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a journal of mormon thought

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CONTENTS

SPECIAL ISSUE:
BOOK OF MORMON IN CONTEMPORARY SCHOLARSHIP

ARTICLES

Thaddeus of Warsaw and the Book of Mormon: A Symposium — *John Durham Peters* — 1

Joseph Smith's Spiritual Language: The Presence of Early Modern English in the Book of Mormon — *William L. Davis* — 41

Enos Encoded: Narrative Structure in the Small Plates — *Ryan A. Davis* — 79

PERSONAL VOICES

A Name of Her Own — *Nanette Rasband Hilton* — 109

No Hard Feelings — *Bryant Thompson* — 125

POETRY

Momiji — *Doug Barrett* — 141

A Little Death — *Doug Barrett* — 143

Crossing Over — *Doug Barrett* — 145

Some Stay — *Sharlee Mullins Glenn* — 148

Layover — *D. A. Cooper* — 149

at my house — *Riley Clay* — 150

A Modest Paraphrase of Alma 30:44 — *Isaac James Richards* — 151

Rumination: Time — *Isaac James Richards* — 152

Rumination: Love — *Isaac James Richards* — 153

FICTION

Matter — *Ryan Shoemaker* — 155

BOOK REVIEWS

A Book of Mormon For the Ages — *Russell Arben Fox* — 163
Grant Hardy, *The Annotated Book of Mormon*

Devotional Approaches to the Academic Study of the Bible and Book of Mormon — *Colby Townsend* — 167
Charles Swift and Nicholas J. Frederick, eds., *The Shall Grow Together: The Bible in the Book of Mormon*

The Wisdom of Fools — *Sarah Nickel Moore* — 170
James Goldberg, Nicole Wilkes Goldberg, and Mattathias Singh, *Tales of the Chelm First Ward*

Transcending Both Orthodoxy and Disbelief — *Sarah Nickel Moore* — 173
David G. Pace, *American Trinity: And Other Stories from the Mormon Corridor*

Opening Hearts and Minds and Chapels — *Robert A. Rees* — 176
Kerry Spencer Pray and Jenn Lee Smith, eds., *I Spoke to You with Silence: Essays from Queer Mormons of Marginalized Genders*

In Sacred Rebellion: Joseph White Musser — *Cyrus D. Simper* — 181
Cristina Rosetti, *Joseph White Musser: A Mormon Fundamentalist*

FROM THE PULPIT

Environmental Stewardship and Confronting the Biodiversity Crisis — *Josh Gilman* — 187

THADDEUS OF WARSAW AND THE BOOK OF MORMON: A SYMPOSIUM

John Durham Peters

Editor's note: What follows is a transcription of a bootleg audio recording of a symposium held over a popular video sharing platform in the early 2020s. Invited presenters were Cleo, a literary historian; Bauer, a lawyer turned scripture scholar; and Miranda, an art historian. The footnotes come from sources shared in the chat. Unfortunately, Miranda's beautifully curated slides escaped the audio recording medium.

CLEO: Welcome, speakers and selected guests. Please make sure you are muted. We hope you've brought your own beverages to the symposium!

Among many claimants for possible literary influence on the Book of Mormon (1830), no one that we know of has yet nominated *Thaddeus of Warsaw* (1803), published in four volumes by the English novelist Jane Porter (1775–1850). I will present the case at length, and then invite responses from Miranda and Bauer.

The novel tells the story of the young noble Polish patriot Thaddeus Sobieski who bravely defends his country. After losing to the Russians and witnessing the partition of Poland, he is exiled to England, where he casts an outsider's eye on British mores. A bestseller, the novel followed a formula stretching from Homer's *Odyssey* to the latest Hollywood blockbuster: action and adventure plus romance and relationships. Volume 1, set in Poland, covers the rebellion against the Russian occupation; volumes 2–4 cover Thaddeus's adventures in England. The Poland and England settings stage very different kinds of narratives, moving from large-scale historical chronicle to social commentary and

satire. It is the first volume that has the relevant intertextual material with the Book of Mormon.

Thaddeus is a larger-than-life fictional figure whose inner struggles only magnify him more. He is loosely based on the Polish military hero Tadeusz Kościuszko, by whose side he fights in the novel. Thaddeus is a courageous and effective soldier, an inspiring leader, skilled with a sword, often bloodied but never beaten. He also has a tender side: He is devoted to his dying single mother, attends mass and reads the Bible, nurses an old dying Polish war hero and an aristocratic lady in distress, and weeps easily and soulfully at the troubles of his country and of other people. In England, he does a stint in debtor's prison for not being able to pay the medical debts he incurred in caring for the venerable war hero. Walking home through London in the wee hours of the morning after a soirée (these aristocrats stay up really late!) he chances upon a house on fire, rushes in to save two children and then heads home to bed before anyone can thank him or find out who he is. He's an all-purpose hero who knows German, can translate poetry into French and Italian, somehow speaks flawless English, and has the suavely self-effacing manners of an impeccable gentleman. Wherever he goes he cuts an impressive figure, "a young Apollo"; men and women alike often ogle his beautiful legs. (Porter has a keen eye for clothing and the effects of personal beauty on others.)

Hiding behind the name of Mr. Constantine because everyone in England is well informed through the newspapers about the valiant exploits of Thaddeus Sobieski, he soon becomes an international man of mystery often mistaken for an exiled French aristocrat and the swoon-worthy most eligible bachelor in town, despite having left all of his wealth behind in devastated Poland. (He survives in part by selling his original artwork.) He is hired by a pretty but shallow flirt to tutor her, but it's an obvious and unsuccessful pretext to win his fancy (she never manages to pay him, clueless to his penniless condition). Among several blushing or conniving ladies, at one point Thaddeus has to fend

off the blandishments of a married would-be seductress whose romantically wild long black tresses make his resistance an impressive tribute to his virtue. (There's nothing risqué in this Joseph-with-Potiphar's-wife episode or anywhere else: As a film, the novel would be rated PG, though the battle scenes could easily be PG-13 or R.) This dashing gent has no interest in this "little bevy of fashionable butterflies."[1] Climactically, he meets and is reconciled with his long-lost father; it turns out that Thaddeus always was, by birth, an English gentleman. He is set up with a handsome annual allowance of 3,000 pounds, more than sufficient to resume the life he enjoyed in Poland, and marries a woman of genuine substance and beauty, with whom he has found true love.

Thaddeus was a pioneering example of the historical novel, a genre soon made famous by Sir Walter Scott in the UK and James Fenimore Cooper in the US, and one that several scholars have suggested might be a relevant model for the Book of Mormon.[2] *Thaddeus* sold well on both sides of the Atlantic, was translated into several languages, and was in print throughout the nineteenth century. (Porter sold over one million books total in the United States alone over the century.) Thaddeus's struggles for the liberty of his country recalled the actual Tadeusz Kościuszko, who also made major contributions to the American cause in the Revolutionary War and was a favorite of such Romantic eminences as Coleridge, Keats, and Byron.[3] The novel's full-throated praise

1. Jane Porter, *Thaddeus of Warsaw: A Novel*, edited by Thomas McLean and Ruth Knezevich (Edinburgh University Press, 2021), 205.

2. See Jillian Sayre, "Books Buried in the Earth," *Americanist Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, edited by Elizabeth Fenton and Jared Hickman (Oxford University Press, 2019), 21–44; Nancy Bentley, "Kinship, the Book of Mormon, and Modern Revelation," in Fenton and Hickman, *Americanist Approaches*, 233–258; and Kimberly Matheson Berkey and Joseph M. Spencer, "'Great Cause to Mourn': The Complexity of the Book of Mormon's Presentation of Gender and Race," in Fenton and Hickman, *Americanist Approaches*, 289–320.

3. Porter, *Thaddeus*, 406–410 ("Appendix C: Poland in the Nineteenth-Century British Imagination").

of liberty readily chimed with patriotic sentiments in the young American republic, and left a mark on the names of cities and statesmen in the US, perhaps even inspiring the name of Warsaw, Illinois, known in Latter-day Saint history for a vociferously antagonistic newspaper during the Nauvoo period. Emily Dickinson's dog-eared copy shows her to have been a passionate reader of the novel. It was a favorite among some Mormon pioneer readers, such as Charlotte Chase (1825–1904), who married a man aptly named Thaddeus Constantine Hix.[4] It also rated a mention in the *Young Women's Journal* of October 1900: Evidently, the journal's editor, Susa Young Gates, found it worthy. It cost twenty-five cents.[5] At whatever price, however, Porter unfortunately reaped little financial reward due to mismanagement of the rights. She issued rewritten new editions in an attempt to take back control from male managers (an early, less successful example of star Taylor Swift reclaiming her intellectual property rights in earlier songs by rerecording them as "Taylor's version"). Reputationally, a similar loss of capital occurred when Scott—someone she had known from afar during a childhood stint in Edinburgh, though four years her senior and belonging to a higher social class—increasingly took credit for founding the historical novel genre.[6]

By the early twentieth century, *Thaddeus of Warsaw* had gone into eclipse, and has only recently been reissued in an informative new scholarly edition based on the original 1803 UK publication rather than later revised versions.[7] And a recent sympathetic dual biography of Porter

4. Lisa J. South and Pamela S. Olschewski, *Our Blessed, Honored Pioneers* (n.p., 2005), 5, https://www.familysearch.org/patron/v2/TH-301-44484-97-69/dist.pdf?ctx=ArtCtxPublic.

5. *Young Women's Journal*, Oct. 1900, 476.

6. For such general background see Devoney Looser, *Sister Novelists: The Trailblazing Porter Sisters, Who Paved the Way for Austen and the Brontës* (Bloomsbury, 2022).

7. Porter, *Thaddeus*.

and her sister Maria, also a bestselling author, aims to restore their reputation.[8] Reasons for the novel's eclipse are not hard to find. By the early twentieth century, it was out of step with the modernist taste for formal complexity and psychological depth. It was no *Heart of Darkness* in probing of evil, no *Ulysses* in experimental form, no *To the Lighthouse* in revealing the subtle webs of human relations. It had already been surpassed by the great historical novels of the nineteenth century. In reading it, I confess, I occasionally found it *Tedious of Warsaw*, as I missed the ethical insight, philosophical imagination, and powerful language of a George Eliot or Leo Tolstoy. There is no higher bar, of course, and in fairness, *Thaddeus* has many amusing set pieces, moves the plot along briskly (though relying too often on coincidences), and makes merciless observations about both the vanity of silly women, some of whose heads are puffed up with the fantasies they've gotten from novels, and the blasé entitlement of self-involved men. Porter has a gift for panoramic battle sequences and bases her vivid Polish material in the first volume on substantial historical research. Kościuszko himself was said to be a fan.[9] *Thaddeus* includes several well-drawn portraits of minor characters, though marred by an ugly treatment of Jewish pawnbroker. She often exposes the decadence of the aristocratic class in England; at one point, as a late-night card game breaks up, the guests "like bees and wasps, were swarming about the room, gathering and stinging as they passed."[10] Though the French Revolution is nowhere explicitly mentioned, Porter is clearly sympathetic with it; her Polish fighters are rebels against the regal despotism of Catherine the Great, and it's not hard to transpose that struggle elsewhere, as indeed American readers did. "*Thaddeus of Warsaw* deserves a place among

8. Looser, *Sister Novelists*.

9. Elizabeth Lee, "Jane Porter," *Dictionary of National Biography 1885–1900,* vol. 46 https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Dictionary_of_National_Biography,_1885-1900/Porter,_Jane.

10. Porter, *Thaddeus*, 249.

the best novels of the Romantic era," concludes Thomas McLean, coeditor of the aforementioned new edition of the novel.[11]

In his unblemished gallantry, Thaddeus reminds one of Book of Mormon heroes, especially Captain Moroni as praised by Mormon. If Thaddeus has any faults, they are hard to find. We first get to know him early in volume 1. He has no ambitions for the glory or financial rewards of a military career. Walking meditatively under a moonlit night sky by the pitched tents of his men, Thaddeus "offered up a prayer for the brave inhabitant who had quitted the endearments of home, to expose his life, and stand on this spot, a bulwark of liberty. . . . [H]e had but one motive for appearing in the field, and one for leaving it. The first energy of his mind, was a desire to assert the rights of his country; it had been inculcated into him, from an infant; it had been the subject of his morning thoughts, and nightly dreams; it was now the passion which beat in every artery of his heart: yet he knew no honour in slaughter; his glory lay in defence; and when that was accomplished, his sword would return to its scabbard, unstained by the blood, of a vanquished or invaded people."[12]

The next morning, the battle begins. Mounted on horseback, he rallies his men by exerting "his voice to the utmost." He "put spurs to his horse, and rushed into the thickest of the battle. His soldiers did not shrink; they pressed on, mowing down the foremost ranks, whilst he, by a lucky stroke of his sabre, disabled the sword-arm of the Russian standard-bearer and seized the colors. His own troops seeing the standard in his hand, with one accord, in loud and repeated cries, shouted victory." Seeing him holding aloft their standard, the enemies shrink. He calls on his men to stop fighting, but in the excitement of the chase, they end up surrounded: "Heedless of anything but giving their enemy

11. Thomas McLean, "The Costs of Women's Writing: On Devoney Looser's *Sister Novelists*," *Los Angeles Review of Books*, 2 Feb. 2023, https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/the-costs-of-womens-writing-on-devoney-loosers-sister-novelists/.

12. Porter, *Thaddeus*, 29.

a complete defeat, the Polanders went on, never looking to the left nor to the right, till, all at once, they found themselves encompassed by two thousand Muscovite horse." Things grow desperate for the "little army." Thaddeus "thought not of himself; and in a few minutes the scattered soldiers were consolidated into a close body. . . . File after file the men were swept down, their bodies making a horrid rampart for their brave comrades, who, rendered desperate by slaughter, threw away their most cumbrous accoutrements, and crying to their leader, 'let us escape or die!' followed him sword in hand; and bearing like a torrent upon the enemy's ranks, cut their way right through the forest." Stunned by Polish gallantry, and running low on musket fire, the Russian forces grudgingly retreat "like a wounded lion," sulking but still dangerous.[13]

After an assessment of the bleeding and wounded, a long march, and the successful overcoming of an objection that he was too wounded to keep fighting, Thaddeus again leads Polish forces into the tumult of battle. Thaddeus's aged but valiant grandfather is also fighting, and in a moment of horror, Thaddeus realizes he has lost him. He asks a soldier, and "the man made no answer, but lifted from the heap the bodies of two soldiers; beneath, Thaddeus saw the pale and deathly features of his grandfather." He is, fortunately, still breathing, so they bind up his wounds, give him water and carry him away to safety. Asking permission to stay with his grandfather, an aged general, Thaddeus is gently reprimanded by him, who warns that by abandoning the field, he risks the life of his soldiers: "You forget the effect which all this solicitude about so trifling a matter might have on the men." Thaddeus returns to battle, and at the end of a long day, the enemy "called up the body of reserve, consisting of four thousand men besides several cannon." This rebuffs the Poles briefly. "Kosciusko alarmed at the retrograde motion in the troops, gave immediate orders for a close attack on the enemy in

13. Porter, *Thaddeus*, 30–32.

front, whilst Thaddeus, at the head of his hussars, should wheel round the hill of artillery, and with loud cries, charge the opposite flank. This stratagem succeeded." Thinking that Thaddeus was leading fresh troops threw the Russian troops "into a confusion that completed the defeat." The Russian army, surrounded, desperately tries to escape, including a group of musketmen "entangled between the river and the Poles." "Thaddeus, who saw the perilous situation of these regiments, directly ordered that they might be taken prisoners, and the slaughter cease." His men want to complete the kill, "but the young count charging through them, ranged his troops before the Russians, and threatened that the first man who would dare to lift a sword against his order, should be shot. The Poles dropped their arms. The poor [Russian] carabineers fell on their knees to thank his mercy, whilst their officers, in a sullen silence, which seemed ashamed of gratitude, surrendered their swords into the hands of their deliverers."[14]

Not all of the enemy fighters are happy to surrender. One young Russian soldier "held up his sword in a menacing posture when Thaddeus, who was approaching, drew near; and before he had time to speak, the young man made a longe [lunge] at his breast, which one of his hussars parrying with great dexterity, struck him to the earth: he would have killed him on the spot, had not Thaddeus caught the blow on his own sword." The quick reflexes of Thaddeus's lieutenant are outdone only by Thaddeus's own! Thaddeus takes a liking to the young soldier, recognizing something noble in his refusal to admit defeat, and takes him into the same tent as his grandfather to nurse their wounds. The soldier turns out not only to be an Englishman in the employ of the Russian army but also (spoiler alert) Thaddeus's half-brother. (In an evergreen plot formula, initial foes turn into best friends.) The Englishman, named Pembroke Somerset, sends his mother a gushing letter about Thaddeus: "He is one of the warmest champions in favour of

14. Porter, *Thaddeus*, 33–36.

the invaded rights of his country; and though born to command, he has so far transgressed that golden law of despotic rulers, '*Ignorance and subjection,*' that throughout his territories every man is taught to worship his God, with his heart as well as with his knees." Thaddeus is a principled fighter and a just leader. "He well knew the difference between a defender of his own country and the invader of another's. He felt his heart beat, his soul expand, at the prospect of securing liberty and life to a virtuous people." In a later chapter, Thaddeus takes an oath of "eternal fidelity to Poland," kneeling and calling "on Heaven to hear him as swore, to assert the freedom of his country to the last gasp of his existence."[15]

Things grow dire for the Poles. The King of Poland, "enervated by age, and sinking under the weight of so many afflictions," makes sad preparations to leave the redemption of Poland to later generations. The Russian ambassador commands all remaining Polish patriots to lay down their arms, but Thaddeus "had gathered, and kept together, a handful of brave men still faithful to their liberties. Indeed his name alone had collected numbers around him in every district through which he marched. Persecution from their adversary, as well as admiration of Thaddeus, gave a resistless power to his appearance, look, and voice; all which, had such an effect on this afflicted people, that they crowded to his standard by hundreds." Thaddeus's men soon carried "redress and protection to the provinces through which they marched." He is skilled at uniting both people and land against their common enemy through grand tours. In the meanwhile, his grandfather has been jailed, and Catherine the Great is wary of releasing him: He "remained in confinement, hopeless of obtaining release without the aid of stratagem." The grandfather is discouraged by his inability to contribute but heartened by news of his grandson's exploits. He reflects that Russian chariots will not roll down the streets of Warsaw until "all

15. Porter, *Thaddeus*, 36–37, 43, 37–38, 59.

virtue is dead in the land" and praises Thaddeus as "ready to die, or ready to live, for his country."[16]

As the end grows nigh, the panoramic fight scenes continue, including two riverside bouts. Thaddeus and his troops have pushed the Prussian forces, allied with Catherine, to "the opposite bank of the river," but the enemy gets fresh reinforcements from the rear. Fearing defeat, the Poles break down a bridge to prevent the enemy from crossing the river. The river's current is swift, swollen with recent rains, and the Poles stand there, stymied. The two Thaddeuses, Sobieski and Kościuszko, "perceiving their panic" (i.e., of their men), "both together plunged into the stream." Inspired by the example of their leaders and embarrassed to have hesitated, the troops follow, and the enemy retreats, intimidated by their courage. In a later encounter, "twice the Russians rushed on them like wolves, and twice they repulsed them by their steadiness." In the exchange, both Sobieski and Kościuszko are wounded, and it seems at first that the latter has been killed, which causes the Poles to scatter. "Thaddeus [Sobieski] with difficulty extricated himself from the bodies of the slain; and, fighting his way through the throng of the enemy which pressed around him, he joined his terror-stricken comrades, who in the wildest confusion, were dispersing under a heavy fire, to the right and left, and flying like frighted deer." As they flee, he comes to another river. "Almost alone in the rear of his soldiers, he opposed with his single and desperate arm, party after party of the enemy, until a narrow stream of the Muchavez [the Mukhavets river, now in western Belarus] stopped his retreat. The waters were crimsoned with blood. He plunged in, and beating the blushing wave with his left arm, in a few seconds gained the opposite bank; where, fainting from fatigue and loss of blood, he sunk, almost deprived of sense, amidst a heap of the killed."[17]

The enemy hosts, in hot pursuit, gallop past him, presuming him dead. "He raised himself from the ground, and by the help of his sword,

16. Porter, *Thaddeus*, 62–64.

17. Porter, *Thaddeus*, 64, 69, 70.

on which he leaned, supported his steps a few paces farther," when he is terrified to discover his grandfather, yet again, abandoned and barely hanging onto life. Thaddeus looks for material to stanch the old man's wounds: "He took his sash and neck-cloth, and when they were insufficient, he rent the linen from his breast." This time, the grandfather really is going to die. "'My son,' said the veteran, in a low voice, 'Heaven hath led you hither to receive the last sigh of your grandfather.'" The intergenerational baton is passed: "May that God preserve you; ever remember, that you are his servant; be obedient to him: and as I have been, be faithful to your country." Thaddeus embraces him: "No heart beat against his; all was still, and cold. The body dropped from his arms, and he sunk senseless by its side." When Thaddeus comes to, he sees that it is a cloudy, windy, moonlit night and discovers he is the sole survivor of a cataclysmic battle: "He was now lying, the only living creature, amidst thousands of the dead who, the preceding night, had been like himself, alive to all the consciousness of existence!" At dawn, he's discovered by some Polish soldiers sweeping the battlefield, who accompany him and his grandfather's corpse in a solemn procession back to camp. A state funeral is arranged with requiems, anthems, chants, nine volleys of gunfire, and a brief eulogy from the bishop. A fellow general takes the deceased's sword, "and breaking it, dropt it into the grave. The aid-de-camps of the deceased did the same with theirs, shewing, that by so doing they resigned their offices." The funeral having ended, the exertion and loss is too much for Thaddeus, who enters his tent, collapses on the bed, and does not arise for five days: "The effects of these fatigues and sufferings had brought him very low."[18]

At the last stand, Thaddeus spends a restless night in camp preparing for battle: "From east to west, as far as the eye could reach, her [Russia's] armies were stretched to the horizon. Sobieski looked at them, and then on the handful of dauntless hearts, contained in the small circumference of the Polish camp, and sighing heavily, retired

18. Porter, *Thaddeus*, 70–71, 74, 75.

into his tent; where he mixed his short, and startled slumbers, with frequent prayers for the preservation of these last victims of their country." The overconfident sentinels think everything's fine, but Thaddeus knows better than to trust them: "Ascending the nearest bastion to take a wider survey, in a few minutes he discerned, though obscurely, through the faint gleams of morning, the whole host of Russia advancing in profound silence towards the Polish lines." He hastens to awake and prepare his men, speeding throughout the camp. Because of his preparations, the Russians are deprived of a sneak attack and face fierce gun fire: "However, in defiance of this shower of bullets, they pressed on with an intrepidity worthy of a better cause." In the ensuing fog of war, the pounding artillery and enveloping smoke makes it hard to tell friend from foe. Though losing ground and facing imminent defeat, "the Poles fought like lions; quarter was neither offered to them, nor required; they disputed every inch of way, till they fell upon it in heaps; some, lying before the parapets; others, filling the ditches; and the rest, covering the ground for the enemy to tread on, as they cut their passage to the heart of the camp."[19]

The battle continues to worsen for the Poles: "Every hope hung upon Thaddeus; his presence and voice infused new energy into the arms of his almost fainting countrymen; they kept close to his side, until the Russians, enraged at the dauntless intrepidity of this young hero, uttered the most unmanly imprecations, and rushing on his little phalanx, attacked them with redoubled numbers and fury. Sobieski sustained the shock with firmness." He can hardly bear to take in what he sees around him, and "beheld his companions, and his soldiers, strewing the earth." Just as he tore his eyes "from the spectacles so deadly to his heart," he is struck with a sword by an enemy officer, and falls to the ground, apparently dead. (This is volume 1 of 4, so we know is it is only apparently.) When he comes to—he was hit on the top of his helmet and knocked out rather than wounded—he sees that the battle has

19. Porter, *Thaddeus*, 78–79.

moved on and watches as the city of Prague is looted and burnt in the distance. (Prague? As in the Book of Mormon, plotting the geography in *Thaddeus* requires more than a casual reader.) He calculates that his mother is only four miles away and rushes to her defense. He can escape safely because the Russians were too busy looting "to perceive a solitary individual hurrying away amidst heaps of dead bodies." He finds her, dying in parallel grief with the motherland. She is shocked to see him covered in blood, and he is helpless to save her. She gives him a locket with a portrait of his father in England. Mother and son have always been very close. In their penultimate meeting, she both hugs him and praises God: She "raised her head from her son's neck, and said, whilst she strained him in her arms, 'Receive my thanks, O! Father of Mercy, that thou hast yet spared to me this blessing!'"[20]

Thaddeus feels like the sole survivor of national collapse. (In England he will later meet other Polish exiles.) "He had survived all his kindred." Poland had vanished and all its liberties. Before he sails away, Thaddeus has a brief audience with the deposed king Stanislaus and assures him that "he has felt from you the care and affection of a father. O! sir, how will future ages believe that, in the midst of civilized Europe, a brave people and a virtuous monarch were suffered, unaided, undeplored, to fall into the grasp of usurpation and murder?" As Thaddeus makes a final tour of his city, "he met with little interruption; for the streets appeared deserted. . . . The shops were shut. Thaddeus stopped a few minutes, in the great square, which used to be crowded with happy citizens, but not one man was now to be seen. An awful and expecting silence reigned over all. He sighed." He soon falls to his knees and in one last apostrophe to his lost nation, "plucked a blade of grass, and pressing it to his lips, exclaimed, "Farewell, Poland! Farewell all my hopes of happiness!"[21]

20. Porter, *Thaddeus*, 79–80, 76.

21. Porter, *Thaddeus*, 86, 88–89.

Thaddeus is soon in England, where the novel will take a very different turn. There is little in the way of resonant language or thematic material in volumes 2 through 4 for the Book of Mormon. The closest might be a scene of happy transport when Pembroke and Thaddeus, after a long series of failed meetings, finally embrace in the presence of their shared father. "Their father, with a speechless tongue, but an eloquent heart, stood over them with uplifted hands, invoking the spirits of their beatified mothers to behold this heavenly scene."[22]

Let me summarize the echoes, including the heart swelling for God and country,[23] souls expanding,[24] the sword left unstained,[25] the fleeing army turning neither to the left nor the right,[26] cutting through enemy lines,[27] calling off the fighting when the enemy is outmatched,[28] the use of stratagem,[29] the enemy repulsed by firmness,[30] ditches filling up with bodies,[31] surprise operations undertaken in profound silence,[32] fainting from fatigue and loss of blood and then reviving,[33] the little army,[34]

22. Porter, *Thaddeus*, 376.

23. Alma 48:12.

24. Alma 5:9.

25. Alma 24:13, 15.

26. Alma 56:37, 40.

27. Alma 52:34, Hel. 1:23.

28. Alma 44:1.

29. Seven uses, all in Alma, starting 43:30 and ending 62:35.

30. Mormon 2:25.

31. Alma 49:22.

32. Alma 55:7.

33. Alma 57:25; Ether 14:30, 15:9, 27, 29. See also Robert Patterson, "Helaman's Stripling Warriors and the Principles of Hypovolemic Shock," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 35, no. 4 (2002): 135–141.

34. Alma 56:19, 33.

the attack from front and behind around a hill,[35] captives surrendering swords,[36] the importance of a better cause,[37] fighting like lions,[38] the motivational leader who sweeps the land while multitudes flock to his standard,[39] the strategic value of flags,[40] the ceremonial burial of swords as a renunciation of a military life,[41] a deeply stressed person taking to bed for days and being very low,[42] the battle-weary soldier briefly resting on his sword,[43] and battles near rivers including hazardous crossings.[44] There are also larger thematic similarities. Like Captain Moroni, Thaddeus's heart swells for his country, tears his clothes, and gathers many to his standard; clement to his enemies, he fights only for self-defense, never for revenge or conquest; love of country is one with the love of God. His grandfather, like Mormon an aged general, is left for dead on the battlefield and pulled out from among the corpses as the distracted enemy rushes by (as also occurs for Thaddeus himself).[45] There is the intergenerational passing of advice and covenant between men, often on the deathbed of the older man, a recurrent theme in the Book of Mormon (consider Lehi, Alma, and Mormon). Like the later Moroni, Thaddeus narrates the horror of civilizational collapse as a lone survivor without remaining kin.[46] Like Mormon, he laments

35. Alma 43:31–35.

36. Alma chap. 43, 52:38–39.

37. Alma 43:45.

38. Mosiah 20:10.

39. Alma 62:5.

40. Alma 46:36.

41. Alma 24:16–17, 25:14.

42. Alma 15:5.

43. Ether 15:30.

44. Alma chap. 2.

45. Mormon 6:10.

46. Mormon 8:3, 5.

the quick change of national destinies.[47] Just as Thaddeus's embrace brings his mother to praise God, so Abish's touch of another queen does the same.[48] Particularly impressive are the parallel stories of an enemy swordsman's attack on the commander intercepted by a loyal lieutenant after the conflict has been briefly halted.[49]

I do not claim the Book of Mormon slavishly steals matter unaltered from *Thaddeus*. What traces appear are creative refashionings. In Porter, for instance, the Russians lack a "better cause," whereas the Nephite armies are inspired by one. Whatever the Book of Mormon takes, it digests and transforms. And there are obviously vast differences between *Thaddeus of Warsaw* and the Book of Mormon. Most conspicuous in volume 1 is the technology of battle: Porter gives us a full picture of Napoleonic-era warfare, with its mounted fighting, musketry, cannonades, smoke, noise, and confusion. (Tactics and strategies, however, appear quite similar between the two books.) She describes weather, emotions, and everything else in a way that is much more colorful and metaphorical than the Book of Mormon; she is florid where the Book of Mormon is terse. Across all four volumes, her novel shows erudition with its occasional snippets of Latin, French, and Italian, and often makes references to literary history—*Hamlet* is a recurrent source—whereas the Book of Mormon's only admitted literary debts are to the King James Bible; it acknowledges no modern library. Though clearly endorsing Christian faith and virtue, the novel is not meant as a sign of God's work, a call to the modern world, or a witness of Christ; it is an entertainment, a kind of sociological sketch, and an effort at moral education. Perhaps above all, the novel abounds in well-drawn female characters, shown richly in their social and domestic lives, something much harder to say about the Book of Mormon.

47. Moroni 9:11–12.

48. Alma 19:29.

49. Alma 44:12.

Of course, we cannot prove that Smith knew the novel. We do know it was popular and widely read in the young republic and was held in the Manchester, New York, lending library, among a collection of over 400 books, which also included two copies of Porter's *The Scottish Chiefs: A Romance* and a copy of *A Narrative of the Campaign in Russia, during the year 1812*, by her brother Robert but clearly coauthored by Porter.[50] The copy of *Thaddeus* there was the second American edition, published in two volumes by I. Riley.[51] There is a copy of this edition in the Beinecke Rare Book Library at Yale University, and it is identical to both the London edition of 1803 and the novel's reissue in 2021. (*Nota bene* to future sleuths: Online versions of the novel use later editions not likely available to Joseph Smith before 1830). We know that Smith went to school in Manchester for at least one winter semester in 1820–21 and as many as five winter terms through 1825.[52]

There is one final tantalizing hint. In 1831 Smith and his wife Emma Hale Smith had twins who sadly died within a few hours of birth. They named one of them Thaddeus.

Thanks for your patience during this long presentation. I believe you are up next, Miranda.

MIRANDA: Umm, thank you, but I can't share my screen.

CLEO: No worries, what's a symposium without a few hiccups? We'll work on getting you access but in the meantime let's have Bauer go next.

MIRANDA: Yes please.

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50. Robert Paul, "Joseph Smith and the Manchester (New York) Library," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 22, no. 3 (1982): 347; Looser, *Sister Novelists*, 294.

51. Miss Porter, *Thaddeus of Warsaw, Four Volumes in Two*, 2nd American ed. (New York, 1810).

52. William L. Davis, "Reassessing Joseph Smith Jr.'s Formal Education," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 49, no. 4 (2016): 39.

