed. Sometimes unlocking the vision takes time and care, together with careful, solemn, ponderous thought, before they are understood” (15). This is true. Unfortunately, Snuffer denies Grant the same privilege, since he ignores or omits a reference to Grant’s later description of his revelatory experience regarding his suitability as an apostle. In Grant’s later account, his visionary experience included the Savior—but the manifestation simply does not take the precise form that Snuffer has decided it must:

I seemed to see, and I seemed to hear, what to me is one of the most real things in all my life. I seemed to hear the words that were spoken. I listened to the discussion with a great deal of interest.... In this council the Savior was present, my father was there, and the Prophet Joseph Smith was there.... No man could have been more unhappy than I was from October, 1882, until February, 1883, but from that day I have never been bothered, night or day, with the idea that I was not worthy to stand as an apostle.... I have had joy in... proclaiming my absolute knowledge that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, the redeemer of the world....

107 Gibbons, 158.

I do not make this statement because of any desire to magnify myself.¹⁰⁸

In his telling a year later, he reiterated:

I had this feeling that I ought not to testify any more about the Savior and that, really, I was not fit to be an apostle. It seemed overwhelming to me that I should be one. There was a spirit that said: “If you have not seen the Savior, why don’t you resign your position?”

As I rode along alone, I seemed to see a council in heaven. The Savior was there; the Prophet Joseph was there; my father and others that I knew were there....

I can truthfully say that from February, 1883, until today I have never had any of that trouble, and I Can bear my testimony that I know that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world and that Joseph Smith is a l prophet of the living God; and the evil one does not try to persuade me that I do not know what I am talking about. I have never had one slight impression to the contrary. I have just had real, genuine joy and satisfaction in proclaiming the gospel and bearing my testimony of the divinity of Jesus Christ, and the divine calling of Joseph Smith, the prophet.¹⁰⁹

This experience was sufficient to silence Grant’s self-doubts and the evil voices who questioned his suitability for the apostleship: we see once again his acute awareness of the perils of pride, and an anxious concern that others not misunderstand his intent. He did not have a “personal,” (i.e., one on one) vision,

108 Grant, “Opening Conference Message,” 315; also in *Gospel Standards*, 195–196 and *Conference Report* (April 1941): 4–5.

109 Grant, *Conference Report* (October 1942): 26.

but his experience sufficed. It is unfortunate that it does not satisfy Snuffer, who later tells us that Grant “would resist any effort to pursue a spiritual manifestation the remainder of his life” (247). This claim is plainly false, as the historical record shows—Snuffer is not giving us good history, and he is certainly not giving us unvarnished “truth.”

For example, Grant described how, in response to his prayer, “the voice of the Lord from heaven” reassured his young daughter that “in the death of your Mamma the will of the Lord shall be done.”¹¹⁰ Grant also reported a visionary dream in which his deceased wife came to claim his son’s spirit during a mortal illness. This initially troubled him, but upon entering his son’s sickroom, he felt the presence of his late wife. His living wife was in the same room and identified the deceased wife’s presence without Grant having said anything. Contrary to Snuffer’s distortion of the record, spiritual manifestations were sought by Grant, and were “a sweet, peaceful, and heavenly influence in my home, as great as I have ever experienced in my life.”¹¹¹

PTHG says that by Grant’s day, “knowledge of Jesus Christ was not only unnecessary, it was viewed by the church president as both negative, and potentially something leading to pride and fall from grace” (64). This reading is absurd—Grant is instead worried about his own proclivity to pride, and asks God to spare him that risk, even if it requires that he not have a personal visitation as he knows many others have. He does not see such a witness as a negative, or a knowledge of Christ as unnecessary—that is pure editorializing by *PTHG*, and directly contradicts Grant’s own testimony. Grant does acknowledge the risk of pride—though given that Snuffer lays claim to such theophanies only to now attempt to marginalize and correct

110 Heber J. Grant, “In the Hour of Parting,” *Improvement Era* 43/6 (June 1940): 363.

111 Grant, “In the Hour of Parting,” 383.

the apostles, pride is apparently not a merely theoretical concern. The members of the Church whose testimonies worry Snuffer need not be concerned regarding President Grant, save if they rely on Snuffer's dubious interpretation, and ignore all the other evidence.

In this paper, I speak only for myself and not for any person or group. I'm grateful for discussions, references, and advance readings from Russell Anderson, Connor Boyack, Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, Cassandra Hedelius, Bryce Haymond, Dennis Horne, Ted Jones, Daniel C. Peterson, Stephen O. Smoot, and S. Hales Swift. Special thanks are due Matthew Roper of the Laura F. Willis Center for Book of Mormon Studies at Brigham Young University for pointing me to several primary sources. Any errors remain my own.

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PASSING UP THE HEAVENLY GIFT (PART TWO OF TWO)

Gregory L. Smith

Review of Denver C. Snuffer, Jr., Passing the Heavenly Gift, Salt Lake City: Mill Creek Press, 2011. 510 pp., no index. \$25.97.

Claims #4 and #5: The Source of the Authority of Brigham Young and the Apostles After Joseph's Death

Snuffer writes of the apostolic succession:

In 1847, Brigham Young publicly explained his understanding of the keys he obtained in these words: “an apostle is the Highest office and authority that there is in the Church and Kingdom [of] God on the earth. From whom did Joseph receive his authority? From just such men as sit around me here (pointing to the Twelve Apostles that sat with him.) Peter, James and John were Apostles, and there was no noise about their being seers and revelators though those gifts were among them. Joseph Smith gave unto me and my brethren (the Twelve) all the Priesthood keys, power and authority which he had and those are the powers which belong to the Apostleship” (87).¹

¹ Snuffer cites Richard S. Van Wagoner, editor, *The Complete Discourses of Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 2009), 1:241. The original is in the Woodruff diaries; see Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 1833–1898*, 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983–85), 3:257 (15 August 1857). Cited as *WWJ* hereafter.

Snuffer then delivers his killing stroke: “This explanation is misleading because Brigham Young was not ordained an Apostle by Joseph Smith” (87). A few pages later, he writes that “Brigham Young’s claim to have received the sealing power when he was ordained an Apostle is completely dependent on the Three Witnesses’ ordination in 1835. That ordination came a year prior to the 1836 visit of Elijah” (91).

An Incomplete and Misleading Citation

Snuffer, though, is putting words into Brigham’s mouth. Brigham did not say, “Joseph ordained me an apostle,” nor did he say, “I received all these keys when I was ordained an apostle.” He says, rather, that Joseph got his authority from apostles, and that “Joseph gave” all the power and keys “unto me and my brethren (the Twelve).” Here again, Snuffer is only giving us part of the story. In the very same talk, Brigham explained: “We do not recieve all at once but we recieve grace for grace. When Brother Joseph received the Preisthood He did not recieve all at once, but He was A prophet Seer & Revelator before He recieved the fulness of the Priesthood & keys of the kingdom.”² He goes on to say that after receiving the Aaronic priesthood, Joseph

recieved the Patriarchal or Melchisedick Priesthood from under the Hands of Peter James & John who were of the Twelve Apostles & were the Presidency when the other Apostles were Absent. From those Apostles Joseph Smith recieved every key power, Blessing, & Privilege of the Highest Authority of the Melchezedick Priesthood ever committed to man on the earth which they held.³

But, this is not all. Brigham then says that

2 WJ, 3:257 (15 August 1847), emphasis added.

3 WJ, 3:257 (15 August 1847).

Elijah spoken of in the Bible that He should Come in the last days to turn the hearts of the fathers to the Children & the children to their fathers. The fulfillment of this scripture is manifest in establishing the kingdom of God & Priesthood on the earth in the last days & those who hold the keys of the priesthood & sealing power have the spirit & power of Elijah & it is necessary in order to redeem our dead & save our Children. There is much more importance attached to this than Parents are aware of.⁴

Brigham has thus argued for a progression from Aaronic, to all Melchizedek keys and authority held by Peter, James, and John, and finally to the mission of Elijah. This may hint that Brigham knew of the basics of the Elijah visitation five years before the account from Joseph's journal was published in 1852 (we will see below that Willard Richards had made a copy for the *Manuscript History* in 1843, and may well have informed Brigham of it, if Joseph did not do so during his instruction in the higher ordinances).⁵

This supposition is strengthened by Brigham's concluding remarks, for he again invokes both Elijah and the keys associated with redemption of the dead: "A man that has embraced the gospel must [be?] some one who has the Priesthood & keys & power of Elijah & must attend to ordinances" for their kindred dead.⁶

It is, then, misleading for *PTHG* to pretend that Brigham lays claim to all priesthood keys and power from Joseph via his ordination by the Three Witnesses to the office of apostle. Brigham clearly understands this authority as something received in discrete steps, and one that ultimately encompasses

4 *WWJ*, 3:258 (15 August 1847).

5 See note 36 herein.

6 *WWJ*, 3:259 (15 August 1847).

Elijah's power. His claim is simply that he got this power from Joseph, and that all such power rests with the apostles.

PTHG claims that

apparently all prior information, charges, ordinations, washings, endowments, sealings and instruction were not as clear to Brigham Young at the moment Joseph died as he would later make it appear. It was only as time went on that the accounts of Joseph passing keys to the Twelve grew to add detail and certainty" (70).

Still, 1847 was not Brigham's or the apostles' first articulation of their claim to possess the authority and power vouchsafed them by Joseph. (And, if *PTHG* viewed Brigham with even a hint of charity, he might be forgiven if his initial reaction at Joseph's death was a sudden confusion—the New Testament apostles were much slower to grasp the implications of Jesus' pre-crucifixion teachings.)

Earlier Claims Made by Brigham Young and the Twelve

In public discourse in 1843, Brigham Young made it clear that the government of the Church rested upon "the prophet" and "the Twelve":

Among other things said that a man or woman may ask of God & get a witness & testimony from God concerning any work or messenger that is sent unto them. But if a person asks for a thing that does not concern him, such as governing the Church what shall the prophet or the Twelve do &c? He will not get an answer. If he does it will not be from God.⁷

Joseph was still alive and did not rebuke or correct Brigham's claim. Within less than two months of the martyrdom, members of the Twelve and other witnesses were reporting the

7 WWJ, 2:271 (6 August 1843).

same thing that Brigham claimed in *PTHG*'s truncated citation from 1847:

Elders O Hyde and P. P. Pratt testified that Joseph the Prophet and Seer had ordained, anointed, and appointed the Twelve to lead the Church. Had given them the Keys of the Kingdom of God for that purpose.

W. W. Phelps and R. Cahoon bore testimony to the same thing, saying that Joseph said unto the Twelve upon your sholdiers the kingdom of God must rest in all the world. Now round up your sholdiers and bear it.⁸

Heber C. Kimball likewise said that “when Jesus was upon the earth his time was spent in endowing the twelve apostles that they might do the things he had left undone and carry out his measures, and upon the same principle we carry out Joseph’s measures.”⁹ Wilford Woodruff wrote:

And when they [the apostles] *received their endowment, and actually received the keys of the kingdom of God,* and oracles of God, keys of revelation, and the pattern of heavenly things; and thus addressing the Twelve, exclaimed, “upon your shoulders the kingdom rests, elders, and bear it; for I have had to do it until now. But now the responsibility rests upon you. It mattereth not what becomes of me.”...

[Brigham Young] has not only had much experience with President Smith, but he has proved himself true and faithful in all things committed to his charge, *until*

8 *WWJ*, 2:455 (25 August 1844).

9 Heber C. Kimball, cited in “Conference Minutes, October Conference Minutes,” *Times and Seasons* 5/20 (2 November 1844): 693–694 (from 7 October 1844).

he was called to hold the keys of the kingdom of God in all the world, in connection with the Twelve: was the first to receive his endowment, from under the hands of the Prophet and Patriarch, who have leaned upon him in connection with the Twelve, for years, to bear off this kingdom in all the world.¹⁰

Again, the claim is clear that Brigham was faithful, and he was *eventually* ordained to all the keys by Joseph in conjunction with his receipt of the higher temple ordinances in Nauvoo. Woodruff would elsewhere write:

The prophet called the quorum of the twelve together several months before his death, and informed them that the Lord had commanded him to hasten their endowments; that he did not expect to remain himself to see the temple completed, but wished to confer the keys of the kingdom of God upon other men, that they might build up the church and kingdom according to the pattern given. And the prophet stood before the twelve from day to day, clothed with the spirit and power of God, and instructed them in the oracles of God, in the pattern of heavenly things, in the things of the kingdom, the power of the priesthood, and in the knowledge of the last dispensation in the fulness of times.

And as his last work and charge to the quorum of the twelve, that noble spirit rose up in all the majesty, strength, and dignity of his calling, as a prophet,

¹⁰ Wilford Woodruff, "To the church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints, Greeting," *Times and Seasons* 5/20 (2 November 1844): 698–700 (from 11 October 1844), italics added. Snuffer quotes this statement (110), but acts as if this is a change in the apostles' stance—even though this statement predates the 1847 statement by Brigham Young upon the misrepresentation of which Snuffer hangs so much (87–88).

seer, and revelator... and exhorted and commanded the brethren of the twelve to rise up, and go forth in the name of Israel's God, and bear off the keys of the kingdom of God in righteousness and honour in all the world.¹¹

Orson Hyde said:

Before I went east on the 4th of April last, we were in council with Brother Joseph almost every day for weeks, says Brother Joseph in one of those councils there is something going to happen; I dont know what it is, but the Lord bids me to hasten and give you your endowment before the temple is finished. He conducted us through every ordinance of the holy priesthood, and when he had gone through with all the ordinances he rejoiced very much, and says, now if they kill me you have got all the keys, and all the ordinances and you can confer them upon others, and the hosts of Satan will not be able to tear down the kingdom, as fast as you will be able to build it up; and now says he on your shoulders will the responsibility of leading this people rest, for the Lord is going to let me rest a while.¹²

Still less than a year after Joseph's death, Parley P. Pratt would explain:

We [the apostles] hold the keys of the ministry and ordinances of salvation in this last kingdom; and if the people choose to be benefitted by them, it is their own blessing; if not, it is their own neglect....

11 Wilford Woodruff, "To the officers and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the British isles," *Millennial Star* 5/9 (February 1845): 136.

12 "Trial of Elder Rigdon," *Times and Seasons* 5/17 (15 September 1844):

This great and good man [Joseph] was led, before his death, to call the Twelve together, from time to time, and to instruct them in all things pertaining to the kingdom, ordinances, and government of God. He often observed that he was laying the foundation, but it would remain for the Twelve to complete the building. Said he, "I know not why; but for some reason I am constrained to hasten my preparations, and to confer upon the Twelve all the ordinances, keys, covenants, endowments, and sealing ordinances of the priesthood, and so set before them a pattern in all things pertaining to the sanctuary and the endowment therein."

Having done this, he rejoiced exceedingly; for, said he, the Lord is about to lay the burden on your shoulders and let me rest awhile; and if they kill me, continued he, the kingdom of God will roll on, as I have now finished the work which was laid upon me, by committing to you all things for the building up of the kingdom according to the heavenly vision, and the pattern shown me from heaven. With many conversations like this, he comforted the minds of the Twelve, and prepared them for what was soon to follow.

He proceeded to confer on elder Young, the President of the Twelve, the keys of the sealing power, as conferred in the last days by the spirit and power of Elijah, in order to seal the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of

the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth should be smitten with a curse.

This last key of the priesthood is the most sacred of all, and pertains exclusively to the first presidency of the church, without whose sanction and approval or authority, no sealing blessing shall be administered pertaining to things of the resurrection and the life to come.¹³

Pratt clearly appeals to repeated meetings with Joseph in Nauvoo (i.e., well after their ordination to the apostleship) and to a deliberate bestowal of keys when Brigham was President of the Twelve (which he was not when first made an apostle).

Snuffer also ignores a vital document, which was likely prepared by the Twelve to articulate their leadership claim. (Snuffer relies heavily on D. Michael Quinn, and some have suggested that Quinn was unaware of this document—this may explain Snuffer’s silence concerning it.¹⁴) The document was published in 2005,¹⁵ and was written between September 1844 and March 1845, likely in the fall of 1844.¹⁶

We were present at a Council in the latter part of the month of March last [1844]... and the greater part of the Twelve Apostles were present....

13 Parley P. Pratt, “Proclamation to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Greeting,” *Millennial Star* 5/10 (March 1845): 151; dated New York, 1 January 1845.

14 Alexander L. Baugh and Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, “I Roll the Burthen and Responsibility of Leading This Church Off from My Shoulders on to Yours’: The 1844/1845 Declaration of the Quorum of the Twelve Regarding Apostolic Succession,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 49/3 (2010):6–7 and 7 n. 4.

15 Baugh and Holzapfel, 9.

16 Baugh and Holzapfel, 11, 12 n. 18.

In this Council, Joseph Smith seemed somewhat depressed in spirit and [said]...

Brethren, the Lord bids me hasten the work in which we are engaged. He will not suffer that you should wait for your endowment until the Temple is done. Some important scene is near to take place. It may be that my enemies will kill me, and in case they should, and the keys and power which rest on me not be imparted to you, they will be lost from the Earth.... Upon the shoulders of the Twelve must the responsibility of leading this church hence forth rest until you shall appoint others to succeed you....

After this appointment was made, and confirmed by the holy anointing under the hands of Joseph and Hyrum, Joseph continued his speech unto them, saying, while he walked the floor and threw back the collar of his coat upon his shoulders, "I roll the burthen and responsibility of leading this church off from my shoulders on to yours. Now round up your shoulders and stand under it like men; for the Lord is going to let me rest a while." ...

Joseph Smith did declare that he had conferred upon the Twelve every key and every power that he ever held himself before God.¹⁷

Snuffer distorts the apostles' claim and creates a straw man by writing that "if information in the endowment alone is sufficient to pass keys, then Mormon dissidents Jerald and Sandra Tanner, who have published the various endowment

¹⁷ Declaration of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Brigham Young Papers, LDS Church archives, cited in Baugh and Holzapfel, 13–19.

ordinances and versions would hold the keys” (111). This is extraordinarily obtuse—the Twelve did not claim that merely having received the endowment conferred keys. Rather, they claimed that they had received the endowment and all the higher ordinances and explicitly been given keys under the hands of Joseph and Hyrum. As one attendee later described the meeting, “‘the keys of power committed’ to the Twelve consisted of ‘Keys of Endowments to the Last Anointing & Sealing[,] Together with keys of Salvation for the Dead. with the eternity of the Marriage Covenant and the Powr of Endless Lives.’”¹⁸

Brigham Young and the apostles’ claims to possess all the keys via ordination from Joseph appeared very early and never wavered. *PTHG*’s hypothesis of a gradual evolution and solidification of claims about keys from Joseph simply does not match the accounts which predate Snuffer’s incomplete 1847 citation.

Claim #6: Joseph Received Sealing Powers in 1829

It is disappointing to see Snuffer resort to an ancient anti-Mormon canard regarding D&C 84 (30). Church critics have long claimed¹⁹ that Joseph Smith’s theophany cannot have occurred because priesthood is required to permit mortals to tolerate the divine presence:

18 Andrew F. Ehat, “Joseph Smith’s Introduction of Temple Ordinances and the 1844 Mormon Succession Question,” (Master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1981), 163; citing Dean R. Zimmerman, *I Knew the Prophets—An Analysis of the Letter of Benjamin F. Johnson to George F. Gibbs, Reporting Doctrinal Views of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young* (Bountiful, Utah: Horizon Publishers, 1976), 35

19 The source for many seems to be Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *The Changing World of Mormonism* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1979), 149–150. A more recent repetition can be found in Richard Abanes, *Becoming Gods: A Closer Look at 21st-Century Mormonism* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2005),

And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God. Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest. And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh; For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live (D&C 84:19–22).

Snuffer, like the Tanners before him, misreads the scripture, declaring that “Joseph Smith... necessarily holds this higher priesthood. For without it, no man can see the Father and live. Since Joseph beheld the Father in the First Vision, it was necessary for him to have this higher priesthood even before the appearance of the angels who later conferred priesthood upon Joseph” (30, citations removed). But this is not what the scripture says.

“Without *this*,” it reads, “no man can see the face of God.” To what does *this* refer? Its antecedent is clearly “the power of godliness”—thus, without ordinances and the priesthood authority necessary to perform them—“the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh.” And, without the power of godliness, one cannot abide the presence of God.²⁰

In most circumstances, the manifestation of that power would follow the receipt of and obedience to the ordinances, which require the priesthood. But God can by grace clearly grant the power of godliness to one who has been unable to receive the ordinances due to the absence of an authorized administrator.

²⁰ This reading is also followed by, among others, H. Dean Garrett and Stephen R. Robinson, *Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants*, Vol. 3 (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 2004), entry for 84:20.

To solve the problem that he believes he has discovered, Snuffer follows Orson Pratt in declaring that Joseph held priesthood already from a pre-mortal ordination (30, 295). But this claim will not salvage other aspects of *PTHG*'s theory. Joseph Smith taught that "at the general & grand Council of heaven, all those to whom a dispensation was to be committed, were set apart & ordained at that time, to that calling. The Twelve also as witnesses were ordained."²¹ Thus, if *PTHG* wishes to appeal to a pre-mortal conferral of priesthood for Joseph to meet his lack of mortal ordination, the Twelve could likewise appeal to pre-mortal ordination even if they did not receive it from Joseph in mortality.²²

Date of Plural Marriage Revelation(s) and Implementation

PTHG claims that "beginning in 1831, Joseph obeyed the" command "concerning plural wives" (326). Here again, his grasp of the relevant history is lacking. There is no evidence that Joseph practiced plural marriage in 1831.

The first documented plural marriage was to Fanny Alger, whose marriage to Joseph has been dated by historians between 1832 and 1836.²³ Furthermore, Snuffer is not cautious enough in his use of the term "sealing" (e.g., 92, 326).

21 Samuel W. Richards record, discourse of 12 May 1844; cited in Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, BYU, 1980), 371, italics added. (This work cited as *WJS* hereafter.)

22 Orson Pratt taught that Joseph had a pre-mortal ordination to priesthood which allowed him to survive the First Vision ("The Divine Authority of the Holy Priesthood, Etc.," *Journal of Discourses* 22:29–30 [10 October 1880]). (*Journal of Discourses* hereafter cited as *JD*.) I think Pratt makes the same error in reading that Snuffer and the Tanners make. If, however, Pratt et al. are correct and I am mistaken, then by Joseph's statement, the Twelve were likewise ordained in the pre-mortal worlds (see note 21 herein)—a claim about which Pratt agrees in any case (*JD* 22:28). Neither scenario helps Snuffer's theory.

23 George D. Smith has suggested as early as 1832, Todd Compton argues for the date range of "early 1833," and Brian Hales inclines to "some point prior to 1837." [George D. Smith, *Nauvoo Polygamy*: "...but we called it celestial marriage" (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books, 2008), 38; Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City, Utah:

During the Nauvoo period, *sealing* could involve the sealing of spouses. (The earliest references to marriages lasting beyond death are found in W. W. Phelps' 1835 letters to his wife.²⁴) However, during the Ohio period, Joseph and others would be spoken of in the revelations as "seal[ing]... up unto eternal life" (D&C 68:12).²⁵ This usage of terminology may be compared to the Book of Mormon, which often speaks of "sealing up" for protection or security (e.g., title page, 1 Nephi 14:26; 2 Nephi 26:17, 27:8, 22; 30:3; Ether 3:22–28, 4:5, 5:1; Moroni 10:2). One sees the same usage in Snuffer's often-cited D&C 124, where Hyrum Smith is said "to hold the sealing blessings of my church, even the Holy Spirit of promise, whereby ye are sealed up unto the day of redemption" (D&C 124:124). This blessing was given on 19 January 1841, i.e., prior to Hyrum's knowledge of or acceptance of plural marriage. However, despite D&C 124, Hyrum was severely rebuked by Joseph for performing an unauthorized *marriage sealing* in June 1843, since "there is never but one on the earth at a time on whom this power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred" (D&C 132:7).²⁶ Wilford Woodruff likewise sealed others up to eternal life in Joseph's lifetime, but he had not received the sealing power involved in the higher ordinances.²⁷ Thus, the two uses of "sealing" must not be confused if one is to understand Joseph Smith's thought.

Signature Books, 1997), 4. Brian C. Hales, *Joseph Smith's Polygamy*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Greg Kofford Books, 2013), 85.] Hales reviews all dating theories on pages 99–106.

24 W. W. Phelps Phelps to Sally Phelps, letter, 18 May 1835, 2–3. Phelps would mention the idea publicly about a month later: W. W. Phelps, "Letter No. 8," *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 1/9 (June 1835): 130.

25 See discussion in Hales, 1:119, 3:85–86.

26 See discussion in Ehat thesis, 66–70. See also Hales, 1:619–623.

27 Woodruff sealed William Clayton up to eternal life on 21 January 1840: "Thou art one of those who will stand upon the mount Zion with the 144,000... and I seal thee up with eternal life..." [George D. Smith (editor), *An Intimate Chronicle; The Journals of William Clayton* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1995), 8; see also James B.

Furthermore, Snuffer uses remarks made by Brigham Young in 1872 as the basis for his claim that Joseph received the plural marriage revelation found in D&C 132 in 1829. *PTHG* declares that this “makes the conclusion inescapable that the original revelation... was provoked during and because of the translation of the Book of Mormon, and not the work done revising the Bible” (80). This is not a sophisticated approach to the issue. Many LDS historians have considered the matter, and most have concluded that there is other evidence that argues against Brigham being correct.²⁸ It is ironic that Snuffer will reject Brigham Young’s account of his personal reception of priesthood keys from Joseph as a later elaboration or confabulation,²⁹ but insist that Brigham’s late remarks about an event that occurred before he was even a member of the Church leads to an “inescapable” conclusion. The only conclusion we are forced to accept is that Snuffer is not doing serious history, and that he employs double standards in his evaluation of evidence depending upon whether it can be shoe-horned into his thesis.

The date of the marriage sealing power’s receipt is important to Snuffer’s broader argument because “I do not believe that Elijah’s [3 April 1836] appearance conferred sealing power on Joseph Smith. Instead, I believe it came to Joseph just as it came to Melchizedek.... It is delivered by the calling of God’s own voice” (327). As we will now see, for Joseph to receive authority from God alone, without an ordaining intermediary, is vital to Snuffer’s project of disputing whether transmitted priesthood authority is needed to perform ordinances.

Allen, *Trials of Discipleship: The Story of William Clayton, a Mormon* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 29].

28 Snuffer is aware of these views (79) but does not engage them or even discuss their evidence. See Hales, 2:68–70 and references therein.

29 See Snuffer, 87–91, and discussion at notes 2–6 herein.

Elijah and the Sealing Keys

PTHG works tirelessly (326–327) to disprove the idea that Joseph received sealing keys in the Kirtland temple in 1836:

All the contemporaneous records kept by any party fail to record any mention by Joseph Smith of the Kirtland Temple visitation from Moses, Elias and Elijah. It was never taught by Joseph Smith, never mentioned in any sermon delivered by him, and was never mentioned in anything Joseph ever wrote (75).

This is excellent lawyering, since it is mostly true in a narrow, technical sense, but it hides several important points. One wonders, first of all, what a Snuffer-esque author in the first century would have written about Jesus' encounter on the Mount of Transfiguration with the same individuals. Jesus wrote nothing about it, and said nothing about it to anyone afterward either. He likewise ordered the other witnesses present not to say anything (Matthew 17:9; Mark 9:9–10). Only when Jesus was gone did the apostles "conveniently recall" (our Snuffer clone might argue) this theophany and have it written down decades later.

Second, as Dan Vogel pointed out, there are two contemporaneous documents penned just after the Kirtland temple dedication which invoke the Elijah theophany.³⁰ The first was written by a hostile source a week following the appearance of the Savior and those who bestowed keys:

They [the Mormons] have lately had what they term a solemn assembly. This was at the completion of the lower story of the Temple which is finished in a very singular order having four Pulpits on each

30 Vogel demonstrated his expertise in early Mormon sources in a Facebook thread: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/themormonhub/permalink/580554425314552/> (14 October 2013). I'm grateful for Cassandra Hedelius bringing it to my attention, and for Vogel's industry regarding primary sources.

end of the House and curtains between each. Also, curtains dividing the house in the center. They have had wonderful manifestations there of late behind the curtains. This was in the night. Their meeting held for several nights in succession. None but the Prophets and Elders were admitted. The number of Prophets now amounts to twelve. Some can see angels and others cannot. They report that the Savior appeared personally with angels and endowed the Elders with powers to work Miracles.³¹

The second more explicit account comes from a member, W. W. Phelps, who wrote his wife:

On Sunday, April 3, the twelve held meeting and administered the sacrament. It was a glorious time. The curtains were dropt in the afternoon. And There was a manifestation of the Lord to Br Joseph and Oliver, [by?] which they [learned?] thus the great & terrible day of the Lord as mentioned by Malachi, was near, even at the doors.³²

Malachi 4:5 promised the coming of Elijah, and the Joseph Smith journal account would record that Elijah declared Malachi's promise to be fulfilled (D&C 110:14), and said "the

31 Lucius Pomeroy Parsons to Pamela Parsons, 10 April 1836, Family and Church History Department Archives, cited in Steven C. Harper, "Oliver Cowdery and the Kirtland Temple Experience," in *Oliver Cowdery: Scribe, Elder, Witness*, edited by John W. Welch and Larry E. Morris (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University and the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship), 263–264. Vogel cites Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, OH, as quoted in H. Michael Marquardt, *The Rise of Mormonism: 1816–1844* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2005), 422.

32 William W. Phelps to Sally Phelps, 1–6 April 1836, William Wines Phelps Papers, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, quoted in John W. Welch, *Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations, 1820–1844* (Provo, UT: BYU Press; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 349.

great and dreadful day of the Lord is near, even at the doors” (D&C 110:16). When Snuffer claims there are no contemporary sources, he is wrong.

Thirdly, why would Joseph and Oliver have spoken about the event frequently, since the full temple ordinances for which the keys were necessary were not given to anyone until much later? A review of the Nauvoo-era discourses shows Joseph preparing the Saints for these ideas and lamenting their reluctance to accept anything new.³³ Extensive public teaching about such things would make little sense until the Saints were ready to participate in the ordinances. One wonders if even Joseph understood their full import initially.³⁴

Fourthly, Joseph “wrote” very little, so his failure to write about Elijah is unremarkable. He would often dictate material, but seldom took up the pen himself. The account that we have of Elijah’s appearance is found in Joseph Smith’s journal, in the handwriting of Warren A. Cowdery. And so, Snuffer must dispense with that evidence: “So far as any preserved record exists, from April 1836, until their respective deaths in 1844 and 1849, neither Joseph nor Oliver ever mentioned this event to anyone. Only Warren Cowdery’s third person handwritten account mentions it” (75).

This borders on the absurd. Warren Cowdery was Joseph’s scribe, and made an entry in Joseph’s personal journal (the vast majority of which was always written by scribes, not Joseph himself). Where does Snuffer think the account came from, if not from Joseph or Oliver? And, why would he presume anyone but Joseph was the source, since it was placed in Joseph’s

33 Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Co., 1938), 91 (*TPJS* hereafter). See *WWJ*, 2:342 (21 January 1844).

34 See Hales, 3:86–89.

journal? Clearly, either Joseph and/or Oliver mentioned it to someone, and did so quite early on.³⁵

Furthermore, we can narrow the time frame considerably—it need not stretch to 1844 or 1848 as Snuffer argues: “Warren Cowdery, who inserted the account of the vision in the... journal, could have written it at any time” (76). Technically true, but still misleading. An initial upper bound can be placed on its composition, since Willard Richards made a first person copy in 1843, which he inserted into the *Manuscript History of the Church*.³⁶ This demonstrates that the text existed by then, and that Richards (who by that date had received the Nauvoo temple ordinances from Joseph) likely understood the vision’s significance. Yet he did not speak or preach about it publicly either. Richards was preparing the *Manuscript History* under Joseph’s direction, and had reached 5 August 1838 before Joseph’s martyrdom.³⁷ Given that Joseph accorded a high priority to the history, and would periodically review it, Snuffer’s confidence that Joseph communicated nothing at all before his death about the vision seems misplaced (324). His claim that the vision was “unknown in the 1830’s and 40’s” is also shown to be false (77).

We can tighten the timeline further by noting that Warren Cowdery arrived in Kirtland 25 February 1836,³⁸ was writing editorials hostile to Joseph Smith by July 1837, and in 1838 would leave the Church never to return.³⁹ Unless Snuffer would

35 The other option is that the event did not happen at all—but Snuffer does not accept that hypothesis: he insists that the visitation of Elijah was real, as we will see shortly.

36 Trevor R. Anderson, “Doctrine and Covenants Section 110: From Vision to Canonization,” (Master’s thesis, Department of Religious Education, Brigham Young University, 2010), 76. See also Hales, 3:88 n. 6.

37 Anderson, 7–8.

38 Anderson, 5.

39 See W.A. Cowdery, [“Editorial”], *Messenger and Advocate* 3/10 (July 1837): 534–541. Compare with the more friendly article in *Messenger and Advocate* 3/8 (May 1837): 505–510.

have us believe that Cowdery somehow had access to Joseph's journals after his estrangement, and moreover that he would make an entry about a spectacular manifestation when he was at odds with the Prophet, we have a narrow window between April 1836 and July 1837 during which the text was written.

PTHG later uses the fact that Warren wrote a March 1837 article about the Savior's Mount of Transfiguration vision of Elias, Elijah, and Moses to argue "if Joseph and Oliver failed to mention the appearances of Moses and Elijah, the scribe who wrote the event displayed an interest in the subject" (77). But if Warren knew nothing in March 1837 (as opposed to simply having no permission to mention the event) this does not help Snuffer's case—it would narrow the writing of the vision to between March and July 1837. Warren's article may, on the other hand, have been stimulated by what he had already written for Joseph, but was to keep private.

PTHG's account is also misleading when it claims that the Warren Cowdery account "was finally discovered and published in the *Deseret News* on November 6, 1852" (77). Willard Richards had placed the vision in the *Manuscript History* in 1843, and the serial publication of that history began on 15 November 1851.⁴⁰ The 1836 Elijah vision was not suddenly "discovered" and then published; it appeared nearly a year later when the on-going newspaper account had reached the events of 3 April 1836.⁴¹

Though he cites the Joseph Smith Papers project, Snuffer does not inform his audience of the editors' conclusions that hurt his thesis. For instance, the editors point out that "this account of visitations closes the journal. After more than six months of *almost daily* recording of developments in Kirtland,

40 Anderson, 9.

41 Anderson, 9. British Saints would have the same material published from 5–12 November 1853.

entries ceased.”⁴² This might push the record back to within days of the event. Furthermore, Snuffer claims again that “we [do not] know what source told Warren... about the event,” and notes simply that “it is written in the third person” (76). He does not tell his readers that the editors indicate that as Warren worked on Joseph’s history, he “also produced third-person accounts. In that endeavor, he had before him a first-person text (the earlier entries of [the] journal), which he changed to third person as he copied them into the history... For this material, he must have relied on another original text—no longer extant—or on oral reports from either or both of the participants.”⁴³ It is thus unsurprising that Warren wrote as he did, and he likely did so on the basis of a first person account fairly soon after the event.⁴⁴

Snuffer also claims that the language of D&C 110 proves that “rather than ordaining or conferring something, Elijah made a statement about what Joseph had previously received.... [T]he ‘keys of this dispensation are committed into your hands’ is a statement about what was already there. The sealing authority had been given to Joseph earlier” (92). This is quite a stretch—Moses and Elias had just appeared and “committed” their keys; why ought we to assume Elijah is simply there to point out what has happened years ago? Elijah speaks in the

42 Dean C. Jessee, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen (editors), *Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839*, vol. 1 of the Journals series of The Joseph Smith Papers, ed., Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City, UT: Church Historian’s Press, 2008), 223, emphasis added.

43 Jessee, et al., *Journals*, 217.

44 Anderson likewise argues that the vision was written on “the day it occurred or soon after” (4, see also 15). Anderson’s research, like the Joseph Smith papers, is also cited by *PTHG* (75 n. 83), but Snuffer does not include these details for his readers, perhaps because they weaken his efforts to downplay the vision’s importance to Joseph’s thinking by claiming that we don’t know what role Joseph had in creating Warren Cowdery’s account of it. Given that the account was written into Joseph’s journal and then included in the *Manuscript History* while Joseph was alive, these claims are dubious.

present tense, not the past. He does not say, “The keys have been committed,” he says they *are* committed—and Elijah then said that his prophesied coming was foretold and is now fulfilled. And Moroni had long ago told Joseph Smith Elijah would have a role in restoring priesthood: “Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah” (Joseph Smith History 1:38).

One does not often see such tortured efforts to dispense with data fatal to one’s thesis.

Joseph’s Nauvoo Era Teachings About Elijah

Joseph Smith likewise would not have agreed with *PTHG*’s claim that Elijah only appeared to announce that all keys had already been returned. On 5 October 1840, the Prophet taught:

Elijah was the last prophet that held the keys of this priesthood, and who will, before the last dispensation, restore the authority and delive[r] the Keys of this priesthood in order that all the ordinances may be attended to in righteousness....

And I will send Elijah the Prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord &c &c.

Why send Elijah[?] [B]ecause he holds the Keys of the Authority to administer in all the ordinances of the priesthood and without the authority is given the ordinances could not be administered in righteousness.⁴⁵

Joseph here explicitly rebuts two of Snuffer’s fundamental assertions by teaching that: (1) one must be authorized to perform the ordinances (see Claim #1); and (2) Elijah was

45 Robert B. Thompson, original manuscript, discourse of 5 October 1840; cited in *WJS*, 43. See also *TPJS*, 172.

sent because he holds keys necessary “to administer in all the ordinances of the priesthood,” and not simply to announce that everything had already happened.

Later, in the *Times and Seasons* of 15 October 1841, Joseph would discuss the concept that “the dispensation of the fulness of times will bring to light the things that have been revealed in all former dispensations, also other things that have not been before revealed. He shall send Elijah the prophet &c., and restore all things in Christ.”⁴⁶

Joseph thus speaks twice of Elijah’s mission in the future tense even after April 1836. If this is not a mere rhetorical act (i.e., speaking for effect as if in the time of Malachi, looking forward to Elijah’s return) then it may undermine Snuffer’s claims even further. As Ehat and Cook noted,

Apparently in [Joseph’s] mind it was not sufficient that he alone had these keys and this power, but he intended by way of ordinances to confer a portion of this power on others who were faithful, thereby actually bringing about the restoration of all things.... It was not enough to Joseph Smith to be a king and a priest unto the Most High, but he insisted that his people be a society of priests “as in Paul’s day, as in Enoch’s day” through the ordinances of the temple (see 30 March 1842 discourse). Throughout the remainder of his Nauvoo experience, Joseph Smith taught and emphasized the importance of the temple ordinances, ordinances that would bestow upon members of the Church the knowledge and power he foreshadows in this discourse.⁴⁷

This view is confirmed by an address given over three years later. Joseph declared, “The keys are to be delivered, the spirit

46 *Times and Seasons* 2/24 (15 October 1841): 577–78, citing a speech of 3 October 1841; also in *WJS*, 76–79.

47 *WJS*, 54–55 n. 22.

of Elijah is to come, the gospel to be established, the Saints of God gathered, Zion built up, and the Saints to come up on Mount Zion.⁴⁸ We again note the future tense, which may be rhetorical, but seems here to also anticipate a culmination that was in the future. “But how are they to become Saviors on Mount Zion?” asks Joseph. He replies:

By building their temples erecting their Baptismal fonts & going forth & receiving all the ordinances, Baptisms, confirmations, washings anointings ordinations & sealing powers upon our heads in behalf of all our Progenitors who are dead & redeem them that they may come forth in the first resurrection & be exalted to thrones of glory with us, & herein is the Chain that binds the hearts of the fathers to the Children, & the Children to the Fathers which fulfills the mission of Elijah.⁴⁹

The ordinances seem vital, Elijah’s keys seem vital, sealing powers are bestowed by mortal ordination, and there is no hint that the Saints are in danger of losing them (claim #9). In fact, as we will now see, it would be absurd for Joseph to act as if these things were in danger of being lost, since he had conferred these ordinances upon the Twelve and others already.

Claim #7: Necessary Authority Could Only Be Transmitted in a Completed Temple

PTHG claims that D&C 124:28 proves that “by 1841, the fullness of the priesthood had been suspended or ‘lost’ from Joseph Smith. He was no longer authorized to use that fullness on behalf of the church. The details of how it was taken have not been preserved” (97–98).

48 *WWJ*, 2:341 (discourse of 21 January 1844); cited in *WJS*, 317–319. I have here modernized the spelling, and added punctuation for ease of reading.

49 *WWJ*, 2:341–342 (21 January 1844).

Perhaps there is no record of the details because Snuffer is in error. When the verse is read in context, such suspicions seem well-founded:

Build a house to my name, for the Most High to dwell therein. For there is not a place found on earth that he may come to and restore again that which was lost unto you, or which he hath taken away, even the fulness of the priesthood. For a baptismal font there is not upon the earth, that they, my saints, may be baptized for those who are dead (D&C 124:27–29).

Snuffer often complains about LDS historians starting with a conclusion and “reasoning backward” (97, 99, 319, 321). He gives us a specimen of that approach here. The scripture says that something has been lost and taken away—but the text then immediately says that this includes the ability to do baptisms for the dead.⁵⁰ But Joseph and the Saints had never done baptisms for the dead prior to August 1840, or had the privilege of doing them.⁵¹ Clearly, when God says something has been lost unto you and taken away, he does not mean taken away *from the Church*, but rather that the doctrines and powers associated with vicarious work for the dead were lost to mortals during the Christian apostasy. God deigns to restore these, but they can only happen in a temple, “For this ordinance belongeth to my house, and cannot be acceptable to me, only in the days of your poverty, wherein ye are not able to build a house unto me” (D&C 124:30). Meanwhile, *for now* “your baptisms shall be

50 Note that Snuffer ends the citation before the line about baptism for the dead on 101–102, and it is also absent from his gloss on 97–98. Necessary context has been omitted, since the citation on p. 102 ends with verse 28, and then resumes with verse 31 on p. 104—the lines that make it most clear that baptism for the dead is the “lost” matter are here absent from Snuffer’s discussion.