BAUER: Fine with me. Thank you, Cleo, for the thorough presentation. Proving period influence on the Book of Mormon has a checkered history, some of it hostile. I don't get that vibe from you, but I worry about the implications. From its publication in 1830, the Book of Mormon has been dogged by sleuths seeking to show its debts to other texts, typically in a debunking spirit, starting from Solomon Spaulding's *Manuscript Found* or Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews* to more recent efforts to show a link to the 1816 pseudo-biblical epic *The Late War*, by Gilbert Hunt, a link admirably refuted by my colleagues.[53] None have stuck. The secular assumption is that such a complex production would have to be plagiarized, but no one's found smoking guns.

CLEO: Don't forget Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.[54]

BAUER: Okay, will look into it. I find the frankly supernatural origin story more plausible and parsimonious. You are totally right that any evidence of influence is circumstantial. We don't know if Joseph or anyone around him read *Thaddeus.* As to naming a child, how common a name was Thaddeus? Was it a family name? To demonstrate influence, you would have to build a much more watertight case than you have here. One would need to compare specific phrasings and narrative elements between the two books, and then compare both more broadly with a wider corpus of texts from the early nineteenth century to separate conventional usage from an authorial fingerprint. "Stratagem," though now archaic, may be standard in the time; to our ears, it might sound like a link, but perhaps not to period ears. Influence would need

53. "The Late War Theory of Book of Mormon Authorship," FAIR: Faithful Answers Informed Response, accessed Mar. 19, 2025, https://www.fairlatterdaysaints.org/answers/The_Late_War_theory_of_Book_of_Mormon_authorship.

54. William L. Davis, "Hiding in Plain Sight: The Origins of the Book of Mormon," *Los Angeles Review of Books*, 30 Oct. 2012, https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/hiding-in-plain-sight-the-origins-of-the-book-of-mormon/.

to be a statistically rare match between Porter and Joseph. Criticism of "parallelomania" can apply to modern as well as ancient sources. I mean, fighting like lions—could there be a more perennial trope?

CLEO: I certainly don't suggest that all of my findings are equally compelling or that this work is anything but preliminary! Lots of research yet to do.

BAUER: Of course. Let's break down your claims. You argue that volume 1 of *Thaddeus* provided *topoi*—linguistic commonplaces or stock phrases—for the Book of Mormon *and* plot elements as well. The first claim is less controversial. Any translation is an updating into the language of its time. We might even say that a good translation is a kind of controlled anachronism, a bridging of two times. Some have seized upon the Book of Mormon's mention of synagogues as damning, since the Lehites couldn't have known about them, emerging only centuries after their departure from Jerusalem, but Joseph did know, and simply used a good word for a "meetinghouse" to translate whatever the Reformed Egyptian original was.

CLEO: Sorry to interrupt again, but Alma 16:13 seems to suggest post-exilic synagogues. Please go ahead.

BAUER: Or should we fuss that *Isabel* is a name that only appeared in twelfth-century Spain? No, Joseph just found a modern equivalent for whatever the siren's original name was. *Isabel* is a natural artifact of the translation process, not an original document of ancient culture. Translation theory can also cover the New Testament Greek names of Jesus' disciples Timothy and Jonas.[55] And as to barley, long considered a mismatch with known pre-Columbian agriculture? Well, the Book of

55. 3 Nephi 19:4.

Mormon got ahead of archaeology: In recent decades, three kinds of barley have been discovered in the Americas![56]

CLEO: You have a rather ample theory of translation! Barley, silk, steel, wheat, wheels, Bethabara, horses, Isabel, second and third Isaiah, slippery treasures—translation has a lot of work to do! I see some slippage here: Why do *Isabel* and *synagogue* get to be generic terms without referential force while *barley* has a secret referential link to historical truths long hidden? Couldn't *barley* just be Smith's generic term for any staple grain? This is methodologically just as swively.

BAUER: Yes, and you have a rather loose account of influence.

UNMUTED PARTICIPANT: Did you two used to be married or something?

CLEO: No, we just like sparring with each other.

BAUER: True. Your point that the Book of Mormon is, if I am using the word correctly, a bricolage rather than a direct lifting from *Thaddeus of Warsaw* is theologically useful in my view because it protects the Book of Mormon from strong period indebtedness and perhaps even adds and enriches translation theory, with Porter potentially providing yet one more source for Joseph's language. But the claims about narrative elements are methodologically dubious. You say an army "looking to the left nor to the right" is a possibility. But the stripling warriors did not dare "turn to the right nor the left." The verb and the order are different. You could say that such variation is just the way that recombinant appropriation works, but you thereby dilute the proof of influence.

56. John L. Sorenson and Robert Smith, "Barley in Ancient America," *Reexploring the Book of Mormon: The F.A.R.M.S. Updates*, edited by John W. Welch (Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1992), 130–132.

Affinity is not influence, and affinity is promiscuous. Anything can be like anything. Structuralist literary analysis was once famous, and then heavily criticized, for showing how the plot elements of a given narrative could be permuted into other narratives. We need hard evidence, the kind that would hold up in court. Critics have always put the Book of Mormon on trial. You're not doing that, but we should be prepared to reply to the strongest criticisms with evidence like chiasmus and names of Egyptian origin Joseph couldn't possibly have known. I fear you're letting in the Trojan Horse. If the Book of Mormon borrows not only language but elements of plot, character, and action from an 1803 novel, that threatens, however slightly, its status as a translation of an ancient record. Our religion depends on the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon.

CLEO: Is truthfulness the same as historicity? I find it ironic: Today's Bible fans work so hard to show the modern appeal of an obviously ancient book, but you work so hard to show the antiquity of an obviously modern book. If you define truthfulness as lack of modern influence, then that puts the whole book at risk. Should an entire religion be potentially in hock to the changing tides of historical research? Jane Porter would be surprised to know that she could set 17 million people trembling! The stakes are so massive!

UNMUTED PARTICIPANT: Maybe not. Porter's echoes show up mostly in the war chapters, and even the most devout readers have sometimes secretly wondered if they were inspired.

CLEO: Very funny! So we now have a theory of the book's patchy or differential inspiration? And some readers like the war chapters. But please, everyone stay muted. Anyway, Bauer, you seem guided by a principle we might compare to the so-called central dogma of molecular biology: DNA can influence protein, but protein cannot influence DNA.

The Book of Mormon could influence the nineteenth century, but the nineteenth century could not influence the Book of Mormon except as translation. Its supernatural origins keep the Book of Mormon immunologically free from period influence. But how long will this highly militarized boundary between history and translation be able to hold up? Autoimmune diseases arise from hyperactive immune responses.

BAUER: The Book of Mormon has continually proved itself greater than its critics.

CLEO: No one here is doubting the book's greatness. The evidence will not stop accumulating. Recently, new works by Walt Whitman have been discovered. This is a man who died over 130 years ago. We live in a digital efflorescence, a growing archival fulness of times: "As well might man stretch forth his puny arm to stop the Missouri river in its decreed course, or to turn it up stream, as to hinder the Almighty from pouring down knowledge from heaven upon the heads of the Latter-day Saints."[57] I'd love to have the holdings of the 1820s Manchester public library digitized for comparative research. *Thaddeus of Warsaw,* I expect, is just one opening to many intertextual sources. We already know how much the oral composition of the Book of Mormon owes to the sermon culture of its day.[58] And to intertextual borrowings from the King James Bible.[59] What transformations will new knowledge invite

57. D&C 121:33.

58. See William L. Davis, *Visions in a Seer Stone: Joseph Smith and the Making of the Book of Mormon* (University of North Carolina Press, 2020).

59. For leading examples, see Nicholas J. Frederick, *The Bible, Mormon Scripture, and the Rhetoric of Allusivity* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2016); Colby Townsend, "'Behold, Other Scriptures I Would That Ye Should Write': Malachi in the Book of Mormon," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 51, no. 2 (2018): 103–137; and Grant Hardy, *The Annotated Book of Mormon* (Oxford University Press, 2023).

in how we read the Book of Mormon? Are we ready for the religious consequences of its shrinking non-nineteenth-century core?

BAUER: Are you steadying the ark? Don't you think the brethren are on top of things? And one day perhaps archaeologists will find a sword of Laban or a Mulekite encampment, a potshard with reformed Egyptian, or a set of engraved metal plates. Never say never.

CLEO: I agree that openness to future surprises is certainly part of the scholarly credo. I think you'll enjoy this cartoon I am sharing.[60] Speaking of material culture, shall we pause and turn to Miranda's presentation?

BAUER: Of course, to be continued!

MIRANDA: Sure, thank you! Let me share my screen.[61] Porter's relevance for the Book of Mormon is not confined to *Thaddeus of Warsaw*'s status as a possible source for language, scene, and theme. The novel also demarcates a cultural style. I suspect this will be less controversial methodologically because in Mormondom, less seems at stake, unfortunately, in the visual arts. Porter has a panoramic way of seeing. As Katie Trumpener and Tim Barringer show in a recent volume, the panorama was one of the leading media genres around 1800, a popular spectacle one could visit in London, Edinburgh, Paris, Rome, and elsewhere.[62] Everyone knows the term *panoramic*, but few know that it was once a specific cultural form. It was one of several visual techniques invented around 1790 in Paris along with the phantasmagoria,

60. Cleo showed a Pat Bagley classic visible here: https://i0.wp.com/sunstone.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/cropper-digging.jpg?ssl=1.

61. Miranda's presentation included several beautiful images of panoramas.

62. Katie Trumpener and Tim Barringer, eds., *On the Viewing Platform: The Panorama Between Canvas and Screen* (Yale University Press, 2020).

the optical telegraph, and hot air ballooning, all of them specializing in revealing sights that are far off, very big, or remote in time or mystery.[63]

Panoramas have largely died off, but their stylistic legacies remain. They integrated elements from art, literature, and architecture, and anticipated photography, museum design, and cinema. As Barringer writes, "visiting the panorama formed a paradigmatic viewing experience of modernity."[64] Viewers would stand on a raised platform before a 360-degree painted scene, often a landscape, sometimes with "faux terrain" elements such as trees, plants, or grass in the foreground. The medium provided what film analysis would later characterize as long shots or extreme long shots, but the viewer was also a kind of editor, able to pivot at will from one part of the scene to the next. Indeed, movement and selection were essential to the experience, given the impossibility of seeing everything all at once. Note Porter's description of Thaddeus's gaze swinging in an extreme long shot of the enemy on the horizon to the "small circumference" of his own camp. Almost as if he were a viewer in a panorama, he ascends the nearest bastion to better survey the enemy.

Porter's panoramic sensibility is not a mere metaphor. Her younger brother, the artist Sir Robert Ker Porter, a classmate of the great painter J. M. W. Turner at the Royal Academy, was an early specialist in panorama painting, specializing in battle scenes. He became famous for a grand painting, showing a British imperialist victory in India, that was exhibited in 1800 in the Lyceum Theatre in London, the same location as the first phantasmagoria outside of France. None less than Benjamin West, the doyen of English painting at the time, raved, and the crowds flocked, briefly enriching the young man. Jane Porter was granted

63. Francesco Casetti, "Rethinking the Phantasmagoria: An Enclosure and Three Worlds," *Journal of Visual Culture* 21, no. 2 (2022): 349–373.

64. Tim Barringer, "The World for a Shilling: The Early Panorama as Global Landcape, 1787–1839," in Trumpener and Barringer, *On the Viewing Platform*, 83.

exclusive sneak peaks of the work in progress and was either the coauthor or ghost writer of the accompanying pamphlet. Robert was soon hired by tsar Alexander I in 1804 to serve as a historical painter of large tableaux. Porter sat at the cutting edge of panoramic culture c. 1800.[65] Both in its individual scenes and its broad sweep from Poland to England, *Thaddeus of Warsaw* is thoroughly imbued with a panoramic sensibility.

The same might be said for the Book of Mormon. It's admittedly a long trip from Porter's England to Amerindian holy writ, but both books make bold in history and genre. Porter packs historical events into the novel form, inserting a fictional figure into documented events alongside really existing people. The Book of Mormon offers a thousand-year history (and even longer with the record of the Jaredites) consisting of sermons, letters, scriptural exegesis, narrative, battles, and more, with the historical figure of Jesus appearing at its climactic moment. Several of its visionary experiences can only be called panoramic (readers today, raised in a different media environment, might call them cinematic). In 1 Nephi 11, for instance, an angel leads the prophet Nephi on a tour of sacred history, focusing especially on the birth, life, and death of Jesus, punctuating each episode with the command: "Look!" (Panoramic episodes in the Book of Mormon are reminiscent of visionary sequences in biblical books such as Ezekiel, Daniel, Revelation, and Isaiah, the last being the Book's key biblical intertext.[66])

The Book of Mormon often refers to awful "scenes" of battle and bloodshed. Even in the single case when a scene is meant to be uplifting, as the Lamanitish servant woman Abish gathers a crowd of people in the hopes that they will be convinced of the power of God, what

65. Looser, *Sister Novelists*, 62–66; Barringer, "World for a Shilling," 103–105. Barringer's point that "Porter's work ushered in a new form of immersive Romantic battle painting" (104) fits Jane as well as Robert.

66. Joseph M. Spencer, *A Word in Season: Isaiah's Reception in the Book of Mormon* (University of Illinois Press, 2023).

they end up beholding is not so different from the Book's other scenes: bodies sprawled on the ground (in this case they are alive).[67] Both *Thaddeus of Warsaw* and the Book of Mormon paint on canvases of the largest size; one makes grand leaps in space as the other does in time. Both make visual spectacle central to their narratives. Both offer views that are impossible to take in all at once. Both require a reader able to keep their bearings in shifting between the large-scale and the personal.

More broadly, the media culture of Mormonism has been robustly panoramic. The media historian Mason Kamana Allred has recently shown the centrality of panoramas to the Church's visual culture.[68] In 1845 in Nauvoo, Illinois, a man named Philo Dibble first proposed eight panorama paintings depicting the life and martyrdom of Joseph Smith, to be illuminated by candlelight and accompanied by music and lectures. None of them still exist, but each panel took up 128 feet of canvas; a surviving sketch shows a landscape in which Joseph Smith addresses a large crowd of soldiers, hundreds of bayonets tilting toward the large fluffy clouds overhead.[69] In Utah around 1880, the Danish convert artist C. C. A. Christensen unfurled a large display of twenty-three paintings that came to be known as "the Mormon panorama" spanning from Smith's first vision in 1820 to the arrival of the Saints in the Salt Lake Valley, now held in the BYU Museum of Art.

The *Journal of Discourses* shows how readily the panorama served as a metaphor for sacred history. Here's Orson Pratt in 1875: "After the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, which period is set in the mind of God, another scene will open up before the world, in the grand

67. Alma 19:17.

68. Mason Kamana Allred, "Panoramic Visions," in *Seeing Things: Technologies of Vision and the Making of Mormonism* (University of North Carolina Press, 2023), 45–72.

69. Here Miranda showed Philo Dibble, *Joseph Smith Addressing the Nauvoo Legion* (1845), https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Joseph_Smith_Addressing_the_Nauvoo_Legion_painting_done_in_1845.PNG.

panorama of the last days." Wilford Woodruff in 1877: "We have to build Temples—one is almost completed and is dedicated; we have laid the foundations of others, and the work, like a panorama, is before us." Orson F. Whitney reported in 1885 of John the Revelator that "the events of the seven thousand years of the world's temporal existence passed before him, like the scenes of a mighty panorama."[70] In this he matches the panoramic apocalyptic vision, culminating in John the Revelator, of 1 Nephi 11–14. More recently, Samuel Morris Brown argues, without reference to its media history, that "panoramic vision" was central to the composition of the Book of Mormon.[71]

The panorama is an excellent medium for telling cosmic-scale narratives to both outsiders and insiders. In the twentieth century the Mormon penchant for pageants, with their crowd splendor and historical span, carries on a broad panoramic lineage, the Hill Cumorah Pageant (1937–2019) most notably, which staged the story of the Book of Mormon itself with a cast of 700 and nearly twice as many costumes. The now-demolished North Visitors Center on Temple Square in Salt Lake City hosted a marble statue of Jesus Christ amid a surrounding mural 166 feet long in a rotunda portraying the night sky on 6 April 1830, the date the Church was founded. But the immersive approach lives on: Nearby, in the Church History Museum, visitors since 2015 can view a six-minute film recreating Smith's first vision on a 240-degree semicircular screen. For members only, in turn, the temple endowment ceremony has presented a panoramic journey from before Creation back to God's presence; in the Salt Lake temple initiates passed through a series of rooms, each one typically featuring floor-to-ceiling paintings depicting the relevant background on all four walls (the Creation, the

70. See also passages in Allred, "Panoramic Visions," 63–64.

71. Samuel Morris Brown, "Seeing the Voice of God: The Book of Mormon on its Own Translation," in *Producing Ancient Scripture: Joseph Smith's Translation Projects in the Development of Mormon Christianity*, edited by Brian M. Hauglid et al. (University of Utah Press, 2020), 137–168.

Garden of Eden, the fallen world, etc.). The wonderful art in the Manti temple by Minerva Teichert among others is a crown jewel, thankfully rescued recently from destruction. These intra-temple paintings are more properly murals than panoramas, and yet temple's environing visual spectacle and immersive aesthetics illustrating grand historical or theological themes have a clear panoramic affinity.

It would be silly, of course, to suggest that the Latter-day Saint panoramic tradition and sensibility owes to Porter's influence. And yet, the parallel with *Thaddeus of Warsaw* does cast into relief the fondness for panoramic perception both in the Book of Mormon and the religion it founds. Sometimes family history research can reveal inherited traits that we didn't realize we were carrying. I conclude on an elegiac note. Minerva's owl takes flight in the gathering dusk, as the saying goes: History only becomes clear as it is passing away. Right when two key expressions of panoramic culture are ending, pageants and murals, that's when we can see it most clearly. In a bout of disruptive innovation, you can remove those forms more easily than you can drop Nephites or Lamanites. We've sadly never regarded art as beyond dispensable. Here we see the approach of a surgeon rather than a conservationist.

BAUER: Are you speaking ill of the Lord's anointed?

MIRANDA: For surgeons, cutting is part of healing. But every surgery I've ever had has hurt. I think it's okay to feel a bit wistful. Anyway, in conclusion, showing influence on culture is theologically less fraught than on scripture, especially a book with such massive history-binding claims. I suspect my contribution registers here as an interesting footnote at best!

CLEO: It's much more than that. It opens up questions about how worlds come out of books. The cosmos you chart—of Porter, Dibble, Christensen, Teichert, pageants, temples, and visitors centers—is one

that lives outside the Book of Mormon. Its readers have populated the world with paintings, plays, movies, videos, comics, games, films, children's books, even miniature gold plates. Such massive material elaboration from a single holy book![72]

BAUER: To say nothing of its spiritual manifestations!

MIRANDA: The great thing, and the terrible thing, about art is that it blurs the boundary between fact and fiction. Art makes worlds. Ontological generation is risky business! The purposes of a given panorama could morph between information, entertainment, and art, but the form imprinted a whole culture's way of imagining history. Art's demiurgic power is subject to abuse—perhaps a reason for the robust anxiety about art in our tradition. What if the wrong people stole the world-making elixir? Some tyranny-curious political leaders live in a constant bubble of what-if. Mao famously thought himself a poet, a rather murderous one at that. Impermeability to factual criticism, even when leaders are demonstrably wrong, drives their critics mad, who correctly believe that a functioning public sphere needs accurate information for its foundation. Such leaders live in a poetic alter-verse of make-believe. Joseph Smith's uncle Jesse, an early critic, complained that he "has eyes to see things that are not, and then the audacity to say they are." That's the definition of a prophet, or a poet. And of a con artist as well. The world is full of maybes. But when powerful people take art's liberty of fabrication as a political mode, people suffer. Ethics is much less plastic than art. Plato thought poets were liars. I get the nervousness!

72. Paul C. Gutjahr, *The Book of Mormon: A Biography* (Princeton University Press, 2012).

BAUER: That's why we need a touchstone for testing truth. Religion offers surety beyond art's maybes.

CLEO: So, Miranda, would you see the Book of Mormon as a world-making fiction?

MIRANDA: No, because fiction is far too insipid a category. Strong art bends reality in its image. Probably more boys were named after Porter's Thaddeus than Tadeusz Kościuszko! The Book of Mormon has ontological tractor beams. For the rabbis, the Torah was reality; everything else was a knockoff. The Book of Mormon is also such a fissioning core of world-making energies. Art and scripture both share the awesome ability to displace ordinary reality in favor of something greater.

CLEO: You're certainly right about the relative newness of the concept: The category of fiction is being invented around the same time as the historical novel.

BAUER: For me, Nephi is not a fictional character.

CLEO: I can accept that Nephi was real. So was Hamlet. He's more real than most of my neighbors.

BAUER: That's just the wrong ontology.

CLEO: Sometimes I think that most of the people I see on the street might as well be zombies or automata. I assume they have rich inner lives and are children of God, but I don't know that. Yes, I can meet them and get to know them, but there's a limit on how many can undergo that magical transformation into people for me. We just can't live long enough to know all 8 billion people on earth. Most people are fated to remain phantoms. Becoming acquainted with strangers is one value of

fiction. Hamlet lives and breathes. Haven't you ever felt that you might be a fiction of some author's imagination, as in Borges's haunting story "The Circular Ruins?"

BAUER: Can't say that I have. Your solipsism about other people can be hazardous and imperial—they don't need you to call them into existence! It's unethical to derealize living people into fictions; they are just as real without our knowledge. And putting facts and fictions on the same level is a license to fabricate. I want to build on Miranda's point about danger: To flatten the distinction between fact and fiction is to give a free pass to criminals and fraudsters. No one's going to do temple ordinances for Hamlet! Shakespeare's work has surely already been done, probably several times. Hamlet and Shakespeare belong to different orders of being; works of literature are not the same as historical records. I don't expect to meet Hamlet at the judgment bar, asking me to account for how I liked the play; I do expect to meet Nephi and Moroni.[73]

CLEO: You're lawyering up again. Our access to Nephi is the same as our access to Hamlet: through a text. Each one is a pile of words and textual traditions. Shakespeare's reality is similar, only his web of traces is more extensive. And there are, of course, the conspirators who insist he didn't really write his work. Even settled history is subject to churning, however silly. That's why we need more and better history. I am sure you can both join me in that wish.

MIRANDA: Yes, the growing tree of being needs pruning. It will otherwise go crazy with leaves and no fruit will grow (even if the poor currant bush hurts in the meanwhile).

SANTIAGO: Hello, everybody! Am I late?

73. 2 Nephi 33:11; Moroni 10:34.

CLEO: I thought you were unavailable!

SANTIAGO: Well, I'm obviously here and have been listening for a while.

CLEO: Welcome! Every symposium needs a party crasher.

BAUER, MIRANDA: [overlapping] What a pleasant surprise!

SANTIAGO: My dear friends, I am charmed by Bauer's passing notion of a "natural artifact" and even more by the question about Hamlet's temple work. Well, no one does proxy work for Laman or Lemuel either. Doesn't the fact that the Church has not yet authorized temple work for Book of Mormon peoples give us license to, as we philosophers like to say, bracket (i.e., suspend) the question of historicity? We can wait for the millennium to sort out who was real. We'll have time then to make all 8 billion living people real—or all 110 billion who ever lived! Historicity is deferred—lucky us! Don't you think you are all being a bit too historicist about the Book of Mormon? Isn't its point to give you access to God? To bring you to the tree of life?

Let me explain. The Book of Mormon is the answer to historicism, a loose term for a wide set of methodological innovations and intellectual commitments that emerge in Europe in the years around 1800. The historical novel is part of it. So is the higher criticism of the Bible. The Book of Mormon almost seems designed to counter the "German madness" from which Mary Moody Emerson hoped her nephews, William Emerson, who had studied the new biblical scholarship in Göttingen in the 1820s, and his brother, Ralph Waldo, would be "cured."[74] She wrote this in 1824, and in the event, neither brother was cured. Starting

74. Elisabeth Hurth, "William and Ralph Waldo Emerson and the Problem of the Lord's Supper: The Influence of German 'Historical Speculators,'" *Church History* 62, no. 2 (1993): 195.

with Hobbes and Spinoza in the seventeenth century, questions swirled about the authorship, dating, and provenance of the Bible, questions that to many minds threatened its religious authority. Indeed, Hobbes and Spinoza relativized the Bible for explicitly political purposes: To criticize scripture has always been to challenge power. Even though the "madness" was slow to disperse into popular American consciousness and there is little evidence of highbrow critical studies reaching rural upstate New York in the 1820s, the Book of Mormon grasps the nettle of biblical errancy, and offers a book of scripture that is partial, fragmentary, and obviously edited. No one needed to know German, anyway, to know about the many textual problems of the Bible: Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason*, well known in the Smith family, raised all the big questions.[75] And the Book of Mormon delivered scripture: quilted, dynamic, explicit about its lacks. To quote it: "And it shall be as if the fruit of thy loins had cried unto them from the dust; for I know their faith."[76] Note the symphony of tenses and the interesting term, "as if." There is a lot of philosophy, poetry, and religion there.

CLEO: That's great, but the Book of Mormon's origin story suggests something pure and *unzeitgemäss,* out of kilter with and unaffected by its times. Both *Thaddeus of Warsaw* and the Book of Mormon came forth in the heyday of Romantic ideas about authorship as a context-free solitary mind spinning its materials spiderlike out of itself. This is more Romanticism's PR about itself than its practice, and of course Romantic writers knew very well what they were doing, creatively amalgamating original work from a wider cultural database of sources and experiences. The Book of Mormon, as a book that jumps into history

75. See Robert N. Hullinger, *Joseph Smith's Response to Skepticism* (Signature Books, 1992); and Jared Halverson, "The Art of Ridicule in the Age of Reason: The Anti-Biblical Rhetoric of Thomas Paine" (PhD diss., Vanderbilt University, 2022), chap. 8.

76. 2 Nephi 3:19.

after a fourteen-century interment in the earth, does share something of this virgin-birth mystique. The gold plates are just as good an alibi for source-free inspiration as Coleridge's opium. Nothing marks its precise historical origins as much as its claim to be not embedded in history—its freedom from biblical corruption and loss of plain and precious things! It's just Smith and a few scribes—there's so little we know about the process of its translation.

SANTIAGO: And yet, few books are more candid, even obsessive, about signposting their process of composition. At almost every turn, the reader knows the author's or editor's name, the approximate date, the chain of custody, and the archival source (or set of plates). The Book of Mormon advertises the fallibility of its human compilers while insisting that divine things can be held in earthen vessels.[77] The Book of Mormon undoes the reader's obsessive hunt for a perfect document, as Jared Hickman argues: The prophetic force of the book may lie partly in its dismantling and reconstitution of our careless expectations about what it means to read holy books. It redefines the very nature of scripture.[78] It is designed to leave its readers suspended in uncertainty about its ultimate status: that's a problem for the reader to solve.[79] Like a quantum variable, the book's ontology depends on the approach—God-is-moving-today wave to some, chloroform-in-print particle to others. How cool to have as the keystone of our religion a text of such creative originality! It's a remarkable book of scripture that admits up front it is missing 116 pages, its "phantom

77. Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith's Gold Plates: A Cultural History* (Oxford University Press, 2023), 28–38.

78. Jared Hickman, "*The Book of Mormon* as Amerindian Apocalypse," *American Literature* 86, no. 3 (2014): 429–461.

79. Jonathan Sudholt, "Unreadability is the Reader's Problem: *The Book of Mormon's* Critique of the Antebellum US Public Sphere," *Radical Americas* 2, no. 1 (2017): 1–33.

limb" as Elizabeth Fenton nicely puts it.[80] Scripture comes in versions! 2 Nephi 29 argues for scriptural plasticity and an open canon. Nephi's building of a ship and the Brother of Jared's creative solution to the problem of transoceanic lighting both depict inspired improvisers working with extant materials—could they be allegories of or meta-commentaries on the process of translation itself?[81] What about the allegory of the grafting of wild and tame olive branches? Are the many examples of what our friend Sam Brown, who you mentioned, Miranda, calls "transformative agency" in the Book of Mormon trying to tell us something?

CLEO: Maybe they're saying a female prophet-translator would have found more to work with in volumes 2–4 of *Thaddeus*?

BAUER: I've been listening with great interest. Elder John A. Widtsoe said, "Higher criticism is not feared by Latter-day Saints." Of course he was right. But he insisted that we get our priorities straight: "Higher criticism as an issue in modern thought is essentially concerned with the question of the existence of God."[82] Critics of the higher criticism have always sniffed a lurking atheism behind its naturalistic readings. We fight over historicist details because God's existence is at stake, as well as the truth of the Restoration.

SANTIAGO: Yes, but believers have grasped the nettle of the higher criticism to honor God with the truths of reason and scripture together.

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80. Elizabeth Fenton, "Open Canons: Sacred History and American History in *The Book of Mormon*," *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists* 1, no. 2 (2013): 349.

81. Ann Taves, "History and the Claims of Revelation: Joseph Smith and the Materialization of the Golden Plates," *Numen: International Review for the History of Religions* 61, no. 1 (2014): 193–194.

82. John A. Widtsoe, *In Search of Truth* (Deseret Book, 1930).

The higher criticism has certainly eaten away at some ways of reading the Bible, but it has opened up others. Jonah is a more spiritually powerful book if read as a satire of ethnocentric arrogance than as an improbable cetacean rescue. The pruning process hasn't been painless, producing the pathological overreaction of fundamentalist literalism, but the Bible's power remains. The Book of Mormon was born already with a text-critical invitation. It's curious that we've rarely embraced it. The great pragmatist philosopher William James once said of Berkeley's idealist philosophy about the identity of being and perception (*esse est percipi,* to be is to be perceived) that it was *practically* true. We encounter reality as richly bundled collections of perceptions. What else could it be? We have, in other words, no need to decide. I think the Book of Mormon's historicity is the same. Practically speaking, its world is undecidable between fiction and history. Devoted readers lend their realities to the book. It is powered by their faith.

BAUER: You know very well that James struggled mightily, crippingly, with religious doubt. He knew you can read Berkeley's idealism as a great vastation, an evacuation or emptying of the universe. All the rich world shrinks to your pitiful little cranium. The subject has to do so much work to maintain the object in its being!

CLEO: Plus Berkeley owned human beings.

SANTIAGO: We can devote another symposium to slavery, but avoiding vastation was why James was ultimately a radical empiricist. Material details blessedly broke through our solipsism, giving us links to the world and other people. Our grasp of reality came in hints and guesses. But language, thought, and culture in his view were not, however, glued to reality at every point. They floated, like a financial currency, on a credit system. Culture was a beautiful tapestry. One nail or two to hang it on the wall of reality was enough to secure its intricately interwoven

threads. Let's call the Book of Mormon that tapestry, and the nail the testimony of Christ. We don't need more than that.

BAUER: The Book of Mormon's scriptural authority needs more than one nail. There's at least Joseph's veracity, the witness of the three and eight witnesses, the clear historical evidence of plates of some kind, the legacy for Indigenous Americans. A lot stands or falls with it.

SANTIAGO: Okay, but we can postpone verifying its anchorage in so-called reality.

MIRANDA: Remember reality is *made*.

BAUER (in mock despair): Help, I am surrounded by postmodernists!

SANTIAGO: Not really. Just people who read the Book of Mormon seriously. Can we please drop the old dualisms of "either divine text or external source," "the most correct book or biggest fraud ever"? Perhaps this dueling apologist-versus-critic mode has obscured a deeper theological lesson. Perhaps the divinity of a text comes from precisely how well it forges alchemical processes of inspiration among its readers. Perhaps the test is the present, not the past. Books teach us how to read them. Mormon hunts among the Nephite library and attaches, last minute, the small plates of Nephi to his abridgment of a thousand years of history. Nephi and all the leading Book of Mormon prophets, as well as the risen Christ, all weave scriptural texts by chunk and snippet. The spirit speaks in fragments—"groanings" as Paul called them (Romans 8:26). Is historicist fidelity the best proof of scriptural power? Nephi certainly didn't think so: Look at how aggressively he ignores the letter of Isaiah, twelve chapters of which he laboriously copied onto the scarce real estate of his plates, and yet with what grand results! The spirit of prophecy bowled over pedestrian questions about what Isaiah really

meant. Laman and Lemuel got their sure proof—and it was spiritually worthless. Hard evidence would deprive us of the difficult and soul-making task of fording the abyss with faith. Why don't we embrace the Book of Mormon's invitation to curious workmanship? Are we fussy philologists embarrassed and compensating for Joseph Smith's speculative majesty and time traveling? Our embalming scriptural methods are not his. We historicists are priestly rather than prophetic.