51 H. David Burton, “Baptism for the Dead: LDS Practice,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 4 vols., edited by Daniel H. Ludlow, (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1992), 1:95.

acceptable unto me” (D&C 124:31)—a clear sign that the Saints are not being deprived of a previous blessing or power. They are, instead, called to build a temple so that this work and the other ordinances associated with it can be restored and continue.⁵²

“If a red brick store is an adequate substitute for a temple,” Snuffer archly observes, “then there must have been plenty of places that could be found for the Lord to come and restore again the fullness” (335). Yet, Joseph Smith specifically told the apostles and others⁵³ that the Lord had commanded him to administer the ordinances and all the keys: “He told us that the object he had was for us to go to work and fit up that room preparatory to giving endowments to a few Elders that he might give unto them *all the keys of power* pertaining to the Aaronic and Melchisedec Priesthoods,” wrote one participant.⁵⁴ After Joseph dedicated the upper room for this purpose,⁵⁵ “Joseph washed and anointed [us] as Kings and Priests to God, and over the House of Israel... [because] he was commanded of God, [to do so]... and [thereby] conferred on us Patriarchal Priesthood.”⁵⁶ Joseph told the Relief Society six days earlier, “the

52 Baptisms were discontinued at the conference held between 2–5 October 1841 [Discourse of 3 October 1841, reported in *Times and Seasons* 2/24 (15 October 1841): 577–578; cited in *WJS*, 76–79]. The temple font was dedicated on 8 November 1841, and baptisms for the dead resumed there on 21 November [Joseph Fielding Smith, *Essentials in Church History* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Co., 1922), 256–257]. See note 79 for a contemporary reading which accords with this view.

53 Ehat thesis, 272 n. 291 cites as examples: Joseph Smith, Jr, *Manuscript History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Documentary History)*. 7 vols. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1978, 4: 608 (hereafter cited as *Manuscript History of the Church.*); Mills, “De Tal Palo Tal Astilla,” 120–21; *WJS*, 116; Bathsheba W. Smith, “Recollections of the Prophet Joseph Smith,” 245; Lucius N. Scovil, letter to *Deseret News Semi-Weekly*, 15 February 1884; Justus Morse, affidavit, in Shook, *True Origins of Mormon Polygamy*, 170.

54 Lucius N. Scovil letter to Editor in “Higher Ordinances,” *Deseret News Semi-Weekly* (15 February 1884): 2; cited by Ehat thesis, 26, italics added.

55 Ehat thesis, 27.

56 George Miller to James J. Strang, 26 June 1855, from H. W. Mills, “De Tal Palo Tal Astilla,” *Annual Publications—Historical Society of Southern California*

keys of the kingdom are about to be given.”⁵⁷ Three days later, he preached on the “keys of the kingdom,” saying that there are “certain signs and words by which false spirits and personages may be detected from true, which cannot be revealed to the Elders till the Temple is completed.”⁵⁸ Brigham Young reported succinctly once all the higher ordinances were given: “Brother Joseph said he had given us all that could be given to man on the earth.”⁵⁹

(This is a far cry from *PTHG*’s dismissive claim that “Joseph instituted a form of temple endowment in May, 1842” (266). According to Joseph, he instituted *all* the ordinances, and he did so at God’s command.⁶⁰)

Willard Richards, keeper of Joseph’s journal and among the first nine to be endowed on 4 May 1842, would note that Joseph was “instructing them in the principles and order of the priesthood, attending to washings it [sic] anointings, & endowments, and the communications of keys, pertaining to the Aaronic Priesthood, and so on to the highest order of the Melchisedec Priesthood, setting forth the order pertaining to the Ancient of days & all those plans & principles by which any one is enabled to secure the fulness of those blessings which has been prepared for the church of the firstborn, and come up into and abide in the presence of God.”⁶¹ Observed Ehat:

10 (Los Angeles: McBride Printing Company, 1917): 120–121; cited in Ehat thesis, 28.

57 Nauvoo Relief Society minutes, discourse of 28 April 1842, cited in *WJS*, 116–117. See Ehat thesis, 31.

58 *Manuscript History of the Church*, discourse of 1 May 1842, cited in *WJS*, 119–120. See Ehat thesis, 35.

59 Heber C. Kimball, journal, 26 December 1845; cited by Ehat thesis, 80.

60 See note 97 herein.

61 Draft sheet of the “*Manuscript History of the Church*,” in the hand of Willard Richards, 4 May 1842, Historian’s Office Church Records Group, Church Archives; cited in Ehat thesis, 29.

Though this priesthood order did not confer the fullness of the priesthood, it “pertained to the highest order” in that it presented all the “plans and principles” that would “enable” anyone “to secure” in this life or before the resurrection the fullness of the priesthood.⁶²

Almost a year later, at subsequent meetings, the same participants were sealed in eternal marriage.⁶³ Joseph would then teach publicly:

If a man gets the fullness of God he has to get [it] in the same way that Jesus Christ obtain[ed] it & that was by keeping all the ordinances of the house of the Lord.... [I]t was one reason why Jesus said how oft would I have gatherd you (the Jews) together that they might attend to the ordinance of the baptism for the dead as well as the other ordinances the Priesthood Revelations &c.⁶⁴

Ehat observed:

When Joseph spoke of “all the ordinances of the house of the Lord,” the “fulness of the Priesthood” and “revelations as God gives in the most holy place in his temple” regarding becoming gods in eternity, he had in mind the highest ordinance of the temple—the only ordinance he had not as yet introduced. It was the capstone of ordinances essential to full salvation. To the members of the Quorum—still only the original nine members—this seems to have been clear. On 6 August 1843, Brigham Young in public discourse said, “If any in the church [have] the fullness of the Melchizedek Priesthood [I do] not know it. For any person to have the fullness of that priesthood, he must be a king and

62 Ehat thesis, 30.

63 Ehat thesis, 60–63.

64 *WWJ*, 2:230–231 (11 June 1843); cited in *WJS*, 213. See Ehat thesis, 77–78.

priest.” Brigham had in 1842 with the eight others of the Quorum received an anointing promising him he would, if faithful, eventually receive another anointing actually ordaining him a king and priest.⁶⁵

The highest ordinances were first introduced on 28 September 1843:

These ordinances, depending on the person’s ecclesiastical position, made the recipient a “king and priest,” “in,” “in and over,” or (as only in Joseph Smith’s case) “over” the Church. Moreover, the recipient had sealed upon him the power to bind and loose on earth as Joseph explained in his definition of the fullness of the priesthood.⁶⁶

And on 22 November 1843, Brigham Young became the first of the Twelve to “receive the fullness of the priesthood” with his wife, Mary Ann.⁶⁷ Joseph then instructed Brigham to perform the same rite for the other apostles.⁶⁸

Snuffer also ignores the fact that the Saints continued to maintain that a temple *was* necessary for the fullness of priesthood practice—and not only because the rank-and-file of the Church were to be endowed and receive the other higher ordinances there. The proxy work of endowments and sealings for the dead (as opposed to proxy baptisms)—which Joseph insisted formed part of the fullness—could not be performed outside of a temple, and never was.⁶⁹ Joseph taught, however,

65 Ehat thesis, 79–80. Citation for Brigham’s discourse is *WWJ*, 2:271 (6 August 1843).

66 Ehat thesis, 95.

67 Ehat thesis, 121–122.

68 Ehat thesis, 145–148. See also 122, citing George A. Smith discourse, *Millennial Star* 37 (2 February 1875): 66, reporting 25 December 1874 discourse.

69 See Richard E. Bennett, “Which Is the Wisest Course?: The Transformation of Mormon Temple Consciousness, 1870–1898,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 52/2 (2013): 5–43, especially 19–23.

that all the ordinances for the living and all keys and powers which he had been given could be and were bestowed on the apostles (see claims #4 and #5). In part, *PTHG* simply has too narrow a definition of the “the fullness,” and refuses to accept Joseph Smith’s statements about the legitimacy of what he did in the maligned upper room of the red brick store, and why he did it. Snuffer’s views are made to trump even Joseph’s, mostly by ignoring the relevant historical evidence.

Claim #8: The Saints Sinned in Missouri and Joseph Offered His Life to Give Them Another Chance

Snuffer discusses the difficulties in Missouri between the Saints and their neighbors, declaring, “Our pride wants us to be the innocent victims of unrighteous and wicked outsiders. But the events are not so one-sided” (98). Snuffer may know some who wish to see it that way, but he cannot charge such views to the Church. B. H. Roberts’ introduction to the official *Manuscript History of the Church* contains a lengthy discussion of the various causes of the difficulties in Missouri, and among these he cites “the unwisdom of the Saints.”⁷⁰ Roberts dates the Saints’ errors to at least November 1831,⁷¹ and says that

it is very clear that the reason why the Saints were prevailed against by their enemies and driven from the center place of Zion, was because of their failure to live up to the high requirements made of them by the Lord. In subsequent efforts to redeem Zion, by attempting to return the exiles to Jackson county, the Saints in all parts of the land again failed to respond with sufficient promptness and fulness to the requirements of the Lord.⁷²

70 *Manuscript History of the Church*, 3:xxxii.

71 *Manuscript History of the Church*, 3:xxiii.

72 *Manuscript History of the Church*, 3:xxxix.

Roberts goes on to describe the events of 1838—including Sidney Rigdon’s “salt sermon”—as “untimely, extreme, and unwise.”⁷³ Snuffer caricatures the views of generations of Latter-day Saints about these events, even in the official history. But he also ignores the clear implication of D&C 123—that the majority of Saints were more sinned against than sinners.

At any rate, Snuffer claims that because of the Saints’ sins in Missouri, Joseph “apparently offered his life in exchange for another chance. The Lord accepted both his acknowledgement [of sin] and his offer” (100–101). A look at the footnote reveals that this claim is not as sturdy as the main text would lead us to believe: “What was offered is not explained either in the revelation or by Joseph Smith” (101 n. 120). But, despite this lack of evidence, Snuffer declares that “subsequent events... make it clear what Joseph offered for this additional chance to complete the restoration and have the saints receive the fullness of the priesthood. He offered, and ultimately forfeited, his life” (101 n. 120).

This is a strange claim. *PTHG* admits that there is no evidence in the revelations or in Joseph Smith’s statements—and, as we have seen, Snuffer is exceedingly resourceful in finding dubious textual “evidence” to defend his theories. He claims that “subsequent events” make this reading obvious, but he does not cite any of this data, or demonstrate how it proves his case. He merely asserts it in a footnote. If Joseph made such an offer, why do none of his sermons in Nauvoo describe it? Why does he not explain these matters to the Saints so they understand the stakes? The text itself says merely:

Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you, my servant Joseph Smith, I am well pleased with your offering and acknowledgments, which you have made; for unto this end have I raised you up, that I might show forth my

73 *Manuscript History of the Church*, 3:xliv.

wisdom through the weak things of the earth. Your prayers are acceptable before me; and in answer to them I say unto you, that you are now called immediately to make a solemn proclamation of my gospel (D&C 124:1–2).

The answer to Joseph’s offering and prayers is that he is to proclaim the gospel. The solemn proclamation calls for the gentiles to bring financial aid and religious observance to Zion. There were many other offerings and acknowledgements made by Joseph besides Snuffer’s dubious claim about him offering his life for the Saints’ sins—Joseph’s letters from Liberty Jail, for example, instruct the Saints that they must set out the names of those who persecuted them, together with the costs (D&C 123:1–16). This is “a duty which we owe to God,” and the Saints ought to “waste and wear out [their] lives in bringing to light all the hidden things of darkness” (v. 7, 13). When they have done “all things that lie in [their] power,” *then* they may “stand still...to see the salvation of God” (v. 17). It is at least as likely that these efforts have been accepted, so Joseph may now call on the world to either help them or suffer God’s intervention. This off-the-cuff reading is at least as likely as *PTHG*’s, with more textual evidence.

Such speculation and tale spinning is great sport, but it simply isn’t history.

Claim #9: The Nauvoo Temple Was Not Built With Enough Speed; the Saints’ Suffering Is Evidence of Punishment

PTHG tells us that “the revelation [D&C 124] required the construction of the Nauvoo Temple.... There was a set time. If at the end of that time the temple was not constructed, the words are clear ‘ye shall be rejected as a church, with your dead, saith the Lord your God’” (104).

PTHG does not tell us that the First Presidency had already urged the Saints to build a temple in August 1840, and the

Saints had sustained this plan at an October 1840 conference.⁷⁴ The *Times and Seasons* announced temple construction had begun on 15 January 1841, four days *prior to the revelation*, which suggests the Saints were not particularly slack regarding the temple:

The Temple of the Lord is in process of erection here, where the Saints will come to worship the God of their fathers, according to the order of His house and the powers of the Holy Priesthood, and will be so constructed as to enable all the functions of the Priesthood to be duly exercised, and where instructions from the Most High will be received, and from this place go forth to distant lands.⁷⁵

“In Nauvoo at the time of Joseph’s death,” Snuffer observes, “there were completed homes built, a Masonic Temple, and manufacturing and retail facilities, but the Nauvoo Temple had been neglected. It was nowhere near completed when Joseph and Hyrum died” (105).

It is certainly true that homes and commercial buildings had been built. Snuffer’s claim that the temple was “neglected” must be established from the evidence, not merely asserted because his theory demands it. The temple required much more labor to complete than homes or businesses. Furthermore, commercial structures were also necessary in order to provide the economic muscle to supply labor and materials for the temple, which could not be built in a void. Does Snuffer believe

74 Lisle G. Brown, “The Sacred Departments for Temple Work in Nauvoo: The Assembly Room and the Council Chamber,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 19/3 (1979): 361.

75 *Manuscript History of the Church*, 4:269; citing Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Hyrum Smith, “A Proclamation of the First Presidency of the Church to the Saints Scattered Abroad, Greeting,” Nauvoo, [Illinois], 15 January 1841. It was also discussed by Joseph in a report in *Times and Seasons* 1/12 (October 1840): 186

the Saints were to have no homes until the temple was built? Joseph Smith evidently did not think so—the Heber C. Kimball family was living in a 14- by 16-foot log house about a mile from the Mississippi river, but in the summer of 1841, Joseph urged a move. Heber’s daughter recorded that “the prophet Joseph being anxious to have my father nearer to himself and his brethren our place was exchanged for one on the flat where father built us a more commodious house.”⁷⁶ The Prophet’s behavior is simply inconsistent with Snuffer’s theory that the temple was being neglected, or that improvements in housing were inappropriate with the Lord’s timetable. If Snuffer’s views were correct, Joseph would have surely urged one of his most obedient followers to dedicate still more labor to the temple, rather than a new home.

Absent from Snuffer’s entire discussion is the Nauvoo House, a hotel whose construction was commanded in the same revelation (D&C 124:22–24). The Saints were not, then, to focus on the temple to the exclusion of all else, and it would have been economically impossible to do so anyway.

Joseph’s Discourses in the Relevant Period

If Snuffer is correct, there ought to be evidence in the historical record—Joseph spoke often and frequently of the Nauvoo temple and its construction. Does Snuffer expect us to believe that God would allow his people to fail without first requiring the prophet to repeatedly warn them? Let us look at some of the historical evidence which *PTHG* does not provide.

24 April 1842

Joseph “pronounced a curse on the Merchants and the rich, who would not assist in building” the temple.⁷⁷ But he gives no warning that the Saints are in danger of losing their privileges

⁷⁶ Stanley B. Kimball, “Heber C. Kimball and Family, The Nauvoo Years,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 15/4 (1975): 454.

⁷⁷ *Manuscript History of the Church*, discourse of 24 April 1842; cited in WJS, 114.

simply because a few wealthy folk are not helping. God does not punish the many for the inaction of a few. The day prior to Joseph's speech, Nauvoo's *Wasp* newspaper (operated by Joseph's brother) would note, "We passed by the Temple, and was delighted at the prospect that here presented itself. A scene of lively industry and animation was there. The sound of the polisher's chisel—converting the rude stone of the quarry into an artful shape—sent forth its busy hum: all were busily employed—the work was fast progressing."⁷⁸ Yet Snuffer claims that scant days later, "by May, 1842 Joseph could see the temple would never be completed in the time allowed" (285). Evidence that we will see below is not consistent with this hypothesis.

1 September 1842

A revelation states:

Let the work of my temple, and all the works which I have appointed unto you, be continued on and not cease; and let your diligence, and your perseverance, and patience, and your works be redoubled, and you shall in nowise lose your reward, saith the Lord of Hosts. And if they persecute you, so persecuted they the prophets and righteous men that were before you. For all this there is a reward in heaven (D&C 127:4).

The audience is encouraged to continue, but no warning or chastisement is forthcoming. (Note that the transitive verb "redouble" does not mean to "double," but means "to repeat in return... to repeat often.... To increase by repeated or continued additions," such as in repeated blows.)⁷⁹ Less than a week later, Joseph Smith sent a letter:

⁷⁸ *The Wasp* (23 April 1842); cited in Don F. Colvin, *Nauvoo Temple: A Story of Faith* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; printed by Covenant Communications, 2002), 22.

⁷⁹ Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English language* (1828), q.v. "redouble."

6 September 1842

Let us, therefore, as a church and a people, and as Latter-day Saints, offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness; and let us present in his holy temple, when it is finished, a book containing the records of our dead, which shall be worthy of all acceptance (D&C 128:24).

Again, there is encouragement but no sign of condemnation. But in Snuffer's telling, Joseph had already decided that failure was inevitable (285).

29 October 1842

About 10 {in the forenoon I rode up and viewed the Temple. I expressed my satisfaction at the arrangements, and was pleased with the progress made in that sacred edifice}.⁸⁰

Joseph here praises the Saints' progress and efforts.

15 November 1842

The *Times and Seasons* reported the enthusiastic response to the arrival of timber from Wisconsin for the temple. The temple committee made assignments by ward, and "requested all the carpenters to come together on the Thursday to prepare the timbers." The response exceeded their expectations:

We had a cheering assemblage of wagons, horses, oxen and men who began with zeal and gladness to pull the raft to pieces and haul it up to the Temple. This scenery has continued to the present date and the expectations of the committee more than realized.

80 *Manuscript History of the Church* (material in braces from "Book of the Law of the Lord"), discourse of 29 October 1842; cited in *WJS*, 132.

On Thursday we had a large assemblage of carpenters, joiners &c. who succeeded in preparing the lumber and laying the joists preparatory to laying the temporary floor and fixing seats &c....

Whilst watching for a few moments the zeal and cheerful labors of the brethren to accomplish this thing we could not avoid feeling grateful to the great Jehovah, and to the brethren engaged in this noble cause. We are constrained to feel thankful to the Almighty for the many blessings we receive at his hands for the prosperity of the place-for the harmony and good feeling prevailing in our midst-and for the great and glorious privileges granted unto us as a people....

Now brethren, if so great and glorious have been the blessings realized in so early a stage of the work what may we expect when the building is completed, and a house prepared where the Most High can come and restore that which has been taken away in consequence of transgression; even the **FULNESS** of the priesthood.

Truly, no exertion on our part ought to be lacking but to double our diligence because great, yea very great are the consequences pending.

As we have already said, we feel thankful to the brethren for the interest they have taken, not only on the present, but on all former occasions. They have come forth like Saints of God and great will be their reward. Not long since they were naked, destitute, afflicted, and smitten having been twice plucked up by the roots; but again they lift their heads with gladness and manifest a determination to fulfil the revelations

and commandments of the Most High if it be at the expense of all their property and even their lives. Will not God reward them? Yea, verily!⁸¹

21 February 1843

Joseph urges both the temple and the Nauvoo House be built:

for I began it & will finish it. Not that public spirit here as in other cities dont deny revelation if the Temple and Nauvoo house are not finished you must run away... every thing God does is to aggrandize his kingdom how does he lay the foundation? build a temple to my great name. and call the attention of the great. but where shall we lay our heads... The building of N. House is just as sacred in my view as the Temple.

I want the Nauvoo House built it must be built, our salvation depends upon it. When men have done what they can or will for the temple, let them do what they can for the Nauvoo House. We never can accomplish our work at the expense of another.⁸²

We note that Joseph urges that the temple be given priority, though both are important. A few months later, he will urge a shift of resources to the Nauvoo House, suggesting that the temple was not being neglected.⁸³

6 April 1843

Joseph discusses using the Twelve to fund-raise for the Nauvoo House—something for which he would be unlikely to slight

81 “The Temple of God in Nauvoo,” *Times and Seasons* 4/1 (15 November 1841): 10–11.

82 Willard Richards, Joseph Smith Diary, discourse of 21 February 1843; cited in *WJS*, 164–166.

83 See notes 84–85 herein.

the temple.⁸⁴ He notes, in fact, that “there has been too great latitude in individuals for the building of the Temple to the exclusion of the Nauvoo house.”⁸⁵ The Saints, then, can hardly have been slacking on the temple if Joseph wants them to put *more* emphasis on the Nauvoo House.

11 July 1843

He [Joseph] beautifully and in a most powerful manner, illustrated the necessity of the gathering and the building of the Temple that those ordinances may be administered which are necessary preparations for the world to come: he exhorted the people in impressive terms to be diligent—to be up and doing lest the tabernacle pass over to another people and we lose the blessing.⁸⁶

Joseph encourages diligence—slackening would be unwise. Work on the temple had slowed over the spring, but this was due to the illness of a key craftsman, William W. Player. An English convert who was the temple’s principal stone setter, Player’s absence delayed the spring start on the walls. Technical problems with the crane needed to raise massive timbers and stones also slowed the work, but this cannot be blamed on a lack of zeal either.⁸⁷

9 October 1843

“President Smith concluded with exhortations to the church to renew their exertions to forward the work of the Temple, and in walking before the Lord in soberness and righteousness.”⁸⁸

84 See note 82 herein, where he asks that the Nauvoo House be next in priority after one has donated to the temple.

85 Willard Richards, Joseph Smith Diary, discourse of 6 April 1843; cited in *WJS*, 175.

86 Eliza R. Snow Diary, discourse of 11 June 1843; cited in *WJS*, 215–216.

87 Colvin, 22–23.

88 “Minutes of a Special Conference,” *Times and Seasons* 4/21 (15 September 1843): 331–332, reporting discourse of 9 October 1843; cited in *WJS*, 254. Joseph

Joseph discussed temple business, but no report is made of a rebuke or warning for being behind schedule.⁸⁹

15 October 1843

Joseph responds to some critics about the economic cost of the temple—clear evidence that work was proceeding and diverting significant resources:

some say It is better, say some to give [to] the poor than build the temple.—the building of the temple has kept the poor who were driven from Missouri from starving. as has been the best means for this object which could be devised

all ye rich men of the Latter Day Saints.—from abroad I would invite to bring up some of their money and give to the temple. we want Iron steel powder.—&c—a good plan to get up a forge[?]. bring in raw materials, & manu[f]act[ur]ing establishments of all kinds.—& surround the rapids—⁹⁰

1 January 1844

The *Times and Seasons* noted:

Considering the many improvements that have been made, and the difficulties in many instances under which the committee have had to labor, the Temple has made great progress; and strenuous efforts are now being made in quarrying, hauling, and hewing stone, to place it in a situation that the walls can go up and the building be enclosed by next fall.

Diary, kept by Willard Richards, notes “Hasten the work of the temple. and all the work of the Last Days. Let the elders & saints do away light mindedness and be sober” (255).

89 “Minutes of a Special Conference,” 330–331; cited in *WJS*, 252.

90 Willard Richards, Joseph Smith diary, discourse of 15 October 1843; cited in *WJS*, 257

There has not been much done at the Nauvoo House during the past season, further than preparing materials; most of the brick, however, and hewed stone are in readiness for that building; and the Temple and Nauvoo House committees, having purchased several splendid mills in the pineries, place them in a situation to furnish both of the above named buildings with abundance of excellent lumber, besides having a large amount to dispose of.⁹¹

We recall that delays had occurred in the previous year because a key tradesman was taken ill. There were also technical problems with the temple's crane.⁹²

21 January 1844

Snuffer cites this discourse, and uses it as evidence that Saints were ignoring Joseph's warnings:

Interestingly, only Wilford Woodruff recorded the content of that talk. Willard Richards reports only that a talk was given, the weather was "somewhat unpleasant," and the subject was "sealing the hearts of the fathers to the children." Joseph's warning that there was a limited time to 'make use of the seals while they are on earth' seems to have gone unheard by those in Nauvoo, and later their descendants. Even the leadership of the church at the time were tone deaf to Joseph's alarm (106–107).

Unsurprisingly, this gloss distorts Joseph's message:

I would to God that this temple was now done that we might go into it & go to work & improve our time & make use of the seals while they are on earth & the

91 "Editorial Address," *Times and Seasons* 5/1 (1 January 1844): 391.

92 See note 87 herein.

Saints have none to much time to save & redeem their dead, & *gather together their living relatives that they may be saved also*, before the earth will be smitten & the Consumption decreed falls upon the world & I would advise all the Saints to go to with their might & *gather together all their living relatives to this place that they may be sealed & saved* that they may be prepared against the day that the destroying angel goes forth & if the whole Church should go to with all their might to save their dead seal their posterity & gather their living friends & spend none of their time in behalf of the world they would hardly get through before night would Come when no man Could work & my ownly trouble at the present time is concerning ourselves that the Saints will be divided & broken up & scattered before we get our Salvation Secure for thei[r] is so many fools in the world for the devil to operate upon it gives him the advantage often times.⁹³

Joseph’s advice to the Saints is not “hurry up and complete the temple.” Instead, he urges them to get all their living relatives in Nauvoo so they can be endowed (after all, most of the Twelve and some others had already been endowed and received all the temple ordinances). Joseph’s “only worry” about the Saints is not their failure or unworthiness, but of them being attacked. This is a risk not because of *their* failure—rather, it is because there are “so many fools in the world” whom Satan can act upon.

Furthermore, when Joseph speaks of the Saints having “none to[o] much time” to redeem “their dead” and “their living relatives,” this is not because the temple will not be done within God’s time limit—rather, he is explicit that the time is short

93 WWJ, 2:342 (discourse of 21 January 1844); cited in WJS, 317–319; Snuffer cites TPJS, 330–331.

because “the earth will be smitten & the Consumption decreed falls upon the world” and “the day that the destroying angel goes forth.” These are clearly eschatological concerns, “before night would Come when no man Could work” (see John 9:4)—the time before Christ’s second coming is short. Snuffer’s gloss abuses the text from start to finish.

It makes no sense for Joseph to encourage gathering to Nauvoo to receive living ordinances if his real message (as Snuffer claims) is that the members are being slothful in building the temple and are in danger of not being allowed to receive the blessings at all. It is likewise incoherent to argue, in light of this instruction, that Joseph had known since May 1842 that they would fail. The leadership is not “tone deaf”—they simply don’t hear what Snuffer’s bias and torture of the text creates out of thin air.

5 February 1844

The *Manuscript History of the Church* reports that Joseph told the Nauvoo Temple’s architect that

if he had to make the Temple ten feet higher than it was originally calculated; that one light at the center of each circular window would be sufficient to light the whole room, and when the whole building was thus illuminated, the effect would be remarkably grand. “I wish you to carry out my designs. I have seen in vision the splendid appearance of that building illuminated, and will have it built according to the pattern shown me.”⁹⁴

Joseph declares that he has seen the finished temple in vision. There is again no evidence that Joseph worries that they will be denied its blessings.

94 *Manuscript History of the Church*, 6:196–197.

4 March 1844

at a meeting of the First Presidency, the Twelve Apostles, the Temple Committee and others, Joseph Smith announced that under the circumstances “he did not know but it was best to let the Nauvoo house be till the temple is completed. [W]e need the temple more than anything Else... we will let the Nauvoo house stand till the temple is done and we will put all our forces on the temple—turn all our lumber towards the temple.”⁹⁵

Surely Joseph would tell the Twelve—nine of whom he had initiated into all the higher temple ordinances, including the “fullness of the priesthood”—if the Saints were slighting God with regard to the temple. But, he did not (compare 7 March 1844 below).

7 March 1844

A critic, Charles Foster, claims that the Saints cannot finish the Nauvoo temple due to the cost. Joseph therefore proposes that they prove him wrong: “who don[‘]t know that we can put the roof on this building this season? by turning all the means of the N[auvoo] House & doubling our diligence we can do it.”⁹⁶ Joseph has thus been content with the pace at which the temple and Nauvoo House are progressing (at times urging more effort to be diverted to the Nauvoo House) and now suggests diverting all effort to the temple. Again, there is no condemnation, nor any hint that the Saints’ chances are running out with Joseph’s death fast approaching (compare 4 March 1844).

95 Ehat thesis, 154; citing Joseph Smith, Diary, 4 March 1844.

96 Willard Richards, Joseph Smith Diary, discourse of 7 March 1844; cited in *WJS*, 322.

10 March 1844

Joseph speaks extensively about election, and the spirit and power of Elijah, which

is that ye have power to hold the keys of the revelations ordinances, oracles powers & endowments of the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood & of the Kingdom of God on the Earth & to receive, obtain & perform all the ordinances belonging to the Kingdom of God even unto the sealing of the hearts of the hearts fathers unto the children & the hearts of the children unto the fathers even those who are in heaven.... Then what you seal on earth by the Keys of Elijah is sealed in heaven, & this is the power of Elijah, & this is the difference between the spirit & power of Elias and Elijah, for while the spirit of Elias is a forerunner the power of Elijah is sufficient to make our calling & Election sure.⁹⁷

In all this, there is no sign that the Saints are falling behind, or that they are in danger of losing these blessings—and Joseph’s death is less than four months away. He even takes time to assure the congregation that Christ will not come in 1844 as William Miller had predicted, and also prophesies that Christ will not come before 1890.⁹⁸ Why would he not address the much more pressing issue of an incomplete temple if Snuffer’s fanciful historical reconstruction is correct?

15 March 1844

The Church’s official newspaper praises the Nauvoo saints and encourages those not gathered to Nauvoo to be likewise faithful in building the temple. There is no sign that the Nauvoo Saints are slacking or risking condemnation:

⁹⁷ Wilford Woodruff Journal, discourse of 10 March 1844; cited in *WJS*, 329–331. Also in *WWJ*, 2:361–362.

⁹⁸ *WJS*, 331–332; see *WWJ* 2:361–362.

We are also pleased that we can inform our friends abroad, that the saints here of late, have taken hold of the word on the Temple with a zeal and energy that in no small degree excites our admiration. Their united efforts certainly speaks to us, that it is their determination that this spacious edifice shall be enclosed, if not finished, this season. And a word we would say to the Saints abroad, which is, that the Temple is being built in compliance with a special commandment of God not to a few individuals, but to all. Therefore we sincerely hope you will contribute of your means as liberally as your circumstances will allow, that the burden of the work may not rest upon a few, but proportionately upon all.⁹⁹

12 May 1844

It is not only necessary that you should be baptized for your dead, but you will have to go thro' all the ordinances for them, same as you have gone through, to save yourselves; there will be 144,000 Saviors on Mount Zion, and with them an innumerable host, that no man can number—Oh! I beseech you to forward, go forward and make your calling and your election sure—and if any man preach any other gospel with that which I have preached, he shall be cursed, and some of you who now hear me, shall see it & know that I testify the truth concerning them; in regard to the law of the Priesthood—there should be a place where all nations shall come up from time to time to receive their endowments, and the Lord has said, this shall be the place for the baptism for the dead—every man that

⁹⁹ "Our City, and the Present Aspect of Affairs," *Times and Seasons* 5/6 (15 March 1844): 472.

has been baptized and belongs to the Kingdom, has a right to be baptized for those who are gone before, and, as soon as the Law of the Gospel is obeyed here by their friends, who act as proxy for them, the Lord has administrators there to set them free—a man may act as proxy for his own relatives—the ordinances of the Gospel which was laid out before the foundation of the world has been thus fulfilled, by them, and we may be baptized for those who we have much friendship for, but it must be first revealed to the man of God, lest we should run too far.¹⁰⁰

Less than two months before his death, Joseph spoke again of both making one's calling and election sure and of performing ordinances for the dead—both of which he had insisted require the temple. He did not, however, rebuke them or tell them that they were being slothful. Why teach them of matters they cannot—in Snuffer's telling—have?

There is, in short, little or no evidence that the Saints were being slothful in building the Nauvoo temple. At various times, Joseph expressed his pleasure with their progress, encouraged them to diligence, asked that more resources be given to the Nauvoo House, declared he had seen the completed structure in vision, and then later moved full attention back to the temple. He encouraged members to bring all their family to Nauvoo so they would have time to receive their endowments before the wicked disturbed them—a strange command if he believed they would not be permitted to receive those blessings. The textual record simply does not match Snuffer's rather speculative reconstruction.

How Much Time?

Snuffer argues that “it is critical to know when the time period of that ‘appointment’” with God in the completed temple

100 Thomas Bullock report, discourse of 14 May 1844; cited in *WJS*, 365–369.

“ended” (104). It probably *would* be critical—which is why the silence of Joseph on this matter is so telling.

A look at some figures does not, however, suggest that there is an obvious problem. The Nauvoo temple was 60% larger than the Kirtland temple, with over three times the floor area.¹⁰¹ The Kirtland construction was commanded on 27 December 1832 (D&C 88:119), and the Saints were severely rebuked for their lack of speed on 1 June 1833 (D&C 95:3, 11–17). The dedication took place on 27 March 1836.¹⁰² From commandment to dedication was 1186 days.

From the commandment to the martyrdom at Nauvoo, 1255 days had elapsed. It would seem unreasonable for the Lord to expect a structure more than half again as large to be built within essentially the same number of days, while also building the Nauvoo House, settling a new city on malarial swamp land,¹⁰³ and developing all the infrastructure necessary to support both a city and temple construction.

Kirtland’s temple cost \$40–60,000;¹⁰⁴ Nauvoo’s was 16–25 times more, requiring a minimum of \$1,000,000.¹⁰⁵ Thus,

101 Wikipedia lists the Kirtland temple floor area as 15,000 square feet, and Nauvoo as 54,000 square feet. See my conservative calculations in the appendix, which yield 14,400 square feet and 44,143 square feet respectively.

102 Milton V. Backman, *The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio, 1830–1838* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Co., 1983), 142–149, 157, 286, 286–294.

103 See Kyle M. Rollins, Richard D. Smith, M. Brett Borup, and E. James Nelson, “Transforming Swampland into Nauvoo, the City Beautiful,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 45/3 (2006): 125–157. “Drainage benefits were slow in coming [to Midwestern states’ swampland] and generally were not realized until after the Civil War.... [T]he drainage efforts in Nauvoo represent a rare early success story” (125). The city’s main drainage ditch alone “would have required at least 22,100 man-hours of effort to complete by hand,” and labor on drainage was a constant throughout the Mormons’ stay in Nauvoo (153).

104 Backman, 161; Eugene England, *Brother Brigham* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1980), 26.

105 Colvin, 44; citing Andrew Jenson, *Historical Record* 8 (June 1889): 872 and *Deseret News Church Almanac* (Salt Lake City, Utah: *Deseret News*, 1975), F4.

while Nauvoo had a population of 11,057 by 1845 (with a total of 15,000 Mormons in all Hancock County),¹⁰⁶ compared to Kirtland's 2,025 by 1836,¹⁰⁷ the cost of Nauvoo's temple was still three times greater on a per person basis: \$66.67/citizen compared to Kirtland's \$29.63/citizen. The construction times also favor Nauvoo over Kirtland: Kirtland did \$50.59 of work per day, while Nauvoo did \$518.94/day to its dedication on 30 April 1846.¹⁰⁸ To be completed by the martyrdom, the Saints would have had to do a staggering \$796.81/day.

Put simply, even with Nauvoo's larger population base, the cost per citizen was two to three times higher than Kirtland, with at least ten times more labor and materials expended per day of construction. Only someone committed to seeing the Saints as failures would condemn and downplay this accomplishment, especially as almost all had arrived in Nauvoo destitute. Even getting adequate food was an on-going issue:

“Even the best providers were often short of flour, milk, butter, eggs, and other staples. Almost every letter from this period deals with the great struggle for food.” On balance it should be reported that food

106 Glen M. Leonard, *Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, A People of Promise* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Co., 2002), Chapter 8. An earlier work [Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1958), 17] estimated 25,000 Mormons in 1844. The calculations using these older estimates can be seen in the Appendix.

107 Marvin S. Hill, Larry T. Wimmer, and C. Keith Rooker, “The Kirtland Economy Revisited: A Market Critique of Sectarian Economics,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 17/4 (1977): 403, 408. The authors note (409) that their assumptions may lead to an underestimate of Kirtland's population. In all my calculations, I have used the largest estimate for Kirtland's cost (\$60,000), and used the estimate of 15,000 for all Mormons in Hancock County. I have assumed that the entire population was present throughout, which is an obvious over-simplification. My estimates are thus conservative, since these factors will underestimate the cost to individuals who helped throughout construction. Those living away from Nauvoo would also have been less able to provide volunteer labor, though monetary donations were solicited.

108 From 19 January 1841 to 30 April 1846 is 1927 days.

supplies were much better by the fall of 1845. Fruit trees planted earlier were now in production, and grain and vegetable products were plentiful. Distribution of these commodities now became the problem as farmers in outlying areas were driven from their farms by mobs, and crops were destroyed.¹⁰⁹

It seems even more capricious for God to see the Saints fail without a single clear warning from the Prophet or the Lord himself. We can profitably compare the rebuke of June 1833 at Kirtland with the essential silence at Nauvoo:

For ye have sinned against me a very grievous sin, in that ye have not considered the great commandment in all things, that I have given unto you concerning the building of mine house.... Verily I say unto you, it is my will that you should build a house. If you keep my commandments you shall have power to build it. If you keep not my commandments, the love of the Father shall not continue with you, therefore you shall walk in darkness (D&C 95:7, 11–12).

The Saints Were Punished?

PTHG claims that D&C 124:47–48 can be used to determine if the Saints failed at Nauvoo. It claims that “we know for certain”:

- A. “The spot was not consecrated by the Lord, or made holy by His or the angels’ presence. At least there is no record of it having occurred;
- B. “The church was moved out of the spot;
- C. “The temple was utterly destroyed;
- D. The migration westward was more than difficult and harrowing” (381).

109 Colvin, 44; quotation from Kenneth W. Godfrey, “Some Thoughts Regarding an Unwritten History of Nauvoo,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 15/4 (1975): 420.

We will consider each claim in turn.

Point A: Spot not consecrated by divine or angelic presence?

This claim is false. “Others also beheld angels and the glory of God,” reported one witness at the Nauvoo temple.¹¹⁰ The research in *PTHG* is not adequate. This issue is treated in more detail below (claim #10). Even Strangite apostates saw the glory upon the temple, though they had a more prosaic explanation:

Uriel C. Nickerson (a Strangite) said that on Sunday night last the Temple was illuminated from the top of the Belfry to the ground and swore that he saw men passing back and forwards having candles in their hands and wanted to make the people believe that there was a visitation by angels, but they were the Mormons themselves. Thus has a Strangite born strong testimony of the glory of last Sabbath.¹¹¹

Point B: Church moved out of the spot?

Snuffer here plays fast and loose with the text, though earlier he does cite the text that speaks of the Church being “moved out of their place” (380, 381). The scripture in question reads:

If ye labor with all your might, I will consecrate that spot [the temple site—see v. 43] that it shall be made holy. And if my people will hearken unto my voice, and unto the voice of my servants whom I have appointed to lead my people, behold, verily I say unto you, they shall not be moved out of their place (D&C 124:45).

PTHG makes it appear that the Church was promised that because the temple (“that spot”) would be made holy they would not be moved out of a physical “spot” or “place”—i.e.,

¹¹⁰ See note 122 herein. See also note 118 herein.

¹¹¹ Thomas Bullock Journal, 17 March 1846; cited in Gregory R. Knight, “Journal of Thomas Bullock,” *Brigham Young University Studies* 31/1 (Winter 1991): 62–63.

Nauvoo (compare 267–270). This reading is not plausible. The Lord spoke in almost identical wording on 16 December 1833 in the wake of troubles in Missouri. He reassured the Saints: “Zion shall not be moved out of her place, notwithstanding her children are scattered” (D&C 101:17, emphasis added).¹¹²

Thus, the heirs of Zion could be physically scattered or driven by wicked men, but this did not mean that they were “moved out of [their] place.”¹¹³ This promise served to reassure the Saints that they would not lose their blessings or station before God—and, the condition placed on the commandment is an interesting one, given Snuffer’s hostility to the apostles: “If my people will hearken unto my voice, and unto the voice of my servants whom I have appointed to lead my people... they shall not be moved out of their place” (D&C 124:45).

And, finally, though forced from Nauvoo by armed men, the Saints were not “scattered.” They remained together in a body under apostolic direction, withdrew in a planned and orderly way, and a large majority followed the Twelve to the Great Salt Lake.

Point C: The temple was utterly destroyed

The temple’s destruction is an uncontroversial, if irrelevant, point. There is no promise in D&C 124 that the temple would endure forever, and *PTHG*’s textual contortions do not find one either (269). (Given that the Jewish temples were both destroyed, if consistent Snuffer would have to argue that they too were never holy spots.) Section 124 does, however, include important teachings on the allowances for the evil actions of others which the Lord will make:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, that when I give a commandment to any of the sons of men to do a work unto my name, and those sons of men go with all their

112 See similar eschatological imagery used in Revelation 2:5.

113 Similar usage can be seen in D&C 97:19.

might and with all they have to perform that work, and cease not their diligence, and their enemies come upon them and hinder them from performing that work, behold, it behooveth me to require that work no more at the hands of those sons of men, but to accept of their offerings. And the iniquity and transgression of my holy laws and commandments I will visit upon the heads of those who hindered my work, unto the third and fourth generation, so long as they repent not, and hate me, saith the Lord God (D&C 124:49–50).

Were Snuffer not so dedicated to his theory, he might see the situation differently, as Brigham Young did:

I was thankful to see the Temple in Nauvoo on fire. Previous to crossing the Mississippi river, we had met in that Temple and handed it over to the Lord God of Israel; and when I saw the flames, I said “Good, Father, if you want it to be burned up.” I hoped to see it burned before I left, but I did not. I was glad when I heard of its being destroyed by fire, and of the walls having fallen in, and said, “Hell, you cannot now occupy it.”¹¹⁴

Point D: Suffering during the exodus from Nauvoo

In a way, this is the most disturbing of the charges because Snuffer presumes to condemn others, becoming an accuser of his brothers and sisters, declaring (based upon tendentious history and a distorted reading of scriptural texts) that the judgments of God were upon them. If he is wrong, then he condemns a noble group who sacrificed to the uttermost for their covenants.

One thinks again of Alma and his band of believers that fled from King Noah—they had to leave their homes to escape an army (Mosiah 18:34–35), settled a new land (Mosiah

114 Brigham Young, “Funds of the Church,” *JD* 8:203 (8 October 1860).

23:1–4), suffered enslavement (Mosiah 24:8–12), had to flee again (Mosiah 24:20), reached another area of sanctuary, had to flee yet again (Mosiah 24:23), and ultimately had to return to Zarahemla for safety (Mosiah 24:25). Snuffer could doubtless distort this experience through his sin-seeking lenses—yet we are told explicitly in the scripture that the suffering was permitted despite their obedience: “nevertheless the Lord seeth fit to chasten his people; yea, he trieth their patience and their faith” (Mosiah 23:21).