BAUER: I think you'll agree that not everyone can be a prophet. God's house is a house of order. What if each culture, each person wrote their own scripture?

SANTIAGO: Doesn't 2 Nephi 29 kind of encourage that? We are invited to be coauthors.

BAUER: Doesn't your cavalier attitude to the received text risk undermining Book of Mormon studies?

CLEO: I can agree to the need to shore up scholarship's fragile status in our culture, especially critical.

MIRANDA: And art's status, especially boundary breaking.

SANTIAGO: Scholarship, like art, has many modes. Why should we impose the impossible standard of "ex nihilo" creation on the Book of Mormon when Joseph Smith made clear that standard doesn't apply even to God? Doesn't spirit join with preexisting elements to make a tabernacle and take joy therein? Could that be a hint about the interpretation and composition of scripture and the nature of revelation? What if bricolage occurred on both ends of the chain of communication? Have we historicists missed the boat? Out of the textual shards of this strange book emerges the voice of God, talking to you, today!

Does anything else matter? The Book of Abraham depicts the council of the gods gathering before the Creation of the world, where one pre-eminent among them says "We will take of these materials, and we will make an earth."[83] What if that were our motto for understanding the creation and creativity of the Book of Mormon? Could even *Thaddeus of Warsaw* be such material?

BAUER: A whirlwind of hypothetical questions! One after the other!

SANTIAGO: Yes, holy things work best in the subjunctive.

CLEO: We'll close with the whirlwind. So good to see you all, if only by screen. Let's do this again!

Exeunt: waving, overlapping cacophony of goodbyes. "This meeting has been ended by host."[84]

83. Abraham 3:24.

84. The symposiasts would collectively like to thank Eric G. Andersen, Samuel Morris Brown, Peter McMurray, Benjamin Peters, Stefan Schöberlein, Joseph M. Spencer, Katie Trumpener, and two anonymous reviewers for help and advice, but blame none of them for claims made here.

Julie Yuen Yim, *The Lord is My Shepherd*, 2020,
Chinese paper cutting, 24" x 20"

JOSEPH SMITH'S SPIRITUAL LANGUAGE: THE PRESENCE OF EARLY MODERN ENGLISH IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

William L. Davis

The question of whether or not Joseph Smith participated in the translation of the Book of Mormon as an actual translator, or merely as a transcriber, remains a point of debate in Mormon studies. Did Joseph receive spiritual impressions and visionary experiences by means of a translation device (seer stone, interpreters, and/or Urim and Thummim) and then articulate them into English by tapping into his own mental storehouse of English vocabulary, phraseology, and conceptualizations (the theory of "loose control")? Or did Joseph simply read the words of a preexisting translation that appeared to him on the surface of the translation device, without any significant contributions of his own (the theory of "tight control")? As Richard Bushman aptly observes, "Latter-day Saints themselves cannot agree on how the writings engraved on the gold surfaces relate to Joseph Smith's oral dictation to his secretaries."[1]

In the course of these debates, the research of Royal Skousen and Stanford Carmack has played an influential role. According to their

Special thanks to David Rodes, James Krauser, Colby Townsend, and the anonymous readers for their helpful suggestions.

1. Richard L. Bushman, "The Gold Plates as Foundational Text," *Foundational Texts of Mormonism: Examining Major Early Sources* (Oxford University Press, 2018), 15.

theory, Joseph Smith did not actually translate the Book of Mormon but rather transmitted a preexisting text ("tight control"), and they point to an array of evidence to support their position. For example, they contend that certain nonstandard grammatical constructions that have been traditionally assigned to Joseph's western New York or New England dialects are also attested in Early Modern English works, indicating that the "so-called bad grammar of the original text of the Book of Mormon turns out to be acceptable usage during the 1500s and 1600s."[2] Though the argument does not exclude Joseph's dialect from consideration (New England and New York dialects did not appear *ex nihilo*, but derived many of their features directly from the multiple dialects of Early Modern English spoken by seventeenth-century immigrants to the colonies), their argument nevertheless destabilizes the exclusive attribution of such linguistic features to Joseph's rural, nonstandard dialect(s). The observation thereby offers provisional support for Skousen and Carmack's theory that a speaker of Early Modern English (or a translation device attuned to it) was responsible for the translation of the Book of Mormon rather than Joseph himself.

Another important observation by Skousen and Carmack is that the language of the Book of Mormon contains a number of Early Modern English features that either do not derive from the King James Bible (hereafter KJV) or do not share the same meanings or types of usage.[3]

2. Royal Skousen, "The Language of the Original Text of the book of Mormon" *BYU Studies Quarterly* 57, no. 3 (2018): 83. See also Stanford Carmack, "The Nature of the Nonstandard English in the Book of Mormon," in Royal Skousen, *Grammatical Variation*, parts 1 and 2 of vol. 3 of Royal Skousen, *The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon* (Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies; BYU Studies, 2016) [hereafter *GV*], 1:45–95.

3. See, for example, Royal Skousen and Stan Carmack's introduction to "Archaic Syntactic Structures in the Book of Mormon," in Royal Skousen, *The Nature of the Original Language*, parts 3 and 4 of vol. 3 of Royal Skousen, *The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon* (Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2018) [hereafter *NOL*], 3:557–558.

In other words, the KJV text could not have been the exclusive model for the entire array of archaic-style language in the Book of Mormon—an observation that undermines the argument that Joseph merely lifted and recycled KJV verbiage to articulate the Book of Mormon. Some of the features necessarily had to originate from a non-KJV source (or sources), to which Joseph Smith, according to Skousen and Carmack, presumably did not have access.

Along with these non-KJV archaic features, Skousen points to "Hebrew-like" constructions expressed as "an extra *and* after an initial subordinate clause."[4] Consider, for example, the following "if, and" conditional construction in the 1830 Book of Mormon: "*If* he [God] saith unto the earth, Move, *and* it is moved."[5] As early as 1994, Skousen proposed that these unusual constructions represented possible Hebraic artifacts that persisted in the English-language text of the Book of Mormon, seeing as how they appeared to be "uncharacteristic of English in all of its dialects and historical stages." This observation prompted him to conclude that "these structures support the notion that Joseph Smith's translation is a literal one and not simply a reflection of either his own dialect or King James English."[6] Once again, Joseph, as a non-Hebrew speaker, is therefore excluded as a possible source.

This collection of evidence, combined with additional textual clues from the original scribal manuscript and the statements of those who witnessed the dictation process, have inspired Skousen and Carmack

4. Skousen, *GV*, 1:362. Skousen refrains from describing this construction as a "Hebraism," because "the comparison between the Hebrew construction and the corresponding one in the Book of Mormon is not always fully parallel," adding, "Sometimes it might be better to refer to these potential Hebraisms as Hebrew-like constructions" (362).

5. Royal Skousen, *GV*, 1:369. Book of Mormon (1830), 440; Helaman 12:12.

6. Royal Skousen, "The Original Language of the Book of Mormon: Upstate New York Dialect, King James English, or Hebrew?" *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3, no. 1 (1994): 34.

to assert that Joseph Smith did not translate the Book of Mormon, but merely dictated a preexisting text that appeared to him by means of the translation instruments. In the introductory chapter to his study on the nature of the original Book of Mormon language, Skousen makes this argument clear: "The first major point I wish to take up in this introduction is the evidence that Joseph Smith himself was not the author of the Book of Mormon nor even the actual translator of its English-language text. Instead, the evidence is very strong that the original text was revealed to Joseph Smith word for word in English and he dictated it to scribes. The text is not Joseph's creation, nor did he create a text in his own language."[7] Such emphatic and definitive claims suggest that the matter is all but closed. But this is not the case, and this essay seeks to question such premature conclusions.

While Skousen and Carmack have enlisted a complex and multifaceted array of evidence in favor of their position, their conclusions nevertheless rest upon a set of foundational assumptions concerning the types of language features (vocabulary, grammar, expressions, etc.) that Joseph allegedly could—or, more specifically, *could not*—have known. This essay, however, argues that such conclusions should be regarded with caution. I would argue that the resources that they use and the interpretive lenses that they apply remain incomplete and underexplored. Early nineteenth-century working-class families, for example, routinely read and studied the works of several influential authors from the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, resulting in their repeated exposure to presumably inaccessible and obsolete vocabulary, archaic expressions, and Early Modern English grammatical and syntactical constructions. Yet Skousen and Carmack seem not to have explored fully these resources. Moreover, idiosyncratic word usages and curious structural variants can emerge from an individual's incomplete understanding and misapplication of unfamiliar grammar

7. Skousen, *NOL* 3:37.

and syntax, as much as they can from artifacts persisting from a source language into a translated text. Yet this avenue of inquiry also remains incomplete.

The question of Joseph Smith's involvement as an actual translator thus hinges on the analytic lenses applied to the *interpretation* of evidence rather than the evidence itself. And, as I argue in this essay, the conclusion that Joseph Smith was not the actual English translator of the English rendition of the Book of Mormon does not derive from a comprehensive examination of all the valid interpretive possibilities. Indeed, I push the argument further by maintaining that the very same evidence that Skousen and Carmack use to support their interpretation of the translation process often and ironically presents more compelling evidence for Joseph's active participation and intervention. Given the nature and implications surrounding the unusual grammatical and syntactical features in the original text, combined with a more expansive understanding of the accessibility of key archaic language features in the early nineteenth century, this essay argues that the evidence does not, in fact, support the theory of "tight control" but rather points quite insistently to a process of "loose control," in which Joseph Smith himself articulated the English words of the Book of Mormon.

Joseph's Idiolect and Spiritual Register

Analyzing Joseph Smith's role as the translator of the Book of Mormon raises the question of whether or not he had the mental inventory of linguistic knowledge to produce all of the language features that appear in the Book of Mormon. In his 2018 review of Skousen's Critical Text Project, Grant Hardy provides a useful starting point when he raises the issue of "idiolects" ("that is, each individual's unique usage of grammar and vocabulary"), coupled with Joseph Smith's potential relationship to the language of the Book of Mormon ("there is some question as to how the language of the text relates to Joseph Smith's idiolect or to the dialectal usages that he might have grown up with in rural,

nineteenth-century Vermont and New York").[8] This issue raises further questions about the nature and relationship between Joseph's idiolect and the English rendition of the Book of Mormon, and I argue that if we pursue the issue of idiolects, particularly regarding how individuals develop and express them, then we can employ additional interpretive tools for the analysis of the text and the identification of the translator.

In order to do so, we need a more robust look at what idiolects are, as well as what their potential can be. In this regard, the *Oxford English Dictionary* offers us a succinct starting point: An idiolect is "the linguistic system of one person, differing in some details from that of all other speakers of the same dialect or language."[9] This definition reveals a key characteristic of idiolects: Each individual has his or her own distinctive, idiosyncratic, one-of-a-kind suite of linguistic characteristics that sets him or her apart from all the other speakers within a language community. These distinctions, moreover, derive from each individual's unique circumstances. In the process of gaining linguistic competence, individuals experience unique pathways of language acquisition within their given speech communities. Such influences cover a wide range of inputs: the formative language spoken at home; the language found in books, pamphlets, and newspapers; conversations with friends and neighbors; and the various styles of speech within the wider community. The sources for a developing idiolect are seemingly endless and interactive.

The development of an individual's idiolect, moreover, does not confine itself to colloquial language. Rather, language learners also

8. Grant Hardy, "Approaching Completion: The Book of Mormon Critical Text Project: A Review of Royal Skousen's *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon* and *The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon: Grammatical Variation*," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (2018): 169–170.

9. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "idiolect (n.)," https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/7112683157. As the definition implies, idiolects refer to each individual's inventory of linguistic knowledge of a dialect or language, while "dialect" refers to the shared language within a community of speakers.

begin to acquire and differentiate between multiple *registers* of speech, such as the casual language used among friends versus the language of decorum in formal settings. These different registers not only have arrays of preferred vocabulary associated with them, but they also find expression through a variety of attendant grammatical, syntactical, and rhetorical forms.[10] From a cognitive linguistic perspective, these registers also accompany specific contexts, or "speech event frames," such as the varied language we use for "fairytales, academic lectures, spoken conversations, obituaries, newspaper reports, horoscopes and business letters, among others," and, as such, these contexts thereby "contain schematic knowledge about styles of registers of language use."[11] This understanding of speech registers within idiolects has direct relevance to the question of Joseph's role in the translation of the Book of Mormon, as well as the appearance of novel utterances in the text.

As a preliminary observation, it is critical to know that each individual learns and employs a variety of speech registers, and these registers can be significantly different from one to another. If we were to observe a Latter-day Saint's everyday spoken language, for instance, and then compare it to the language that he or she uses to utter prayers and blessings, the differences in language—stripped of the contexts or "speech event frames" in which they were spoken—might lead an observer to believe, incorrectly so, that the two sets of linguistic material indicated

10. Ever since Michael A. K. Halliday first defined the linguistic register as "the configuration of semantic resources that the member of a culture typically associates with a situation type," the term has been contested. See Michael A. K. Halliday, *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning* (University Park Press, 1978), 111. The use of "register" in this essay refers to all the language features—that is, the vocabulary, grammar, syntax, formulas, and so forth—that the speaker associates with particular sociocultural scenarios and contexts.

11. Vyvyan Evans and Melanie Green, *Cognitive Linguistics: An Introduction* (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006), 228.

two different speakers. The same issue, in turn, offers an important critique to the common argument that Joseph could not have translated the Book of Mormon due to differences between his personal language and the language appearing in the text. This assertion does not take Joseph's multiple language registers into serious consideration, resulting in a flawed and overly reductionist assumption that Joseph's informal and everyday style, or even his semi-archaic style (such as the hybridized form he used for his own 1832 History), must inevitably duplicate the register found in the Book of Mormon—a different register that Joseph reserved for revelatory texts and utterances.[12]

In another key observation about the development of an individual's idiolect, the process of acquiring fluency and competence does not always occur without complications. In the course of normal language acquisition, children frequently make any number of overgeneralization errors, which result in a variety of novel forms of vocabulary, grammar, and syntax (e.g., "he runned," instead of "he ran"). Children, as well as adults and fluent speakers, also acquire faulty or incomplete definitions of words by making defective inferences from the context of their reading material.[13] Neither are they immune from developing unique and unusual variations of common phrases or expressions, or misapplying certain grammatical and/or syntactic constructs. To all of these potential challenges, one can add the variable of a nineteenth-century youth acquiring a non-native register of Early Modern English, and such difficulties would no doubt manifest in multiple ways. When we consider such dynamics of language acquisition and then revisit the original text of the Book of Mormon, we find strong indications

12. See, for example, Stan Carmack, "Is the Book of Mormon a Pseudo-Archaic Text?" *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 28 (2018): 177–232.

13. See William E. Nagy, Richard C. Anderson, and Patricia A. Herman, "Learning Word Meanings from Context during Normal Reading" *American Educational Research Journal* 24, no. 2 (1987): 237–270.

that many of its idiosyncratic textual features point to a translator's idiolect—or, to be more precise, the imperfect biblical-style register of a translator with a penchant for expressing texts in Early Modern English.

Adopting the issues of Joseph's idiolect and the origins and development of his registers as a governing analytic, the following sections address three primary areas related to the original language of the Book of Mormon: Part I analyzes several idiosyncratic samples of Book of Mormon grammar and vocabulary that strongly suggest human error. Part II explores the persistence of archaic vocabulary in the reading material of early nineteenth-century working-class families, with a specific focus on John Bunyan's *The Holy War* (1682). Part III looks at John Bunyan's use of the periphrastic *did*, an archaic past-tense syntactic structure that appears frequently in the Book of Mormon, to show how nineteenth-century readers could readily access and deploy the forms and rhythms of this archaic style of speech.

Part I. Idiolects and Idiosyncrasies

In his monumental analysis, Skousen observes an unusual Book of Mormon construction, which he describes as non-English and Hebrew-like: "The original Book of Mormon text frequently separates an initial subordinate clause from its following main clause by means of an unexpected use of the connector *and*."[14] In addition to this unexpected "and," these constructions frequently contain what Skousen describes as an "intervening clause" or "some kind of interruption or extended subordination," which appears between the main and subordinate clauses.[15] Among many examples, he offers the following construction from the

14. Skousen, *GV*, 1:362.

15. Skousen, *GV*, 1:362; Skousen, *NOL*, 3:50.

Original Manuscript (spelling modernized), which uses the connector "as" in the subordinate clause (1 Nephi 8:13):

> And **as** I cast my eyes around about [subordinate clause]
> *that perhaps I might discover my family also* [intervening material]
> **And** I beheld a river of water [main clause].[16]

In a simplified form (with the removal of the intervening material), the phrase reads, "*as* I cast my eyes around about . . . *And* I beheld a river of water." In English, of course, we would not expect the additional "and" opening the main clause, prompting Skousen to theorize that these unusual constructions represent a Hebrew-like artifact that persisted into the English translation.

As Skousen further observes, this textual oddity appears with a number of connectors, such as *after, as, because, had, if, when,* and *while*.[17] Among these options, moreover, Skousen indicates that "the clearest evidence for this usage being Hebraistic involves the subordinate conjunction *if,*" as in the example mentioned earlier: "***If*** he [God] saith unto the earth, Move, ***and*** it is moved."[18] At the same time, however, Skousen cautions that these "if, and" conditionals are "not exactly a normal Hebraism since the equivalent cases involving simple subordinate clauses (such as '**if** you come **and** I will come') are not found in the Book of Mormon text."[19] With no precise equivalent construction

16. I have simplified Skousen's textual notations for this example. See Skousen, *GV*, 1:367. For the text in the Original Manuscript, see "Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon, circa 12 April 1828–circa 1 July 1829," 12, The Joseph Smith Papers, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/original-manuscript-of-the-book-of-mormon-circa-12-april-1828-circa-1-july-1829/10#facts.

17. Skousen, *GV*, 1:366–376.

18. Skousen, *GV*, 1:363. Book of Mormon (1830), 440; Helaman 12:12.

19. Skousen, *NOL*, 3:51.

in Hebrew, Skousen's cautionary assessment positions the construction as "Hebrew-like" rather than "Hebraic."[20]

Skousen's association of these forms with Hebrew does not, however, take into account the close relationships that these structures share with similar English-language models in the New Testament. These associations are particularly noticeable in the constructions that share analogous content and structural similarities. Consider the following examples from the Book of Mormon and the New Testament:[21]

> If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove. (Matthew 17:20)
>
> If ye shall say unto this mountain: Be thou cast down and become smooth! —and it shall be done. (Helaman 10:9)
>
> If he [God] saith unto this mountain: Be thou raised up and come over and fall upon that city that it be buried up! —and behold, it is done. (Helaman 12:17)
>
> If he [God] saith unto the earth: Move! —and it is moved. (Helaman 12:13)
>
> If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you. (Luke 17:6)

From a technical perspective, it is important to observe that these Book of Mormon and New Testament examples are not grammatically identical; they convey different dynamics. Nevertheless, in spite of these technical variations, the Book of Mormon formulations openly display their direct derivation and dependence upon the English renditions of the KJV New Testament models. (Among the many obvious structural

20. For Skousen's explanation, see *GV*, 1: 361–362.

21. The Book of Mormon examples follow Royal Skousen's reconstruction of these verses. See Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (Yale University Press, 2009), 542, 548–549.

and verbal parallels, note the conspicuous six-word, verbatim phrase, "ye shall say unto this mountain," appearing in both Matthew 17:20 and Helaman 10:9.) Such appropriations of New Testament phraseology—specifically KJV English phraseology—reveal a process involving both borrowing *and* modification. Such correspondences, moreover, run counter to assumptions about an underlying Hebrew or Hebrew-like text. With the Book of Mormon forms ultimately deriving from adaptations of New Testament lexico-syntactic templates, any linguistic artifacts from the translation process would necessarily come from Greek (the language underlying the New Testament), rather than Hebrew, presenting an admittedly awkward resolution for the theory of "tight control."

A close examination of these constructions, however, suggests a different process at play. When analyzing these forms in detail, we find that the Book of Mormon constructions introduce a new type of agent—an individual who already possesses the necessary power and faith to enact a miracle. This fundamental difference transforms the epistemic premises by introducing new background knowledge that radically alters the context and meaning. In this respect, the analysis of the "if, and" conditionals cannot be strictly limited to a grammatical assessment, isolated from the context in which the forms appear. Rather, as Barbara Dancygier observes in her study on conditional constructions within the framework of cognitive linguistics, "every aspect of the structure and wording of a given sentence is thus considered to make a contribution to its overall interpretation in ways that are governed by linguistic convention."[22] These new agents and their background associations, therefore, provide crucial information about the nature of the transformation of the New Testament structures into their Book of Mormon reconfigurations.

22. I am specifically following Barbara Dancygier's description of cognitive approaches in her study on conditional constructions. Barbara Dancygier, *Conditionals and Prediction: Time, Knowledge and Causation in Conditional Constructions*, Cambridge Studies in Linguistics 87 (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1.

In the Book of Mormon, the conditional constructions describe a *capable* agent performing a speech act that will definitely cause an event to happen, should the speaker desire it: "If you command it, [and] then it will happen." Here, the "if" subordinate clause presupposes a speaker who already has the quality and sufficiency of faith to make the miracle happen ("if you command it"), while the "and" conjunctive clause proclaims the inevitable consequent action ("the mountain will move"). By contrast, the New Testament constructions describe *deficient* agents, or individuals who do not yet have enough faith to realize such an event, and merely present the consequent action as a motivating future possibility: "If you had enough faith, then you would be able to make it happen." Thus, the capable agents in the Book of Mormon already have the necessary power to make miraculous events occur, while the deficient agents in the New Testament do not. These differing premises, in turn, have direct implications on the structuring of the conditionals.

To make these differences explicit, observe what happens when we insert one of the Book of Mormon *capable* agents—one who already has the necessary power to enact miracles—into the New Testament conditional framework for a *deficient* agent. In Helaman 10:5–10, the Lord blesses the prophet Nephi_2 (the son of Helaman_3 and older brother of Lehi_4), with the sealing power, giving him the ability to move mountains, destroy temples, and smite the people, if he so chooses. Now, observe what happens when we insert this capable agent into the position of a deficient agent in the conditional construction found in Matthew 17:20:

> If **Nephi$_2$** have faith as a grain of mustard seed, he shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove.

From a strictly formalist view ("an autonomous formal description of a linguistic structure," without recognition of context), this reconfiguration technically works as a grammatical construct.[23] Yet the background knowledge that informs this conditional—that is, Nephi_2 already having

23. Dancygier, *Conditionals and Prediction*, 1.

the necessary faith to move mountains—creates an irreconcilable contradiction when inserted into the context of a deficient subject. $Nephi_2$, who has been given full access to the sealing power, still somehow lacks the power and faith in the New Testament construction to invoke the very blessing that the Lord has already bestowed on him.[24]

Thus, if we position $Nephi_2$ as the agent within the New Testament conditional framework, then the framework itself *requires a reconfiguration* to accommodate $Nephi_2$'s divine blessings, character, and attributes. Using the agent "$Nephi_2$" and the conditional structure in Matthew 17:20, the transformation then involves the following pathway, beginning with the substitution of $Nephi_2$ for the subject (for the sake of clarity, I am identifying the result of the action as the "result, extension"):

If **Nephi$_2$** have faith as a grain of mustard seed, [subordinate clause]
he shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence
to yonder place; [main clause]
and it shall remove. [result, extension]

Because $Nephi_2$ is not deficient in his abilities and attributes, the condition of him needing "faith as a grain of mustard seed" is not only irrelevant but contradictory. This phrase, by necessity, thereby gets removed from the subordinate clause:

If **Nephi$_2$** ~~have faith as a grain of mustard seed~~, [subordinate clause]
he shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence
to yonder place; [main clause]
and it shall remove. [result, extension]

We should pause here and make an important observation: With this simple step of removing the offending phrase, the conditional

24. This contradiction becomes even more pronounced when God, one of the capable agents in the Book of Mormon, is inserted into the New Testament model: God, an omniscient and omnipotent deity, would then present as an agent lacking in full knowledge and power. God would become an imperfect and hesitant God, introducing a theological conundrum.

construction immediately transforms into the same conditional framework that appears in the Book of Mormon.

Let's look at this domino effect in detail. When we remove "have faith as a grain of mustard seed," the opening subordinate clause contains a gap following the initial words: "If $Nephi_2$ . . ." This gap, however, does not remain vacant. By default, the opening phrase of the main clause ("he shall say unto this mountain") shifts into the subordinate clause position:

If **Nephi$_2$** . . . he shall say unto this mountain	[new subordinate clause]
~~he shall say unto this mountain~~, Remove hence to yonder place;	[main clause, remainder]
and it shall remove.	[result, extension]

Consequently, this adjustment cascades through the remainder of the conditional construction, reconfiguring the component parts automatically (and, most likely, unconsciously and inadvertently). The remainder of the main clause becomes intervening material ("remove hence to yonder place"), while the final "result, extension" becomes the new main clause ("and it shall remove"). The resulting configuration thus recreates the conditional construction found in the Book of Mormon (the redundant "he" is removed in the subordinate clause):

Nephi$_2$ substituted into the Matthew 17:20 model	
If [$Nephi_2$] . . . shall say unto this mountain,	[subordinate clause]
Remove hence to yonder place	[intervening material]
and it shall remove.	[main clause]
Nephi$_2$ in Helaman 10:9	
If ye [$Nephi_2$] shall say unto this mountain:	[subordinate clause]
Be thou cast down and become smooth!	[intervening material]
—**and** it shall be done.	[main clause]

These Book of Mormon reconfigurations reveal a specific dynamic at play: In the process of formulating an innovative expression based closely on New Testament models, the syntactic structure of the models

came into direct conflict with the introduction of a new type of subject—that is, the substitution of the original *deficient* agent (lacking sufficient faith) with a *nondeficient, capable* agent. The resolution of this conflict resulted in the Book of Mormon forms: nongrammatical conditional constructions that emerged from a process of misapprehension of the original structure of the New Testament models, followed by faulty analogic mapping of the same misconception onto variant forms. Rather than revealing the presence of a divine translator introducing non-English artifacts into the text the Book of Mormon, these curious constructions, in what proves to be a rather pedestrian revelation, result from nothing more than simple human error.

The nature of these errors, moreover, offers clues about the translator. As demonstrated above, the translator did not fully grasp the mechanics of the original conditional construction, as modelled in the New Testament passages. Nevertheless, as the text of the Book of Mormon abundantly indicates, the translator repeatedly used this faulty lexico-syntactic frame as the structural basis for a wide variety of variant forms, from "if, and" conditional constructions to the presence of an extra "and" in subordinate clauses with the connectors *after*, *as*, *because*, *had*, *if*, *when*, and *while* (Skousen provides approximately four dozen examples of these defective forms, scattered throughout the text).[25] In addition, and most clearly observed in the variety of "if, and" conditionals in the Book of Mormon, these constructions became *formulaic* in nature—meaning the core "if, and" structural pattern had developed into an *entrenched mental and oral formulaic template,* which the translator deployed to express a variety of related ideas (that is, the formulaic templates consisted of flexible, semi-preconstructed frames with substitution slots for novel material).[26]

25. Skousen, *GV*, 1: 361–376.

26. This essay follows Alison Wray's working definition of "formulaic language" (which she terms "formulaic sequences"): "a sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other elements, which is, or appears to be, prefabricated:

This combination of a faulty formulaic template with apparent fluency in variability and substitution (e.g., the many different scenarios that God's power or the prophet Nephi's power could potentially enact) strongly suggests that the translator was still developing his/her/their/its syntactic competency with an unusual and seemingly archaic complex form. These expressions, moreover, suggest that the development of these constructions took place *outside* a community of native Early Modern English speakers, who, as part of the normal dynamics within a speech community and the attendant fertile environment for language acquisition, would have provided various natural mechanisms of corrective feedback. As a result, the Book of Mormon constructions express an idiosyncratic usage that mirrors the continuum of a youth in process of mastering oral formulaic utterances by "adopting stereotyped expressions that are neither copied directly from nor even directly reduced from adult usage" (that is, adopting expressions without examining, fully comprehending, duplicating, and/or making use of all the component parts of the original formulas), resulting in idiosyncratic formulations that persist into adulthood.[27] The presence of the idiosyncratic "if, and" conditional constructions, along with several related forms (the extra "and" in subordinate clauses), provides strong indications that these peculiar constructions reflect the translator's idiolect, rather than artifacts of translation.

Idiosyncratic definitions and uses, awkward reconfigurations of preexisting templates, and human missteps can also account for several other words on Skousen and Carmack's list of archaic meanings.

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that is, stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar." Alison Wray, *Formulaic Language and the Lexicon* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 9.

27. Ann M. Peters, *The Units of Language Acquisition* (Cambridge University Press, 1983), 82. For Peters's discussion on idiosyncratic formulas with children and adults, see esp. 80–88. More recently, Alison Wray turns to Peters's work to address the issue of "provenance," or "the way that formulaic sequences come about." See Wray, *Formulaic Language*, 59.

Consider "depart," meaning "divide, separate, part," which appears in Helaman 8:11: "God gave power unto one man even Moses to smite upon the waters of the Red Sea and they *departed* hither and thither."[28] The language of this passage originates from multiple verses in the KJV (see, e.g., Exodus 7:17; Exodus 14:16, 21–22; Exodus 16:1; Deuteronomy 9:7; and 2 Kings 2:8, 14). But for our purposes the final phrase "departed hither and thither" demands our attention. This formulaic phrase comes not from the story of Moses parting the Red Sea but from the story of Elijah and Elisha parting the Jordan River: "And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and *smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither*, so that they two went over on dry ground. . . . And he [Elisha] took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and *smote the waters* . . . and when he also had *smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither*: and Elisha went over" (2 Kings 2:8, 14). The phrases "*divided* hither and thither" and "*parted* hither and thither" provide the formulaic model for the Book of Mormon phrase "*departed* hither and thither" (these specific KJV phrases only occur in 2 Kings 2:8, 14). The word "departed," however, which only occurs in Helaman 8:11, appears to come from other related expressions associated with this story, such as "the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin . . . after their *departing* out of the land of Egypt" (Exodus 16:1)—a phrase that would evolve into the commonplace

28. Stanford Carmack and Royal Skousen, "Revisions in the Analysis of Archaic Language in the Book of Mormon," in Royal Skousen, *Textual Criticism of the Book of Mormon*, part 8 of vol. 3 of Royal Skousen, *The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon*, preprint page 7 (bolding in original) [hereafter "Revisions, Archaic Language"]. This essay follows the preprint version released by the Interpreter Foundation on Oct. 22, 2020. Skousen and Carmack's lists may therefore contain further revisions in the final publication. For the preprint version used in this essay, see https://interpreterfoundation.org/blog-pre-print-of-revisions-in-the-analysis-of-archaic-language-in-the-book-of-mormon/.

formula, "the children of Israel departed from Egypt."[29] The atypical use of "departed" in this Book of Mormon passage thus emerges from simple human error during the adoption and reconfiguration of biblical phraseology: In the process of oral dictation, Joseph spontaneously drew on habituated formulaic language from multiple stories in the KJV, reconfiguring the phraseology in the moment of performance to express the ideas in a novel text, only to conflate the different formulas in an awkward manner.

This same process, moreover, explains the unusual use of "scatter" on the title page of the Book of Mormon, which Skousen and Carmack define as "to separate from the main group" (as opposed to a general dispersal of the entire group).[30] The phrasing in question reads, "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*."[31] The latter portion of this sentence derives, however, from the KJV rendering of Genesis 11:9: "The Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth."[32] The awkward use of "scatter," deriving once again from an imprecise reconfiguration of preexisting biblical phraseology, provides strong evidence that Joseph drew on habituated and entrenched language from the KJV to articulate the Book of Mormon text.

In like manner, Joseph's idiolect could easily account for other idiosyncratic usages or allegedly archaic meanings in the Book of Mormon.