Snuffer could also doubtless find evidence for evil in the Christian martyrs of Rome, or in Ammonihah when those who believed were stoned, driven out, and had their wives and children burned alive (Alma 14:7–12). Sitting thus to arraign others appeals to some, but it is an easy game. There is enough tragedy in any life to provide fodder for such facile judgmentalism—but the scriptures warn against it:

Cursed are all those that shall lift up the heel against mine anointed, saith the Lord, and cry they have sinned when they have not sinned before me, saith the Lord, but have done that which was meet in mine eyes, and which I commanded them. But those who cry transgression do it because they are the servants of sin, and are the children of disobedience themselves (D&C 121:16–17).

Claim #10: There Were No Pentecostal-Type Experiences in the Nauvoo Temple

Here again, one wonders if Snuffer is simply ignorant of the historical record, or if he is willfully withholding information. Multiple accounts from the Nauvoo temple are extant:

- “After the dancing had continued about an hour, several excellent songs were sung, in which several of the brethren and sisters joined... I called upon Sister Whitney who

stood up and invoking the gift of tongues, sang a beautiful song of Zion in tongues. The interpretation was given by her husband, Bishop Whitney, and me, it related to our efforts to build this house to the privilege we now have of meeting in it, our departure shortly to the country of the Lamanites, their rejoicing when they hear the gospel and of the ingathering of Israel. I spoke in a foreign tongue; likewise, Brother Kimball. After a little conversation of a general nature I closed the exercises of the evening by prayer.”¹¹⁵

- “I stayed all night in the Temple of the Lord. The Spirit of God seemed to fill the House and cause every heart to rejoice with a joy unknown to the world of mankind, for the Lord manifested himself to his saints.”¹¹⁶
- “I labored in the Temple assisting in the endowments. The Spirit of the Lord filled the House insomuch that the brethren shouted for joy. Brother Orson Spencer said he could no longer contain himself. President Young told him to speak; and he opened his mouth and spake in power and demonstration of the Spirit of God.”¹¹⁷
- “At sundown went to the Temple. 14 partook of the Sacrament after which we had a most glorious time. Some of the brethren spoke in tongues. Bro. Z. Coltrin and Brown held a talk in tongues which was afterwards interpreted and confirmed. Some prophesied. Bro. Anderson related a vision. And all of us rejoiced with exceeding great gladness. A light was flickering over br. Anderson’s head while relating his vision, Phinehas Richards face shone with great brightness. Two men

115 *Manuscript History of the Church*, 7:557–58. See George D. Smith, editor *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1995), 244.

116 Jacob Gates Journal, 9 January 1846, cited in Joseph Heinerman, *Temple Manifestations* (Manti, Utah: Mountain Valley Publishers, 1974), 50.

117 Jacob Gates Journal, 15 and 16 January 1846; cited in Heinerman, 50.

arrayed all in priestly garments were seen in the n.e. corner of the room. The power of the Holy Ghost rested down upon us. I arose full of the Spirit and spoke with great animation, which was very cheerfully responded to by all, and prophesied of things to come. A brother testified that our meeting was accepted of God. And we continued our meeting until after midnight, which was the most profitable, happy, and glorious meeting I had ever attended in my life, and may the remembrance be deeply rooted in my soul for ever and ever. Beautiful day.”¹¹⁸

- “At sundown went to the Temple to pray. While there heard last night Chester Loveland was called out of bed by his mother in Law stating that the Temple was again on fire. He dressed as quick as lightening and ran out of doors and saw the Temple all in a blaze. He studied a few seconds, and as it did not appear to consume any, and there was no others running, he was satisfied it was the glory of God, and again went to bed. Another brother saw the belfry all on a fire at a 1/4 to 10. He ran as hard as he could, but when he came to the Temple he found all dark and secure.... Thus was the Spirit, power and glory to God manifest, not only at the Temple while we were there but also in our families for which my soul rejoices exceedingly.”¹¹⁹
- “About the same time Sister Almira Lamb while in her own room saw a vision of her dead child. It appeared to her in great glory and filled the room with light. She was afraid. It went away and after she was calmed down, her child appeared again to her and told the mother to remove her bones from where they were buried among

118 Thomas Bullock Journal, 15 March 1846; cited in Knight, 61–62.

119 Thomas Bullock Journal, 16 March 1846, in Knight, 62.

the Gentiles, and bury them among the Saints, and again disappeared.”¹²⁰

- “At sundown went to the Temple to pray.... The Spirit was upon me and we all had a most glorious meeting. The glory of God again resting on the Temple in great power.”¹²¹
- ”Sunday, March 22nd, 1846. I went to my Seventies Quorum meeting in the Nauvoo Temple. The whole Quorum being present consisting of fifteen members.... Dressing ourselves in the order of the Priesthood we called upon the Lord, his spirit attended us, and the visions were opened to our view. I was, as it were, lost to myself and beheld the earth reel to and fro and was moved out of its place. Men fell to the earth and their life departed from them, and great was the scene of destruction upon all the face of the land, and at the close thereof, there appeared a great company as it were of saints coming from the west, as I stood with my back passing to the east and the scripture was fulfilled which saith, ‘Come, see the desolation which the Lord hath made in the earth’; and the company of the saints who had been hid as it were, from the earth; and I beheld other things which were glorious while the power of God rested down upon me. Others also beheld angels and the glory of God.... The sacrament was administered. Our joy increased by the gift of tongues and prophecy by which great things were spoken and made known to us.”¹²²

120 Thomas Bullock Journal, 16 March 1846, in Knight, 62.

121 Thomas Bullock Journal, 18 March 1846, in Knight, 63.

122 *Journal Book of Samuel Whitney Richards*, 22 March, 1846, Book No.2, 7–8; cited in Heinerman, 50–51.

Conclusion

I will give you one of the keys of the mysteries of the kingdom. It is an eternal principle that has existed with God from all Eternity that that man who rises up to condemn others, finding fault with the Church, saying that they are out of the way while he himself is righteous, then know assuredly that that man is in the high road to apostacy and if he does not repent will apostatize as God lives[.] (Joseph Smith, Jr.¹²³)

In sum, *PTHG*'s history is both selective and dubious. Where does all this lead the author?

“Proud Descendants of Nauvoo”

Snuffer seems almost obsessed with the fact that so many current Church leaders are descended from those of the Nauvoo era. “The proud descendants of Nauvoo,” he grumbles, “who have always retained control of the church’s top leadership positions, claim to hold all the keys ever given to Joseph Smith. They teach that they can bind on earth and in heaven. They are the ‘new Popes’ having the authority the Catholic Pope claims to possess” (303, see also 66, 263). “The idea of men holding God’s power is what led to the corruptions of Catholicism,” (37) and “[w]hen it is believed a man can bind heaven, then it is believed that salvation is available by and through that man” (263).¹²⁴ This grouching about lineage is a constant refrain:

123 Joseph Smith remarks made at Brigham Young Dwelling, Montrose, Iowa Territory (Tuesday, 2 July 1839), recorded in Willard Richards Pocket Companion; cited in *WJS*, 413. See also *TPJS*, 278.

124 As he often does, Snuffer distorts a text or the Church’s teachings. In fact, the keys are said to bind “on earth and *in* heaven,” not to bind heaven (i.e., God) against God’s will (Matthew 16:19, 18:18; D&C 124:93). Surely Snuffer knows this. If such a claim is beyond the pale, then so were the New Testament apostles. Joseph Smith made the same claim, see note 97 herein.

- “Ever since the expulsion of church members from Nauvoo, the highest leadership positions in the church have been held by Nauvoo’s proud descendants” (113).
- “The proud refugees from Nauvoo and their descendants have always claimed they succeeded in doing all that was required” (381).
- “If [my] new view of history is more correct than the narrative offered by the proud descendants of Nauvoo...” (420; see also 116, 118).
- “The Nauvoo saints and their proud descendants would necessarily diminish. This view is unlikely to ever be accepted by a church whose leadership is filled overwhelmingly by those same proud descendants of Nauvoo. There hasn’t been a single church president without Nauvoo ancestors” (119).

It is difficult to escape the impression that on some level Snuffer resents not having opportunities in Church leadership. He berates members, claiming that “we envy those who fill leadership positions because we want the power granted through priestly office and position” (415). I do not think most Latter-day Saints of my acquaintance envy leaders or lust after power. One wonders if Snuffer is projecting his own struggles onto others. He lists *his* Church callings in the books he sells.¹²⁵ As a convert to the Church, one wonders if he feels unjustly boxed out of the leadership positions that purportedly go almost exclusively to “the proud descendants of Nauvoo,” since “Church leaders at the highest levels... most often have family ties to other church leadership. Almost all Apostles and members of the First Presidency are related by blood or marriage” (209). He invokes the figure of the prophet Samuel, who “was called

125 “He has served on the High Council, taught Gospel Doctrine and Priesthood classes for twenty-one years... and instructed at the BYU Education Week for three years” (509). “I have taken assignments as a home teacher, gospel doctrine teacher, ward mission leader and high counselor [*sic*]” (3).

by God. Although he was not of the chosen family, he received the prophecy. Through him, God condemned the family of Eli, foretelling their destruction” (306).¹²⁶ The analogy is hardly a veiled one. The autobiographical element in many of his claims is not subtle:

[In] the Dispensation of Moses, there were two traditions that operated independent of one another. The one was official and priestly. The other was unofficial and prophetic. The priestly tradition held recognized office, and could be easily identified. The other was “ordained by God himself,” and those who possessed it had His word to them as their only credential... They were not merely regarded as unofficial. They were persecuted by both the leaders and followers of the official religion. They suffered for their testimony of the truth.... [I]n every dispensation the truth taught in purity must come from unheralded, questioned and reviled sources. Therefore, those who obtained this higher priesthood during the Dispensation of Moses were denounced, rejected and almost always came from outside the recognized hierarchy.... The “line of authority” consists of only one: God. (292, 296).

Snuffer seems to have almost returned to the Baptist upbringing of his youth—he has concocted a kind of LDS priesthood of all believers. His model does the Protestants one better, however, since only the elect, the truly saved—those whose calling and election is sure, those who receive priestly

126 Snuffer also writes that “The family of Eli had filled the Lord’s House with corruption, extortion, and sexual perversion.... The end of Eli’s house came in a single day.... Thus ended the house of Eli. God’s judgments established Samuel as the new, presiding priest and prophet. When this happened, once again there was a man among the Israelites who could provide what Moses had earlier offered” (305, 307).

power from beyond the veil—have any real power or priesthood authority.

Snuffer discusses a change to the LDS temple ceremony: “As long as [these elements] remained as a part of the ceremony,” he says, “it was clear to those who participated that there were *no mortal sources who could claim they were ‘true messengers.’* Mortal men were universally depicted as false ministers in the ceremony Joseph restored. The only source of true messengers was God or angels sent by Him” (276, italics added).¹²⁷ But, if this is true, that rules Snuffer out as a true messenger, since he too is mortal.

“Unless the Spirit witnesses to the truth, or an angel comes bearing unmistakable signs, no teaching should be accepted,” he says elsewhere (340). So perhaps mortals *can* be true messengers if the Spirit bears witness? But if so, why does he complain when members bear testimony that the Spirit has borne witness of the reality of President Monson’s calling (488–489)?¹²⁸ In all this, the intent and effect is clear—to disqualify the prophets and apostles by any means necessary, and to insist upon Snuffer’s *bona fides*.

On 11 September 2013, Snuffer announced that he had been excommunicated for apostasy.¹²⁹ He reported that the Church’s action resulted from his refusal to cease promoting and distributing *Passing the Heavenly Gift*. The book was the subject of a letter from his stake president, which Snuffer posted online prior to his excommunication. His stake president writes, in part:

The issue for consideration to [your] disciplinary council is whether the continued publication of *Passing*

¹²⁷ I have elided the more specific elements of the temple ceremony, which Snuffer mentions explicitly.

¹²⁸ These sections are examined in detail following note 141 herein.

¹²⁹ Denver Snuffer, “Yesterday,” *from the desk of Denver Snuffer* (blog), 11 September 2013, <http://denversnuffer.blogspot.ca/2013/09/yesterday.html>.

the Heavenly Gift constitutes an act of apostasy and, if so, what the appropriate remedy should be....

Denver, I am not anxious to chase people out of the church. My goal is the opposite—to enable all to enjoy the blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I have tried to be open minded about the issues we have discussed. I am sympathetic with those who face crises of faith.

I cannot deny, however, the spirit's influence on me and the responsibilities I have to protect the interests of the Church. I have tried to persuade you that *PTHG* is not constructive to the work of salvation or the promotion of faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The book's thesis is in direct conflict with church doctrine. In your effort to defend the restoration, you have mischaracterized doctrine, denigrated virtually every prophet since Joseph Smith, and placed the church in a negative light. The book is a misguided effort to [p. 2] attempt to bridge the gap between the church and its dissidents. *PTHG* will never be the solution to hard questions that you believe it is. Like every other such effort, it will attract only the attention of those whose spiritual eyes, ears and hearts are obscured from the truth. Your work pits you against the institution of the church and will lead to the spiritual demise of you and your family.¹³⁰

Having read the book, I can vouch for the accuracy of this summary. Snuffer's attitude toward the counsel he was given

130 M. Truman Hunt to Denver Snuffer, "Notice of Disciplinary Council," letter (21 August 2013), 1–2. Online at Denver Snuffer, "Don't call me. (Yes, that means you too!)," *from the desk of Denver Snuffer* (blog), 23 August 2013, http://denversnuffer.blogspot.ca/2013/08/dont-call-me-yes-that-means-you-too_23.html.

is made obvious both by his decision to post it, and his later comments:

- “I do not want [my audience] to attend [my speeches] thinking all is well between me and the powers in control of the church.”
- “The church must act in accordance with one law, and I must act in accordance with another for the purposes of the Lord to be fulfilled.”
- “Right now, I don’t think [Stake] President Hunt thinks he has any other choice. He probably doesn’t. That is fine. I bear no ill will toward him or any other member of my stake. No one gets ahead in the institution by disregarding instruction from above. Actually, I do the same. However, for me, ‘above’ has little to do with 47 East South Temple and the institution is not where I expect any future. I try to help the church regardless of its opinion of me. I simply have no axe to grind no matter the outcome on September 8th [the date of the disciplinary council].”¹³¹

“The authorities are to be respected and sustained,” Snuffer writes early on, later adding, “It is not the responsibility of church members to judge church authorities” (28–29, 422). But, when those authorities instruct *him*, he lashes out:

- “A temporary, corporate organization that is owned by a sole individual, which IS The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints won’t survive beyond the veil. There you leave behind your money. You can’t buy or sell in that better place. Since I’ve been there already, the turbulence here is of little moment to me.”¹³²

131 Denver Snuffer, “Current Events,” from the desk of Denver Snuffer (blog), 26 August 2013, <http://denversnuffer.blogspot.ca/2013/08/current-events.html>.

132 Denver Snuffer, “Contentment,” from the desk of Denver Snuffer (blog), 7 September 2013, <http://denversnuffer.blogspot.ca/2013/09/contentment.html>.

- “The book brings to light the [B]abylonian methods church leadership uses to make rapid and dramatic changes. We are not now the same church restored by Joseph Smith. *Passing the Heavenly Gift* shows how that happened.”¹³³

Disdain for Rank-and-File Members

Snuffer claims he wants to help members,¹³⁴ but his attitude toward those who disagree is best described as contemptuous. His tone is more off-putting because of the air of sanctimony that attends some of his text—Snuffer dispenses homilies on what true religion and real belief are about: “Real saints always appreciate anything the Lord condescends to give them. They are never ungrateful, impatient, or demanding. They qualify by patience and obedience to receive more. Then they petition in humility and gratitude to receive it” (308). He paints himself as the long-suffering, respectful martyr, and says that his stake president told Snuffer and his children that he is “worthy of a temple recommend.”¹³⁵ Snuffer emphasizes to his children that he sustains his bishop and stake president.¹³⁶ However, he refuses to attend his disciplinary council if his children cannot

133 Denver Snuffer, “Compliance (So Far As Possible),” *from the desk of Denver Snuffer* (blog), September 4, 2013, <http://denversnuffer.blogspot.ca/2013/09/compliance-so-far-as-possible.html>.

134 “If the church has been condemned, rejected and cursed, it may be a blessing for you. If a new narrative acknowledging this, allows us to avoid inappropriate adoration of men, I may save your soul” (467).

135 It is not clear how an accusation that he persists in teaching false doctrine is consistent with the stake president agreeing that Snuffer qualifies for a temple recommend. If Snuffer’s account is accurate, I presume the stake president meant that Snuffer was not charged with “immorality, dishonesty, or some serious moral transgression,” not that his leaders felt they could issue him a recommend. See Denver Snuffer, “Last Night’s Family Home Evening - Don’t call me,” *from the desk of Denver Snuffer* (blog), 9 September 2013, <http://denversnuffer.blogspot.ca/2013/09/last-nights-family-home-evening-dont.html>.

136 Snuffer, “Last Night’s Family Home Evening - Don’t call me.”

attend. He left his council without learning of its decision.¹³⁷ He will not honor his leaders' instructions to cease teaching that which Church leaders have declared to be false doctrine, and only days earlier was jabbing Church leaders in Salt Lake:

I'm not sure if that meets the requirement for "repentance" in this current predicament, but that's what I can do. If the church wants to make me another offer, then let the stake president know and I'm sure he'll pass it along. Given how little time remains I thought I'd skip the middleman and put this up here because you guys downtown read this blog (as we can tell from the blogmeter).¹³⁸

Actions speak louder than mere words. "It is not for me to say," he observes piously, "when such a line [to priestcraft] has been crossed" (211). But he has said it and implied it over and over again, and continues to do so.

Thus his irenic pose is frequently undercut by his switch to caricature and attack upon members and leaders of the church for not measuring up to his standards (all while denying that this is what he is doing):¹³⁹

- "When [the temple ritual] becomes a substitute for actually receiving the heavenly gift offered by the Lord, it can make those who participate think they are better than others who cannot" (287).
- "The saints still claim we fulfilled everything required by the revelation in January, 1841 (Section 124)... According to their account of the historical narrative, all

137 Denver Snuffer, "Don't Know," *from the desk of Denver Snuffer* (blog), 9 September 2013, <http://denversnuffer.blogspot.ca/2013/09/dont-know.html>. See also Peggy Fletcher Stack, "Did Mormons boot writer? Church isn't saying and he doesn't know," *Salt Lake Tribune* (10 September 2013, 9:29 a.m.).

138 Snuffer, "Compliance (So Far As Possible)."

139 Compare his written claim that Church "authorities are to be respected and sustained" (28–29) with his attack on prophets and apostles below.

is well in their Zion. They intend to build Zion some day, when they get around to it” (303);

- “The gentiles¹⁴⁰ will be prideful, taught by false teachers, and learning false doctrine....False religions offer everything but worship of Christ. They will use good ideas, virtues, even true concepts as a distraction to keep followers from coming to Christ.¹⁴¹ The way to prevent souls from receiving redemption is to distract them.... So long as they are kept occupied with hollow virtues and sentimental stories they cannot come to Christ, enter His presence, and gain salvation. The stories urged by false teachers are filling, but not nourishing to the soul” (336–337).
- “We have moved further away from Zion since the time Joseph Smith was Prophet... until [the Lord] sends someone who can teach what is necessary... we will continue to lose light, discard, truth, forget what is expected, and dwindle in unbelief” (402).
- “The gentile church will be secure with false teachings that tell them Zion is intact. Everything is fine. The power to redeem, to bind on earth and in heaven is with them. Zion is prospering and enjoys God’s favor. There is no need to repent and return to Christ, because everything is well with the church. But these ideas are not only false, they come from the devil” (338).
- “The gentiles will console themselves with the thought that ‘there is no hell,’ instead only varying degrees of glory. In the end all will be saved to some state of glory. Repentance can be postponed. So, also, can study of

140 Snuffer’s interpretation requires that “the church restored through Joseph Smith [be] referred to throughout the Book of Mormon as the ‘gentiles’” (331).

141 It is ironic that this tactic is precisely that adopted throughout by *PTHG*—true principles are mixed with false claims.

the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There is no hurry.... Follow the broad mainstream of the institution, and all will be given in the Lord's own time as we are prepared to receive more" (339).

As is so often the case, Snuffer's self-appointed jeremiad mixes truth with error. He warns about the very real risks of mistaking mere sentimentality for the Holy Spirit, but in the next breath implies that the current church ("the gentiles") all make the mistake: "The effect of the Holy Ghost is not sentimental. Moving someone to tears or thrilling them is a false emotional tool, employed by storytellers, writers, film makers, and composers. The gentiles could avoid errors if they had the Holy Ghost. But they confuse sentiment for the gift" (340).

Snuffer is perhaps most offensive when he decides to attack mainstream members' testimonies or expressions of belief:

- "Each week these gentiles will declare to one another 'I know the church is true' as a mantra to console them. Yes, 'All is well' with this imitation Zion" (339).
 - "In Mormon 'testimonies' each Fast Sunday for many years now... Mormons praise the church president by reciting a mantra. ('I know President Monson is a prophet of God' and also confirming 'I know the church is true.')
- Seldom does Christ's name get mentioned in Mormon testimonies anymore, other than as an appendage to the 'testimony' confirming the exalted status of the president of the church, and the truthfulness of the church itself. The church has become a substitute for Christ, and in that sense has become the modern idol of the gentile church, just as Nephi, Christ, Moroni, and Joseph Smith predicted" (488-489).

Snuffer's witness and claims, then, are to be praised and accepted. Others' testimonies are to be ridiculed. I think it a pernicious slander to claim that Christ's name is "seldom"

mentioned in Mormon testimonies. Perhaps Snuffer's ward is some type of anomaly. But one cannot reason with this kind of blind prejudice. He will notice only those things which prove his point, even if they are exceptions rather than the rule, or only in the observer's jaundiced eye.

Disdain for Modern Apostles

The misrepresentation and criticism is also prelude and justification for the disdain Snuffer exhibits toward the modern apostles. He sometimes tries, I think, to hide it, but it tends to show itself anyway.¹⁴² His attitude is perhaps best summarized by his chapter title, "Prophets, Profits and Priestcraft" (185). Apostles are chosen, he insists, because of "proven management talent," (209) and "talented business, civic, and education backgrounds, according to leader's [*sic*] own explanations, outweigh religious backgrounds" (210). "In place of prophecy and revelation, church management focused on an effort to gain uniformity and control" (241).

He thus refers to the Church's current leaders as "modern administrative Apostles" (61):

Today, testimonies of the presiding authorities, including the First Presidency and Quorum of Twelve, assert only vaguely they are "special witnesses" of the Lord.... A great number of active Latter-day Saints do not notice the careful parsing [*sic*] of words used by modern administrative Apostles. They presume a "witness of the name" of Christ is the same as the New Testament witness of His resurrection. The apostolic witness was always intended to be based upon the dramatic, the extraordinary.... Without such visionary encounters with the Lord, they are unable to witness about Him, but only of His name (62).

142 See, for example, the claim that, for him, "instruction from above... has little to do with 47 East South Temple" in note 131 herein.

PTHG also claims that there are “two different kinds of Apostles”—“one is an administrative office in the church. The other is a witness of the resurrection, who has met with Christ” (34). Thus, Snuffer sees himself as an “apostle” (and not a mere administrative one either). He repeatedly accuses leaders of the Church of fostering a “cult of personality” (241, 264, 352, 359–360), claiming the prophets believe “they are entitled to the adoration of followers” (359–360). His treatment of Brigham Young and blood atonement is simply vintage anti-Mormonism (132–141).¹⁴³ He even has a preemptive warning should disciplinary action be taken against him:

For us [the Church] the coming sifting will be done by the Lord, not by us diving ourselves into splinters. Of course, the church can judge and reject true believers. If it elects to do so, and to thereby cause a separation, the responsibility for that will lie with the church leaders. Leaders have already been warned about persecuting the saints, as this will result in them forfeiting whatever priesthood remains with them (317).

Snuffer and Quinn on David O. McKay

PTHG does some persecution of its own. Snuffer quotes D. Michael Quinn: “A First Presidency secretary acknowledges that [David O.] McKay liked his ‘celebrity status’ and wanted ‘to be recognized, lauded, and lionized’” (349). He cites Quinn’s *Extensions of Power* volume, which gives as its source a book by secretary Francis M. Gibbons.¹⁴⁴ A check of these references is discouraging, but not surprising for those familiar with

¹⁴³ “Murder was allowed,” reads one representative sentence, “but only when President Young thought it was needed for the salvation of the victim” (223).

¹⁴⁴ The citation is from D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power* (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books, 1997), 363. Quinn cites Francis Gibbons, *David O. McKay: Apostle to the World, Prophet of God* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book, 1986), 347, 263.

Quinn's methods.¹⁴⁵ The actual text of Gibbons' volume for the pages cited reads:

[263] The encroachment on [McKay's] private life that celebrity status imposed... was something President McKay adjusted to with apparent difficulty. He was essentially a modest, private person, reared in a rural atmosphere, who at an early age was thrust into the limelight of the Mormon community. And as he gained in experience... as wide media exposure made his name and face known in most households, he became, in a sense, a public asset whose time and efforts were assumed to be available to all. This radical change in status was a bittersweet experience. *To be recognized, lauded, and lionized is something that seemingly appeals to the ego and self-esteem of the most modest among us, even to David O. McKay.* But the inevitable shrinkage in the circle of privacy that this necessarily entails provides a counter-balance that at times outweighs the positive aspects of public adulation. This is easily inferred from a diary entry of July 19, 1950.... The diarist hinted that it had become so difficult to venture forth on the streets of Salt Lake City that he had about decided to abandon the practice. For such a free spirit as he, for one who was so accustomed to going and coming as he pleased, any decision to restrict his movements about the city was an imprisonment of sorts. But the only alternatives, neither of which was acceptable, were to go in disguise or to ignore or to cut short those who approached him. The latter would have been especially repugnant to one such as David O. McKay, who had cultivated to the highest degree the qualities of courtesy and attentive listening.

145 See Part 1, note 44.

It was ironic, therefore, that as the apostle's fame and influence widened, the scope of his private life was proportionately restricted.... [347]

Everywhere he traveled in Australia, or elsewhere on international tours, President McKay received celebrity treatment. Enthusiastic, cheering, singing crowds usually greeted him at every stop, sometimes to the surprise or chagrin of local residents. A group of well-known Australian athletes, about a flight to Adelaide with President McKay's party, learned an embarrassing lesson in humility. Seeing a large, noisy crowd at the airport, and assuming they were the object of its adulation, the handsome young men stepped forward to acknowledge the greeting [348] only to find that the cheers and excitement were generated by the tall, white-haired man who came down the ramp after them (*italics added*).

It takes a certain talent to transform an account that praises McKay as a “modest, private person,” (whose privacy and personal convenience suffered because of how unwilling he was to appear rude or short with anyone) into an “acknowledgment” that McKay “liked” his celebrity. The original line about being “recognized, lauded, and lionized” is obviously intended to point out that such things are a danger to anyone because they appeal to the ego, and all would be tempted by them—but it is likewise clear that Gibbons does not think that McKay succumbed to that temptation. Snuffer is helping Quinn bear false witness against both McKay and Gibbons.¹⁴⁶ He is credulous, using unreliable sources that reinforce what he wants to believe.

146 Snuffer uses similar tactics to distort (210–211) the meaning of Jeffrey R. Holland, “Prophets in the Land Again,” General Conference, October 2006.

A Closed Mental System

Snuffer clearly sees himself as one called by God to straighten out Church members, prophets, and apostles.¹⁴⁷ He has created a hermetically closed mental system, in which any disagreement with his ideas is simply evidence that he is correct and fulfilling prophecy. “Prophetic messages can be suppressed, censored or discarded,” he declares without a hint of irony, “They can be ignored or condemned” (273):

We [the Latter-day Saints] claim to hold keys that would allow men filled with sin to forgive sins on earth and in heaven, to grant eternal life, or to bar from the kingdom of God. Using that false and useless claim, we slay the souls of men, thereby committing murder. We are riddled with priestcrafts (414).

Snuffer even manages to persuade himself that a call to reform the Church must come from someone who is not a leader, because Nephi condemns “those who ‘lead’” since Satan “leadeth them away carefully down to hell” (337–338, citing 2 Nephi 28:11–14):

Those who claim repentance is necessary will be accused of looking beyond the mark. They will be thought of as false messengers, with a false message, trying to steady the ark. They will be asked by what authority they preach repentance, because they are not called to lead. However, Nephi condemned those who “lead” because they “teach by the precepts of

147 “I have an assignment given to me I intend to discharge. It is because I love God and therefore love His children. It will cost me a great deal to accomplish that. Not only ire of the organization, but the money I will spend to accomplish the task” – Snuffer, “Contentment,” (note 132 herein). Such a claim violates D&C 42:11: “It shall not be given to any one to go forth to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by some one who has authority, and it is known to the church that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church.”

men,” and not by the Holy Ghost. Therefore, a call to repentance cannot come from a leader. It must come from elsewhere. When it does, the result will be anger, even rage, as Satan stirs up the hearts of men (338).

(If this argument were valid, one could argue that because the Good Shepherd “leadeth me beside the still waters,” one *should* follow leaders. This is simply sophistry or desperation.)

Thus, Snuffer *must* be believed, because to accuse him of being a false messenger is to fulfill prophecy and to confirm his association with past prophetic figures. Like conspiracy theories, no evidence or argument can penetrate this kind of self-referential thinking. Snuffer claims that the absence of miraculous experiences at the Nauvoo temple proves its bankruptcy—but I do not expect that my having demonstrated that there were miraculous events reported will change his mind (claim #10).

Snuffer repeatedly casts himself in the role of beleaguered prophet, crying in the wilderness:

- “If any dare to criticize the false Zion and its corrupt teachings, they will be met with anger, even rage” (337).
- “If a gentile follower of this false Zion encounters an inspired view of their own awful state, they can awaken.... Unfortunately, that is unlikely because anger and rage at the truth will keep them from seeing it” (339).
- “The call to repentance will be painful, difficult to bear, and unpopular” (340).
- “The gentiles will be in a state of awful darkness. They will not know revelation when it comes, and reject it when offered to them. They will say they have a body of doctrine and trusted leaders, and they do not need anything more” (341).

- “Any voice crying repentance is labeled a dissenter, and their words are condemned and attacked. They are thought to be ‘of the devil.’ By stirring up strife we succeed in making people fear truth. We close our minds, become deaf and blind” (415).
- “The latter-day gentiles will be unenlightened by the Holy Ghost, rejecting the Spirit’s condemnation of them, and unwilling to receive anything more from God” (342).
- “As to the messengers sent [after Moses to rebellious Israel]... they all held higher priesthood. Their power and authority came directly from the Lord, not from a priestly hierarchy which perpetuated authority” (406).
- “False prophets benefit from their claims. True ones are never popular, and always preach repentance.... any time a true prophet is sent, all who reject him become part of ‘the world.’ Those who are of ‘the world’ fail to receive the messengers God sends, preferring the false ones that men admire. The result of their false religion is damnation alongside the liars, adulterers and whoremongers” (409–410).

One is reminded of Carl Sagan’s rejoinder to physics cranks who cry, “They laughed at Galileo, you know!” Replied Sagan: “They also laughed at Bozo the Clown.” One is not automatically right or inspired simply because others disagree.¹⁴⁸

Now that Snuffer has been excommunicated for apostasy, that too will likely provide him with more evidence that he is right.¹⁴⁹ If others’ testimonies disagree with him, they will be said to be deceived, corrupted, and lacking the true insight

148 “The fact that some geniuses were laughed at does not imply that all who are laughed at are geniuses. They laughed at Columbus, they laughed at Fulton, they laughed at the Wright brothers. But they also laughed at Bozo the Clown.” [Carl Sagan, *Broca’s Brain* (New York: Random House, 1979), 64.]

149 See notes 129, 131–133 herein.

that he has been vouchsafed. To reject his “revelation” is to be unwilling to receive more from God.

All this is, to be sure, his privilege. But, Snuffer is not entitled to his own historical data. And, given how wrong he is about those things, one can only hope that he and his audience pause to wonder if he could be equally confused about matters of even greater import. “False messengers always imitate the true ones, claiming to be what they are not,” he warns. “They seek, of course, to deceive the very elect if it is possible” (276–277). This is a caution that cuts both ways—if we let it.

In this paper, I speak only for myself and not for any person or group. I'm grateful for discussions, references, and advance readings from Russell Anderson, Connor Boyack, Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, Cassandra Hedelius, Bryce Haymond, Dennis Horne, Ted Jones, Daniel C. Peterson, Stephen O. Smoot, and S. Hales Swift. Special thanks are due Matthew Roper of the Laura F. Willis Center for Book of Mormon Studies at Brigham Young University for pointing me to several primary sources. Any errors remain my own.

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Appendix 1 — Square Footage of Kirtland and Nauvoo Temples Compared

Kirtland. Heber C. Kimball wrote that the Kirtland temple “was 80 x 60 feet, and 57 feet high to the eaves. It was divided into two stories.”¹⁵⁰ The temple also had a full attic. Thus: 3 levels x 80 feet x 60 feet = 14,400 square feet.

Nauvoo. Nauvoo had a basement baptistry, and a first and second floor. Each of the first and second floors had a half floor or “mezzanine” on either side (labeled “a” and “b” in the table below). The temple was crowned by an attic, and a multi-level tower. A bill for temple construction reports 2,225 square feet of flooring used for the entire tower, and so I have used that value here.

Level	Length (ft)	Width (ft)	Total Area (ft ²)	Source
Basement baptistry	80	120	9,600	Colvin, 182
1st Floor	80	120	9,600	
2nd floor	80	120	9,600	
1st Floor Mezzanine (a)	18.5	100	1,850	Colvin, 207
1st Floor Mezzanine (b)	18.5	100	1,850	
2nd Floor Mezzanine (a)	18.5	100	1,850	Colvin, 210
2nd Floor Mezzanine (b)	18.5	100	1,850	
Front attic section	86	37	3,182	
Main east attic	88.2	28.75	2,536	Colvin, 214
Tower (multi-level)	-	-	2,225	Colvin, 213
			44,143	

The ratio between Nauvoo and Kirtland is thus conservatively $44,143 \div 14,400 \approx 3.1$

150 Whitney, 100.

Appendix 2 — Temple Costs Compared to Population

Estimates of the Kirtland temple costs vary from \$40–60,000. As discussed in the main text, the 1845 Mormon population in Hancock County is estimated at 15,000. An older work estimates 25,000 Mormons in and around Nauvoo in 1844. The tables below allow readers to compare these figures:

Temple	Cost	Population	Days to Construct	Cost/Citizen	Cost/Day
Kirtland	\$40,000	2,025	1186	\$19.75	\$33.73
	\$60,000	2,025	1186	\$29.63	\$50.59
Nauvoo	\$1,000,000	15,000	1927	\$66.67	\$518.94
	\$1,000,000	25,000	1927	\$40.00	\$518.94

Costs Per Citizen

Nauvoo	Compare to Kirtland at \$40,000	Compare to Kirtland at \$60,000
Nauvoo pop 15,000	3.4	2.3
Nauvoo pop 25,000	2.0	1.4

Even reading the data with the most favorable slant for Snuffer's thesis, the Nauvoo temple cost 1.4 times as much per citizen as Kirtland.¹⁵¹

Costs Per Day

Nauvoo	Compare to Kirtland at \$40,000	Compare to Kirtland at \$60,000
Nauvoo at \$1 million	15.4	10.3

The most advantageous reading of the data for Snuffer's thesis still shows the Saints spending ten times as much.

¹⁵¹ Estimates for both temples typically include labor and materials. See William Edwin Berrett, *The Restored Church: A Brief History of the Growth and Doctrines of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, fifteenth edition revised and enlarged (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Co., 1973), 125; and Colvin, 44.

THE LATE WAR AGAINST THE BOOK OF MORMON

Benjamin L. McGuire

Recently, the Exmormon Foundation held their annual conference in Salt Lake City.¹ A presentation by Chris and Duane Johnson proposed a new statistical model for discussing authorship of the Book of Mormon.² The study attempts to connect the Book of Mormon to a text published in 1816: *The Late War Between the United States and Great Britain*.³ The latter is a history of the war of 1812 deliberately written in a

1 The conference occurred between October 18th and October 20th, 2013.

2 The presentation was titled “How the Book of Mormon Destroyed Mormonism.” It was presented on Saturday, October 19th, by Chris Johnson. The study was co-authored by Chris and Duane Johnson. The presentation can be viewed here: <http://buggingmos.wordpress.com/2013/10/25/chris-johnson-how-the-book-of-mormon-destroyed-mormonism/>

3 The full title of the work is given as: *The Late War Between the United States and Great Britain From June, 1812, to February 1815* (G.J. Hunt: New York, 1816). Rick Grunder provides this description of the various publications of this text: “This work went through at least sixteen editions or imprints 1816-19, all but two in 1819. All were published in New York City, under a total of ten different publishers’ names. First “Published and sold for the author, by David Longworth,” 1816... the book was then issued as *The Historical Reader*, Containing “*The Late War... Altered and Adapted for the Use of Schools...*,” etc., promoted particularly as a textbook (Samuel A. Burtus, 1817). There was no edition in 1818, but in 1819 there appeared no fewer than six separate editions or imprints under the original title and eight more editions or imprints as *The Historical Reader*. All fourteen of these 1819 publications called themselves the third edition. In five instances that year, both of the titles were published by the same parties, including the author himself. Furthermore, most of the 1819 editions (irrespective of title) seem to have had the same pagination (233 pp., with possible differences in plates and ads).” (Rick Grunder. *Mormon Parallels: A Bibliographic Source*. [Lafayette, New York: Rick Grunder—Books, 2008], p. 724.)

scriptural style. A traditional (non-statistical) comparison between this text and the Book of Mormon was apparently introduced by Rick Grunder in his 2008 bibliography *Mormon Parallels*. I will discuss only the statistical model presented by the Johnsons here.⁴

The history of author attribution is nearly as long as the history of reading and writing.⁵ Within the field of literary studies, author attribution has developed into a field of scholarship, complete with its own history, its discussions on methodology, and even its own tightly contested difficult questions. This development has resulted in large reference volumes like the *Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous English Literature* (based on a work first published in 1882-3, and expanded twice to the current publication's 9 volumes, with the most recent volume added in 1962).⁶ Scholarly discussion of author attribution continues, but is largely unknown within Mormon Studies, whose participants rarely come from a field of literary and textual criticism. This has lent a novel feel to those engaged in statistical approaches to the authorship of the Book of Mormon, even though few of these techniques are really new. Most of the participants seem unaware of the body of scholarly work that already exists which often supports or points out critical flaws in current assumptions. These can be

4 I may at some future point deal in a more detailed fashion with the thematic parallels presented by Grunder, along with his discussion of potential Hebraisms in the text.

5 "The scholarly study of attributions made its appearance at a period when literacy had ceased to be the monopoly of small cadres of specialist scribes and reading was for the first time practiced by a substantial public, ministered to by booksellers, stationers, scribal publishers, schoolmasters and grammarians. In the Western tradition such a public seems first to have consolidated itself in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE in Athens,... One important project was to distinguish the genuine works of Homer from other works that still at that time went under his name." (Harold Love, *Attributing Authorship: An Introduction* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002], 14-15.

6 For further references and discussion see Love, *Attributing Authorship*, pp. 14-31.

found in past and current searches for influence and author attribution. Scholars of literary studies have been engaged in this endeavor for over two centuries, critiquing and evaluating the success of various methods as they have moved along. I detail some of this history in my review essay on Grunder's bibliography.⁷

This statistical modeling approach is in many ways simply an expansion of early attempts to investigate literary works using digital archives. However, after the first round of resulting scholarship it became apparent that electronic searches engaging in source attribution were plagued by many of the same flaws as non-electronic authorship attribution efforts. As an authority in the field, Harold Love, put it:

When Byrne wrote, the accumulation of parallels was a labour-intensive business which depended on incessant reading of the works concerned. Today a phrase can be pursued almost instantaneously through the magnificent on-line LION archive, which covers all fields of English and American drama and of authored volumes of poetry up to 1900, and in many cases beyond, and is rapidly expanding into prose.... Now that the capacity to multiply parallels — most of which will be misleading — is almost unlimited, intelligent selectivity has never been more important.⁸

Love's point is that these digital archives create an almost unlimited supply of texts, in which searches can be performed easily for an almost unlimited number of phrases. When these searches are made, long lists of parallels are inevitably

⁷ I responded more generally to Grunder's entire work in a two part essay found here: <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/finding-parallels-some-cautions-and-criticisms-part-one/> and <http://www.mormoninterpreter.com/finding-parallels-some-cautions-and-criticisms-part-two/>

⁸ Love, *Attributing Authorship*, 90.

discovered. However, parallels found in this manner — stripped of context and extracted from their sources — are, for the most part, illusory. This situation is similar to the way that visual look-alikes eventually pop up — somewhere, sometime — for virtually every public figure. We marvel at the uncanny resemblance between the two people, sometimes even theorizing familial relationships, forgetting about the automatic massive-scale search for similarities that occurs whenever someone becomes a public figure. When literary parallels are the result of intensive searches of massive databases, they cannot help us identify an author (or even influences on an author), nor can they help us understand the relationships between texts. This doesn't make these searches without value. Love points out where these electronic searches are most helpful:

Here LION, Gutenberg and similar electronic archives come into their own, since as well as providing illusory parallels they also assist mightily in shooting down those which arise from the common parlance of the time. Once we have encountered an unusual expression in the writings of three or four different authors it ceases to have any value for attribution. What we are looking for is occurrences restricted to two sources only: one the anonymous work and the other a signed one! Even that might not be final: if the two authorial corpora are both large enough, chance alone would dictate that they should contain a few exclusive parallels.⁹

This may seem counter-intuitive. Love is not arguing that parallels are only valid if they are unique. Rather, within the massive electronic search model, illusory parallels are inevitable and must be treated with caution. Hence, parallels are more likely to be valid indicators of influence if they are unique.