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29. See also, Deuteronomy 9:7: "the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt."

30. Skousen and Carmack, "Revisions, Archaic Language," 19.

31. The Book of Mormon, title page (italics added). See https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/bofm/bofm-title?lang=eng.

32. The phrases "confound the(ir) language" and "scattered" also appear in verses 7 and 8, reinforcing the connection between the language and the narrative.

Consider, for example, the Book of Mormon phrase "cite your minds forward to," which Skousen includes in a short list of "words, phrases, and expressions that appear to occur only in the Book of Mormon," without "any evidence for their independent existence, in either Early Modern English or modern English."[33] Skousen states, "Thus far I have not been able to find any evidence in English for the precise expression 'to cite one's mind forward' or even 'to cite one's mind' or 'to cite forward' (there are, on the other hand, a good number of examples of 'cast one's mind')."[34] In a letter dated July 31, 1832, however, Joseph Smith wrote to William W. Phelps expressing frustration with Church leaders in Missouri. In the course of telling them about the Lord's displeasure, Joseph admonished Phelps and the leaders to recall the words of Christ: "*I cite your minds* to this saying: he that loveth Father or Mother, wife & Children more than me is not worthy of me."[35] Rather than being evidence for "tight control," in which Joseph transmitted some other entity's words, the expression "cite your minds (forward)" reveals Joseph's own idiosyncratic variation of a common—and likewise variable—expression: "call one's mind forward," "call to mind," "carry one's mind forward," "cast the mind back," "cast the mind's eye back," and "lead one's mind forward," among others.[36]

33. Skousen, *NOL*, 3:535.

34. Skousen, *NOL*, 3:536.

35. Joseph is paraphrasing Matthew 10:37. "Letter to William W. Phelps, 31 July 1832," 2, The Joseph Smith Papers, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-william-w-phelps-31-july-1832/2 (spelling and punctuation lightly modernized).

36. See, respectively, Samuel Johnson, *The Works of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.* (London, 1796), 2:159; John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*. Reprint. Roger Sharrock, ed. (1666; Clarendon Press, 1962), 3; Joshua P. Slack, *The American Orator* (D. & E. Fenton, 1817), 127; "Legislative Acts/Legal Proceedings," *National Intelligencer*, Feb. 3 1809, 4; "Commerce," *Columbian Centinel,* Jan. 6, 1813, 1; William Gilpin, *Lectures on the Catechism of the Church of England* (R. Blamire in the Strand, 1795), 41.

Idiosyncratic definitions within Joseph's idiolect could also account for the unique meanings of "pollutions" (referring to "people who are polluted or who pollute"), "retain" (meaning "to take back," an apparent conflation of "retake" and "regain"), "subsequent to man" (meaning "consequent to man"), and "wax" ("causative usage, in the passive," as in, "to cause to become").[37] As Skousen has observed, these usages appear to be unique to the Book of Mormon: "Thus far I have not been able to find any evidence for their independent existence, in either Early Modern English or modern English."[38] Idiosyncratic meanings and definitions are, however, normal occurrences in the formulation and development of an individual's idiolect—particularly, I would argue, when the unique usages are also part of an individual's religious register, which makes heavy use of non-native, archaic forms.

When we expand the scope of analysis to include the possibility of scribal flaws and the pressures of a rapid dictation process, in which Joseph sought unsuccessfully to find the precise language to express an idea in the moment of performance, then such factors can further account for additional idiosyncratic or allegedly archaic usages, such as using "ceremony" instead of the more specific description of a council of peace, parley, or peace ceremony (Mosiah 19:24); "counsel" instead of "counsel *with*" (Alma 37:37; 39:10); "consigned" instead of "resigned" (Helaman 7:9); "whereby" instead of "wherefore" (Ether 8:9); and "whereunto" instead of "while" or "but" (Ether 12:23).[39] The scribe's spelling of "nithermost" might, in fact, be a phonetic

37. See Skousen, *NOL*, 3:535.

38. Skousen, *NOL*, 3:535.

39. Skousen, *NOL*, 3:92–93, 210–211, 265.

representation of what appears to be Joseph's rural New England pronunciation of "nethermost" (Jacob 5:13–14, 19, 38–39, 52).[40]

When we step back from all of these examples and look for a common thread, we find an array of idiosyncratic usages that reflect the types of common mistakes that occur during the formation of an individual's idiolect and, in this case, non-native spiritual registers. But perhaps more importantly, we also discover a much larger underlying and repeated strategy of textual production: a process of appropriating and modifying biblical and biblical-sounding language to produce innovative texts and readings. This process, moreover, is not limited to occasional turns of phrases or isolated passages. Rather, the process reveals a ubiquitous, persistent, and fundamental characteristic of the Book of Mormon translator's method. We would be remiss, therefore, if we failed to recognize that this same creative process characterizes, and is entirely consistent with, virtually all of Joseph's scripture-making endeavors and revelatory texts.[41]

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40. In his study on New England dialects, James W. Downer Jr. compared the representations of rural mid-nineteenth-century speech in the *Biglow Papers* (1848), written by James Russell Lowell (1819–1891), a prominent early American author and scholar of linguistics, with the dialects of their rural mid-twentieth-century counterparts. Downer observed that the rural New England dialects, both in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, often switched the /ɛ/ sound for /ɪ/, so that words such as "kettle" were pronounced "kittle"; "engine" as "ingin"; "generous" as "gin'rous"; regiment" as "rigiment"; "steady" as "stiddy"; and "yet" as "yit." This dialectical shift in vowel sounds strongly suggests that Joseph Smith, who lived in rural New England until approximately eleven years of age (the most formative years of his language development), would have pronounced "nethermost" as "nithermost," prompting the scribe's misspelling. See James W. Downer, "Features of New England Rustic Pronunciation in James Russell Lowell's *Biglow Papers*" (PhD diss., Michigan University, 1958), 162. See also figures 21–24 (166–169).

41. Working with the Johannine Prologue, Nicholas J. Frederick offers a masterclass in close reading when he explores Joseph Smith's creative reworking

Part II. Archaic Vocabulary and Meanings

Joseph Smith's New England and New York dialects, coupled with the language of the KJV and the registers of contemporary revivalism and religious discourse, have provided obvious locations of investigative research to identify possible sources of the archaic biblical-style language in the Book of Mormon. Meanwhile, another prominent resource remains neglected: the popular reading material of the day. When we look into the family libraries of early nineteenth-century farmers and artisans, we find that they owned and read the works of a number of influential authors from the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. Yet, with regard to Joseph, the availability of such materials and their popularity in working-class homes rarely receives attention, presumably due to his alleged illiteracy and purported lack of

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of biblical phraseology and "how the Bible is both *deconstructed* and *reconstructed* in the course of composing the Mormon scriptural corpus." Nicholas J. Frederick, *The Bible, Mormon Scripture, and the Rhetoric of Allusivity* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2016), xviii. See also Seth Perry, *Bible Culture & Authority in the Early United States* (Princeton University Press, 2018), 110–128; and Philip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion*, updated ed. (Oxford University Press, 2013), esp. 21–23. For Joseph's appropriation of non-biblical religious phraseology, such as the language of contemporary revivalism, see William L. Davis, *Visions in a Seer Stone: Joseph Smith and the Making of the Book of Mormon* (University of North Carolina Press, 2020), 112–114; Mark D. Thomas, *Digging in Cumorah: Reclaiming Book of Mormon Narratives* (Signature Books, 2003), 123–147; and Grant H. Palmer, *An Insider's View of Mormon Origins* (Signature Books, 2002), 95–133. For the wider use of archaic, scriptural language as a textual genre in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Eran Shalev, *American Zion: The Old Testament as a Political Text from the Revolution to the Civil War* (Yale University Press, 2013), 84–150; and Perry, *Bible Culture & Authority*, 86–109.

interest in reading.[42] In the early American republic, however, regular reading—silent and aloud, by individuals, families, or groups in various gathering places (from literary and debate societies to local inns and taverns)—was a common and popular pastime.

In his influential study on the cultural life of rural New England, William J. Gilmore observes that the 1787–1830 personal libraries of the rural residents in Vermont's Windsor District (located immediately south of the region where the Smith family lived in Randolph, Royalton, Sharon, and Tunbridge) contained works from such authors as William Shakespeare (1564–1616), John Milton (1608–1674), Richard Baxter (1615–1691), John Flavel (ca. 1627–1691), John Bunyan (1628–1688), Isaac Watts (1674–1748), Philip Doddridge (1702–1751), John Wesley (1703–1791), Samuel Johnson (1709–1784), and James Hervey (1714–1758), among others. According to Gilmore, the most popular religious texts in these working-class libraries were "Bibles (and New Testaments), Watts' *Psalms* and his *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, and the writings of Flavel and Baxter and Wesley."[43] Moreover, many of these authors, particularly when engaged in religious discourse, adopted and adapted styles of conservative and archaic language in order to enhance the spiritual gravity of their works.

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42. Lucy Smith famously said that Joseph "seemed much less inclined to the perusal of books than any of the rest of our children," which commentators often use to assert Joseph's lack of interest in reading. See Lavina Fielding Anderson, ed., *Lucy's Book: A Critical Edition of Lucy Mack Smith's Family Memoir* (Signature Books, 2001), 344. Lucy's comment does not, however, state that Joseph did not like to read. She simply makes a comparison of Joseph's reading habits in relation to his siblings. Thus, without knowing how much the other Smith children were inclined to read, the comment remains an observation without a reference point.

43. William J. Gilmore, *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life: Material and Cultural Life in Rural New England, 1780–1835* (University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 62, 64–67.

John Bunyan's *The Holy War* (1682)

Among these authors, John Bunyan warrants our particular attention. Born in Bedfordshire, England, in late 1628, Bunyan grew up in poverty. Apart from a short stint in school, where he learned how "to Read and Write," Bunyan educated himself by reading and self-improvement, further developing a writing style that reflected his religious environment and his ubiquitous storytelling culture.[44] In all, Bunyan produced at least fifty-eight works (ranging from tracts and treatises to sermons and allegories), but he remains best known for *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), a work that has never gone out of print.[45] Christopher Hill, one of Britain's preeminent historians, observed that "next to the Bible, perhaps the world's best-selling book is *The Pilgrim's Progress*, translated into over 200 languages, with especially wide sales in the Third World."[46] For early nineteenth-century readers, however, *The Pilgrim's Progress* was not the only work that received significant attention.[47]

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44. John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding*, edited by Roger Sharrock (Clarendon Press), 5; Richard L. Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory: John Bunyan and English Dissent* (Stanford University Press, 2002), 5, 85. See also N. H. Keeble, "John Bunyan's Literary Life," in *The Cambridge Companion to Bunyan*, edited by Anne Dunan-Page (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 20; Nancy Rosenfeld, "The Holy War (1682)," in *The Oxford Handbook of John Bunyan,* ed. Michael Davies and W. R. Owens (Oxford University Press, 2018), 277.

45. For a broad description of the works, see Keeble, "John Bunyan's Literary Life," 18.

46. Christopher Hill, *A Tinker and a Poor Man: John Bunyan and His Church, 1628–1688* (W. W. Norton, 1988), 375.

47. Popular titles in America included *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666); *The Pilgrim's Progress, Part 2* (1684); *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman* (1680); *A Few Sighs from Hell* (1658); *The Holy City or the New Jerusalem* (1665); *Seasonable Counsel* (1684); *Solomon's Temple Spiritualized* (1688); *The Water of Life* (1688); and *The Heavenly Footman* (1698). For additional titles and publications, see Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory*, appendix, 637–641; David E. Smith, "Publication of John Bunyan's Works in America" *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 66, no. 10 (1962): 640–652.

Bunyan's *The Holy War* (1682) also stood as one of his most beloved and popular allegories, particularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in both Britain and America. In the eighteenth century, the work appeared in over fifty editions in Britain.[48] Yet, even with these vast numbers flooding both British and American markets, American publishers began issuing their own editions to keep up with the demand. Between 1794 and 1818 alone, eight American editions and reprints appeared in several centers of publication: New York (1794, 1805), Portsmouth, New Hampshire (1794), Philadelphia (1803, 1818), Baltimore (1812), Albany (1816), and Boston (1817).[49] In addition to these British and American publications, John Wesley included an edited version of *The Holy War* in his multivolume *Christian Library*, an educational resource for Methodist exhorters and preachers, who often had little or no formal education.[50] With such extensive publication and circulation of Bunyan's works, it is no surprise that titles such as *The Holy War*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Grace Abounding*, along with biographies of John Bunyan, were readily available in the bookstores near the Smith family residences in Palmyra and Manchester, New York.[51]

In terms of the story, *The Holy War* is an extended, militaristic allegory that recounts the epic tale of a town called Mansoul (Man's

48. Anne Dunan-Page, "Posthumous Bunyan," in Dunan-Page, *Cambridge Companion to Bunyan*, 144.

49. Smith, "Publication of John Bunyan's Works," 647.

50. Vicki Tolar Burton, *Spiritual Literacy in John Wesley's Methodism: Reading, Writing, & Speaking to Believe* (Baylor University Press, 2008), 106, 110–112. See also Nancy Rosenfeld, "The Holy War (1682)," 280.

51. James Bemis, a major regional printer and bookseller, advertised copies of *Pilgrim's Progress, Grace Abounding*, *The Holy War*, *Law and Grace Unfolded*, and *The Life of Rev. John Bunyan* in his Canandaigua shop, seven miles south of the Smith's Manchester farm. See, for example, "Canandaigua Book-Store," *Ontario Repository*, Nov. 11, 1817, [3]; and "Books in Divinity," *Ontario Repository*, June 20, 1820, [1]. Palmyra bookseller T. C. Strong also frequently advertised *The Life of John Bunyan*; see, for example, "T. C. St[r]ong Books, and Stationary," *Palmyra Register*, May 17, 1820, 4.

Soul), whose citizens battle to overcome a series of assaults by Diabolus (Satan) and to live in accordance with the laws of their rulers, King Shaddai (God the Father) and his son Emanuel (Christ). And, like the Book of Mormon, *The Holy War* makes use of archaic language and grammatical structures, along with sharing an assortment of textual features that make it an apt example for comparison. We begin with Bunyan's vocabulary and how his popular work provided a vehicle for archaic meanings to persist into the early nineteenth century.

In *The History of the Text of the Book of Mormon, Part 3: The Nature of the Original Language* (2018), Royal Skousen and Stan Carmack originally identified thirty-nine words that "sometimes take on a meaning that dates from Early Modern English" rather than Joseph Smith's nineteenth-century language.[52] Since that time, they have recategorized several of the lexical items, reducing the list to twenty-six words with archaic meanings.[53] This new list, however, requires further review. "Raigned" and "Call of," for example, persisted into the nineteenth century, while the meaning they assign to "Mar" does not provide the most suitable definition for its context.[54] In addition, as mentioned earlier,

52. Skousen, *NOL*, 3:91.

53. Skousen and Carmack, "Revisions, Archaic Language," 2.

54. *Raigned* ("arraigned"): "the culprits were *raigned*, convicted, and condemned, by competent tribunals," in Alexander Stephens, *The History of the Wars Which Arose out of the French Revolution* (John Bioren and Thomas L. Plowman, 1804), 2: 253 (emphasis added). *Call of* ("need for"): "though you think there is a *great call of* public justice, let no unmerited victim fall," in T. B. Howell, *A Complete Collection of State Trials* (Longman, Hurst, Reese, et. al., 1820), 27:379 (emphasis added). *Mar*: in the verse, "no monster of the sea could break them, neither whale that could mar them," Skousen and Carmack define "mar" as "hinder, stop." This choice, however, obliterates the parallel structure ("no monster . . . could break / neither whale . . . could mar"), which sets up "mar" as synonymous with "break." A more precise definition would be "damage," as in the OED sense I.2, "to damage (a material thing) so as to render useless; to destroy or impair the quality of (an object)." The OED offers a fitting example from Richard W. Hamilton's 1853 publication of *The Revealed Doctrine of Rewards and Punishments*: "The vessel is so marred that it cannot be repaired." See *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "mar (v.)," sense I.2, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/3414607628.

idiosyncratic definitions, awkward articulations, and human mistakes (e.g., speaker or scribal errors) can account for the usages and meanings of "consigned," "counsel," "depart," "nithermost," and "whereby." For whatever words remain on their list, *The Holy War* further reduces the collection by nine more items. The relevant words (*in italics*) appear below, together with Skousen and Carmack's definitions in quotation marks. I then provide samples from *The Holy War* that either express the same meanings, or, alternatively, provide meanings and examples that appear to fit the Book of Mormon usage more precisely:[55]

> *Break* [meaning] "to stop, interrupt": "Diabolus their king had in these days his rest much broken" (53); "this Diabolonian council was broken up" (217).
>
> *But* "unless, except": "the walls . . . could never be opened nor forced but by the will and leave of those within" (9); "nor can they by any means be won but by their own consent" (12).[56]
>
> *Course* "direction"; specifically, "the motion of people in a certain direction":[57] "they . . . steer their course towards the town of Mansoul" (10); "coming up to the wall of the town, he steereth his course to Eargate" (62).
>
> *Cross* "to contradict": "to send our petition by a man of this name, will seem to cross the petition itself" [the messenger's name and the message itself appear to be at cross purposes] (98).

55. See Skousen and Carmack, "Revisions, Archaic Language," 2. For *The Holy War* examples, I follow John Bunyan, *The Holy War*, edited by Roger Sharrock and James F. Forrest (Clarendon Press, 2012), which uses a first edition of *The Holy War* (1682) as a copytext. See Roger Sharrock and James F. Forrest, "Note on the Text," in Bunyan, *The Holy War*, xl–xlviii.

56. In *Grace Abounding*, Bunyan writes, "the tempter came in with this delusion, That there was no way for me to know I had faith, *but* by trying to work some miracle" (18; emphasis added).

57. Skousen and Carmack, "Revisions, Archaic Language," 6.

Flatter "coax, entice": "I will try to catch them by fawning, I will try to flatter them into my net" (192).

Give "describe, portray": "he gave it out in special that they should bend all their force against Feel-gate" (203). ["Gave it out in special" means that Diabolus described the assault plan in detail, with special attention to the attack on Feel-gate.]

Manifest "expound, unfold" [or "reveal"; see footnote]:[58] "it is not myself, but you—not mine, but your advantage that I seek by what I now do, as will full well be made manifest, by that I have opened my mind unto you" (14); "This is manifest by the very name of the tree; it is called the 'tree of knowledge of good and evil'" (15).

58. Skousen and Carmack argue that the definition "expound, unfold" (OED, manifest, v., sense 3) best suits Alma's words: "But behold, my limbs did receive their strength again, and I stood upon my feet and did manifest unto the people that I had been born of God" (Alma 36:23). Yet the full entry for this definition reads, "To expound, unfold, clear up (a matter), as in a manifesto or public declaration," which refers to a scenario in which ambiguous information requires further clarification. This is not the context of Alma 36:23, where Alma has risen from a redemptive trance and is telling the people what has happened to him. The OED definition in 1.a., "To make (a quality, fact, etc.) evident to the eye or to the understanding; *to show plainly, disclose, reveal,*" provides the most suitable definition for the context. *The Holy War* examples reflect this same sense of revealing, disclosing, and making information apparent. For additional examples, see Bunyan, *The Holy War*, 5, 239. For the definitions of "manifest," see *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "manifest (v.)," sense 1.a. and 3, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/8022393336.

Opinion "expectation" [or an expectation based on belief; see footnote]:[59] The trial of Mr. Lustings: "I was ever of opinion that the happiest life that a man could live on earth was to keep himself back from nothing that he desired in the world" (122); The trial of Mr. Atheism: he "did briskly talk of divers opinions; and then and there I heard him say, that for his part, he did believe that there was no God" (120).

Study "to concentrate thought upon": "Since, therefore, the giant could not make him wholly his own, what doth he do but studies all that he could to debauch the old gentleman" (19); "your greatness is pleased to give us to continue to devise, contrive, and study the utter desolation of Mansoul" (169).[60]

59. Skousen and Carmack revised the archaic meaning from "considered judgment" to "expectation" ("Revisions, Archaic Language," 16), arguing that Alma's meaning best matched the OED, sense 5, meaning: "Thought of what is likely to be the case, knowledge; expectation based on knowledge or belief." But this interpretation proves imprecise, particularly in light of the examples that the editors provide, such as "The warre continuing beyond opinion [beyond what was expected], the State was inforced to procure pay for the armie" (R. Johnson, translation of G. Botero, *Trauellers Breuiat* [1601], 136) or "When their consciences are possessed with an opinion of hell fire [knowledge based on belief]" (J. Dove, *Confutation of Atheisme* [1605], 5). In contrast, Alma states, "***I give it as my opinion*** that the souls and the bodies are reunited of the righteous at the resurrection of Christ" (Alma 40:20; emphasis added), which indicates Alma's "opinion" is his "belief" in a doctrine. The OED, sense 1.a., provides a more accurate definition: "What or how one thinks about something; judgement or belief. Esp. in **in my opinion**: according to my thinking; as it seems to me. **a matter of opinion**: a matter about which each may have his or her own opinion; a disputable point." *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "opinion (n.)," sense 1.a. and 5, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/5028687369 (bolding in original). Any sense of expectation in Alma's words is founded on his "belief"—referring to the hoped-for, future outcome—therefore the sense of expectation is secondary. *The Holy War* examples reflect Alma's central meaning: a belief in a doctrine and/or a belief in a future outcome. For additional examples, see Bunyan, *The Holy War*, 159, 216.

60. For additional examples, see Bunyan, *The Holy War*, 144, 237.

The presence of these nine archaic meanings in *The Holy War* should give us pause in attributing distinctive meanings to words in the Book of Mormon. If a single work can produce such results, then an analysis of the archaic language in the reading material of the early nineteenth-century needs to be taken more fully into account. If we expand our analysis to more of Bunyan's works, for example, we find that Skousen and Carmack's definitions for "*Desirous* 'desirable'" and "*Extinct* 'physically dead'" appear in *The Pilgrim's Progress, Part 2*: "they make the Woods and Groves, and Solitary places, places *desirous* to be in" (235–236) and "Tis pity this Family should fall and be *extinct*" (260).[61] In addition, their definitions for *Idleness* ("meaningless words or actions") and *Profane* ("to act profanely") match some of the ways in which Bunyan also uses the terms "idle, idleness, idly, profane, and profaneness."[62] For example, "he suffers his house to be scattered with profane and wicked books, such as stir up to lust, to wantonness, such as teach *idle, wanton, lascivious discourse*, and such as have a tendency *to provoke to profane drollery and jesting*; and, lastly, such as tend *to*

61. Skousen and Carmack, "Revisions, Archaic Language," 2, 9, 11.

62. Skousen and Carmack's definition for "idleness" includes "passionate expression or perhaps meaningless prayers," and "instances in the Book of Mormon of *idleness* and *idle* that seem to work best if we interpret them as referring to the Lamanites as people whose actions are 'voice of meaning or sense; foolish, silly, incoherent' (see definition 2b in the OED for idle, also definition 3 for idleness)." This meaning, however, appears in the New Testament: "Their words seemed to them as *idle tales*, and they believed them not" (Luke 24:11). Their definition for "profane" is "intransitive and means 'act profanely' rather than 'speak profanely,'" which the Bunyan examples also demonstrate. Skousen and Carmack, "Revisions, Archaic Language," 9, 11.

corrupt, and pervert the doctrine of faith and holiness" (62).[63] Thus, fully half of the twenty-six archaic meanings on Skousen and Carmack's list can be found in these three works by Bunyan alone.

Part III: Grammar, Syntax, and Periphrastic *Do*

Along with archaic word meanings, Bunyan's *The Holy War* offers models for a variety of archaic syntactic and grammatical structures. In her study on Bunyan's prose in five of his most popular works (*Pilgrim's Progress, Parts 1 and 2*; *Grace Abounding*; *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*; and *The Holy War*), Julie Coleman identifies some of Bunyan's most common archaic elements: "Bunyan used six linguistic variants to Biblicize his language: *-eth* inflections, *mine/thine* before vowels, *mine/thine* before consonants, *yea* in place of *yes* or *aye*, periphrastic *do*, and *thou* singulars." In terms of overall usage of all of these categories, Coleman notes, "*The Holy War* is the text whose language is most influenced by the language of the Bible as Bunyan repeatedly signals that a more elevated interpretation underlies the literal story."[64] When Bunyan composed his works, the periphrastic *do* (e.g., "his words *did shake* the whole town," instead of "his words *shook* the whole town") had largely fallen out of use, though his writings remained "reminiscent of periphrastic

63. For "idleness" (meaningless, frivolous words), see also "if they railed on religion so could he; if they talked beastly, vainly, *idly*, so would he." For "profane" (behavior), see also, "when he could get [away] from his friends, and so spend it [the Sabbath] in all manner of idleness and profaneness then he would be pleased," and "they that shall inwardly chuse the company of the ungodly and openly profane [profane behavior], rather than the company of the godly, as Mr Badman did, surely are not godly men, but profane." John Bunyan, *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman* (W. Nicholson, 1808), 137–138, 42, 257, respectively.

64. Julie Coleman, "The Manufactured Homespun Style of John Bunyan's Prose," *Bunyan Studies*, no. 18 (2014): 114; see also figure 16. Readers should note that Coleman's examples of archaisms extend beyond the features she mentions in this quote.

Biblical usage in a trend also apparent in other religious writings of the period."[65] (We should also note here that "Biblical usage" for Bunyan includes the Geneva Bible, a text saturated with examples of periphrastic *do*.)[66] Moreover, as Coleman demonstrates, Bunyan's decision to adopt this archaic feature was part of a larger project of using "Biblicized language for distinct stylistic purposes," and his use of the periphrastic *do* fluctuated according to the type of work that he was composing.[67]

When observing the use of the periphrastic *do* in *The Holy War*, we find that Bunyan not only made frequent use of this structure but also composed a variety of forms that, in turn, reflect the full array of usage in the Book of Mormon. In his essay addressing the use of periphrastic *do* in the Book of Mormon, with specific focus on the past-tense syntax ("affirmative declarative periphrastic *did*," which he terms "ADP *did*"), Carmack provides four different types of expressions of this feature: (1) "Adjacency (the auxiliary *did* is adjacent to the infinitive)"; (2) "Inversion (did + subject + infinitive – verb – second syntax with a preceding adverbial or object)"; (3) "Intervening Adverbial Use (an adverb or an adverbial phrase is used between did and the infinitive)"; and (4) "Ellipsis (*did* carries through to a second infinitive, akin to *I didn't see or hear anything, I will go and do,* etc.)."[68] Later in the essay, Carmack provides yet another configuration, which he describes as "consecutive ADP

65. Coleman, "Manufactured Homespun Style," 126.

66. W. R. Owens observes that "although Bunyan generally quotes the Authorised Version, it is clear that he knew the Geneva Bible well, and he also refers to the work of Tyndale." W. R. Owen, "John Bunyan and the Bible," in Dunan-Page, *Cambridge Companion to Bunyan*, 41. See also, Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory,* 463.

67. Coleman, "Manufactured Homespun Style," 133.

68. Carmack, "The Implications of Past-Tense Syntax in the Book of Mormon," *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 14 (2015): 122–123, table 1.

did," in which periphrastic *did* is "used consecutively in the KJB [KJV] and the BofM [Book of Mormon] without a repeat of the subject."[69]

With regard to all of these features, *The Holy War* provides multiple examples. Consider the following representative configurations:

> Adjacency: "Yea, how by hostile ways she *did oppose* / Her Lord, and with his enemy *did close*" (2); "my Father *did accept* thereof" (75); "he *did cast up* four mounts against the town" (188).
>
> Inversion: "Then *did* the town of Mansoul *shout* for joy" (49); "Then *did* the giant *send* for the prisoners" (52); "there *did* the tyrant *set up* his standard" (189).
>
> Intervening Adverbial: "they *did* never as yet *see* any of their fellow-creatures" (11); "This image was so exactly engraven, (and it was engraven in gold,) that it *did* the most *resemble* Shaddai himself" (24); "nor *did* there now *remain* any more a noble spirit" (17).
>
> Ellipsis: "they two *did range* and *revel* it all the town over" (27); "He also *did kiss*, and *embrace*, and *smile* upon the other two" (106); "Then *did* the Prince's trumpets *sound*, the captains *shout*, the town *shake*, and Diabolus *retreat* to his hold" (87).
>
> Consecutive ADP *did*: "the Prince's men *did* bravely *stand* to their arms, *and did*, as before, *bend* their main force against Ear-gate and Eye-gate" (86); "Now *did* Mansoul's cup *run over*, now *did* her conduits *run* sweet wine" (149).

Considering the popularity of Bunyan's works in early nineteenth-century America, any of his readers would have been exposed to an abundant variety of periphrastic *do* constructions.

These structures, moreover, are not the only archaic elements in Bunyan's biblical style. Limitations on space do not allow a more extensive exploration, but his works also provide additional examples relevant to Skousen's and Carmack's several analyses, such as verbal complementation (especially with *cause, command* and *desire*), command syntax,

69. Carmack, "Implications of Past-Tense Syntax," 138.

agentive *of* syntax, and archaic phraseology. Whether or not one chooses to believe that Joseph Smith read any of Bunyan's stories, the writings themselves were certainly widely accessible and could easily have provided a wide range of templates for many of the Book of Mormon forms.[70]

70. This accessibility of archaic forms speaks to the issue of influence and comparative analysis. Carmack frequently dismisses texts as possible sources of influence based on differing rates of usage from one text to another, but this is a systemic flaw in his analyses. It is a faulty assumption to argue that two texts must share a similar profile for a given feature in order for one to qualify as a possible source of influence for the other. Carmack notes, for example, that the periphrastic *did* rate in the KJV is 1.7 percent, while the Book of Mormon rate is 27.2 percent, prompting him to argue that "the occasional intersection" of KJV and Book of Mormon periphrastic *did* syntax argues against the KJV as a source of influence: "The rates and patterns of use strongly indicate independence" (Carmack, "Implications of Past-Tense Syntax," 123, table 2). This reasoning, however, rests on the faulty premise that the human mind processes language in empirically predictable ways. Yet, the mind does not read a text, isolate a particular feature, calculate the frequency of usage, and then attempt to reproduce that same frequency in a new composition. Rather, the mind is unpredictable, focusing on different linguistic elements and making use of language features in idiosyncratic ways. An individual, for instance, could encounter the unfamiliar periphrastic *do* in a work, and then, struck by the novelty of the form, latch onto it and use it at a much higher rate of frequency than the source text expresses. These differences would not disqualify the original text from being a source of inspiration. Though the rate of periphrastic *did* in the KJV is 1.7 percent, this percentage refers to *515 instances* of the form (as Carmack indicates in table 2), which would provide an ample resource to observe and mimic. Grant Hardy raises the same concern: "It seems to me, however, that Carmack does not give adequate consideration to alternative hypotheses: for instance, Joseph may have picked up the *do*-auxiliary from the King James Bible and then overused it in an idiosyncratic way." Hardy, *Approaching Completion*, 15n17.

Conclusion

While this essay does not provide a comprehensive survey of every textual phenomenon that Skousen and Carmack employ to assert their theory of "tight control," the information presented here nevertheless offers more than sufficient evidence to demonstrate that Joseph Smith's participation in the translation work was far more involved than a simple process of transmitting a preexisting, pretranslated work to his scribes. Rather, the English-language text of the Book of Mormon points ineluctably to Joseph himself as the source of the English rendition. The textual characteristics reveal much about the translator: The language came from a fallible source—specifically, a translator who was a non-native speaker of Early Modern English, despite adopting some of its characteristics; a translator who did not have perfect command of the specific meanings of all the words being used (or occasionally misspoke and used similar but incorrect words); and a translator prone to human error, especially when adapting KJV structures and patterns to new forms and contexts. The attribution of such idiosyncratic meanings and defective constructions to God, his angels, his sacred instruments, or some other divine agent results in a strained and implausible position to maintain.

By restoring Joseph Smith to the power, function, and title of being an actual *translator*, we enhance our understanding of the nature of his revelations. In doing so, we also clarify the message and meaning of the Book of Mormon. As one of the many possible insights that such a view would bring, there is perhaps no greater opportunity than recovering the final intentions for the text of the Book of Mormon. In this important and consequential regard, the 1840 third edition of the Book of Mormon—the last edition that Joseph Smith personally edited and corrected—would assume authoritative status over the earlier versions. Royal Skousen's work to recover the earliest (spoken) version of the text would then prove invaluable as a means to observe the original expression of the ideas, but it would be the 1840 revision of the

work that would provide the foundational text for analysis to determine authoritative readings. Understanding the nature of the text as being the product of Joseph Smith's "loose control" translation thereby provides a crucial and essential foundation for future explorations of the Book of Mormon.

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Julie Yuen Yim, *Suffer the Little Children to Come to Me III*,
2023, Chinese brush painting, 22" x 22"

ENOS ENCODED: NARRATIVE STRUCTURE IN THE SMALL PLATES

Ryan A. Davis

> *There shall be no other* name *given nor no other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the* name *of Christ the Lord Omnipotent.*
>
> *—Mosiah 3:17; emphasis added*[1]

If the Book of Mormon possesses, in the words of the late Elder Neal A. Maxwell, "divine architecture," then it follows that one task of theology ought to be to seek God in the structure of the book.[2] In this vein, Adam Miller argues that "theological readings aim to develop a text's latent images of Christ."[3] Given that the Book of Mormon is, whatever else it may be, a narrative, then those searching for God in it would do well to pay attention to the ways the text's narrative structure (i.e., its "divine architecture") develops "latent images of Christ." Miller gestures toward a methodology for divining Christ in texts when he writes that

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1. All citations from the Book of Mormon come from Royal Skousen, *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (Yale University Press, 2009). I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments, which have served to strengthen my argument. The essay is dedicated to my friend Ken Kohler, who has greatly enriched my appreciation for the Book of Mormon.

2. Neal Maxwell, "The Children of Christ" devotional, Brigham Young University, Feb. 4, 1990.

3. Adam S. Miller, "An Experiment on the Word: Reading Alma 32" (2014), 6, Maxwell Institute Publications 7, Brigham Young University Scholars Archive, https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/mi/7.

the power of theology "derives from its freedom to pose hypothetical questions: *if* such and such were the case, *then* what meaningful pattern would the text produce in response?"[4] In what follows I offer such a theological reading of the small plates of Nephi, paying particular attention to the book of *Enos*.[5]

My point of departure is the following hypothetical question: What image of Christ emerges if we take Jarom and Abinadom at their word? After receiving the small plates from Enos, Jarom asks, "What could I write more than my fathers have written?" (Jarom 1:2). Given that he does in fact write more, I take his question to be rhetorical, especially since he, too, received revelations and prophesied. Nevertheless, he declares that "the plan of salvation" recorded by his fathers "sufficeth me" (Jarom 1:2). Abinadom similarly states: "that which is sufficient is written" (Omni 1:11). Following Miller's approach, I assume that when Abinadom writes "that which is . . . written," he refers to the record of the small plates up through *Enos*. My task is therefore to flesh out the meaningful pattern that emerges from the small plates when we begin with this assumption.

Using the tools of narratological analysis, I will show how Enos's experience configures the narrative of the small plates in a way that highlights its underlying transformative ethos. The narrative desires not just that readers be convinced that Jesus is the Christ (see the Book of Mormon title page), but also that they be transformed by entering into a particular sort of relationship with Him. Enos models how to do this through his wrestle before God.

To aid the reader in following my argument, I offer an overview of the sections that follow. In the first section, I introduce key

4. Miller, "Experiment," 4.

5. To avoid confusion, I will refer to names of people in Roman text and books named after people in italics. Thus, Enos refers to the man, *Enos* to the book named after him. However, when citing scriptural sources, I will use Roman text: e.g., Enos 1:2.

narratological terms that inform my interpretation of the small plates. These terms help flesh out some of the narrative implications of the language used by Jarom and Abinadom. In this section I also briefly explain how the small plates make use of the hermeneutic and proairetic narrative codes, drawing on the work of literary theorist Roland Barthes. In the second and third sections, respectively, I develop a hermeneutic reading of the small plates (with an emphasis on the vision of Lehi in 1 Ne. 1, which gives the small plates a narrative beginning) and a proairetic reading of *Enos*. These two sections contain the meat of my argument. Whereas the hermeneutic reading is concerned with the enigmatic figure that Lehi sees in the opening chapter of the small plates, I will show how the text traces an emerging awareness among the Nephites that this figure is the promised Messiah, who is ultimately identified with Jesus. The proairetic reading will focus on Enos's wrestle, which is both (1) inspired by his father's preaching about the gathering of Israel and (2) framed as a ritualistic sacrifice. It is in the relationship between the hermeneutic and proairetic codes where the transformative ethos of the small plates is most clearly manifest. In the fourth section, I explore some of the implications of reading Enos's wrestle through a sacrificial lens before offering some concluding remarks.

Enos and the Small Plates: A Methodological Primer

To understand how Enos's experience configures the narrative of the small plates, it is important to lay out the narratological concepts that inform my analysis. The first is what narrative scholar Peter Brooks calls the sense of an ending and its role in creating narrative meaning: "The sense of a beginning . . . must in some important way be determined by the sense of an ending. We might say that we are able to read present moments—in literature and, by extension, in life—as endowed with narrative meaning only because we read them in anticipation of the structuring power of those endings that will retrospectively give

them the order and significance of plot."[6] Narrative meaning is a function of the relationship between the component parts of a narrative like its beginning and its ending. Endings specifically have structuring power; they link the parts of a narrative together in a way that allows meaning to emerge. Implicit in Jarom and Abinadom's language of sufficiency is the claim that *Enos* endows the small plates with the sense of an ending. As such, what happens in *Enos* retrospectively conditions how we understand the beginning of the small plates (even after having already read the beginning). In this way, *Enos* gives the narrative of the small plates the "order and significance of plot."

The second narratological concept, coherence, is related to the first. According to the literary scholar H. Porter Abbot, there is a long-standing assumption in the history of interpretation that narratives possess "some kind of deep coherence." Narratives are, in other words, "'whole' in the sense that everything in a narrative somehow *belongs* and contributes to its meaning."[7] Narrative meaning may be a function of the relationship between the different parts of a narrative, as Brooks explains, but it is also predicated on the assumption that these parts logically cohere. The assumption that the small plates constitute a coherent whole means that their beginning and end contribute to their meaning. Given that the small plates contain numerous books and authorial voices, the argument that they constitute a coherent whole is not immediately apparent. Sharon J. Harris has recently argued that *Enos* is a written instantiation of an oral text.[8] As an anonymous reader of my essay remarked, one implication of Harris's argument is that *Enos* could be viewed as a "freestanding" book, one that could be

6. Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 94.

7. H. Porter Abbott, The *Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 93.

8. "Enos as Every-body," in *A Wrestle Before God: Reading Enos 1*, edited by Adam Miller (Latter-day Saint Theology Seminar, 2024), 1–10.

read as narratively independent of the small plates. As intriguing as Harris's argument and its implications are, the reading I propose in this essay would be completely elided if we read *Enos* as separate from the small plates. Reading the small plates as a narrative whole thus allows us to see important insights that would otherwise be obscured.

The third narratological concept, closure, is also related to the first. Philosopher Noël Carroll has argued that "closure yields a feeling of completeness. When the storyteller closes her book, there is nothing left to say."[9] Whereas Brooks's point about endings is that they structure narratives and thus contribute to the production of narrative meaning, closure broaches the terrain of emotion. The feeling of completeness implies a sense of satisfaction that the storyteller has said what she wanted to say. Jarom and Abinadom's language, which is remarkably similar to Carroll's, suggests they are satisfied with the way *Enos* completes the small plates. Even though there is more text that comes after *Enos*, it is *Enos* that provides a sense of closure.

What is it about the closure in *Enos* that Jarom and Abinadom find so satisfying? Sharon J. Harris offers a clue when she points to the dictation order of the Book of Mormon: "Mormon may have organized the record [the Book of Mormon] so that these [*Enos*, *Jarom*, *Omni*] constituted its final message, the last statement that would eventually go to the remnant of the house of Israel."[10] The implication of the Book of Mormon's dictation order is clear for Harris: "In the small plates we find the deepest and richest expansion of the whole covenantal story."[11] I share Harris's sense of the importance of the small plates, especially as they relate to God's covenant with the house of Israel, though I believe *Enos* is unique among the "itty bitty" books in providing a sense of

9. Noël Carroll, "Narrative Closure," *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition* 135, no. 1 (2007): 2.

10. Sharon J. Harris, *Enos, Jarom, Omni: A Brief Theological Introduction* (Neal A. Maxwell Institute), 7.

11. Harris, *Enos*, 7.

narrative closure.[12] I will return to these issues below. For now, I want merely to draw attention to the narrative (and theological) significance implicit in the structure of the small plates.

The three narratological terms adduced above help explain the narrative implications of Jarom and Abinadom's language about the sufficiency of the small plates up through *Enos*. Specifically, they serve to justify treating the small plates as a single coherent narrative, one that can be read in meaningful ways, and they highlight the role of *Enos* in configuring the plates' narrative meaning. In this way, they lay the preliminary groundwork for my reading of the small plates.

When we turn to the text itself, what stands out is that the small plates open with Lehi's vision of an unidentified figure and close with Enos's repeated prayers, which he describes as a wrestle before God. The sense of a beginning in the small plates is thus marked by mystery and unanswered questions, and the sense of the plates' ending is marked by actions that succeed each other in rapid sequence. As Roland Barthes explains in his literary theory book *S/Z*, questions correspond to the hermeneutic code and actions to the proairetic code, both of which codes foment the reader's desire to know how the story will go.[13] I will address the role of each code in turn as it relates to the small plates. To illustrate the hermeneutic code, Barthes points to the title of Balzac's novella: "SARRASINE * The title raises a question: *What is Sarrasine*? A noun? A name? A thing? A man? A woman? This question will not be answered until much later, by the biography of the sculptor named Sarrasine. Let us designate as *hermeneutic code* (HER) all the [textual] units whose function it is to articulate in various ways a question, its response, and the variety of chance events which can either formulate

12. The "itty bitty" language comes from Harris, *Enos*, 2.

13. As Brooks states, "The desire of the text (the desire of reading) is hence desire for the end, but desire for the end reached only through at least minimally complicated detour, the intentional deviance, in tension, which is the plot of narrative." Brooks, *Reading for the Plot*, 52.

the question or delay its answer; or even, constitute an enigma and lead to its solution."[14] In the small plates, Nephi activates the hermeneutic code when he introduces his reader to a mysterious figure whom his father sees and whose identity is not immediately known: "One descending out of the midst of heaven" (1 Ne. 1:9). Whether intentionally or not, Nephi creates narrative suspense by withholding the identity of the unknown figure and thus induces the reader to keep reading.[15] The satisfaction of that desire comes as the reader learns over the course of the small plates that this figure is the Messiah, who is also the Holy One of Israel, who is, ultimately, Christ.[16] Nephi gestures toward this chain of identity when he writes of "that day . . . [when] they shall believe in Christ and worship the Father in his name . . . and *look not forward any more for another Messiah*" (2 Ne. 25:16; emphasis added).[17] In other words, the resolution of the enigma surrounding the mysterious figure that Lehi sees culminates with (the revelation of) Christ. By fomenting his readers' desire to keep reading through his use of the hermeneutic code, Nephi seeks from the outset of his record to narratively bring his readers to Christ.

There is more to the story, though, than the revelation of Christ's identity as the One Lehi sees in vision. The hermeneutic code in 1 Nephi may drive the reader toward Christ, but it does not constitute the ending that retroactively configures the meaning of *Christ.* This

14. Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, translated by Richard Miller (Hill and Wang, 1974), 17.

15. Given the fact that Nephi begins writing the small plates thirty years after arriving in the promised land, a case can be made that he intentionally withholds the identity of the figure his father sees.

16. The chain of identification includes myriad more names/titles. See Susan Ward Easton, "Names of Christ in the Book of Mormon," *Ensign*, July 1978, 60–61; and Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon* (Deseret Book, 2009).

17. If 2 Ne. 25:16 gives us Christ = Messiah, 2 Ne. 1:10 gives us Holy One of Israel = Messiah.

function belongs to the book of *Enos*. And, notably, *Enos* draws heavily on the proairetic code. Literary critic Dino Felluga offers a clear definition and example of the proairetic code: "The proairetic code applies to any action that implies a further narrative action. For example, a gunslinger draws his gun on an adversary and we wonder what the resolution of this action will be. We wait to see if he kills his opponent or is wounded himself. Suspense is thus created by action rather than by a reader's or a viewer's wish to have mysteries explained."[18] The clearest example of the proairetic code in *Enos* can be seen in what Benjamin Keogh calls Enos's "prayer cycles."[19] Although Enos himself frames his experience as a singular wrestle, the text clearly distinguishes four separate cycles that are repeated in quick succession and that involve an immediate resolution of an action (i.e., Enos receives an answer to his prayers even if the fulfillment of that answer lies in the future). Unlike the case of 1 Nephi, in which the identity of the figure that Lehi sees is only resolved after substantial textual delay, the reader is not kept waiting for the Lord's responses to Enos's prayers.

This repetition of resolution points up an important function of the proairetic code in *Enos*. Every time the Lord answers his prayer, Enos turns around and prays again. In a sense, they are bound up in a positive reward loop—the satisfaction of Enos's desire augments his desire, which leads to further satisfaction. But the process does not just augment desire, it redirects it.[20] After praying for himself, Enos then prays for the Nephites and finally again for the Lamanites. Like Lehi after he tastes the fruit of the tree, Enos, too, turns outward when the fruit of his labor (prayer) produces its own variety of sweet fruit.

18. Dino Felluga, "Modules on Barthes: On the Five Codes," *Introductory Guide to Critical Theory*, Jan. 31, 2011, Purdue University, accessed Apr. 25, 2024, http://www.purdue.edu/guidetotheory/narratology/modules/barthesplot.html.

19. Benjamin Keogh, "Re-Reading: Enos, God, and Conversation," in Miller, *A Wrestle Before God*, 97.

20. See Harris, *Enos,* 29–30.

Perhaps more important than augmenting Enos's desire, the process also changes him. As Enos himself recognizes, his "faith began to be unshaken in the Lord" (Enos 1:11). This change gets at what is perhaps the most important function of the proairetic code in *Enos*. Although the Book of Mormon's stated interest is convincing Jew and Gentile that "JESUS is the CHRIST" (see the title page)—an identification encouraged by Nephi's use of the hermeneutic code—Enos shows what it looks like to enter into a relationship with Christ. In this way, his wrestle serves to underscore the underlying transformative ethos of the small plates.

The Radical Novelty of "Christ": A Hermeneutic Proposition

When the Book of Mormon was first published to the world, much was made of its doctrinal congruence with the Bible.[21] On one point, however, it was decidedly incongruent; namely, that of its "pre-Christian knowledge of Christ," which Terryl L. Givens identifies as "one of the most radical and pervasive themes in the Book of Mormon."[22] The book's own authors, as Adam Miller has argued, were "extraordinarily self-conscious about their peculiar, anticipatory brand of pre-Christian Christianity."[23] Nephite Christianity makes its appearance early in the

21. See Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion* (Oxford University Press, 2002), 186.

22. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon*, 199. On the Book of Mormon as a Christological text, see Jay E. Jensen, "The Precise Purposes," in *By Study and by Faith: Selections from the Religious Educator*, edited by Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Kent P. Jackson (Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2009), 25–36; Robert L. Millet, "'The Most Correct Book': Joseph Smith's Appraisal," in *Living the Book of Mormon: Abiding by Its Precepts*, edited by Gaye Strathearn and Charles Swift (Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Deseret Book, 2007), 55–71.

23. Adam S. Miller, *An Early Resurrection: Life in Christ before You Die* (Deseret Book, 2018), 2.

text. As Givens has noted, there is a significant shift in language from a preference for "Messiah" in 1 Nephi to a preference for "Christ" in 2 Nephi.[24] The shift may seem like just a matter of semantics, given that the two terms mean the same thing ("anointed one" in Hebrew and Greek, respectively). However, whatever the concerns raised by the small plates' distinction between "Messiah" and "Christ"—both in terms of historical claims and translation theory—the fact of the matter remains that they treat "Christ" as a novel expansion of the Nephites' understanding of messianism.[25] For his part, Givens sees the shift in language as theologically resonant. More than mere rhetoric, he argues, it underscores the Book of Mormon's radical reconfiguration of covenant theology.[26] Indeed, the revelation of "Christ" substantially

24. See Teryl L. Givens, *2nd Nephi: A Brief Theological Introduction* (Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2020), 26–27. This linguistic shift is actually more extensive than Givens states. Of the more than forty references in the Book of Mormon to the "Holy One," only four appear outside of the small plates, and of these four, only one registers the fuller expression "Holy One of Israel," namely, when Jesus quotes Isaiah in 3 Nephi 22:5. (The other three occur at Alma 5:52, Helaman 12:12, and Mormon 9:14.) By way of comparison, "Holy One of Israel" occurs over thirty times in the Old Testament and not a single time in the New Testament. Of the seventy some references to the "Lamb" or "Lamb of God," only nine occur after Omni. Skousen prefers "Lamb" instead of "Lord" at 1 Nephi 13:24. He also counts an additional reference to "the Lamb" at 1 Nephi 13:34. See Skousen, *Book of Mormon*, 749. The only two references to "Messiah" outside the small plates are in Mosiah 13:33 and Helaman 8:13.

25. In a sense, "Christ" in the small plates functions more like a proper noun than a title. When Nephi and Jacob use it, they are always referring to a specific individual. It was only after I began this essay that I became aware of James Faulconer's interview with the Neal L. Maxwell Institute, in which he makes the same point about the novelty of Christ as the Messiah in the Book of Mormon. See Blair Hodges, interview with James E. Faulconer, Neal L. Maxwell Institute, MIPodcast 106, Apr. 17, 2020, https://mi.byu.edu/mip-bti-faulconer/.

26. See Givens, *2nd Nephi*, 19–27.

reconfigures Nephite messianism, reorienting both the Nephites' religious orthodoxy and orthopraxy.[27]

As revolutionary as Nephite messianism may be, it does not appear tout à coup in the Book of Mormon.[28] Rather, Nephi presents it as an emergent phenomenon, showing how an Israelite family from circa 600 BC came to link "the covenants of the Lord" to a figure, Christ, who, at least by this name, was not necessarily familiar to them.[29] Nephi does this by making use of the hermeneutic code. In the opening chapter of the Book of Mormon, he describes Lehi's vision of "One descending out of the midst of heaven" (1 Nephi 1:9). Although subsequent textual clues will link this figure to Jesus, and despite the tendency of many a modern reader probably to do so from the outset, strictly speaking, the text is rather vague at this point.[30] Nephi underscores this sense of vagueness with an indefinite article a few verses later to describe Lehi's learning about "the coming of *a* Messiah" (1 Nephi 1:19; emphasis added). Reading the indefinite article against the grain of emergent Nephite messianism, Joseph M. Spencer offers a fascinating analysis of Nephi's

27. For example, the Nephites continued to live the Law of Moses even as they taught their children "the deadness of the law" in order that their children "may look forward unto that life which is in Christ"? (2 Nephi 25:27).

28. Joseph M. Spencer, *The Anatomy of Book of Mormon Theology* (Greg Kofford Books, 2021), 58.

29. The phrase "covenants of the Lord" comes from the Book of Mormon title page. I will use the term *Nephite messianism* in this essay to refer to the Nephites' brand of messianism that identifies Christ as *the* Messiah.

30. The fact that a modern reader steeped in Christian codes would associate the figure with Jesus from the outset does not necessarily undermine the sense of suspense created by the hermeneutic code. The hermeneutic code is part of the structure of the small plates that exists independently of readerly assumptions. People reread familiar stories all the time, even when they know how the stories end. Consider mystery novels, the paradigmatic example of the hermeneutic code. The enduring popularity of a work like Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express* suggests that knowledge of how a story ends does not diminish readerly interest in it.

report of Lehi's messianic prophesies in the context of Jerusalem at the time of Josiah. Notably, Spencer grounds his interpretation on Lehi's audience. Had Lehi's audience "been universally aware of a strong prophetic tradition focused on the then still-future coming of Jesus Christ," writes Spencer, "it would have made sense for the narrative to report on Lehi's prophesies regarding '*the* Messiah.'"[31]

Where Spencer reads the indefinite article in the context of seventh and sixth century BC Jerusalem, I read it in the context of the narrative of the small plates. From a strictly textual perspective, it is not necessary to determine whether Lehi means Jesus Christ when he prophesies of a messiah. Indeed, in 2 Ne. 11:2–3, Nephi excludes his father from the list of those who had seen the "Redeemer" (who is implicitly linked to Christ later in the chapter). Whether or not Lehi has in mind *the* Messiah, Nephi clearly *is* invested in resolving the textual ambiguity in this direction, though he also postpones the resolution of the question. When he first reports his father's vision of "One descending out of the midst of heaven" (1 Ne. 1:9), his reader finds herself in the position of Barthes from the Sarrasine example above: full of questions. Who is this One? Given that he descends from heaven, is he the God sitting upon his heavenly throne from the previous verse? Subsequent verses only serve to proliferate questions: Who are the twelve that Lehi sees? Are they Jesus's twelve apostles? What is the book Lehi is bid to read? Who is the unnamed messiah in the book? Is it the One who gives him the book? Notably, Nephi does not initially provide any answers to these questions. In fact, he even intentionally withholds information: "I, Nephi, do not make a full account of the things which my father hath written" (1 Ne. 1:16). On balance, 1 Nephi is full of questions that Nephi implicitly poses but does not answer. Narratively, these unanswered questions create suspense and compel the reader to keep reading.

31. Spencer, *Anatomy*, 59.

In 1 Ne. 10:4, however, Nephi begins to satisfy his reader's desire for answers. He writes, "Six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem—*a* prophet would the Lord God raise up among the Jews, yea, even *a* Messiah, *or in other words*, *a* Savior of the world" (emphasis added). Again, the repetition of indefinite articles emphasizes the nonspecificity of the figure in question. However, Nephi immediately includes the parenthetical expression "or in other words," indicating that he recognizes that the link between *Messiah* and *Savior* was not obvious, and that he needed to clarify the unorthodox, or at least unfamiliar, idea.[32] Similarly, in verses 5 and 6 he adopts demonstrative adjectives rather than definite articles to make the same rhetorical point: "*this* Messiah," "*this* Redeemer," "*this* Redeemer." Not until he uses a definite article in verse 7—"*the* Messiah"—does he linguistically normalize for his readers the titles/roles of the Jewish prophet his father had seen. In this way, Nephi's development of Nephite messianism is reflected in his manipulation of the hermeneutic code.

The complete satisfaction of readerly desire does not come from Nephi but Jacob, who, like his brother, uses language that points to the Nephites' emerging awareness of Christ as central to their understanding of messianism. In his first recorded discourse to the people, Jacob interrupts his message about Christ's mission with a parenthetical explanation about His name: "Wherefore, as I said unto you, it must needs be expedient that Christ—for in the last night the angel spake unto me that this should be his name—that he should come among the Jews, among they which are the more wicked part of the world. And

32. The small plates contain other similar gestures of rhetorical clarification. In 1 Nephi 11:33, the angel shows Nephi the "apostles of the Lamb." Nephi then adds the phrase "for thus were the twelve called by the angel of the Lord," as though such knowledge were unfamiliar. Likewise, Lehi learns about multiple key doctrines, including the scattering of Israel and the fall of Lucifer, only after reading the brass plates. His expressions "for it appears" in 1 Ne. 22:3 and "I . . . must needs suppose" in 2 Nephi 2:17 both suggest the information he is learning is new to him and his family.

they shall crucify him—for thus it behooveth our God—and there is none other nation on earth that would crucify their God" (2 Ne. 10:3). I have already addressed how the small plates use the term "Christ" as something other than a title comparable to "Messiah." What interests me here is what Jacob's language suggests about who knew what when. His audience is apparently hearing the name Christ for the first time, else why explain what "Christ" means if they already know? Jacob, too, however, indicates that he had only learned Christ's name the previous night. Although an angel had revealed the name Jesus Christ previously to Nephi (in 1 Ne. 12:18, 1830 ed.), according to Royal Skousen, Nephi never shares it with Jacob.[33] Had Jacob learned the name previously from his brother, or from reading the plates, why mention the angel but not these sources? In short, the language of the small plates underscores my view that Nephite messianism, including especially the central position of (Jesus) Christ therein, is an emergent phenomenon.

The hermeneutic code is not the only element of Nephi's narrative that emphasizes the emergent nature of the Nephites' Christ-centric messianism. The structure of the narrative itself accomplishes the same task. As the reader follows the story of the Book of Mormon's original family, she accompanies them virtually on their journey toward their awakening to Christ.[34] By doing so, she experiences her own sort of

33. Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon*, vol. 4, part 1 (Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2004), 258–59. It should be noted that the reference to "Jesus Christ" at 1 Ne.12:18 in the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon is replaced by "the Messiah" in the 1837 edition. The current edition used by the LDS Church retains the same language as the 1837 edition.

34. To be sure, within the narrative structure, each character makes his own unique contribution. Thus, Lehi emphasizes the redemptive role of a Messiah, Jacob learns the Redeemer's name is "Christ," and Nephi ends his record with the small plates' most elaborate articulation of "the doctrine of Christ" (see 2 Nephi 31). My point is that the reader is present for each of the contributions and sees them as part of a single unveiling story.

vicarious awakening to Christ.[35] Nephi encourages this attitude of narrative identification by adopting the technique of *mise-en-abyme*.[36] In 1 Ne. 1 he begins a record about a Messiah and His redemptive role vis-à-vis the House of Israel with an account of a patriarch from the House of Israel reading a book about "the coming of a Messiah and also the redemption of the world" (1 Ne. 1:19). Lehi and the reader thus come to learn that Christ is the Messiah through their respective and related reading experiences—Lehi by reading the book given him by one of the twelve (1 Ne. 1:11) and the reader by reading the story of Lehi (i.e., the small plates). The Book of Mormon is, as they say, meta.

Undergirding the narrative structure of the small plates is a geographic logic that contributes to the emergence of Nephite messianism. The farther the Lehites (and later the Nephites) travel from the Holy Land, the clearer and more developed their understanding of Christ becomes. Consider the following progression. While still in Jerusalem, Lehi sees a vision of an oblique "One descending out of the midst of heaven" and learns about "the coming of a Messiah" (1 Ne. 1:9, 19). Then, while wandering *away* from Jerusalem in the wilderness, he learns that this Messiah will be "a Savior of the world" (1 Ne. 10:4). This Messiah is further linked to the Lamb of God, and by the end of

35. In narratological terms, Nephi avails himself of two key operations described by Paul Ricoeur: emplotment and configuration. Ricoeur defines emplotment as "a synthesis of heterogeneous elements . . . , the events or incidents which are multiple and the story which is unified and complete" (21). In the small plates, the revelation of "Christ" is the synthesizing element around which Nephi and the other authors construct their narrative. In this sense, if we look closely at their narrative decisions, we see that they point to this central element of emplotment. As for the reader's vicarious reawakening to Christ, consider the following remark by Ricoeur: "Following a narrative is reactualizing the configuring act which gives it its form" (27). Paul Ricoeur, "Life in Quest of Narrative," in *On Paul Ricoeur: Narrative and Interpretation*, edited by David Wood (Routledge, 1991), 20–33.

36. On identification, see Rita Felski, *Uses of Literature* (Blackwell, 2008), 23–50.

his life, Lehi appears to have a fuller and more established understanding of this "Holy One of Israel, the true Messiah, their Redeemer and their God," though he never explicitly connects this figure to "Christ" (2 Ne. 1:10). Only after the family is settled (initially, albeit temporarily) in the New World does Jacob reveal the name of "Christ" to the people. This revelation is followed by yet further wandering in the wilderness until the Nephites settle down in the Land of Nephi (a *new* new Promised Land?). Only at this point, with the Nephites at their furthest remove from their home Holy Land, does Nephi pen the small plates' most extensive excursus on the doctrine of Christ in 2 Ne. 31. As Spencer has observed, "only in a radically new setting could a pre-Christian Christianity get off the ground."[37] Indeed, Nephi seems to argue that with a new promised land comes a new covenant.[38] Perhaps not surprisingly then, he draws heavily on the Exodus pattern in the construction of his narrative, as George S. Tate has shown.[39] In doing so, Nephi weaves together the Old World covenant of the Bible and the New World covenant of the Book of Mormon into a common tapestry of God's salvific work.[40] This weaving together of the two covenants

37. Spencer, *Anatomy* 63. Spencer further argues that the Israelite's failure to understand Lehi's "Christian messianism" may be what forced Lehi and his family to flee their homeland in the first place (63).

38. This new covenant does not replace the old one so much as it subsumes it. See chapter 2 of Givens, *2nd Nephi*.

39. George S. Tate, "The Typology of the Exodus Pattern in the Book of Mormon," in *Literature of Belief: Sacred Scripture and Religious Experience*, edited by Neal E. Lambert (Religious Studies Center Brigham Young University, 1981), 245–262. Another example is the way Lehi draws on Moses' final address in Deuteronomy for his own final words to his family. See Noel B. Reynolds, "Lehi as Moses," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9, no. 2 (2000): 26–35.

40. In Tate's words, "[the Book of Mormon's] typology is more conscious because the narrators are understood to possess the Christological key to the fulfillment of the types." Tate, "Typology," 257.

appears with exceptional potency in the account of Enos, to which I now turn.

Wrestling Before God: A Proairetic Transformation

At first glance, there are obvious similarities between the way Nephi opens 1 Nephi and the way Enos begins his account. As Harris has observed, both are hunters, both begin their writings with first-person pronouns, and both mention the influence of their parents.[41] (In his case, Enos only mentions his father.) If we accept that Enos draws on these similarities intentionally, then a fundamental difference between his and Nephi's writing styles becomes more significant. Nephi avails himself of the hermeneutic code, implicitly posing numerous questions that he does not immediately answer, as a way of driving the narrative. For his part, Enos favors the proairetic code. He drives the narrative by recounting the various actions he undertakes, including four consecutive prayers that all receive an answer in short order. Whereas Nephi's narrative choices are aimed at identifying the Messiah, Enos's emphasize his wrestle before God, an experience that will transform his relationship not just with God but also with his brethren (Nephites and Lamanites).

Scholars have emphasized the importance of Enos's experience in different ways. Elizabeth Brocious and Benjamin Keogh, for example, both emphasize the formulaic nature of Enos's prayers. Brocious sees Enos's conversion narrative as a unique take on the idea of *ordo salutis*—the logical sequence of steps in salvation—from Christian (specifically Reformed) theology.[42] In addition to Enos's, the Book of Mormon collects other formulaic conversion narratives and in this sense functions

41. Harris, *Enos*, 22.

42. Elizabeth Brocious, "Elements of Salvation: The Pattern of Conversion in Enos and Other Book of Mormon Narratives," in Miller, *Wrestle Before God*, 53–76.

as "a sort of *salutis* history."[43] Keogh argues that Enos's "prayer cycles" reflect a chiastically structured, ongoing conversation with God. As Enos accepts God's invitation to keep the conversation going, not only does he draw closer to God, but he also enters into a covenant with God that reorders his relationship to God.[44] For her part, Harris emphasizes the covenantal resonance of *Enos,* specifically the covenant involving the House of Israel, even going so far as to note the "temple-like overtones" of Enos's experience.[45]

Like Brocious and Keogh, I believe the formulaic nature of *Enos* matters, though I would draw attention to the way it highlights the proairetic code. Enos's actions—which include soul-hungering (v. 4), crying in mighty prayer (v. 4), raising his voice to the heavens (v. 4), pouring out his whole soul (v. 9), and praying "with many long strugglings" (Enos 1:11)—reveal not only the intensity of his desire, but the manifestation of that intensity in deed. At the same time, the reader also finds her (narrative) desire aroused and then satisfied as each of Enos's actions creates suspense—Will God answer? What will He say?—that is then immediately resolved. There is satisfaction in knowing both *that* God answers Enos's prayers and *how* He answers them. In this way, the proairetic code in *Enos* drives the narrative by satisfying the reader's desire to know what happens next, in contrast to the hermeneutic code in Nephi's writing, which ties desire to knowledge, not action.