9 Love, 91.

Parallels can be identified with electronic searches – but must then be evaluated in more traditional ways to determine if there is evidence for borrowing or influence. I provided a tentative methodology that I use for this purpose in the second part of my review of Grunder. The Johnsons’ presentation seems to be based on the premise that numerical weighting of shared phrases between texts can overcome the weaknesses inherent in using an electronic search of a massive database to study the relationship between texts. I concur with Love in disagreeing with this premise. However, I believe there are additional problems with the Johnsons’ methodology and conclusions. On their website, they candidly list several potential weaknesses of their study. What follows is a discussion of the Johnsons’ approach, including additional problems with their database and algorithm.

Description of the Data and the Methodology

To introduce their methodology, Duane Johnson provided this “high level pseudocode” description of the score that he and his brother devised to measure similarity between two books:¹⁰

For each book, create n-gram frequency counts:

Clean the Text

- 1) remove non-alphabetic characters including newlines; keep spaces
- 2) normalize the case (e.g. lower case)
- 3) Slice the entire text into n-grams (i.e. “n” word sequences) e.g. in our study we chose 4-grams: “i nephi having been born of” becomes [“i nephi having been”, “nephi having been born”, “having been born of”] etc.

10 See <http://askreality.com/hidden-in-plain-sight/#phrases> downloaded on 10/26/13. I have adjusted the formatting, replacing the bullets with numerical references.

- 4) Sort the n-grams and count their frequencies

To Make a Baseline of n-gram Frequencies:

- 5) Randomly select a large sample of books (arbitrarily chosen number in our study: 5,000)
- 6) Add up all of the n-gram frequencies
- 7) Discard n-grams with frequency ≤ 4 (due to OCR errors, it's common to get many, many erroneous n-grams. Incidentally, discarding 4-grams with $\text{freq} < 4$ is why our highest matches have a score of 0.25)

To Get a Score for Each Book:

- 8) Find common n-grams between the Book of Mormon and each book
- 9) Eliminate from the list of common n-grams any n-grams found in the KJV or Douay-Reihms bibles [*sic*]
- 10) Take the inverse baseline frequency (e.g. if the phrase "having been born of" shows up 6 times in all of the books sampled for the baseline, then the inverse baseline frequency would be $1/6 = 0.167$).
- 11) Sum all inverse baseline frequencies for common n-grams to get a "score"
- 12) Finally, divide the score by the total word count of each book (since larger books will, by random chance, have more matches). The result is a score that can be used to rank books by similarity.

To Rank All Books:

- 13) Use the score / wordcount
- 14) exclude small books whose signal-to-noise ratio is low ("small" was arbitrarily defined as 15,000 words in our study).

The authors do recognize some problems in the data and methodology. The first identified problem involves dealing

properly with variations in the lengths of the texts. The second is the problem of OCR errors. OCR stands for *optical character recognition* – the process by which a book page is captured as an image or a picture and converted into an electronic text for searching. Often, depending on the quality of the image (which in turn is affected by the condition of the book and other issues), the OCR process can create errors in the text. Sometimes the result is a recognizable (but different) word, but more often than not the resulting term is unrecognizable. The third issue is the confusion associated with the inclusion or exclusion of biblical texts. I will discuss this particular issue in greater detail below. To resolve the first, they excluded shorter texts. To resolve the second, they arbitrarily removed all of the word sequences that occurred fewer than four times. To resolve the third, all of the four-word sequences that could be constructed from the KJV or Douay-Rheims Bibles were excised from the data set. (This is not insubstantial as my own use of the KJV results in just under 680,000 different four-word phrases occurring in just that volume alone.)¹¹

The data I am using for my analysis comes in part from Duane Johnson’s blog (see fn. 11). He does not recognize the historical problems associated with electronic searches for authorship attribution. But it is clear from statements in the blog that he believes that this study has uncovered a textual reliance of the Book of Mormon on the work by Hunt:

Using a “Uniform Match Score” (based on a size-independent matching scale), Hunt’s *The Late*

¹¹ My own work, which I will explain later, gathers just under 680,000 four-word phrases from the King James Version. All of these phrases were simply eliminated from the data set. I have not yet parsed the Douay-Rheims Bible at this time, and given the greater significance of the KJV for this discussion, it did not seem necessary. The primary necessity of excluding it seems to stem from the early date of included sources, starting in 1500, since it was published prior to the KJV. It seems reasonable though, that between the two editions of the Bible, close to a million four-word phrases were eliminated from consideration.

War transmitted textual influence to *The Book of Nullification* is highest (0.37), followed by *The Book of Mormon* (0.24), and finally *Chronicles of Eri* (0.08)... all of which were significantly higher than the baseline scores, indicating textual transmission, or common influence.

According to this post, the textual reliance is either direct (from Hunt to the Book of Mormon) or based on a common source (i.e., a genetic connection of some sort is claimed to exist). However, Chris Johnson clarifies this in the comments:

After a few tests it was clear that the Book of Mormon was a product of its culture, and could not have been made before 1822 since it relied on too many phrases found only in an 1822 Koran. It also could not have been written prior to 1816 since it relies on Hunt's *The Late War*.

Chris Johnson's conclusion is much less ambiguous than Duane Johnson's. In examining this claim, I will be providing my own analysis using a different set of tools.

My own work with texts and textual locutions began nearly a decade ago. I first wrote on this topic in an Internet forum, and my comments were eventually picked up and relocated.¹² I have some limited abilities to compare larger sets – performing logical operations on these sets of locutions,¹³ but, in general, my tools are a bit simpler than those described above. I have an automated process – an algorithm – that takes a text,

12 <http://solomonspalding.com/SRP/parallels.htm>

13 My tools allow me to combine sets, to extract only elements common to two sets, and to subtract one set from another (removing all of the common sets). Using these tools, I could in theory build up a baseline data set similar to that used by Chris Johnson, although it would potentially take several weeks of constant computation, as they note, and a huge data repository. My tools were not designed with this functionality in mind.

isolates the numbers, changes capitals to lower cases, and strips out all punctuation. This process is generally referred to as *normalization* and corresponds to the first stage of the text cleaning above.¹⁴ At this point, a text can be sorted in multiple ways. It can either be broken up into various-sized locutions (the n-grams used above) or sorted on frequency. Sorting on frequency provides details about the size of the vocabulary (in terms of unique words), and so on. Breaking up the text into locutions of a certain size creates a list of all of the phrases found in a text of a certain length.¹⁵ This new set of locutions can then be treated much like a normalized text. Its entries can also be sorted by frequency. With no repetition, a text can have almost as many unique phrases as it has words.¹⁶ The Book of Mormon is a good example of a text with a great deal of repetition (think: “and it came to pass”), and this can be seen in the larger gap between the number of total words in a text and the number of unique four-word phrases.

We can take this list of four-word phrases (along with their frequencies, if we choose) and compare them to similar lists from other books. The study in question proposed creating a baseline database – a combination of these frequency lists from a series of books chosen at random from a specific date range and matching criteria. This would create a very large list of phrases, along with total frequencies (the total number of times a phrase is used through the entire set of works). This overall frequency then became the basis for a weighting value for each phrase. My tools do not include this baseline database or the

14 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Text_normalization

15 Often a marker is reinserted into the text (a punctuation mark) so that the new phrase can be seen as a single word for comparison purposes. So the phrase: “I Nephi, having been born of goodly parents becomes “I-Nephi-having-been” : “Nephi-having-been-born” : “having-been-born-of” : “been-born-of-goodly”, and so on. Johnson’s blog post displays this feature in his data.

16 When broken into four-word phrases, it would in fact have three phrases fewer than the total number of words in the text.

weighting it produces. My own analysis will not refer to a set of baseline data.

What follows, then, is a discussion of some of the inherent flaws in this basic methodology described by Johnson that are revealed through my own analysis and expectations.

Flaw 1. Preparation of the Texts

The first major issue occurs in the texts themselves. In preparing my notes, I used an existing digital copy of the Book of Mormon in my possession that I had cleaned up in a way similar to this method – by normalizing the text as well as removing material not strictly associated with the text or with its authorship. In the Johnsons’ video presentation, an awareness of this need is discussed. Hunt’s volume contained a lengthy appendix, which of necessity needed to be removed – it was described as creating noise.¹⁷ This appendix seems to have been an 18-page addition including the full text of three treaties made by the U.S. government.

In the blog post, we are provided with a list of the four-word locutions that they used to produce their weighted connection between the Book of Mormon and Hunt’s *The Late War*. The list is provided in ascending order of weights. While the earliest entries then have the least impact on the overall score of the connection, some of those entries are obviously problematic. For example, the text that was used to value the Book of Mormon included a copyright statement.

The copyright statement reads as follows (I have omitted the part in the middle that was written by Joseph Smith):¹⁸

¹⁷ The noise can come from additional instances of phrases used in the text itself. But it also creates new phrases when truncated elements are mashed together. I did not remove these pages.

¹⁸ The part written by Joseph Smith is a description of the text made at the time the application was made in June of 1829. This was hand copied from a proof-sheet of the title page of the Book of Mormon. While this text is closely associated with the Book of Mormon, it was never claimed to be a part of the

Northern District of New York, to wit:

BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the eleventh day of June, in the fifty-third year of the Independence of the United States of America, A. D. 1829, JOSEPH SMITH, JUN. of the said District, hath deposited in this office the title of a Book, the right whereof he claims as author in the words following, to wit: ...

In conformity to the act of Congress of the United States, entitled, “An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned;” and also the act entitled, “An act supplementary to an act, entitled, ‘An act for the encouragement of learning, by the securing copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned,’ and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints.”

This is seen in the list of parallels provided. In fact, of the 549 distinct four-word locutions given in the blog and shared between the two texts, 75 of them (13.7%)¹⁹ come from this

translation of the text, and so its potential value in ascertaining authorship is likely to be limited. Further, it is likely that the similarities between the summary on the title page and the text itself are derivative of the text of the Book of Mormon. For these reasons, I have generally excluded the entire title page with its summary from my past assessments.

19 Listed alphabetically by the first word of each four word set: act-entitled-an-act, act-for-the-encouragement, act-supplementary-to-an, an-act-entitled-an, an-act-for-the, an-act-supplementary-to, and-books-to-the, and-etching-historical-and, and-extending-the-benefits, and-proprietors-of-such, arts-of-designing-engraving, authors-and-proprietors-of, be-it-remembered-that, benefits-thereof-to-the, books-to-the-authors, by-securing-the-copies, charts-and-books-to, conformity-to-the-act,

copyright statement. This may have simply been an oversight. Unlike much of the text (except for the appendix, that they had already excluded), the copyright statement was not authored as part of the Book of Mormon, and it has a recognizable history.

The copyright statement comes from the copyright application form, a preprinted document in which the applicant had to fill in the blanks. The original application is known.²⁰ Only part of the copyright statement is original to Joseph Smith, and those parts were produced in 1829 when the application was filed. The statement in the Book of Mormon simply duplicates this application (as was generally required). This use of a form may explain why it duplicates in such great quantity the material from Hunt's volume (which was also copyrighted in New York and used an apparently identical or nearly identical pre-printed copyright application form.) It also explains why parts appear in so many other volumes

copies-during-the-times, copies-of-maps-charts, deposited-in-this-office, designing-engraving-and-etching, during-the-times-therein, encouragement-of-learning-by, engraving-and-etching-historical, entitled-an-act-for, entitled-an-act-supplementary, etching-historical-and-other, extending-the-benefits-thereof, for-the-encouragement-of, he-claims-as-author, historical-and-other-prints, in-conformity-to-the, in-the-words-following, in-this-office-the, independence-of-the-united, it-remembered-that-on, language-of-the-people, learning-by-securing-the, maps-charts-and-books, mentioned-and-extending-the, of-designing-engraving-and, of-learning-by-securing, of-maps-charts-and, of-such-copies-during, of-the-independence-of, office-the-title-of, proprietors-of-such-copies, remembered-that-on-the, right-whereof-he-claims, securing-the-copies-of, such-copies-during-the, supplementary-to-an-act, the-arts-of-designing, the-authors-and-proprietors, the-benefits-thereof-to, the-copies-of-maps, the-encouragement-of-learning, the-independence-of-the, the-times-therein-mentioned, the-united-states-of, the-words, following-to, therein-mentioned-and-also, therein-mentioned-and-extending, thereof-to-the-arts, this-office-the-title, times-therein-mentioned-and, to-an-act-entitled, to-the-act-of, to-the-arts-of, to-the-authors-and, united-states-of-america, whereof-he-claims-as, words-following-to-wit, year-of-the-independence

20 For the full text of the original copyright application, see Nathaniel Hinckley Wadsworth, "Copyright Laws and the 1830 Book of Mormon." *BYU Studies* 45/3 (2006), p. 97.

(as indicated by the low weights)²¹ – the copyright application quotes statements from the U.S. Constitution (from Article I, Section 8, Clause 8) and the Copyright Act of 1790. These statements (or portions of them) would appear in most works printed in the United States between 1790 and 1831. (In 1831 we had the first major update to the Copyright Law.)

Removing this text wouldn't impact the weight much (it only reduces it by a little more than a half of one percent) because of the frequency in other texts. But it does dramatically reduce the number of parallels presented.

Additionally, there is the problem of the texts as they are. Most of the archived material that is searchable is produced by scanning the books into an image format, after which OCR is used to convert the images into a searchable text format. Despite recent improvements in the technology, texts that have been produced retain significant problems. The text I used for Hunt's *The Late War*²² had some of these issues. In various places, 'Gilbert' becomes '6ilbert', 'With' becomes '7vith', and 'account' becomes 'accoutt'. Since it is the OCR software that makes these mistakes and since the same combination of letters which may be confusing in one book can also be confusing in another (there were fewer typefaces back then), OCR software often makes the same kinds of mistakes in different texts. To deal with this, the proposal above excludes phrases found less than four times across the entire studied body of works. This

21 From the chart on the blog, simple math can be performed to discover the frequency of occurrences in the baseline data set. The formula is $1/[\text{the listed value}]$. So, for example, from my list in fn. 19, if we make this calculation for the first five items in that alphabetical list, we get these frequencies: *act-entitled-an-act* – 3,350, *act-for-the-encouragement* – 360, *act-supplementary-to-an* – 241, *an-act-entitled-an* – 2,279, and *an-act-for-the* – 3,608. It is safe to suggest that a copyright statement with some degree of similarity occurs in a significant number of these texts.

22 For my analysis, I downloaded the text file at this address: http://www.archive.org/stream/latewarbetween_00hunt/latewarbetween_00hunt_djvu.txt

helps ferret out many of these errors.²³ The result runs right into Harold Love's suggestion about searching for parallels: "Once we have encountered an unusual expression in the writings of three or four different authors it ceases to have any value for attribution." In an effort to deal with bad data, has this collection effectively crippled their own weighting system by removing all of the instances that Love would find of real value? I believe that it has, although part of that explanation will also come up a little later. For this system to work in the long run, it would need texts that had been checked and found to be free of error. This has already been done with popular texts that are still in print, like the Book of Mormon or the KJV. However, it is not so easily done with archived scanned images of less interesting and less read works. (It is certainly not a chore that we would look forward to doing with the 130,000 volumes or even the 5,000 volumes randomly selected for the baseline data.)

The impact of removing these phrases is to create a hole in the text where the problematic word exists. By removing the four-word phrases that include the error (and there would generally be four phrases removed if there were an error),²⁴ it is quite likely that there is little impact on the baseline data. If a phrase is popular, it will remain popular in other works. However, the risk isn't in the removal of the errors, it's in the removal of legitimate phrases that are relatively unique.²⁵

23 It also reduces the size of the data accumulated and the times required to process and search the data compilations. (I am fairly confident that this wasn't the intention, it was just a beneficial side effect.)

24 The phrases will be the phrases with the error in each of the positions X-2-3-4, 1-X-3-4, 1-2-X-4, and 1-2-3-X.

25 There are several potential ways to correct this that would not be too computationally intensive. A separate database could be maintained of all of the phrases removed for a lack of frequency, and this separate database could be matched up against the text in question. The matches (which would in theory be a relatively small number if most of the removed examples are errors) could then be examined individually for significance).

Flaw 2: Length of Texts

A second major issue comes up with regard to the length of source texts. While the word count is referenced in the final score (generally with respect to the text in question),²⁶ this application seems to ignore much of what makes text length (or word count) interesting to us. Two useful features when dealing with locutions (or n-grams) are the size of the vocabulary (the number of unique words) and the overall length of the text in words. Both of these factors can influence the degree to which the texts are similar. And these are somewhat related figures. Shorter texts generally have a smaller vocabulary, while larger texts correspondingly have a larger vocabulary.²⁷ My lengths are likely to be a little different from those given by the blog site – due in part to minor differences in the process of cleaning the texts for use, and because I potentially use different sources for both texts. Given the size of the two texts, this discrepancy probably has a small impact on the outcomes of my examination.

The Book of Mormon text used in my apparatus was 269,551 words long with a unique vocabulary of 5,638 words (compared with the text of 271,240 words used in the Johnson study). *The Great War* was 56,632 words long (compare this to 55,378 words in the blog study – a difference most likely due to the inclusion of the appendix material) with a unique vocabulary of 5749 words. Significantly, the Book of Mormon text, while being nearly five times longer, has a vocabulary of similar size. And the shared vocabulary amounts to roughly forty percent of the respective vocabularies (specifically, they have a shared vocabulary of 2,281 words). My experience is that

26 In the comments, Duane Johnson points out: “When we say ‘Score / WC’ in the table, we mean ‘Score divided by wordcount’ which is the same slope you see in the graph.”

27 One of the reasons why word count studies can work with shorter texts is that they are far more interested in the common words rather than the unusual words that make up the rare phrases that the Johnsons are looking for.

the vocabulary size of *The Late War* is consistent with books of similar length, while the Book of Mormon has an unusually small vocabulary. When we calculate the number of unique four-word locutions for each text, we can see the difference in repetition. The Book of Mormon contains 202,830 unique four-word locutions compared with *The Late War* containing 51,221.²⁸ Why is this interesting to us? If we follow the weighted matches used by the blog, there are 549 shared four word locutions common to both texts. This means that of all the possible phrases found in *The Late War*, only 1.07% of them make it into the Book of Mormon. And within the Book of Mormon, of the potential 200,000+ unique phrases, only 0.27% could be derived from *The Late War*. This is not a high number. This ratio drops substantially when we back out the 75 parallels taken from the copyright application (with 474 parallels it becomes 0.93% and 0.23% respectively).

This sort of ratio (the size of the footprint relative to the size of the text) doesn't come out in the calculations used. One of their supporting examples was provided in the blog:

Surprisingly, the Uniform Match Score between The Book of Mormon and *The Late War* (scoring 0.24) was more significantly correlated than *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and its most influential book *The Officer's Daughter* (1810), scoring 0.20. This indicates that Jane Austen's work was less influenced by her literary culture than The Book of Mormon.

I took copies of these two works (due to the better OCR, I used a version of *The Officer's Daughter* published in its original four volumes and combined them). I used the much cleaner text

²⁸ For those interested, that means that the Book of Mormon has about 25% repetition at the level of four word phrases, while *The Late War* has only about 10%.

of *Pride and Prejudice* from Project Gutenberg.²⁹ *The Officer's Daughter* had a total word count of 140,245 with a vocabulary of 11,308 (some of this is undoubtedly due to OCR errors), while *Pride* had a word count of 122,880 with a vocabulary of 6,323. When I compared these two texts in a non-weighted comparison, it resulted in 1,934 common four-word phrases (conservative, due to the OCR errors in *The Officer's Daughter*). Having then backed out the parallels from the KJV we end up with 1,677 shared phrases. This results in a ratio in *Pride and Prejudice* of 1.4%.³⁰ This result is more than five times the overlap between the Book of Mormon and *The Late War*. Of the 6,323 words used in *Pride*, 3,996 of them are also found in *The Officer's Daughter* (63%).

In other words, the 'Uniform Match Score' (a term coined by the Johnsons) focuses very narrowly on one aspect of the data that is tightly controlled. It seems to have very little to do with the actual density of the overlap in the texts. Later in the comments to the blog entry, Duane Johnson offers this:

Certain baseline data such as the false positive rate of our tools are still lacking. For example it is difficult to answer: "How often will our algorithm turn up the wrong books?" We don't know, so we wish to test our tools on as many books as possible, especially a) mystery texts where influence or authorship is unknown b) books with known influences, so that we can determine accuracy and c) books that are translated from another culture, time, language or place so that we can see how distantly connected a real Urantia or Koran text might look.

29 You can see these texts here <https://archive.org/search.php?query=officer%27s%20daughter%20AND%20mediatyp%3Atexts> and here <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1342>

30 *Pride and Prejudice* contains 119,224 unique four-word phrases.

Here, with *Pride and Prejudice*, we have a text where they suggest there is a weight that is incongruous with the text that was “its most influential book.” Rather than seeing this as evidence for an obvious flaw in their ‘Uniform Match Score,’ we instead get the conclusion that Jane Austen was simply less influenced by her environment than was Joseph Smith.³¹ Given the suspect nature of the weighting system, I am unconvinced that there is actually any influence between these two books.

Without considering the size of the texts, any sense of relative proportion is lost. Harold Love pointed out that we are likely to find some degree of coincidental overlap between any two texts of sufficient size. This is a relatively small footprint (textually) – finding only 474 parallels in more than 200,000 opportunities. It is much smaller than the connection between *Pride and Prejudice* and *The Officer’s Daughter*.

Flaw 3: Issues with the Biblical Text

In the discussion on method above, there is an attempt to sort out the influence of the biblical text. This was done by removing the four-word locutions that paralleled both the KJV and the Douay-Rheims translations of the Bible. Given the date of the two texts being closely examined, I only included the KJV in my testing. I did not exclude additional four-word sets equivalent to those in the Douay-Rheims.³² For some background details, my text of the KJV is 791,539 words long.