As with Jarom and Abinadom, the reader's narrative satisfaction is bound up with the theological implications of Enos's experience. To understand what is at issue in Enos's wrestle, I will contrast my view with what we might call the common view sometimes found in scholarly commentary and, at least in my experience, Sunday school classes. The common view tends to make two assumptions: (1) Enos's wrestle

43. Brocious, "Elements of Salvation" 76.

44. Keogh, "Re-Reading."

45. Harris, *Enos*, 25.

is a metaphor for prayer, and (2) his prayer is part of the repentance process.[46] We can render this view as an analogy: Wrestle : remission of sins :: Prayer : forgiveness of sins. The analogy makes sense in light of Enos 1:2, 4–5. Unfortunately, this view has led some—perhaps in an effort to make Enos's experience relevant to modern readers (see 1 Ne. 19:23)—to smuggle in certain assumptions, arguing backward from Enos's remission of sins to his presumed motivation for praying in the first place. For instance, Bruce Satterfield precedes his quotation of Enos 1:2 with the following assertion: "Once Enos recognized his fallen spiritual condition, he began to repent."[47] This phraseology posits Enos's decision to repent as conditional upon the prior recognition of his fallen condition. However, Enos does not frame the matter this way. Notice the chain of correlation suggested by the repetition of the conjunction "and": "I went to hunt beasts in the forest, *and* I remembered the words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life and the joy of the saints; *and* the words of my father sunk deep into my heart, *and* my soul hungered, *and* I kneeled down before my Maker, *and* I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul" (Enos 1:3–4; emphasis added). Enos kneels to pray not ostensibly because of the perceived gap between him and God—a gap opened

46. See Dennis L. Largey, "Enos: His Mission and His Message," in *The Book of Mormon: Jacob through Words of Mormon, To Learn with Joy*, edited by Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1990), 141–156, https://rsc.byu.edu/book-mormon-jacob-through-words-mormon-learn-joy/enos-his-mission-his-message. Emphasis in the original. On this view, the image of wrestling points up the nature or extent of Enos's exertion.

47. Bruce Satterfield, "The Paradigm of Enos," available on the Internet Archive Wayback Machine, accessed Apr. 4, 2025, https://web.archive.org/web/20210413104516/https://emp.byui.edu/SATTERFIELDB/Papers/Paradigm%20of%20Enos.htm.

up by his sinfulness—but in response to his father's message that sunk deep into his heart.[48]

What, then, did Jacob say that so impacted Enos, and how do his words affect our understanding of Enos's wrestle? The key phrase from Enos 1:3 is "joy of the saints." Harris finds echoes of these words in Psalm 132 and links Enos's wrestle to the Abrahamic covenant. Specifically, she understands Enos's wrestle as a ritualistic sacrifice in which he offers his soul to God through his broken heart and contrite spirit.[49] I share Harris's view of the importance of the covenant as well as her understanding of Enos's wrestle as an offering. However, in place of Psalm 132, I propose 2 Nephi 9:18, which references both the saints and their joy, as the source for Jacob's words: "But behold, the righteous, the *saints* of the Holy One of Israel, they which have believed in the Holy One of Israel, they which have endured the crosses of the world and despised the shame of it, they shall inherit the kingdom of God, which was prepared for them from the foundation of the world; and their *joy* shall be full forever" (emphasis added).[50] The broader context of Jacob's remarks (a two-day discourse spanning 2 Ne. 6–10) comes from Jacob's gloss of Isaiah and relates to the Abrahamic covenant and Christ's role in it. Before reading *Isaiah* directly to the people, Jacob is at pains to

48. Keogh offers a middle ground approach when he observes that Enos "is an inheritor of the common [i.e., fallen] human condition." Keogh, "Re-Reading," 99.

49. See Harris, *Enos*, 26–29.

50. In this same discourse, Jacob makes numerous references to joy/gladness/happiness (2 Ne. 8:3, 11; 9:3, 14, 43, 51, 52) and saints (2 Ne. 9:19, 43). David R. Seely also identifies 2 Nephi 9:18 as the source text for Enos 1:3, but he seems content to highlight Jacob's definition of a saint and his association of the joy of the saints with eternal life. He does not take up the broader context of Jacob's words. See David R. Seely, "Enos and the Words Concerning Eternal Life," in Nyman and Tate, *Book of Mormon*, 221–233, https://rsc.byu.edu/book-mormon-jacob-through-words-mormon-learn-joy/enos-words-concerning-eternal-life.

remind them that they are a remnant of the House of Israel (2 Ne. 6:5). He seems to be saying, "pay attention, this pertains to you."[51] Then after reading *Isaiah,* the first point he makes has to do with God's covenant relationship with the House of Israel: "I have read these things that ye might know concerning the covenants of the Lord, that he hath covenanted with all the house of Israel" (2 Ne. 9:1). In other words, Jacob specifically addresses the scattering and gathering of Israel and the role to be played therein by the Holy One of Israel, whom we know from our analysis of the hermeneutic code to be Jesus Christ.

Jacob's message about the joy of the saints is thus sandwiched between references to covenants and the House of Israel (2 Ne. 9:1, 53), while everything in between relates to the saving power of Jesus' atonement. In this way, Jacob orders his remarks to highlight the Atonement as the lynchpin that binds the House of Israel to God through covenants. Verses 41, 42, 45, 50, and 51 all contain injunctions, which culminate with the injunction to "come unto the Holy One of Israel" (i.e., Jesus Christ; v. 51). The theologian Howard Thurman once wistfully declared: "How different might have been the story of the last two thousand years on this planet grown old from suffering if the link between Jesus and Israel had never been severed!"[52] Anticipating Thurman's sentiment by some 2,500 years, Jacob rhetorically links the doctrine of the gathering of scattered Israel to the figure of Jesus Christ. And this, I maintain, is the theological context in which Jacob's message about the joy of the saints sinks deep into Enos's heart and drives him into the forests where he wrestles before God.

In his description of his wrestle, Enos laces his narrative with references to the Old World, not unlike the way Nephi does in the opening account of his father's vision. As Matthew L. Bowen notes, there are

51. On Jacob's gloss of Isaiah, see lecture 12 of Joseph M. Spencer, *The Vision of All: Twenty-five Lectures on Isaiah in Nephi's Record* (Greg Kofford Books, 2016).

52. Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Bacon Press, 1976), 16.

"several instances in which Enos utilizes wordplay on his own name, the name of his father 'Jacob,' the place name 'Peniel,' and Jacob's new name 'Israel' in order to connect his experiences to those of his ancestor Jacob in Genesis 32–33."[53] Similarly, as John Tvedtnes and Matthew Roper note, the expression *before God* in *Enos* 1:2 would be rendered as "*liphney 'el*, literally 'to the face of God,'" which recalls Peniel, the place where the Old Testament Jacob wrestled.[54]

In one important respect, however, Enos's language differs from that of the Bible (as well as that of the Book of Mormon in the only other verse that mentions wrestling). Whereas Genesis 32:24 and Alma 8:10 both refer to a wrestle *with* someone, Enos states that he wrestles *before* God.[55] Thus, as significant as the connections are between Enos and the biblical Jacob, I propose that Enos's wrestle be read according to a different biblical dynamic; namely, that of sacrifice. Such a reading is justified by Amaleki's expansion of Enos's own language. In verse 9, Enos "pour[s] out [his] whole soul unto God" (Enos 1:9). Later, Amaleki evokes these words but makes a significant emendation: "come unto Christ . . . and *offer* your whole souls *as an offering* unto him" (Omni 1:26; emphasis added). In Amaleki's reframing of Enos's experience, *pour out* becomes *offer . . . as an offering*. Indeed, the repetition of the verb *offer* only serves to reiterate the sacrificial frame through which Amaleki's words allow us to read Enos's wrestle.[56]

Christians in the Book of Mormon operate under two different, if complementary, sacrificial logics. They keep the Law of Moses

53. Bowen, "And There Wrestled a Man," 152.

54. John A. Tvedtnes and Matthew Roper, "Jacob and Enos: Wrestling before God," *Insights: A Window on the Ancient World* 21, no. 5 (2001): 2.

55. Similarly, he refers to his "struggling *in* the spirit" and his "strugglings *for*" the Lamanites, but never to a struggle *with* someone (Enos 1:10, 11; emphasis added).

56. In her provocative analysis, Harris frames Enos's soul offering as an example of kenosis. See Harris, *Enos*, 27–30.

(2 Ne. 5:10; 2 Ne. 11:4; 2 Ne. 25:24) even as it points them toward Christ, who required the sacrifice of a "broken heart and a contrite spirit" (2 Ne. 2:7).[57] Although the Book of Mormon does not offer many details about what the Law of Moses looked like among the Nephites, it seems safe to assume it probably included something resembling the five types of offerings described in the Old Testament.[58] In *On Sacrifice,* Moshe Halbertal distinguishes between a gift and an offering in the context of biblical sacrifice.[59] Unlike a gift, which is exchanged between equals, and which establishes an obligation for reciprocation, an offering occurs within a hierarchal structure. Offerings from an inferior (human) to a superior (God) are always marked by the term *minchah,* "something that is brought forward or *laid before.*"[60] I submit that in wrestling *before* God, Enos effectively gives to God his "own soul" as an offering (*minchah*; Enos 1:4).

Redeeming Relationships

At issue in the sacrificial (re)framing of Enos's wrestle is a different understanding of Enos's relationship with God. Indeed, Enos's experience dramatizes the transition from the Old World model of sacrifice, grounded in the Law of Moses, to the New World model grounded in Christ. According to Halbertal, offerings that occur outside the confines of the Law of Moses carry with them the possibility of rejection and

57. In this sense, Christ reiterates the new sacrifice in 3 Ne. 9:20, he does not introduce it.

58. On the Nephite Law of Moses, see Clark Goble, "What Was the Nephite Law of Moses?," *Times and Seasons*, July 29, 2016. The five offerings are the burnt offering, peace offering, cereal or meat offering, sin offering, and guilt offering. See Sylvain Romerowski, "Old Testament Sacrifices and Reconciliation," *European Journal of Theology* 16, no. 1 (2006): 13–24.

59. Moshe Halbertal, *On Sacrifice* (Princeton University Press, 2012).

60. Halbertal, *On Sacrifice*, 10 (emphasis added).

trauma.[61] It will be remembered that Enos may not have been ordained as a priest, and he therefore would not necessarily have possessed the authority to offer sacrifices.[62] To illustrate the danger inherent in unauthorized offerings, Halbertal points to the examples of Cain, Aaron's sons Nadav and Avihu, and Job. As Job recognized, to attract God's notice was risky business.[63] Halbertal refers to the "horror of visibility" behind Job's desire for anonymity (see Job 7:12–17).[64] Better to go unnoticed than risk rejection.

Like the Old Testament examples cited by Halbertal, Enos's experience is also marked by a degree of vulnerability.[65] That the Lord accepted his offering thus calls for careful consideration. The fact that his sacrifice and its outcome differ from the fatal sacrifice of Nadav and Avihu or the rejection of Cain suggests the broken heart and contrite spirit—mentioned in 2 Ne. 2:7 and 4:32, though not explicitly referred to as a sacrifice until Jesus does so in 3 Ne. 9:20—is a different sort of ritual. To read Enos's soul offering in light of this new Christian ritual has three important implications.

The first relates to Enos's alleged solipsism. By word count alone, *Enos* is an extraordinarily egocentric text. Consider just verse 27, which contains five first-person singular personal pronouns, three possessive adjectives, and two second-person personal pronouns, which all orbit around the gravitational center of rhetoric that is Enos. The ostensible

61. Halbertal, *On Sacrifice*, 15–18.

62. Unlike with Jacob and Joseph, there is no indication that Enos was ordained. See John Tanner, "Jacob and His Descendants as Authors," in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, edited by John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Deseret Book; Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1991), 56.

63. See Job 10:11, 16–17. In the Book of Mormon, see also 2 Ne. 9:44 and Jacob 2:10.

64. Halbertal, *On Sacrifice*, 16.

65. Fatimah Salleh, *The Book of Mormon for the Least of These* (By Common Consent Press, 2020), 134.

self-centeredness of the text has not gone unnoticed by commentators. Harris, for example, wonders whether Enos does not suffer from a bit of a savior complex.[66] Whatever Enos's failings on this front, the interpretive frame of Christian sacrifice allows for an alternative, perhaps more charitable, reading.

Take the aforementioned risk of rejection inherent in sacrifice. As Halbertal has argued, approaching God was something of a doubled edged sword: "The one who is offering a sacrifice wishes to appear before God, to be made visible. . . . And yet being in the spotlight before power can be terrifying."[67] That risk gave rise to a unique function of ritual; ritual became "a protocol that protects from the risk of rejection."[68] The cost of such protection, however, was that it "erase[d] the individuation of the one who [was] approaching."[69] As the example of Enos shows, in contrast to the loss of individuation embedded in the sacrificial logic of the Law of Moses, the Christian ritual of a broken heart and contrite spirit affirms rather than elides the individual. Christ invites all to come unto him, not as some indistinguishable part of a larger group, but each as an irreducibly unique child of God. As with Enos, one must expose one's whole soul to the "piercing eye of the Almighty God" (Jacob 2:10), but doing so prepares one to hear the Lord declare "*thy* sins are forgiven *thee*, and *thou* shalt be blessed" (Enos 1:5; emphasis added).

The second implication concerns love. For Halbertal, "love is a noninstrumental relationship outside . . . the sphere of exchange."[70] Given that God can always reciprocate a gift with a greater gift, how can man make a genuine sacrifice, one that is an expression of love rather than an effort merely to obtain something else from God? How,

66. Harris, *Enos,* 47.

67. Halbertal, *On Sacrifice*, 15.

68. Halbertal, *On Sacrifice*, 15.

69. Halbertal, *On Sacrifice*, 16.

70. Halbertal, *On Sacrifice*, 22.

in other words, do we escape the logic of the gift cycle and enter into a relationship with God that is not governed by exchange? Drawing on the story of Abraham, Halbertal writes, "The urge to bestow is essential to love, but the loving partner wants that bestowing to be *part* of the relationship and not the *reason* for it."[71] God desires a relationship with us in which bestowing takes place, but He does not want us to enter into a relationship with him *because* he gives us something. As King Benjamin teaches his people, we are perpetually "unprofitable servants" in the realm of exchange anyway (Mosiah 2:21).

God's "horrifying request" to Abraham arose in response to the "anxiety of instrumentality" that haunts the gift cycle.[72] Only a sacrifice as significant as one's child (or oneself, according to Halbertal) could break out of the gift cycle and be considered an expression of love. Thus, John writes; "God so *loved* the world, that he *gave* his only begotten Son" (John 3:16; emphasis added). The gift of His son is an expression of God's love. Through the Son, He desires that we enter into a relationship with Him, one that is marked by love, not the "anxiety of instrumentality." Entering into this type of relationship, I maintain, is precisely what Enos exemplifies in his wrestle before God. Updating this dynamic for our times, the late Elder Maxwell reminded us that "the only uniquely personal thing we have to place on God's altar" is our will.[73] Everything else already belongs to Him. Thankfully, in God's divine calculus, the offering of our will is sufficient. Thus, Elder Maxwell sounds this hopeful note: "Consecration thus constitutes the only unconditional surrender which is also a total victory!"[74]

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71. Halbertal, *On Sacrifice*, 24 (emphasis in the original).

72. Halbertal, *On Sacrifice*, 24.

73. Neal A. Maxwell, "Swallowed Up in the Will of the Father," Oct. 1995, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1995/10/swallowed-up-in-the-will-of-the-father?lang=eng&abVersion=V01&abName=GLOB88.

74. Maxwell, "Swallowed Up."

The third implication of understanding Enos's wrestle as a Christian sacrifice is that the relationship between God's love and sacrifice helps to clarify Enos's remission of sins. If Enos does not set out to receive a remission of sins, why does he receive it? And why does he experience guilt? The common reading of Enos assumes he must have committed some grave sin.[75] I posit a different explanation. Sylvain Romerowski has argued that the ritualistic protocols associated with Old Testament sacrifices reinforced "a sense of perpetual guilt, of guilt and unworthiness never really dealt with."[76] Does Enos 1:6 reflect the logic of guilt inherent in Old Testament sacrifices rather than Enos's remorse for some specific infraction he had committed?[77] If this is the case, it is significant that in asking the Lord, "how is it done?" (Enos 1:7), the Lord points him immediately to his "faith in Christ" (v. 8). Only Christ's infinite and eternal sacrifice (Alma 34:10) can overcome the guilt logic of Old Testament sacrifices, or what Mark Wrathall refers to more broadly as "the entire economic model of justice."[78] What Enos learns, and what Alma and Amulek will later develop, is the doctrine that Christ's atonement has less to do with the payment of debts than it does with the healing of relationships.[79] In other words, Christ satisfies the demands of justice and opens up to Enos the means of redemptive mercy.[80] This is what Keogh means when he says that "covenant

75. President Kimball, for example, wrote: "Like all of us—for none of us is perfect—he [i.e., Enos] had strayed. How dark were his sins I do not know." Qtd. in Satterfield, "Paradigm of Enos."

76. Romerowski, "Old Testament Sacrifices," 21.

77. Incidentally, the presence of guilt may explain why Amaleki interprets Enos's experience the way he does.

78. Mark A. Wrathall, *Alma 30–63: A Brief Theological Introduction* (Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Brigham Young University, 2020), 82.

79. The language of debts versus healing comes from Wrathall, *Alma 30–63*, 82.

80. See Mosiah 15:9 and Alma 34:14–16.

expresses a relational relocation."[81] In finding himself thus reoriented to God, Enos really has found "a more excellent way—and all it requires is participation."[82]

Enos's remission of sins thus points us beyond the transactional nature of the economic model of justice. What is more, Enos 1:5 is not the only verse in Restoration scripture that treats the remission of sins in this way. In D&C 110:5, the Lord remits Joseph Smith's and Oliver Cowdery's sins as preface to their visions in the Kirtland temple, including their vision of the Savior. Similarly, in D&C 29:3, Joseph and six elders have their sins remitted before they "receive these things." In none of these cases do the people involved approach the Lord specifically in search of a remission of sins the way, for example, Joseph did on other occasions.[83] And yet in each case the remission of sins precedes some significant occurrence. In D&C 110:5, it is accompanied by the Lord's declaration, "you are clean before me." In section 29, the Lord declares, "I am in your midst" (D&C 29:5). In these verses, the remission of sins operates as a preparatory or initiatory act for entering into a more intimate relationship with God, a sort of ritualistic cleansing that precedes greater proximity to God.[84] In this sense, Enos's experience resonates with the sacrificial purpose of both the Old-World tabernacle and the temples of the Restoration period.[85]

Viewing Enos's wrestle before the Lord through the lens of sacrifice allows us to see the connection between redemption and relationships.

81. Keogh, "Re-Reading," 105.

82. Keogh, "Re-Reading," 105.

83. See Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 1:29; and Joseph's 1832 account of the First Vision.

84. There is no reason to see this understanding of the remission of sins as incompatible with the understanding in the common view of Enos, which attributes to him some specific, if unnamed, sin. Both things can be true.

85. In addressing the "temple-like overtones" of Enos's experience, Harris relates Enos 1:3 to both Psalm 132:12 and D&C 109:80. See Harris, *Enos*, 25.

By offering his soul, Enos opens himself to redemption, which is marked by the ritualistic remission of his sins, and in this way, he enters into a new relationship with God. What is more, the moment he does so, his attention then turns outward to his own people, the Nephites, and then to his brethren the Lamanites, despite his "deeply adversarial relationship" with them.[86] As the prophet Joseph once said, "A man filled with the love of God is not content with blessing his family alone, but ranges through the whole world, anxious to bless the whole human race."[87]

Conclusion

The small plates are a narratively complex record. For a variety of reasons (e.g., the multiplicity of authorial voices), it can be difficult for readers to follow the plot of the story that the plates tell. By drawing upon the tools and concepts of narratology, I have laid out one (in my view, productive) way of reading them. Understanding the function of the hermeneutic and proairetic codes in the text allows us to see how the narrative both shapes the reader's understanding of the story and drives her desire to see how the story will end.

What is more, a specific focus on the narrative structure of the small plates reveals certain insights that would otherwise go unnoticed. For example, Nephi's use of the hermeneutic code gives greater salience to the emergent nature of Nephite messianism, which identifies Jesus Christ as the Messiah. The prevalence of the proairetic code in *Enos* suggests that developing a certain type of relationship with Jesus—through a sacrificial wrestle, in Enos's case—is more important than just understanding His messianic identity. In this way, the two codes work together by coupling knowledge with action. In this way, they

86. Salleh, *Book of Mormon*, 136.

87. Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:227.

underscore the transformative ethos that lies at the core of the small plates.[88]

That the small plates emphasize a transformative ethos places the Book of Mormon in good stead with other religious texts. According to Karen Armstrong, "scriptural traditions prescribe different ways of living in harmony with the transcendent . . . [and] nearly all . . . present us with the human being who has achieved this transformation and achieved a more authentic mode of being."[89] If the Book of Mormon was truly written for our day—a claim made not just by modern LDS prophets, but also by the text's self-conscious prophetic authors—certainly one reason must have to do with its insistence on transforming, and not just convincing, its reader. Indeed, this insistence is woven into the very structure of the record.

88. It is interesting to note that the abridgement of the large plates begins with the discourse of King Benjamin, which culminates with his people's Christian sacrifice (see Mosiah 4:1–3). Enos's experience of coming unto Christ *individually* is followed almost immediately by the people of King Benjamin coming unto him *communally* by taking upon them Christ's name (Mosiah 5:7–8).

89. Joseph Smith made a similar argument about the Book of Mormon's call to a more authentic mode of being when he declared that one may "get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by [those of] any other book." Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:461. Armstrong traces the waning art of scripture in our modern world to the fact that "instead of reading [scripture] to achieve transformation, we use it to confirm our own views." Karen Armstrong, "The Lost Art of Reading Scripture," *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review*, Summer 2020, https://tricycle.org/magazine/karen-armstrong-scripture/.

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A NAME OF HER OWN

Nanette Rasband Hilton

BUT, you may say, no other name matters—what has naming got to do with personal salvation? I will try to explain.[1]

Over many years, I've made a point to list the names I find in scripture denoting the Savior. I suspect many Christians do this to understand the character of Jesus. So far, I have catalogued forty-nine names for the Lord which describe the substance of His work. Considering each name helps me see Christ's character as I try to be like Him, literally taking His name as my own. However, I am female; Christ was not female. (This is despite the abundant feminized scriptural language that Christians must be "born" and "begotten of God.") I am a daughter, a sister, a wife, and a mother; Christ was none of these things. These gendered roles are key features of my female identity, even my "divine nature and destiny."[2] God the Father and Jesus Christ provide universal godly role models, but I also seek divine female examples by which to pattern my life. I want to know more about my past, my present, and my future.

Longing for feminine representation in the Godhead, in scripture, and in religious praxis spans time and religious traditions, and is visible

1. These lines are drawn from Virginia Woolf's opening lines: "But, you may say, we asked you to speak about women and fiction—what has that got to do with a room of one's own? I will try to explain." *A Room of One's Own* (1928; repr., Harcourt, 2005), 3.

2. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," 1995, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/the-family-a-proclamation-to-the-world/the-family-a-proclamation-to-the-world?lang=eng.

across Latter-day Saint church history.[3] Knowledge of our Heavenly Mother has been revealed, yet we live below our privileges because of cultural paralysis—we fail to act on this revelation. If Heavenly Mother, the cocreator of worlds and souls, remains inaccessible and relegated to shrouded obscurity in religious praxis, what kind of salvation can her spiritual offspring expect? Her perceived irrelevance and her anonymity are alarming. In liminality Mother in Heaven floats. Knowing God the Mother is a timeless necessity no less essential than knowing God the Father.

My work as a rhetorician includes the recovery of lost names and rhetorical legacies from the long American nineteenth century that, if recovered, may benefit us today. Most of these names belong to women. In this essay, I work to recover women in rhetorical history and their timeless legacy, especially Mother in Heaven. While I am female and the mother of five daughters and six granddaughters, my unease isn't confined exclusively to women's concerns. Rather, all the men in my life, including my grandsons, stand to benefit or suffer because of women's marginalized position.

To better understand our current moment, I offer the three ancient symbols of the feminine divine: Maiden, Mother, Crone. Recovering the name of women in scripture and US history through the lens of these classic archetypes illustrates why naming practice is important to personal salvation and how we might enjoy the power that comes with the privilege to name. Equitable naming practice is a universal concern, responsibility, and privilege.

In recent conversation, I asked a couple friends what motivates them toward their goals. My friend Kerstin offered the German word *zuversicht*—the reason to get out of bed in the morning. My friend Xiumei shared the Chinese *hanzi* 危机 (*wei-ji*), which combines the concepts of crisis and possibility. I see these cross-cultural ideas culminating in the

3. David L. Paulsen and Martin Pulido, "A Mother There: A Survey of Historical Teachings about Mother in Heaven," *BYU Studies* 50, no. 1 (2011): 1–28.

Greek word *kairos,* which signifies the perfect moment, that enchanted time when a rhetorical situation is ripe for action and the world primed for social change. Our time provides a kairotic moment to recover forgotten names—even a restoration of women's divine nature and destiny.

Maiden

The first classic female archetype is the Maiden. Maidenhood is often marked by notions of possibility and faith in a positive future propelling

Figure 1. Annalee Poulsen, *Maiden*, 2024, mixed media, 11" x 17"

youth on their personal missions in life. Young people are famous for believing in such magical moments, recognizing them, inciting them, and acting on them. Joseph Smith Jr. was such a boy, and Virgin Mary was such a maiden. Mary was a prime model of *zuversicht* and *wei-ji* when she responded to the preeminent kairotic moment, her unique mission call, saying, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38).

Mary is the most common female name in Western human history. In fact, we can get lost in the many Marys spanning time. Virginia Woolf capitalizes on this ubiquity at the beginning of her touchstone feminist treatise *A Room of One's Own*. She explores the excuses for and ramifications of woman's elision from the historical record by asking her audience to call her by one of the many names of Anon (for anonymous), deliberately disrupting the masculine line of authoritative descent. She tells her readers to "call [her] Mary Beton, Mary Seton, Mary Carmichael or by any name you please—it is not a matter of any importance."[4] Woolf is being ironic, proceeding to prove that naming and remembering names matter a lot.

Because *Mary* is ubiquitous, *Mary* is universally recognized and relatable. Woolf is Mary. I am Mary. All women are Mary. At the Annunciation, Gabriel said, "Fear not, Mary" (Luke 1:30). What happens when we remove the comma from Gabriel's reassuring words and instead consider them an injunction? We hear "Fear not Mary." This small grammatical difference might instigate great social action—supporting and developing female power instead of fearing it.

For example, "The Song of Mary" or "The Magnificat" (Luke 1:46–55) is one of the oldest hymns sung throughout many Christian denominations. It is one of the most glorious testimonies ever recorded in scripture. During her pregnancy Mary confides her belief in God, in His Son, and in her divine mission as His mother to her much-older relative and friend Elizabeth. Mary's witness is a perspective from one

4. Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 5.

crossing the threshold from maidenhood to motherhood. She rejoices in being seen and elevated by God, declaring that "he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden." Furthermore, she exults in knowing that "all generations shall call me blessed" (Luke 1:48).

However, instead of calling her blessed and celebrating her role in God's plan, Protestants and Latter-day Saints have all but eliminated her in fear of Mary veneration and deification. There are seven songs revering Joseph Smith Jr. in the LDS hymnal, but none that remember Mary as the first convert to Christianity and Jesus' most devoted disciple. To enjoy the miracle of God's condescension (1 Nephi 11:16–17), the union between deity and humanity that made Jesus capable of performing the Atonement, we need to sing "The Song of Mary"!

Among the many biblical Marys is Mary Magdalene, who does not measure up to society's expectations for women because she is single and childless. Mary Magdalene is suspect in many minds, often associated with moral sin or demonic possession. But she is also an icon of repentance and devoted discipleship. She was an eyewitness to the Savior's ministry and crucifixion. As the first person to whom the resurrected Savior appeared, she recognized Him when He pronounced her name. Mary Magdalene is mentioned twelve times in the Gospels—more than any other woman and more than most of Christ's apostles. God, Angel Gabriel, and Christ supersede cultural conventions by seeing Marys and speaking their name, thereby demonstrating the divine pattern of God valuing all people.[5]

Mother

The second classic female archetype is the Mother. While mitochondrial DNA from our mothers charts our biological lineage, cultural tradition dictates that we inherit our surname from our fathers.[6] My

5. Romans 2:11; Acts 10:34.

6. Laurel Hamers, "Scientists Find Clue to Why Mitochondrial DNA Comes Only from Mom," *Science News*, June 23, 2016.

Figure 2. Annalee Poulsen, *Mother*," 2024, mixed media, 11" x 17"

last name—my maiden name—hails from the little northern Utah town of Heber. I am proud to be part of the Rasband clan. Today, 567 people have this surname.[7] I am not one of them, anymore.

Many a maiden considers the time of her marriage, when her identity and loyalty may conflict. Will her name change? While more and

7. Search "Rasband," at forebears.io., https://forebears.io/surnames/rasband, accessed Aug. 28, 2024.

more women are retaining surnames at marriage, in the past, a name change was expected and caused a woman's identity to be subsumed by her husband's—legally known as coverture.[8] This practice—whereby a woman is covered, or shrouded, by her husband, giving up her personhood and fading to the background or becoming invisible—lingers still today as women replace their father's name with their husband's.

Many years ago, standing in the courthouse and looking between the clerk and my fiancé, I saw my family name fade like an old sepia print as I practiced my new signature: J. Nanette Hilton.[9] I could have chosen differently, but convention carried sway. It's this matter of choice I emphasize: We each have agency to name and be named. Given the choice again, I would have added my husband's family name to my own three. If Jesus can have forty-nine monikers, I can have a few. As my identity expands, I've continued to add names like Momma, Nana, and Professor. But just recently, sifting through my mail I encountered a ghost from the past threatening my personhood. It was an envelope addressed to Dr. and Mrs. Paul Hilton. Some cultures believe that when a person dies, they experience three deaths: first, when their spirit leaves their body; second, when the body is interred or cremated; and, finally, when their name is last spoken. Experiencing the omission of my name on the envelope took my breath away—like a micro-death.

Baptism is a symbolic micro-death as covenant-makers (women and men) are buried in the water and reborn, taking upon themselves the name of Christ. For many, it is a rite of passage undertaken without full understanding of its implication—like the young bride surrendering her maidenhood and name. Christian culture draws from the

8. For a definition and discussion of historical and modern coverture laws, see Allison Anna Tait, "The Return of Coverture" *Michigan Law Review First Impressions* 114 (2015): 99.

9. This dilemma is a "Hobson's choice" wherein a woman "is faced with the choice of the name of one man (her father), or of another man (her husband)." See Omi Morgenstern Leissner, "The Name of the Maiden," *Wisconsin Women's Law Journal* 12 (Fall 1997): 253.

biblical notion that the husband typifies Christ and the wife typifies His kingdom, thus she gives up her own name and is subsumed in His.[10] Idealistically, the wife is protected and provided for by her husband who metaphorically represents Christ; she is cherished so much that he gives her his most valuable possession: his name. Few people today recognize this religious signification or that the woman is likewise an embodied type of Christ, even sacrificing her blood and body for others. But, once fully comprehended, we have opportunities to renew our commitments more meaningfully through ordinances and sacraments wherein names and naming are keys to evolving personal power and salvation.

Not only does scripture offer the Maiden Mary but also Mother Mary—same woman, different phase. While maidenhood is bright with connotations of innocence and possibility, motherhood is credited with the power to shape individuals and societies—a child's success points to the mother's success. However, motherhood is also a fraught positionality as women are often blamed for society's failures. Motherhood is a good example of how women teeter on the scales of social expectation and judgment.

God sidesteps culturally gendered conventions, again and again, to get the job done. For example, Maiden Mary of "low estate" conceived without a husband—consider the social stigma Mary suffered. Elizabeth—a self-declared Crone—stepped forward to name her son John, contrary to custom, when her husband was mute from disbelief (Luke 1:60). Furthermore, in Jesus' ancestry are Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba, who resist perfect-mother stereotypes. These women may be considered social outcasts and are among the few females named in scripture. Our list of feminists begins with Eve, who enacted the divine plan by breaking the rules. Women are often remembered only because they exceed the bounds of social propriety.[11] If not scan-

10. See Eze 16:8–14; Isa. 54:5; Hos. 2:7; and Jer. 3:20.

11. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Well-Behaved Women Seldom Make History* (Vintage Books, 2007). The uptake of this idea stems from her academic essay

dalized, women are mostly silent and invisible from the historical record—religious and secular—prompting Woolf's incandescent prose. In maidenhood, women are sexual commodities and sometimes hypervisible if they thwart convention. In motherhood, women are laborers valued for their procreative and domestic work until they recede into aged obscurity.

The silenced mother and missing-mother motifs are pervasive. Consider the many absent mothers informing fairytales, including Snow White, Rapunzel, Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella, and Beauty and the Beast. The hidden mother has often been perpetuated by mothers. A photographic trend in the Victorian era was such an instance when women omitted themselves from the picture. Rather than holding their baby in the portrait or propping up the infant, mothers held the baby while concealing themselves "under a shroud, obscured as another object, their limbs disembodied by the framing of the image, cut out of the frame entirely, or scratched or burned out of the image."[12] This type of self-effacement conveys a false modesty resulting in woman's erasure across centuries, not only in photographs, but in legal recognition, public education, the arts, sciences, and in nearly every sphere of influence—even today. This erasure can be seen through the culturally constructed "'sacred' censorship" or "holy hush" around Heavenly Mother, impoverishing generations.[13]

Crone

The third classic female archetype is the Crone. After maternity, a woman is often discounted and banished from society, becoming the

"Vertuous Women Found: New England Ministerial Literature, 1668–1735," *American Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (1976): 20–40.

12. Susan E. Cook, "Hidden Mothers: Forms of Absence in Victorian Photography and Fiction," *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies* 17, no. 3 (2021): 1–25.

13. Paulsen and Pulido, "Mother There."

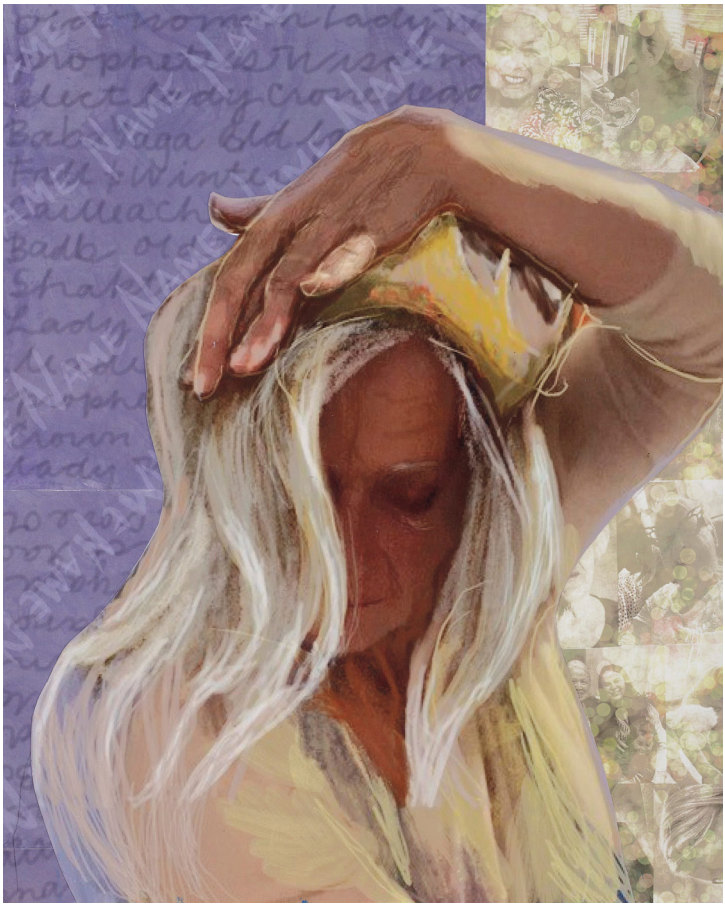

Figure 3. Annalee Poulsen, *Crone*, 2024, mixed media, 11″ x 17″

spectral mother and wife, lurking in the shadows and mad in the attic, and the haunting hag with magic powers hovering at the margins.[14] The Crone is the most mystifying archetype, because of modern negative

14. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (Yale University Press, 1979).

linguistic connotation and prevalent ageism. Modern usage defines crone as a "feeble and withered old woman" and as a "strong term of abuse."[15] In the archetypal sense, the Crone may elicit fear because she has supernatural powers and upends expectation. Fear is the barrier to revelation and change. American psychoanalyst and writer Clarissa Pinkola Estés recovers the Crone, reminding us that the word has etymological roots in *crown*, *corona*, *coronation*, and *queen*.[16] Having experienced maidenhood and motherhood, the Crone is at the apex of development—beyond any commodification, above stereotypes, and rejecting cultural constructs. She is wisdom personified—Leila, Lady Wisdom, Wise Woman, Mary, Baba Yaga, Shekhinah, Befana, Radha, Kuan Yin, Shakti, Badb, Banshee, Fall and Winter after Spring and Summer, Cailleach. She is the mature Athena, Mazu, Artemis, Anu, Persephone, and Eostre. She is perfected Gaia, Pachamama, Inanna, Ishtar, Astarte, Macha, Demeter, Dea Matres, and Isis. As I now am, She once was. She is every woman through Her experience. She is perfect. She is God-dess. I see Her and She sees me. As She now is, I may be.[17]

Years ago, in a graduate seminar charting the history of American feminism, I became aware of first wave American feminists who recognized the fundamental need to know God the Mother. This knowledge liberated me from feeling alone or wrong in my desire for connection to the feminine divine. In fighting for women's rights, these

15. Online Etymological Dictionary, s.v. "crone," https://www.etymonline.com/word/crone.

16. Clarissa Pinkola Estés, *The Dangerous Old Woman Series: Myths and Stories of the Wise Woman Archetype*, 5 vols (Sounds True Recordings, 2010).

17. Lorenzo Snow: "As Man Now Is, God Once Was; as God Now Is, Man May Be," *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow* (Deseret News, 1884), 46, available on the Internet Archive, accessed Aug. 28, 2024, https://archive.org/details/biographyfamilyr00snowrich/page/46/mode/2up.

nineteenth-century women also fought to elucidate Mother in Heaven. Margaret Fuller and Elizabeth Cady Stanton are prime examples of women who publicly worked to recover the female divine and were consequently stigmatized and generally forgotten.

Many considered Fuller the greatest intellectual of her day. One scholar suggests that Fuller was perhaps the "greatest humanist of her century, one of the greatest America has ever produced."[18] A key element of Fuller's legacy is her dedicated excavation of female power. In an 1841 essay, Fuller names this feminine force "Leila." She describes Leila as having "all the elemental powers of nature, with their regulating powers of conscience and retribution." Fuller addresses this female divine, writing that "to my restless spirit thou didst bring a kind of peace, for thou wert a bridge between me and the infinite." Gradually, Fuller imagines herself subsumed in Leila—taking on her name and character. Ultimately, a bold Leila facilitates a unification with God and issues a call to action. Fuller writes that Leila "will give us back to God yet wiser, and worthier, than when clinging to his footstool as now. 'Have I ever feared,' said Leila. Never! but the hour is come for still deeper trust. Arise! let us go forth!"[19] In her transcendental essay, Fuller not only illuminates the female divine, but also speaks Her power to enter and bring woman into God's presence.

In 1845, Fuller published her feminist manifesto *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*.[20] Her opening lines challenge social constructs

18. Susan J. Rosowski, "Margaret Fuller, an Engendered West, and Summer on the Lakes," *Western American Literature* 25, no. 2 (1990): 125–144, https://doi.org/10.1353/wal.1990.09139.

19. Margaret Fuller, "Leila," *The Dial*, Apr. 1841, available at The Walden Woods Project, accessed Aug. 28, 2024, https://www.walden.org/what-we-do/library/thoreau/leila/.

20. S. Margaret Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (Greeley and McElrath, 1845).

of women's inferiority to men, especially as a supreme ruler. She disputes this idea by flipping the script of Hamlet's infamous line: "'Frailty, thy name is WOMAN.'" She rewrites it to read, "Frailty, they name is MAN." Fuller follows these lines with an obscure quote from a toast at a convention she attended: "'Earth waits for her Queen,'" which she reinscribed as "Earth waits for its King." With these juxtaposed lines, Fuller unmasks the logical fallacy of sexist stereotypes limiting female power and demands social gender reform at the highest level. Because Fuller was a thirty-five-year-old spinster at the time of publication, her bestselling polemic questioning conventional marriage and gendered expectations made her a social outcast.

Fuller escaped social scrutiny by going to Europe, eventually living in Rome, where she met the poor aristocratic republican revolutionary Giovanni Angelo Ossoli, with whom she had a son. As war refugees, the family sailed for the United States. Today, few people know or remember that Fuller set women's suffrage in motion with her *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*. Her landmark book and revolutionary spirit qualified her to preside over the first National Woman's Rights Convention. In a May 1850 letter, convention president Paulina Wright Davis "hoped to confide the leadership of [the Women's Rights] movement" upon Fuller.[21] However, Fuller and her family drown on their voyage home, never receiving Davis's invitation. Davis remembers the October 1850 Worcester, Massachusetts, audience mourning Fuller in a moment of silence, missing "her guiding hand—her royal presence."[22] After her death, Fuller's texts were severely censored by a cadre of male editors who considered her rhetoric and lifestyle socially subversive. Fuller continues to be denigrated, marginalized, and forgotten because

21. Quoted in Megan Marshall, *Margaret Fuller: A New American Life* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013), 388.

22. Quoted in Marshall, *Margaret Fuller*, 387–388.

she failed to conform to "the cult of true womanhood."[23] I believe that by recovering Fuller and her rhetoric, we may gain what Davis envisioned as a "radical and universal" plan for actively bridging and eliminating present social boundaries that limit personal and societal potential.[24]

Elizabeth Cady Stanton was another first wave American feminist calling for a recovery of "the feminine element" who suffered stigmatization for her unconventional rhetoric.[25] As she made plans for the Seneca Falls Convention, her father thought her "insane" and tried to "dissuade her from [her] madness."[26] Contrasting with Fuller's unconventionality, Stanton performed "true motherhood" via traditional marriage and the bearing of seven children. She is remembered as a historical figure in the longstanding fight for women's suffrage; she brought "a proposed constitutional amendment guaranteeing women the right to vote" to the US Senate "fruitlessly" for forty years. By all measures of the modern connotations of "crone," Stanton qualifies because of her old age, arthritis, obesity, and blindness.[27] In my opinion, and in Stanton's, she delivered her wisest, most powerful, and most eloquent speech at the end of her life, entitled "Solitude of Self."[28] Eighteen years after Stanton's death, the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution finally passed into law. Her

23. Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820–1860," *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2, part 1 (1966): 151–174.

24. Quoted in Marshall, *Margaret Fuller*, 388.

25. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The Woman's Bible* (1895; repr. Dover, 2002), 14.

26. Stanton, *Woman's Bible*, vi.

27. Stanton, *Woman's Bible*, xi.

28. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Solitude of Self," delivered before the Committee of the Judiciary of the United States Congress, Jan. 18, 1892, available at National Park Service, accessed Aug. 28, 2024, https://www.nps.gov/wori/learn/historyculture/solitude-of-self.htm.

tenacity in the fight for women's enfranchisement is astounding—seconded only by the obstinance in forbidding her from seeing the fruit of her labor.

Stanton's legacy is sometimes thought to be exclusively a secular and political crusade since some are unaware of her effort to recover Mother in Heaven and liberate Her daughters. In 1886, Stanton began her project to critically examine "the Bible to determine what it really said about women." Stanton's theological reformation efforts brought together a coalition of female scholars and theologians, "ignit[ing] a firestorm" and making her an outcast amongst the conservative leadership of the National Woman Suffrage Association, the women's rights organization she began and over which she presided. Stanton first published *The Woman's Bible* in 1895 and it was an instant bestseller, yet "arousing widespread controversy" and considered by "some members of the clergy [to be] a work of Satan."[29] Stanton's primary effort was to emancipate women from subjugation and to empower her to reach her full potential; for Stanton, restoring a true conception of Heavenly Mother to the Godhead was key.

I am heartened to know about these courageous and faithful women. Their biographies and legacies fuel my belief that we must continue the work to recover Mother in Heaven. By naming Her, She becomes real and able to empower us as exemplar and teacher, able to offer and elicit a response. Exploring Her positionality may help us reconceptualize God the Mother: By recognizing Her multifaceted nature, not only as Mother, but also as Maiden and Crone, we complete the portrait of our Heavenly Matriarch in Her seat in the Godhead. I feel differently about my own potential and daily grind when I reflect on my Divine Mother's journey through the various stages of womanhood, not assuming Her

29. Stanton, "Solitude of Self," x.

to be stuck in one idealized or romanticized phase. I feel less fear. I feel hope.

BUT I maintain that She would come if we worked for Her, and that so to work, even in poverty and obscurity, is worth while.[30]

30. Last line appropriated from Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*. By beginning and ending our essays with the word *But*, Woolf and I invite contemplation, collaboration, and negotiation on our common topic of women's visibility and recognition. Capitalizations mine.

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NO HARD FEELINGS

Bryant Thompson

"No Hard Feelings" is an inspiring folk ballad about finding peace in dying. The Avett Brothers ask: "When my body won't hold me anymore. And it finally lets me free. Will I be ready?" and "When my feet won't walk another mile. And my lips give their last kiss goodbye. Will my hands be steady?"[1] Amid these weighty questions, the songwriters offer a consistent theme—a determination to endure the anguish of this life with no hard feelings.

I reflected on the depth of this song as my brother, Erik Thompson, was in the throes of his battle with ALS, a progressive neurodegenerative disease that can rob you of your ability to function—to eat, drink, move, sit, stand, walk, talk, swallow, and even breathe.[2] This song caught my attention because ALS lends itself to hard feelings: It is fatal, but it is cruel and punishing well before that. If today is bad, tomorrow will be worse, almost assuredly. As your body withers, your hope holds on for dear life. Lisa Genova noted that ALS results in a "paralytic crawl to death," while Mitch Albom wrote this harrowing description: "ALS is like a lit candle: it melts your nerves and leaves your body a pile of wax. . . . [Y]ou cannot support yourself standing. . . . [Y]ou cannot sit up straight. By the end, if you are still alive, . . . your soul, perfectly awake, is imprisoned inside a limp husk."[3]

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1. The Avett Brothers, "No Hard Feelings," on *True Sadness*, American Recordings, 2014.

2. Robert H. Brown and Ammar Al-Chalabi, "Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis," *New England Journal of Medicine* 377 (2017): 162.

3. Lisa Genova, *Every Note Played* (Simon & Schuster/Scout, 2018), 216.; Mitch Albom, *Tuesdays with Morrie: An Old Man, a Young Man, and Life's Greatest Lesson* (Doubleday 1997), 10.

Drawing on the work of Paul Tillich, David Brooks noted that just when we think we have reached the lowest of lows, agony smashes through and thrusts us down to a new bottom floor with new pain that is as unfamiliar as it is agonizing.[4] Life was once so promising—that is, before the bewildering incongruities and bitter ironies arrived. We start to ask: "Why me? Why this? Why now?. . . . Did not God notice this torturous turn of events? And if He noticed, why did He permit it?"[5] C. S. Lewis wrote that feeling neglected in our suffering can seem like we are in a long and desolate valley, only to discover that we are actually in a "circular trench" where there is no relief and no end.[6] Anger enters. We hurt, we cry, and we might even rage. We become overwhelmed and completely exhausted. Just when we think we have reached our limit, hope finds us again and lets us catch our breath. We bask in the warmth of a compensatory blessing—but, soon, the storm clouds return. Anger enters again—as if through a revolving door. We are cast down to a new level of misery and we are not sure whether to be more dismayed at the persistence of our suffering or delighted at the tenacity of our hope.

Writing about the intersection of suffering and hope, Francine Bennion told a story about talking with a friend who, following brain surgery, had been left paralyzed on one side of her body and had severely impaired speech and sight. Bennion mentioned to her friend that she had been preparing to give a talk at the Brigham Young University Women's Conference on the theology of suffering. Bennion's friend replied that she would rather have the talk be about the "theology of—courage—hope—like looking out a window." Bennion replied,

4. David Brooks, *The Second Mountain: The Quest for a Moral Life* (Random House, 2019), 64–65. See Paul Tillich, *The Shaking of the Foundations* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), 52–61.

5. Neal A. Maxwell, "Irony: The Crust on the Bread of Adversity," *Ensign*, May 1989, 63.

6. C. S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed* (Harper and Row, 1961), 6.

"I hope it will be the same thing." In the talk, Bennion noted that a useful theology of suffering helps us make sense of suffering in order to proceed with hope, compassion, and understanding. Bennion made the astute observation that learning to become more like our heavenly parents and living as they live will entail understanding and processing suffering in healthy and hopeful ways—suggesting that suffering does not just go away as we become more like God. Instead, as we start to become more similar to our heavenly parents, we develop an increased capacity to engage in, and triumph over, moments of suffering. To this point, she noted that the pathway to becoming more like our heavenly parents passes through—not around—suffering and that it is amid such suffering wherein we can learn to develop a better understanding of God and of ourselves.

According to Bennion, we chose to come to this earth because "we were willing to know hurt" and it is in knowing this hurt that helps us become more like our heavenly parents: they know hurt and, as a result, feel "more abundantly alive, with ultimate fulness of truth, joy, and love." Bennion also suggests that "nobody is manipulating every human decision that would affect every human experience" because, if that were the case, "we would have the kind of existence now that Lucifer offered permanently"—one absent of suffering but also devoid of agency, choice, vitality, and joy.[7]

Our heavenly parents allow us to suffer because they want us to learn to know reality and to begin to enact and navigate daunting environments—and learn to find joy even amid such tribulation. This is the essence of mortality. Bennion noted: "If we are to be like God, we cannot live forever in fear that we may meet something that will scare us or that will hurt us. We have to be able, as he is able, to meet what comes of others' agency, and of living in a lawful universe that allows

7. Francine R. Bennion, "A Latter-day Saint Theology of Suffering," Brigham Young University Women's Conference, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, Mar. 28, 1986, 212–231.

creation of a habitable planet only when it allows also the difficulties that come in natural operations of such a planet."

As taught by Jeffrey R. Holland, suffering is the price we pay for divine growth. If we aspire to become like our heavenly parents, we must go through the type of suffering they have endured—and learn to endure it well just as they have learned to do. Holland makes this point as follows: "Lord, give me all thy choicest virtues, but be certain not to give me grief, nor sorrow, nor pain, nor opposition. . . . Lord, be careful to keep me from all the experiences that made Thee divine. And then, when the rough sledding by everyone else is over, please let me come and dwell with Thee, where I can boast about how similar our strengths and our characters are as I float along on my cloud."[8] Of supreme importance, in addition to learning how to endure hardship, we need a redeemer to overcome the harmful effects of this world—we need him if we are to endure the suffering that comes to us in mortality. Bennion wrote that the atonement of Jesus Christ allows us to endure "the falling, the hungering, the screaming, the crawling on the floor, the being disfigured and scarred for life psychologically or physically, and still survive and transcend it."[9]

One way Erik tries to transcend his circumstances and awaken his hope is by taking a break in his in-home sauna. He turns up the heat to warm his aching body and turns on the music to comfort his weary mind. One evening, I sent the song "No Hard Feelings" to him to listen to as part of his nightly sauna routine. A few hours later, I received a text from him that filled me with awe. He had a veil-piercing experience as he listened to the song. Erik wrote: "I immediately made it my goal to simply live, and choose to have a mindset of, no hard feelings to the end!" He elaborated on his daily battles with anger, noting that "sometimes anger wins, but not today." He said: "I know it will get

8. Jeffrey R. Holland, "Waiting on the Lord," *Liahona*, Nov. 2020, 117.

9. Bennion, "Latter-day Saint Theology of Suffering."

very difficult in the future to have this mindset, but I am determined to be grateful even when I suffer." Reading Erik's message was a vivid reminder that I have a front-row seat to watch a remarkable human being work through his suffering with heroic determination.

This front-row seat is both heartbreaking and awe-inspiring. It is heartbreaking because I continually think of what my brother is going through mentally, emotionally, and physically, and wish I could do something to soften the pain. I cry almost every day when I think about Erik's plight. As I imagine his circumstances, I feel his pain sharply. The emotional contagion between us as close siblings feels overwhelmingly gripping. I have often hoped that I would eventually wake up and this would all be a bad dream. But that has not happened. This is all too real—and the tears seem to flow even when I would least expect them: watching one of my sons play a ball game where I quickly put on my sunglasses to hide my tears, sitting in a work meeting where I suddenly start to take copious notes so I can shield my watery eyes from view, eating dinner with my family where I immediately take a long sip from my cup hoping the tears will retreat back into my eyes, or even teaching a class where I jump to a class exercise earlier than anticipated just to buy a few minutes for my emotions to settle down. Tender feelings sneak up on me with such a great force that it feels emotionally violent.

It is heartbreaking because I think of what we used to do together. Oh, what I would give to see Erik hit an ace serve on the pickleball court and hear his clever trash talk, watch him dive into the corner of the racquetball court to make an acrobatic shot and hear him laud his athleticism, or observe him beat out a slow-rolling ground ball on the softball field and listen to him wonder out loud how he got such impressive genetics in the speed category (when I did not). I never realized how much I could long for what used to be regular occurences—I yearn for the return of such idyllic days.

If I could have my wish, Erik would be fully healed. He would not have to deal with such physical misery and emotional angst; he would

not have to face such frequent bouts of fear. A few years ago, I was almost sure such healing would be his. One night, I knelt for several hours and pleaded with Heavenly Father for relief for my brother. I was certain that an answer came—an answer that promised relief. The spiritual confirmation felt so real and valid. Later, I felt impressed to give Erik a blessing of healing and, on a different occasion, participated in a blessing where a revered family member promised Erik that he "would be okay." In as much as Erik still faces daunting daily struggles, I spend some time contemplating what it means to "be okay" because I still believe that promise but I am unsure as to what that means in terms of mortality. To this point, the suffering that comes along with seemingly unfulfilled spiritual expectations feels like a special form of suffering. It is quite jarring and unsettling when petitions to heaven do not go as your heart told you they would.

Nevertheless, I find great solace in this counsel from Holland: "There will be times in our lives when even our best spiritual effort and earnest, pleading prayers do not yield the victories for which we have yearned. . . . So while we work and wait together for the answers to some of our prayers, I offer you my apostolic promise that they are heard and they are answered, though perhaps not at the time or in the way we wanted. But they are always answered at the time and in the way an omniscient and eternally compassionate parent should answer them."[10]

I have absolute confidence in our loving heavenly parents. I feel them beckoning to us with gentle and reassuring warmth: signaling they are here, they see us, they know us, and they love us in ways we cannot yet begin to understand.

In speaking about the nature of suffering and of our tendency to feel that nobody cares when we suffer, Holland expressed his belief that, during the atonement of Jesus Christ, the "father may never have been

10. Holland, "Waiting on the Lord," 116.

closer to His Son than in these agonizing final moments of suffering."[11] This is reassuring, even though the hurt remains very real. For Erik, he really does have some difficult days—and such days are only getting worse and more frequent. These are not fun days; they are not the days you post about on social media, share with friends, or even write about in your journal. These are hard days, excruciating days, even ugly days that are only seen by his innermost circle. As difficult as these days are, they are also bonding, connecting, and sacred. Our love for each other feels supported by unseen and holy beings. Even if our heavenly petitions are not always received as we had once hoped, our confidence in the existence of a benevolent, involved, and loving God has increased.

Even as our hearts feel more broken than ever, our love feels deeper. This experience is allowing for our souls to commune with each other at a different level. It feels loved-based and unifying. Even my crying has taken on a different form. I have gone from frequent crying that hurts my heart to daily crying that calms my mind and relieves my negative emotions. I am even becoming more willing to cry without taking cover behind my sunglasses. I have come to see crying as a self-soothing practice that flushes out stress, restores peace of mind, and clarifies my thinking even as it produces deep reflection and feelings of gratitude. I welcome a good cry. Crying helps me feel closer to heaven.

There is so much about Erik's circumstances that is awe-inspiring. And there is ample evidence that the windows and doors of heaven have swung wide open. Therefore, these struggles do not deter me from continuing to seek for answers, miracles, and divine intervention. For me, there is a vibrant and emerging narrative regarding Erik's immortal existence. That does not mean that I never grapple with hard feelings: The battle is real and it is often daily. Yet in my pursuit to resist the hardening of my own feelings, I am looking to my brother, Erik. Abundant are his reasons to cleave to hard feelings, but I see him beating

11. Jeffrey R. Holland, "None Were with Him," *Ensign*, May 2009, 88.

them back. Even if human in his efforts, he is remarkably persistent in striving to resist hard feelings—and he is holding onto gratitude with everything he has.

Gratitude can be classified into at least two different types: episodic and persistent.[12] Episodic gratitude is a feeling of appreciation in response to a desired outcome. This type of gratitude is emotional and event-based—it can be intense but also fleeting. Persistent gratitude, however, is "a stable tendency to feel grateful" across contexts. Persistent gratitude emerges as a function of multiple and interrelated episodes of gratitude. Those with persistent gratitude develop appraisal tendencies based on the repeated pairing of a stimulus with an emotion—with future events often being interpreted through the lens of gratitude.

Dieter F. Uchtdorf encourages us to embrace "an overall spirit" of gratitude and points us to the Book of Mormon prophet Nephi, who, notwithstanding his immense suffering, did praise God "all the day long." The positive effects of gratitude are abundant: It is liberating, helps us see things as they are, and enhances our perspective. Gratitude can "make life sweeter, more joyful, even glorious" while helping us "find a purifying drink of healing, peace, and understanding."[13] Empirically, gratitude can lead to increased psychological well-being, life satisfaction, sense of purpose, positive emotion, and relational connection as well as decreased shame, anxiety, and depression, especially if we also allow ourselves to experience the natural, even if difficult, emotions that come into our lives.[14]

12. Ryan Fehr, Ashley Fulmer, Eli Awtrey, and Jared Miller, "The Grateful Workplace: A Multilevel Model of Gratitude in Organizations," *Academy of Management Review* 42 (2017): 361–381.

13. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "Grateful in Any Circumstances," *Ensign*, May 2014, 70.

14. Martin E. P. Seligman, Tracy A. Steen, Nansook Park, Christopher Peterson, "Positive Psychology Progress: Empirical Validation of Interventions," *American Psychologist* 60 (2005): 410–421. Sonja Lyubomirsky, *The Myths of*

Although gratitude is a potent predictor of positive outcomes, it cannot simply vanquish pain. Gratitude does not override the harsh conditions of mortality nor does it replace suffering—but it can accompany suffering as a nurturing companion.[15] The interaction between suffering and gratitude is more of an "and" instead of an "or." Erik can be grateful in his circumstances "and" wish he never had to go through such soul-crushing sorrow. He can be delighted by his joys "and" devastated by his distress. He can also rejoice that ALS will not be his unwelcomed companion forever. To this point, in a gathering with friends and family, Erik said, "My mortal body has ALS, but my immortal spirit does not. Holland wrote that "one day the dawn will break brightly and all shadows of mortality will flee" where we will become glorified and complete.[16] The atonement of Jesus Christ makes the "and" possible in our lives—it offers a basis to be grateful and a reason to hold on to ultimate hope.[17]

Gratitude has a close connection with awe, the "feeling of being in the presence of something vast that transcends your current understanding of the world."[18] Awe is a powerful emotion that can be experienced through nature, birth, death, music, sacred mantras, spiritual experiences, intellectual epiphanies, athletic and artistic performances, collective effervescence, and moral beauty.[19] John B. Bingham describes awe as relating to profound reverence and divine surprise while Ulisses Soares teaches that awe is "inspired by the

Happiness: What Should Make You Happy, but Doesn't, What Shouldn't Make You Happy, but Does (Penguin, 2013), 3–4.

15. Uchtdorf, "Grateful in Any Circumstances," 70.

16. Jeffrey R. Holland, "Like a Broken Vessel," *Ensign*, Nov. 2013, 40.

17. Neal A. Maxwell, "Hope Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ," *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 61.

18. Dacher Keltner, *Awe: The New Science of Everyday Wonder and How It Can Transform Your Life* (Penguin, 2023), xvi.

19. Keltner, *Awe*, xxv.

influence of the Holy Ghost" in that it encourages heavenly wonder, amazement, and righteous enthusiasm.[20]

Our most potent experiences of awe tend to relate to moral beauty: observing others overcome adversity with courage.[21] Moral beauty is something I see frequently when I spend time with Erik. He and I had a recent opportunity to attend the temple together. Given his inability to use his arms, I had the privilege of helping him through the session. At a key moment of our temple worship, we were making covenants by raising our right hand. I observed Erik struggle with all of his might to raise his hand. He did not get his hand all of the way up, but it was his humble determination that was so impressive. His quiet resolve was an act of holy consecration. He was giving everything he had to commune with his maker.

Another time I experienced awe with Erik was when I sent a question to him about football. Erik is a one-of-a-kind football genius. I was coaching the defense on my son's football team and wanted to get Erik's expertise about the best way to cover a certain offensive alignment. Erik replied by sending a picture of a hand-written note he drew on his phone. Typically a highly talented artist, Erik's scribbles looked similar to what a toddler might draw—ALS had taken away his ability to use his hands. It was not an elegant drawing, but it was an act of love. I wept as I looked at it.

Then, there was the transcendent experience I had at Erik's fiftieth birthday party. I had walked out to the parking lot to get something. As I walked back into the party, I heard a beautiful song, a sentimental and childhood favorite, carrying through the large speakers. The song was "Lord, I Hope This Day is Good" by Don Williams. I felt a very powerful spirit wash over me. I was hearing with my spiritual ears and seeing

20. John B. Bingham, "In Awe: The Astonishing Goodness of God," BYU Speeches, Aug. 2021, 2; Ulisses Soares, "In Awe of Christ and His Gospel," *Liahona*, May 2022, 115.

21. Keltner, *Awe*, xxv.

with my spiritual eyes for a time. Tears were streaming down my cheeks as I walked. It was as if my ancestors had descended on the party from the heavens above. And it was not just a few of them: It felt more like all of them at once. It was very overwhelming, but profoundly peaceful. The message was simple. God loves all of us very much and our ancestors are here to help us understand that. It was incredibly connecting and an unforgettable reminder that we are not forgotten.

In all instances, I felt part of something much larger than my self—I felt part of a shared space that I believe was occupied by Erik and heavenly beings. I felt tenderness and transcendence. I saw moral beauty and experienced collective effervescence. Scholars who study awe refer to these types of experiences as the "vanishing self" where we feel absorbed by a powerful force that is good, safe, protective, and loving. In this way, awe is paradoxical: We feel smaller in the vastness but bigger because the master of the vastness loves us.[22] Awe increases self-knowledge and helps us become kinder, calmer, and more compassionate. Awe is also an antidote to emotional pain—it quiets chatter and hushes anxiety.[23]

Suffering can facilitate instances of awe because it sets the stage for moments of moral beauty. We begin to see the many ways in which others suffer: We start to see that suffering is as complex as it is universal. To this point, this essay does not attempt to list the many ways in which we suffer nor does it seek to romanticize suffering. Suffering is miserable—and not all suffering leads to positive outcomes. Moreover, some suffering may require use of law enforcement and legal systems as well as changes in social norms and institutional structures. Suffering

22. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, "You Matter to Him," *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 19.