31 There is some irony here in the degree to which Jane Austen was entirely separate from her environment. Those four-word phrases which might be entirely unique to Austen (the phrases that could hint at the degree to which Austen was independent of the literary culture in which she wrote) would be excluded by this study – both as a potential source (in that the frequency might not be high enough to include) and in the results (with no overlap at all, it would never come up in comparison). We get a conclusion that really cannot be supported by the data collected.

32 With its earlier publication date, the Douay-Rheims Bible would have a greater impact on earlier texts used in the baseline data. Hunt’s volume was patterned on the KJV, and the Book of Mormon much more closely resembles the

It contains a vocabulary of 12,574 words. And it has 679,612 unique four-word locutions.³³

I generated a comparison between this text of the King James and both *The Late War* and the Book of Mormon. The results showed an overlap with *The Late War* of 2,341 common four word locutions. The overlap with the Book of Mormon was significantly larger, at 25,020 locutions. This means that roughly 4.57% of *The Late War* duplicates material from the KJV, contrasted with 12.33% of the Book of Mormon duplicating phrases from the KJV. In both cases, these statistics trivialize the less than one percent overlap between the two books in question presented on the blog.

There are many potential reasons for excluding the KJV and Douay-Rheims phrases from consideration. I expect that including those phrases certainly skewed the baseline data. If I compare *The Late War* and The Book of Mormon using my texts without excluding the KJV data (that is, if I include all of the four-word locutions in my results), I end up with 1,478 shared phrases.³⁴ Of these shared phrases, a majority (57.3%) are also in common with the KJV. This leaves, at best, 631 shared four-word phrases between the Book of Mormon and *The Late War* independent of the KJV.

language of the KJV than it does the Douay-Rheims. For these reasons — and to keep the discussion as simple as possible — I only worked with the KJV.

33 Like my text of the Book of Mormon, this text is relatively free of OCR errors. I note that the repetition in the KJV is between the other two texts, at 15%.

34 This figure includes all of the four-word phrases used in both the Book of Mormon and *The Late War*. This figure is significantly different from the 549 weighted phrases used by the Johnsons to score the relationship. My figure includes low frequency phrases (including potentially OCR errors). Due to differences in the cleaning process, there are some additional variations. I did not include the copyright statement in the Book of Mormon (so the phrases exclusive to the copyright statement are not in this list) and I did not strip out an end material from Hunt's volume. The larger collection of phrases is useful because it provides a picture of the total ratio of textual material in common between the two books.

Removing this data also hides something that ought to have been obvious to us. The biblical text creates language in the environment (or represents that language) in an incredible density. When *The Late War* attempts to duplicate this language, we get an exact match 4% of the time. The Book of Mormon uses this language 12% of the time. It is only in removing these kinds of statistics that we get the sense of how the method is working: Without this comparison, what is otherwise a trivial overlap between two texts is magnified.

Flaw 4: Problems with the Weighting of the Phrases

There are several issues with the weighting system. The first, Chris Johnson describes remarkably well in his presentation. Here are the comments explaining this idea from the blog:

if you find the two-word phrase “Millennium Falcon” in a book, and another two-word phrase, “it is” in a book, the former should matter a lot more than the latter. Why? Because almost every book in the world contains the 2-gram (bigram) “it is” but only a select few have “Millennium Falcon”. So, what does a “weighted” value look like? It’s just the inverse of the baseline frequency, i.e. $1.0/\text{baseline-frequency}$. Using the example above: if “it is” occurs 5,847,361 in a sample of 5,000 pre-1830 books (which it does in our baseline sample) then the “weighted value” of the match is $1.0/5,847,361$ or 0.000000171. Let’s say “Millennium Falcon,” on the other hand, occurs only one time in all of our sampled pre-1830 literature. Then, it would have a score of $1.0/1.0 = 1.0$. So finding a “Millennium Falcon” match between the Book of Mormon and another book would be more than 5 million times more important.

Consider this challenge with respect to the biblical text. We know that the text of the KJV played a large role in the text of the

Book of Mormon. (This is seen by the large language footprint we find using these four word locutions.) However, the sheer frequency of the phrases from the Bible in the environment make this weighting approach problematic. A large number of collectively common phrases – all coming from the same ultimate source – might have virtually no impact on the weighted score if their frequencies in the baseline data were high enough.

Clearly this occurs in the case of the copyright statement. There we have a portion of the text that is not original to the Book of Mormon. Once we see it for what it is, we can track it – both to its immediate source (the copyright application) and then to its more distant sources (the pre-printed form, the legislative acts of the federal government that serve as its sources, and so on). What is interesting is how this interacts with the electronic search. This is one part of the Book of Mormon for which we can produce a genealogy for the text. It's also a part of the text that, because of its existence in the environment, doesn't trigger significant movement on the weighted scale. The collective initial weight³⁵ of these 75 phrases was roughly 0.33. The weight of a single phrase with a frequency of four across the entire baseline data was 0.25. All 75 of these phrases had less weight than two examples from the other end of the spectrum. So, on the one side, influence — if it is widespread, even if it comes from an identifiable source is considered negligible by this method. This is true of the copyright statement. It would also be true for the most part of the biblical text.

This fits right in line with Harold Love's assessment. Finding the phrase in more than a couple of sources (in our electronic search) means that each individual source is unlikely to be the cause of the influence. That connection becomes illusionary. Likewise, there is zero possibility that the copyright statement

35 Calculated by the sum of the inverse of the frequencies.

in Hunt's work could have been the cause of the copyright statement in the Book of Mormon.³⁶

There is another corollary: Love's assessment of electronic sources didn't talk about frequencies of the phrases themselves across a corpus of work, but rather the number of sources in which a phrase occurred. The Book of Mormon uses the phrase "it came to pass" 1,353 times. If it were the only text to use this phrase, the baseline value for it would still be .000739. If that phrase occurred in only one other work, instead of being potentially highly significant (as Love suggests) it would be completely trivial in this weighting system. While this method tracks an overall frequency of a phrase within the collective pool of phrases used across an entire body of literature, it does not provide us with one very important detail, namely, how many works (or authors) use that phrase (independent of the frequency).

The next problem we have is with the sense of actual rarity. If, as Love argues, multiple instances are truly problematic, then our goal isn't to try to create a random sampling that is uniform when compared to the larger body of literature; we want to find a sampling that is most likely to give up the bad parallels in a frequency large enough to control mis-valuing the phrases. In creating a range of texts that extends from 1500 to 1830, with no geographical limitations, we tend to dilute the texts significantly. That is, even with 5,000 texts, if we had an even distribution (and I recognize that we don't), we would see a rather limited number of texts coming from an appropriate place and time. The distribution would have been far better had it been limited to a period around (both before and after) the publication of the Book of Mormon and from a much closer geographic perspective. It may not be that coincidental that

36 It's also true that part of that statement was caused (with absolutely certainty) by the existence of the federal copyright act of 1790. This method could not point us to that connection.

the closer matches occurred in those texts written closer to the publication of the Book of Mormon than those farthest away.³⁷ The dilution of the baseline data may enhance the value of these texts. How can we demonstrate this?

We can, as Harold Love suggested, use an existing database to function as a negative check. To do this, I selected a few of the highest scoring examples (those that have the minimal four occurrences across the selected set of texts). The texts were selected over the interval of 1500 to 1830. To duplicate this, I will use Google Books and perform a string search for identical text across that same interval. This won't give me a frequency of occurrences within an individual source text, but it will indicate (through the number of hits) how many sources the phrase occurs in – and in doing this there is a minimal boundary for a frequency.³⁸ Because the list is in ascending order based on score, I start from the bottom and work my way toward the top and search for the last ten items in the list.

1. your-women-and-your: 1 hit³⁹
2. year-that-the-people: 2 hits
3. year-on-the-tenth: 14 hits
4. women-and-your-children: 1 hit
5. with-his-army-against: 29 hits
6. will-hearken-unto-him: 1 hit

37 I note in passing here that the KJV comes from a much earlier period of time. We don't suppose that the extreme overlap between the two is due simply to common language in the environment. Part of this is that the KJV was the most published work in the time period leading up to (and following) the publishing of the Book of Mormon.

38 There may be some duplication in the hits due to multiple editions of a single work.

39 The general search looks like this: https://www.google.com/search?q=%22your+women+and+your%22&biw=1467&bih=608&sa=X&ei=MgtoUvSgFsHyyAGR_YCABA&ved=0CCMQpwUoBA&source=Int&tbs=cdr%3A1%2Ccd_min%3A1%2F1%2F1500%2Ccd_max%3A1%2F1%2F1830&tbm=bks . It is created by using quotes to designate an exact phrase, then using the search tools feature to indicate a custom date range between 1/1/1500 and 1/1/1830.

7. will-give-unto-you: 3 hits
8. wickedness-which-had-been: 1 hit
9. which-he-gave-unto: 13 hits
10. were-upon-the-waters: 1 hit

These may be typical — or not. But, looking at these, three of them see a marked reduction in value. And while this may not be typical of the entire set, if it is, the impact would likely move Hunt's source down the value list. There are clearly some phrases which are rarer than others, and they may be useful. However, the selection of texts seems problematic in this regard. If this selection process takes a phrase where we can find dozens of examples elsewhere and produces only four occurrences (just enough to keep it from being eliminated but not so many that the parallel isn't simply removed), then there is clearly a problem with the process. And this valuation process could create a cumulative impact on the data. Either the number of texts in the base data is insufficient or the selection criterion needs to be re-tuned.

Part of this issue is in the assumptions that seem to be brought to the question. The desire is to identify a text which may have most influenced the text of the Book of Mormon, but to create the baseline of language you don't simply stop with the publication date of the Book of Mormon. If the Book of Mormon is a piece of nineteenth-century literature, it is both a product of, and a contributor to that language of its environment. We might opt to test the significance of earlier books against this baseline data, but unfortunately the data itself is not robust.

When we create a random sampling for statistical use, we do so on the assumption that our random sample will correlate well with the larger population. However, the sample size of 5,000 is far too small (and no work was done to verify that this random sampling was in line with the larger population). Given the nature of the problem, though, and the desire to reduce the

impact of phrases common in the environment, there doesn't seem to be a need for a truly random sample. Instead we should hand pick those texts that are most likely to share the same language – those texts that come from a closer geographic location and a closer time frame. We should try to reduce the impact of common phrases as much as possible so that those that are really unusual can stand out appropriately. We can do this by providing books with a content of history and war (and even theology) and by using travelogues.

There is another aspect to this, however. The copyright parallels (all 75 of them) are clearly the only part of the Book of Mormon for which we can point to an exact genealogy of texts. We know the textual history of this bit. We know it isn't original to the Book of Mormon, we know which sources were used, and so on. And yet if this was all that came up in the comparison, this weighting would immediately disqualify these parallels as irrelevant. There would be no reason to take a second look and discover what any one of us can see quite easily. In this regard the weighting system fails on both ends. It inappropriately overvalues some elements, and it inappropriately undervalues others. While I can suggest ways in which to accommodate for overvaluing some elements, I am not sure such an easy corrective measure can be taken to adjust for undervaluing other elements.

Finally, when we look at the list of weighted elements, we notice that many of them have little weight or value. The first 111 entries have the same value as a single later entry with a frequency of four occurrences. We can be fairly confident in these cases that the parallel is likely more environmental than direct. If we toss out all of the phrases where there are more than fifty occurrences in the baseline data, it would mean losing 225 (including the 75 from the copyright statement). This brings the overall footprint of Hunt's text in the Book of Mormon down to an underwhelming 0.16%. The real reason

for keeping them in the long list doesn't seem to be much about the mathematical impact of these common phrases (which is virtually non-existent) but rather the psychological impact of having a large list of parallels.

Flaw 5: Textual Context

The final issue is over the challenge of context. When we take texts and reduce them to these strings, we eliminate context. We rip out punctuation. Our four-word phrases cross natural textual lines. Without a more nuanced parsing, this is the only possible outcome. But it doesn't help us understand the relationship between texts. Because I quoted it verbatim earlier, the copyright statement makes a terrific example. Here are a few lines from it:

In conformity to the act of Congress of the United States, entitled, "An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned;" and also the act entitled, "An act supplementary to an act, entitled, 'An act for the encouragement of learning

The blog identified a couple of noteworthy parallels in this short text:

entitled-an-act-for : time-therein-mentioned-and :
therein-mentioned-and-also : act-entitled-an-act :
entitled-an-act-supplementary : act-entitled-an-act :
entitled-an-act-for ...

Each of these four-word phrases crosses a textual boundary. They move from the immediate statement to a quotation of another text. This movement is lost. These phrases cross sentences and paragraphs. They string words together that don't belong together except in the sense of an n-gram – a

computational model based on removing the markers of these divisions from the text. The relationships that can sometimes be seen in these parallels don't exist for us as readers (or as writers). These aren't phrases that occur for us (or in our environment) because they don't actually exist as phrases (as locutionary acts). These are naturally rarer – because they are created entirely by coincidental circumstance and not by design of any author. And, in using them in a way that weights rarity more heavily, we tend to emphasize a feature of the language that doesn't exist except in the computational representation of word strings that no longer correlate to real writing or to real speech. These fragments, strung together, cannot provide us indicators to the language usage in comparison because they don't represent language usage at all.

Some Additional Observations

I had some additional concerns. Duane and Chris Johnson tend to use very ambiguous language to describe the relationships between texts. Some of it is incorrect, some of it is contradictory. Consider the following statements from the blog post:

Our results point to *The First Book of S* (1809) influencing the creation of *The Late War*... Our preliminary analysis is showing that *The Late War* likely inspired the creation of quite a few books between 1820-1830, ...

Using a “Uniform Match Score” (based on a size-independent matching scale), Hunt's *The Late War* transmitted textual influence to *The Book of Nullification* highest (0.37), followed by *The Book of Mormon* (0.24), and to a lesser extent *Chronicles of Eri* (0.08). The influence from *The First Book of Napoleon* on Hunt's *The Late War* was 0.06, all of which were

significantly higher than the baseline scores, indicating textual transmission, or common influence.

We were interested in uncovering any books besides the Bible that may have played an influential role on the 1830 Book of Mormon.

This indicates that Jane Austen's work was less influenced by her literary culture than The Book of Mormon.

After a few tests it was clear that the Book of Mormon was a product of its culture, and could not have been made before 1822 since it relied on too many phrases found only in an 1822 Koran. It also could not have been written prior to 1816 since it relies on Hunt's *The Late War*. Also the *Chronicles of Eri* was more distant than the Book of Mormon to its most common ancestor, while *The Book of Nullification* was more connected to its ancestors than the Book of Mormon. I also tried tracing Solomon Spalding's *Manuscript Found*, and *The First Book of Napoleon*, but couldn't find a close source of textual transmission, meaning they were more out of place, and less explainable than the Book of Mormon.

These paragraphs present a confusing image. What does "influence" actually mean? Is it synonymous with reliance? By influence do the Johnsons mean that the Book of Mormon would not exist in the form it is today without the earlier book having been published? One thing that stands out to me is the statement about Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. On the basis of their weighting system they connect this book to a relatively unknown work from 1810: *The Officer's Daughter*. Jane Austen

is considered one of the most influential novelists of the modern era. This would be the first time that this connection has been offered, and it's being offered on the basis of an electronic search engine!

There is no evidence that this work was ever read by Jane Austen. In fact, just this year, Cambridge University Press released *The Cambridge Companion to 'Pride and Prejudice'*, in which we get details about the text, its narrative and characters, its philosophy, its composition and publication, even its historical background and literary context. Nowhere in that volume will we find a reference to Miss Walsh's *The Officer's Daughter*. For an author who wasn't very "influenced by her literary culture," an awful lot has been written about that culture and its influence. We actually know a great deal about Jane Austen and her literary influences. Part of this is due to the fact that literary scholars and historians have been discussing and detailing her achievements in terms of the relationship she had with prior literature since the mid-twentieth century (really beginning with the work of F. W. Bradbrook and Jocelyn Harris). For Austen, this interaction was often very deliberate – we know this not just from her books, but from the many letters that she wrote which detailed her own reading and re-reading. She tells us who her favorite authors were and why. And this is why we might be a bit startled to find out how this book, which she apparently never read, was in fact the most significant influence on her own writing.

Clearly something is off in this analysis. Yes, it's possible, that through any of a number of ways, this text was the most influential to her writing. Perhaps her best friend read it and shared the details over and over with her until it became ingrained in her subconscious. It's possible. It's just not very likely. Similarly, when we get to Hunt's book, there is this emphasis on the nature of the book as a school text. Actually,

we don't have any record of it being used in schools. There were, Rick Grunder points out:

at least sixteen editions or imprints 1816-19, all but two in 1819. All were published in New York City, under a total of ten different publishers' names.... There was no edition in 1818, but in 1819 there appeared no fewer than six separate editions or imprints under the original title and eight more editions or imprints as *The Historical Reader*. All fourteen of these 1819 publications called themselves the third edition. In five instances that year, both of the titles were published by the same parties, including the author himself. Furthermore, most of the 1819 editions (irrespective of title) seem to have had the same pagination (233 pp., with possible differences in plates and ads)... A comparison of the Daniel D. Smith 1819 edition of *The Late War* (considered in this entry) and another in my possession under the same title, "Printed & Published by G. J. Hunt. Corner of Varick and Vandam streets," 1819, reveals what appears to be the identical typesetting (including page 41 mis-numbered, "31") except for the different publishers' names on the title pages, and their own ads filling their respective final page of the book. G[ilbert]. J. Hunt's ads at the end of his edition... provide some suggestion of his business and personality. Since the author appears to have been affiliated with both printing and a bookstore, I wonder if he printed these books himself (or had them printed), but then went around town soliciting orders from other booksellers or publishers, promising their own names on the title pages as publishers (as opposed to their appearing merely as distributors). In such a possible situation, we might be less surprised when we

notice that after 1819, no further editions of this *wildly* published textbook appeared.⁴⁰

The author appears to have marketed the book to book-sellers (and not to schools) in an attempt to get this volume into the public view. There is no indication that it was ever actually used in a school as a school text. This is further suggested by the fact that after his wild marketing scheme ended in 1819, the book was never re-published (or even reprinted). A great deal of inappropriate emphasis is placed on the book's own description of its purpose as a way of suggesting that it be used and this potential connection to Joseph – that he likely encountered it in school as a “textbook used in the 1820s.”

Finally, on the blog we notice the collection of works to which this is being compared (for which we have the composite score presented). It is obvious that these works could not have been included within the baseline data. There are at least eight different copies of Hunt's book, ranging from the highest (with an adjusted score of 4.2 to the twenty-third spot with an adjusted score of 2.3. That's a significant range. Given the shift, we have to ask: exactly which version was Joseph supposed to have come into contact with? The first edition (assigned the highest score) was not (apparently) marketed for school children. That comes with the second edition in 1817, and in the many different copies published in 1819. Yet, from the list of scored texts provided by Johnson, it is the 1816 edition which has the highest score. Of the other seven copies scored by Johnson, the second highest (a copy of the 1819 third edition) comes in with a weighted score reduced by 25%. Is this gap caused by OCR errors or is it due to textual differences?

From the same list we also have several versions of the Koran, ranking from number eight to number two hundred

40 Rick Grunder, *Mormon Parallels: A Bibliographic Source*, pp. 724-5.

and thirty. An explanation for the significance of the one version of the Koran was hinted at in this statement:

since it [the Book of Mormon] relied on too many phrases found only in an 1822 Koran.

This isn't a claim of some sort of influence, or shared language caused by the environment. This is the claim that Joseph must have read this particular edition of the Koran (and not some other edition), and used it by incorporating it into his text of the Book of Mormon (along with the other imagined sources). This stretches credulity (although perhaps not as much as the claims about Jane Austen).

Conclusions

It isn't a particularly difficult feat to reconstruct the Book of Mormon using phrases found from many different sources. In the 1960s, Julia Kristeva coined the term *intertextuality* to describe this feature of all texts. They were, as she described them, a 'mosaic of quotations' all coming from other sources. Some of this is certainly due to textual influence and reliance. There is no doubt that the Book of Mormon owes a great deal of its contents to the King James text. But, as Harold Love points out, given a large enough body of literature, you can also find these phrases caused by coincidence. In the long run we note that there are some real similarities that can be found in the texts of these two books. But, most of these similarities are not discovered by creating a list of these four-word phrases – because these phrases are not themselves meaningful. Does this process attempt to reduce the significance of the Book of Mormon to a few hundred four-word phrases, stripped of punctuation and context? That seems to be the outcome. Hunt wanted to create a text that read like scripture as a marketing tool. In this way we get a lot of biblical sounding text. The Book of Mormon, on the other hand, doesn't just use biblical

language, it engages biblical issues – it asks questions about morality, about agency, about creation. It ponders the meaning of writing and reading. It describes religious experience.

At this point, this preliminary work of statistically mining electronic databases does not deal with Love's concerns or rehabilitate the practice. Perhaps future refinements will help. I do see uses for these kinds of approaches to the text. They can help us see where to start looking for real potential overlap. Substantial phrasing that does not occur commonly will encourage us to return to the text and evaluate it in a more traditional fashion. Once we do this, we may find a copyright statement with an identifiable textual history, Or we may discover that the parallels tell us absolutely nothing because they are most likely due to coincidence.

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