23. Maria Monroy and Dacher Keltner, "Awe as a Pathway to Mental and Physical Health," *Perspectives on Psychological Science: A Journal of the Association for Psychological Science* 18, no. 2 (2023): 309–320.

can be soul crushing, with some forms of suffering being too difficult to talk about or even imagine. My heart extends to all who suffer.[24]

I will also note my major reticence in writing this essay about suffering. I started writing it well over two years ago, but I wondered whether I had the audacity to write about suffering—such a sensitive and tender topic. Paralyzing is a word to describe my inability to get this essay going. I asked myself whether I had suffered enough to write about suffering. I really wrestled with this. I revisited this paper dozens and dozens of times but could only write a paragraph or so, if that, and would have to stop due to feeling very unsettled. Then, after listening to Dacher Keltner's book on awe and thinking of the power of the Atonement in ways I had not fully examined at that depth, I concluded that writing this essay had nothing to do with whether I had suffered enough and everything to do with the fact that Jesus Christ has suffered enough.[25] He certainly has and the ramifications of that are huge. Then, everything inside me, everything I had read on this topic, and everything I had reflected on, just seemed to start flowing.

My intention in writing this essay is to highlight two potential avenues to help mitigate the negative effects of suffering—gratitude and awe—and to affirm my belief that Jesus Christ is the ultimate deliverer from all suffering. In my view, adding gratitude and awe to the suffering equation facilitates a clearer pathway to escape hard feelings which, as noted by the Avett Brothers, "haven't done much good for anyone" except to keep them "afraid and cold."

The Avett Brothers are right: Harboring hard feelings does not help us. But how do we overcome them? Susan David's research on emotional agility helps us understand that we can learn to process difficult emotions in healthy ways—we can become familiar with painful emotions without being captivated by them and we can develop an

24. Bryant S. Thompson, "The Joy and Burden of Serving as Bishop: An Open Letter to Bishops," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 54, no. 3 (2021): 119.

25. Keltner, *Awe*.

increased awareness of their impact on us without being defined by them.[26] We can learn to distance ourselves from these difficult emotions while labeling them with precision and without judgment. As we do, we will begin to move away from embattled bitterness and toward gratitude and awe, even when our streams of suffering run deep.

As noted by Tillich, "Suffering introduces you to yourself and reminds you that you are not the person you thought you were." Suffering offers "a larger narrative of change and redemption" wherein "we can suffer our way to wisdom" and experience our "first taste of nobility"—not because of the suffering per se, but because of our response to the suffering.[27] As we lean heavily on gratitude, welcome ways to experience awe, and allow ourselves to feel even our most difficult emotions, we might see that suffering really has dragged us to a different version of ourselves—a more sanctified version. Instead of breaking us, our bottom floor of suffering can break us open as we strive to "redeem something bad by turning it into something sacred"—turning darkness into holiness, trading beauty for ashes. Richard G. Scott taught, "So that the period of mortal testing and growth would yield its greatest benefit, you were taught and prepared for the circumstances you would personally encounter in mortality."[28]

Notwithstanding this beautiful truth, it is not always easy to remember the lessons we learned from our heavenly parents in the premortal realm. Mortal life is messy and suffering is aversive. If suffering came as a gentle request, I cannot think of anyone who would welcome it. In fact, the next time suffering knocks at my door, I will not want to answer. If it decides to come in anyway—not because a benevolent God wants me to suffer, but because I chose to live in a fallen world laden with infuriating unfairness—I will try to be like my

26. Susan David, *Emotional Agility: Get Unstuck, Embrace Change, and Thrive in Work and Life* (Penguin Random House, 2016), 5–7.

27. Tillich, *Shaking of the Foundations*, 52–61.

28. Richard G. Scott, "Truth Restored" *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 78.

brother, Erik: cleave to genuine gratitude with all of my might and savor moments of awe while giving myself permission to feel the very difficult and raw emotions associated with this life.[29] I will also strive mightily to remember the premortal lessons I received from God. I know the Holy Ghost will help me remember what I learned about the exalting nature of suffering.[30] In fact, I feel that I get glimpses of this from time to time—and I am eternally grateful for such glimpses. I don't suppose any of this will take away my suffering, but I do think it will help me feel God's immense love for me. I also believe it will help me access latent reservoirs of divine strength that can come to each of us because we are children of God.

As noted by Holland, it is difficult to even imagine the type of joy that awaits us in our eternal home, yet, even in mortality, we can have a "sacred, revelatory, profoundly instructive experience with the Lord," even in "the most miserable experiences," even "when facing the most insurmountable odds and opposition."[31] Such transcendent outcomes are possible because the Savior has divine influence and inherent goodness—he is all-powerful and fully merciful.[32] He "knows, understands, and feels every human condition, every human woe, and every human loss. He can comfort as no other. He can lift burdens as no other. He can listen as no other. There is no hurt he cannot soothe."[33] He "intimately understands our every pain, affliction, sickness, sorrow, separation" and is deeply committed to ensuring all things work together for our good. To this point, Gerrit W. Gong recently told a Chinese story: "A man's

29. Gerrit W. Gong, "All Things for Our Good," *Liahona*, May 2024, 41; Dale G. Renlund, "Infuriating Unfairness," *Liahona*, May 2021, 41.

30. Jeffrey R. Holland, "'Suffering is Exalting' - Elder Jeffrey R. Holland (Q&A 2012)," posted Feb. 19, 2023, by True Millenial, YouTube, 4 min., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRLDdNk5G4Y.

31. Jeffrey R. Holland, "Lessons from Liberty Jail," BYU Speeches, Sept. 2008, 3–4.

32. Jeffrey R. Holland, "The Laborers in the Vineyard," *Ensign*, Apr. 2012, 31–33.

33. Tad R. Callister, *The Infinite Atonement* (Deseret Book, 2000), 209.

son finds a beautiful horse. How fortunate, the neighbor says. We'll see, says the man. Then the son falls off the horse and is permanently injured. How unfortunate, the neighbors say. We'll see, says the man." This story continues where what appears to be an unfortunate turn of events becomes a fortunate circumstance. We can have confidence that all things can eventually work together for our good because, notwithstanding the very real trials of mortality, we have a savior who is good.[34]

I can think of no better example of moral beauty than our Savior, Jesus Christ—he suffered beyond our ability to comprehend and he did not shrink. He wanted to shrink, but he didn't. Strengthened by the covenant he made with Heavenly Father to atone, Jesus Christ held on because of the joy that was set before him: to rescue us from despair, succor us with divine love, and absorb all of our wounds that we might enjoy an eternal connection with those who have tenderly nurtured us (and us them) through the crucibles of mortality.[35] We will forever cleave to, cherish, and appreciate our compassionate co-suffers in mortality—and we will forever adore He who delivered us from that suffering. Our Savior took upon himself "the weight and agony of ages and generations" that he might heal us completely—with no lingering scars, no lasting bitterness, and no hard feelings.[36]

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34. Gong, "All Things for Our Good," 41.

35. Callister, *Infinite Atonement*, 209. Russell M. Nelson, "Joy and Spiritual Survival," *Ensign*, Nov. 2016, 81; Renlund, "Infuriating Unfairness," 41.

36. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: John Taylor* (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2011), 39.

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Julie Yuen Yim, *Noah and the Animals*, 2020,
Chinese paper cutting, 24" x 24"

Momiji

For R.H.M.

Doug Barrett

Recall, in your mind's eye, this sight: two white-shirted figures
exploring the October hills above Nagasaki. enjoying the freedom
to talk unencumbered. "Sometimes," you said,
"I think nature has a way of playing Bach to itself."
Ascending a path through terraced fields in the serene
late morning light

at forest edge they found a great stone staircase
winding up into the trees. Then
a gate in a stucco wall. Within
was the flagstone courtyard, immaculately swept,
of a Shinto shrine, the windowless cordovan buildings
sleepy with the peace of the place

the entire sanctuary canopied in fiery momiji.
Here, a wooden dipper upon a well.
A priest appeared and seemed to motion them to drink.
The water was ice cold—how long
since the sun had shone here beneath
this flaming red roof, this maple sea?

They stood speechless under the silence
of flickering crimson, as breezes danced the upper leaves
barely daring to move
the place performing the work
of attunement: decades, centuries, of daily sweeping and contemplation
as if the gift they'd sought so hard to give had found them at last.

Departing the opalescent shade, released through the opposite wall
onto a sunlit hill where a small red *tori* stood,
there on top they ate lunch, but took no pictures
except in the mind
of the empty inlets and islands of the blue Tachibana-wan
extending toward Kumamoto east

or, westward, of Nagasaki harbor's monstrous toy ships, each
sipping the season, the imperfection
of every perfect moment
autumn-seared sun already undoing itself
in immortality and eternal life
illicit as eye could reach.

Why had they in all their preaching been unable to find
such joy? What god had they denied to attain it?
Now, many years later,
when I mention that day
you don't remember it. I didn't know
I'd been left so far behind.

DOUG BARRETT served in the Japan West Mission. He holds a PhD in English literature from the University of Washington and has taught at Sierra Nevada College, Deep Springs College, and Western Nevada College. He has also been a camp counselor, wrangler, bank courier, retail clerk, postal worker, census worker, and academic labor organizer. His poetry has appeared in *Avocet*, *Canary*, *Weber: The Contemporary West*, and elsewhere. He currently resides in Maine.

A Little Death

Doug Barrett

I was fasting that day when we went out into the farmlands
around Nagasaki, looking up referrals. After hours of walking,
we found ourselves on a ridge looking down on rice fields
    and a tiny village
work of life being carried on by Breughelesque distant figures
set as if to the foreign swelling of unripened music
under a mute old sun, all things basking in the glow
that fasting sometimes casts over the world.

We turned back there, never found that referral. When we got home
I felt wobbly but no rest for here was the mission assistant
whisking me off to visit Kurume and Sasebo. By Kurume
    I was feeling run over
and by Sasebo barely conscious, there delivered
to the naval base hospital—diagnosis: pneumonia.
Spent the next days in hourly ritual coughing: feet on the bed
hands on the floor, till I'd emptied my lungs of crap.

When I got out I was alone, for everyone had gone
up to the *taikai*: the big mission conference in Fukuoka.
I walked to the train station reveling in the lightness
    that accompanies recovery
but which this time went deeper. Weightless, companionless,
no mouth to my ear, no loyal soul-absorbing voice. but rather
every unkept pore seemed to breathe for the first time in Japan—
seemed to draw in the spirit of that garbled unmanageable world

of people calmly heading to places they never knew
    they'd never get to

a world of silent traffic, shops and houses wonderful, ordinary
    and strange—
and to breathe me out into that world, so that I seemed to be
not in Japan but *inside* Japan. Rules, too, had dissolved.
    Why, I could have . . .
but the thought never really occurred, only the quiet wish
to have this walk last as long as possible, and indeed
    it hasn't ended yet.
Which train did I take to Fukuoka—the slow train or the express?

At Fukuoka I was welcomed as one returning from a little death
for so it was, the first of several over the years—
    a taste of what's to come?
When the big one hits I imagine coming through the pass
    out to a fork
the left road leading down into the plain where stands the Holy City
family and friends, symphonies ascending to the skies
the other a narrow trail leading deep into the mountains
silent, empty of a living soul. Maybe I'll take that one.

Crossing Over

for Dan, Washington, DC, North Mission, 1998–2000

Doug Barrett

Sun-dappled redwood mist
    bandtails flush, wrentits call through fiery green walls.
Chattering hikers returning from the still-inaudible sea
blindly pass a doe in the ferns.
    Back at the dock
eagle-eyed Auduboners blew through like a bushtit swarm
racking up species, the kind of birding you hate
    missing the loon surfacing behind the pier
    the wandering tattler around the cove bend
        the ones you had to wait for.

At Wildcat Beach, cliff-edge tent in flame-guttering wind
    up the beach, a driftwood fire.
        Lone gull rides the horizon
        fox family darting around.
Sleep, rest sore feet, but who can say it's over?
Beyond us out there, the impossible other shore.
Behind us the catastrophe of immortality
that drove us to the little horrors we emit like octopus ink.
    Mystery gave out
    then the wine and mushrooms.
    Sex gave out, then chastity, then property and oil
        all the achievements, all the accumulation
        all the lists, all the games, all the service
            and finally chatter too.
End of the line now, but who can say it's over?
From here to Japan, only ocean

bridged by whale causeways
myriad jeweled droplets
each its own universe.
Lighthouse winking out there, and tanker lights.
Cliff grass rippling a little more gently now
in the night wind.

In the morning, whimbrel in the silent surf
harbor seal watching offshore
and raccoons have stolen our bread
baby claws prying through lockbox cracks
but who can say it's over?
Well, you do, more or less—Sunday responsibilities
uneasy scent I remember.
But first, around Wildcat Lake
birdsong-throbbing thickets in August heat
siren song reminding us that everything
is made of sex: hand and eye
deer, raccoon
willet, godwit, pintail, warbler.
fern, willow, kelp—
rock and water, too?
And what's sex made of?

Noonday slog back up the red-baked fire road
sweating out body and mind.
Jay's feather, so blue
"Don't pick it up."
Molten elements, last seaward glance from the ridge.
It hasn't solidified yet. Sunlight subsides
to luminous shade. Scent mosaic
poison oak backlit as if from within

wrentits still scuffling immersed in hidden bird paths
    silky soft air.
Could you believe
    it's always been like this . . .

You've gone ahead. Go ahead on.
I'll just sit down here and watch the poison oak change color
    a little longer.
    Where are you going, little Buddha
        off to save the world?
Why not sit down with me here and save it that way?
    Who knows what might happen
    if we wait long enough.

But no.
    Not your show
        Don't you know
        you can save the whole world and lose your soul?
But that's the risk we've run since time began.
So go, walk with the immunity of God's ministers
    the gunshot-riddled streets of Anacostia, Capitol Heights
Get it down on tape and send it back to remind us
    what horror's made of.
    And when you find them and take them
    over the bridge that doesn't exist anymore
just tell them, tell her
if you have to tell anyone anything
        that it hasn't solidified yet—
the light, I mean—
    and it isn't over.

Some Stay

Sharlee Mullins Glenn

I will be a swallow; I will stay.

Not all birds fly south
when leaves flame then
fall and nights turn
cold and daunting.

Some stay.

Finches, for instance,
and sparrows.
They stay, and sing
their tiny hearts out,
perched on bony barren
branches, improbable
and brave.

SHARLEE MULLINS GLENN has published poetry, essays, short stories, articles, and criticism in periodicals as varied as *Women's Studies*, *The Southern Literary Journal*, *Segullah, BYU Studies Quarterly*, *Ladybug*, and *The New York Times*. She is also an award-winning author of children's books.

Layover

D. A. Cooper

The mystery of flight times and of paths
that pierce the sky, scarring the flesh of heaven,
hangs just above and gently seeps into
this temple to the god of taking trips;
this holy church built for the patron saint
of nomad wanderers; this sacred shrine
where pilgrims stop to pray while passing through,
each headed to their final destination.

I sit here in this sanctuary waiting
for my next flight, which never seems to come
just when I want it to. I'm always waiting
for the unknown, unknowable creator
of timetables to tell me it's my turn.

D. A. COOPER is a poet from Houston, Texas. Aside from *Dialogue*, his poetry and translations have recently appeared in the *ARCH-HIVE*, *Light*, *Irreantum*, *New Verse Review*, and *THINK*. In his free time, he likes to read, write, and ponder.

at my house

Riley Clay

at my house we
don't talk about Mom
and no one knows why

my brothers wonder
if Dad's afraid
or hurt or ashamed to admit that
he hopes she'll come back
but it's getting harder now to
remember her

except
sometimes
when i'm almost asleep
i think i can hear her
singing

a wistful song
that makes me smile

until morning

when i forget the words
and why we pretend
she's not
here

RILEY CLAY works with and writes about education, history, religion, and material culture. He's lived and studied on three continents, and he and his wife now call Utah home. While "at my house" is his first published poem, short stories and essays by Riley have previously been featured in *Irreantum*, *The Copperfield Review*, and *The International Association for Visual Culture*.

A Modest Paraphrase of Alma 30:44

Isaac James Richards

> *for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*
> *—Revelation 19:10*

All things denote there is a God, even the carpet, and the tile, and the television. Tele- meaning "at a distance" plus "vision." And yet the toddler places his palm directly on the screen, patting the prophet's face, while speaking in tongues. The cat yawns: *prophecy.* The clock ticks: *pro-phet*. The timer beeps: *pro-phe-cy, pro-phe-cy, pro-phe-cy*. My aunt opens the oven and out billows prophecy. Prophecy spiraling from cinnamon rolls. Prophecy pouring from the faucet. Prophecy pressing against the windows from the outside. Tulips blooming like prophecy. A breath mint melting like prophecy. Teenagers snoring to the sound of prophecy. Children drawing it, color spilling outside the lines. Older children marking it, word-by-word, once and every time . . . there it is again! Prophecy. Then grandma presses pause on the prophet, to go to the bathroom, because she doesn't want to miss a word.

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Rumination: Time

Isaac James Richards

What is like grating cheese? Hard
to begin with vehicle before tenor
but perhaps Samson's falling locks.
I glance at my Delilah, weakening
me by thickening soup. The closer you
get to the end of the block the more
likely you are to slice your knuckle.
Tattered skin. A carpenter's curling
wood chips spilling from a hayloft.
Sprinkling salt. Posterity. The years
falling like these soft orange shreds.
We are not young anymore my love,
but we are not too old to savor
this—*this is delicious* poblano soup
so all we can do is dip our sop in
the dish and try not to betray each
other in these final hours waiting
for your tomb, and hopefully another.

Rumination: Love

Isaac James Richards

After passing another
I've been implored a
so fine. I will. This
my pinkie toe to my
through a Californian
or elbow, Utah's rib
Too easy, this meta-
surrounded by buzz-
and inaccurate, judg-
Botox, fat freezing,
which say *body* loud
to parse cabins in
or Montana Moose
Plus lots and lots of
to find something to
going 85 miles per
car along this entire
when the sun falls to
to my right, I feel like
along your back,
on either side your
mine. That's what it
to borrow chromo-
rectangle tap for a
are not good listeners,
coaxed quite the muse.
I have cinnamon bears
as a place to drive to.
possess a 1,433.52-
"Adopt a Highway" sign:
hundred times or more
one: I-15, traveling from
index finger, slight curve
ankle, an Arizona armpit,
cage—why a skeleton?
phor, a cliche bison skull
ards in a sagebrush desert
ing by the billboards for
and 1-800-JESUS, all of
-er than *eternal.* But how
Idaho's Snake River Valley,
Moss (an ice cream flavor)?
lawyers. Look, I'm trying
be angry about when I'm
hour and can't see another
mountain range. Truth is
my left and the cliffs rise
my fingers are driving
smoothing the soft plateaus
spine's ridges. Mine. Not
means to adopt, to love,
somes or exchange a plastic
tank of gasoline. Audiobooks
but Taylor Swift has
And I won't be lonely if
for company and you
As if anyone could really
mile ribbon of rock. As if

something that long
that human DNA is 10
could stretch 61 times
that doesn't explain
So darling, when I get
this highway together.
if I'm Mexico, then all
in the middle from
With people passing
engines powered by
My arrival tonight
could be a child. They say
billion miles long, or
to the sun and back but
our years of infertility.
there, let's finally adopt
If you are Canada and
we have to do is meet
either end. An unbroken line.
through, between us, on
burning liquid. Who knows.
could be the end of a long road.

MATTER

Ryan Shoemaker

God began to be a problem soon after Tommy Ericson turned fourteen, when Sister Larson, his old primary teacher who lived down the street, accidentally killed her youngest daughter Callie while backing into the garage to load boxes of clothes she planned to donate. Since Tommy and his dad home taught the Larsons, they went over that evening with Bishop Wilkinson and a few other ward members. Tommy didn't want to go. He wanted to shoot hoops with his friends in the summer twilight. But Tommy obeyed his dad—he always obeyed—and put on a white shirt and tie.

At the Larsons' house, Tommy had never seen such sadness, a sadness so absolute and incomprehensible that he wanted to flee from it: Brother and Sister Larson sobbing and holding each other on a brown leather sectional in their living room as Bishop Wilkinson and Sister James, the ward Relief Society president, listened with bowed heads as the Larsons ran through scenarios of how they could have avoided Callie's death. Why hadn't they gone to Zuma Beach that morning? Why hadn't they donated the clothes the previous weekend? What if they'd just parked in the driveway and carried the boxes to the van?

There in the Larsons' living room, Tommy had a thought that made him blush: *Why hadn't God saved Callie?* He turned his head to see if anyone had heard the thought. For years after, that thought remained for Tommy a moment of deep shame.

For Tommy, Callie Larson's death was like a curtain yanked open to reveal a vast, strange world his parents had shielded him from.

Soon after Callie's death, Tommy began stopping at the Burbank Library on his way home from school to scan *Los Angeles Times*

headlines. He thought that maybe if he knew more about the world, he might understand God. But the world Tommy read about made no sense. The Lockerbie bomber. Famine in Sudan. The Rwandan genocide. Catastrophic earthquakes in Iran. A Christian aid group perishing in a fiery plane crash. Always with those headlines, Tommy felt a dizzying vertigo, the library floor tilting beneath his feet. Why didn't God intervene to save the innocent? Why didn't he punish evil? And when Tommy asked these questions in his private prayers, God was silent. Alone in that silence, Tommy blamed himself, clasping his hands together and repeating, "Help my unbelief," a phrase he'd read somewhere that seemed to voice a sadness and yearning he felt in his core.

And that's how it was for Tommy through high school and into his freshman year at BYU, his unbelief growing, one doubt stacking onto another and then another. Sometimes, lost in distraction and routine, Tommy forgot about his doubts for a while, but they were always there gnawing on the edges of his mind.

Tommy wondered if the God he was raised to believe in was someone's creation, an idol to worship and adore: a loving father, a God of simple explanations and blessings for the righteous, a God designed to echo back the illusion of an ordered world to faithful believers.

"Or maybe it's all a mystery, all unknowable," Tommy would sometimes say to himself like a mantra to explain God's silence, but the consolation of those words was fleeting. Though Tommy wanted to believe, at some point he quietly surrendered to his doubts, and with that surrender he felt a deep ache that began at his heart and worked its way through his body.

So even as Tommy received his mission call to Italy, shopped for suits, and sat between his smiling parents on a blinding white couch in the celestial room of the Los Angeles Temple, the only belief that seemed to make life understandable and straightforward and transparent to him, that explained tragedy and suffering and God's silence,

was not to believe in God at all. Without God, suffering didn't need complicated explanations.

Yet at night, alone in his dark bedroom, Tommy pondered the dim streetlights beyond his window and thought, *God, why have you forsaken me?*

Tommy, Elder Ericson now, was a well-liked missionary, and because he'd excelled academically in high school and played sports, he always found something in common with other missionaries. But he felt distant from them, secretly incapable of accessing their earnestness for the work and their devotion to God—though Tommy worked hard and obeyed the rules, hoping God would speak to him if he did. Often, Tommy felt alone because he couldn't share his deepest doubts with anyone. The closest he'd come was in the Missionary Training Center, with his companion, Shepfield, who'd been called to another Italian mission.

Shepfield grew up in Orange County, surfed and, like Tommy, played high school baseball. Tommy liked Shepfield, with his sun-bleached hair and tan face, how he'd wink and put his finger to his lips when he opened packages from his mom and pulled out six-packs of Coke and issues of *Sports Illustrated*. Tommy liked Shepfield's grinning, laid-back approach to the work, a believer above all the stuffy mission formality, pharisaical intensity, and quiet competition. If anyone, Tommy thought Shepfield would understand his doubts.

One Friday morning when they were both bedridden with a cold, Shepfield on the lower bunk and Tommy on the top, only the two of them in the room they shared with four other missionaries, Tommy tried to explain to Shepfield about Callie Larson and all those *Los Angeles Times* headlines and the perfect sense of a world without God. The words rushed from Tommy, and with them a sensation of lightness. When Tommy finished, Shepfield said nothing, and Tommy wondered if Shepfield was asleep. Then Shepfield whispered, "Never tell anyone what you just told me." Shepfield paused. "I won't tell on you."

They didn't speak about it again, and Tommy never brought it up with another missionary.

And that's how it was with Tommy late one cold winter evening a year later in La Spezia, Italy, as he and his companion, Elder Barlow, walked back to their apartment on the stone promenade that ran along the city harbor.

It was the week between Christmas and New Year. A heavy rain had fallen earlier, churning up a rotten smell from the bay. The rain had stopped, and now a dense mist veiled the lit apartment windows along Viale Italia and rushed past the streetlamps lining the harbor. Tommy and Barlow had just come from an appointment with a young navy cadet on holiday leave who'd been more interested in practicing his English and talking about his favorite American movies than discussing God—and Tommy was fine with that, though, of course, he felt a heavy guilt that he hadn't steered the conversation more toward God.

At 9:15, the streets were empty. The bay water slapped at the harbor's stone sea wall, and the wind whipped at the palm trees. Still, Tommy sensed a gaping silence beneath the wind and the water. *It's all a mystery*, he thought. *How can we understand anything?*

Talked out by the end of the day, Tommy and Barlow said nothing as they walked along the promenade, a longer route to their apartment that Tommy had chosen so they wouldn't arrive before 9:30, which would have been against the mission rules. Tommy wanted the warmth of the apartment, a bowl of cereal, and a few minutes rereading a letter from a girl he'd met in his ward at BYU.

The mist drifted by the low streetlamps in ghostly shapes that almost put Tommy in a trance, a distraction from his thoughts and the damp cold. Then Tommy heard something just in front of them, two voices speaking a language he didn't understand, something Slavic, and then a third voice repeating a word that pitched higher and higher until it became only a sound. Three men, lit by a streetlamp's golden light, appeared through the mist. One, tall with blond slicked-back hair and a camel-colored leather coat, held a short, bearded man from behind,

and the other man, his teeth bared, repeatedly plunged a knife into the bearded man's chest.

Tommy stopped, not wanting to believe what he saw, the horror amplified by its unexpectedness. A harsh sound, as involuntary as the twitch of a muscle, slipped through Tommy's parted lips, a mix of disbelief and revulsion.

The man with the knife turned his head to Tommy and Barlow, absorbing them with one long, startled look: their dark suit pants and white collared shirts, their knotted ties peeking through the unbuttoned tops of their black trench coats. The knife was coated with blood. Tommy's heart hammered in his ears, and every muscle in his body felt stitched together. Far away, a ship horn sounded, one sustained, low moan the wind swallowed up. The tall man took a step backward, uncoiling his arms from the bearded man and shrugging him off like an unwieldy load. The bearded man fell heavily and unimpeded to the ground, landing fully on his back with a low grunt. The two men turned and ran.

A deep cut across the man's right cheek dribbled blood into his trimmed beard, and his thick sweater, the color of a pumpkin, darkened around a half dozen frayed holes in the fabric. His trembling fingers moved over his chest.

Barlow's hand covered his mouth. "What do we do?" His eyes were shut tightly, his pale, pinched face turned from the man.

Tommy's body shook. An icy cold dripped into his arms and legs. "Call someone," he said, pointing toward Viale Italia. "Find a payphone."

Barlow nodded and turned toward the road, vanishing into the darkness.

A part of Tommy wanted to leave, too, to turn away and follow Barlow, but something kept him there. To leave the man alone, he felt, was wrong.

Tommy knelt next to the man, the moisture and cold from the promenade's rough stones seeping through his wool pants. The man looked Moroccan or Tunisian, copper skin, a long, thin nose, and eyes

so brown that Tommy couldn't see the irises. "Help will come," Tommy said in Italian. He squeezed the man's right shoulder, a touch to reassure him, what Tommy imagined appropriate, what he thought anyone would do. His pressing fingers sensed thin muscle and the hard bone beneath the skin, and Tommy almost recoiled from the foreignness of this stranger's body, the sudden intimacy of that touch.

There was a gurgling in the man's throat. Tommy knew to apply pressure for the bleeding, so he put his gloved hand over an oozing hole below the man's heart—but this felt futile. Tommy had a vile of consecrated oil in his backpack. He'd been ordained with the holy priesthood, taught that he could put his hands on the man's head and offer a blessing of comfort, even healing. But this also felt futile, pointless. There was so much blood.

The man, his lips a blueish gray, stared up at the sky, not blinking. He whispered one repeated syllable. Tommy lowered his head to hear through the wind. "Ab," the man said. "Ab, ab, ab."

Tommy mouthed the word, the quick press and release of his lips forming the sound. "I don't understand," Tommy said in Italian, wondering if the repeated sound were just a reflex of shock, a scrambled synaptic misfire. Then, like a sudden flash, a distant connection to something he might have read or heard long ago, Tommy understood the word. His throat tightened. "Father," the man was saying in Arabic. "Father, father, father."

Tommy touched the man's right hand, but his glove felt like a barrier between them. Tommy pulled the glove off and held the man's hand. It was cold and calloused on the palm.

"Ab, ab, ab," the man continued. A single tear leaked from his right eye.

Tommy squinted into the mist. He listened for sirens, for footsteps, for voices. Nothing. It was as if he and this man were the only two who existed.

The man coughed. There was blood at the corners of his mouth. Breath rasped through his parted lips, and his chest heaved. "Help

will come," Tommy said again. Then out of habit, he began to pray, the words flicking noiselessly on his tongue. He prayed that Barlow would find a phone, that an ambulance would arrive, that this man, by some miracle, would live.

But Tommy felt foolish—and then angry. He glared into the dark sky. "Do something!" he shouted. And then Tommy thought: *What does it matter?*

A crescent sliver of moon surfaced through the mist. The sea lifted and fell. Under and above him, Tommy sensed the patterned, ancient movement of the earth and moon and sun, separate from him, though so close. But then the weight of the man's calloused hand in his hand, the weakening voice calling for his father—Tommy knew that it did matter.

The man twisted his head to look at Tommy, but Tommy wasn't sure if the man saw him or someone else. The man's breath rattled. Tears trickled from his eyes. "Mio figlio," Tommy said to the man, though he wasn't sure why. And then dredging up his almost-forgotten high school French, he said, "Mon fils. Mon fils." But the words, familiar though still foreign to Tommy, stretched like an abyss between him and the man. Tommy brought the man's hand to his lips and kissed it. "My son, my son," Tommy said in English, bending down to whisper in the man's ear. "Don't be scared. I'm here. I'm here. Everything will be all right. I love you."

RYAN SHOEMAKER's {ryanshoemaker@suu.edu} debut story collection, *Beyond the Lights*, is available through No Record Press. T. C. Boyle called it a collection that "moves effortlessly from brilliant comedic pieces to stories of deep emotional resonance." Ryan's second story collection, *The Righteous Road: Stories,* is available in 2025 through BCC Press. His short fiction has appeared in *Gulf Stream*, *Santa Monica Review*, *Booth*, and *New Ohio Review*, among others. Find him at RyanShoemaker.net.

Julie Yuen Yim, *Nativity*, 2023,
Chinese paper cutting, 10″ x 13″

A Book of Mormon for the Ages

Grant Hardy, ed. *The Annotated Book of Mormon*.
New York: Oxford University Press, 2023. xvi + 892 pp.
Hardcover: $39.95. ISBN: 978-0-19-008220-8.

Reviewed by Russell Arben Fox

For intellectually inclined, scripture-studying Mormons of a particular age, the path of Book of Mormon scholarship has been fairly straightforward. In the second half of the twentieth century, there was the work of Hugh Nibley, which defended the text's historical validity and prophetic value through Old World cultural comparisons; then came the writings of John L. Sorenson, who again focused on its historical and cultural plausibility, this time by setting it against New World archaeology and geography. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, studies of the Book of Mormon made a theological turn, exemplified by the work of Terryl L. Givens, launching an approach to reading the text as a distinctly American scripture that engaged the same range of philosophical concerns found in the whole long history of biblical reflection. Thus, over my lifetime as a fifty-six-year-old non-expert follower of religious debates, the historical, cultural, and the theological angles of Book of Mormon reflection have been well covered.

What has been missing, though, was a *literary* approach to reading the text. Not that this has been entirely absent; throughout the history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, literary appropriations from and invocations of different parts of the Book of Mormon's narrative have been fairly common. But reading the Book of Mormon specifically as one would analyze any other narrative, looking to understand the writerly or editorial intentions behind it, and developing interpretations that work from within the presented text itself—that has had a very minor place in the history of Book of Mormon scholarship. Until Grant Hardy came along, that is.

A scholar of world religions and religious texts at the University of North Carolina, Hardy has been working consistently for more than twenty years to bring forward his literary take on what used to be regularly called the "keystone" of Mormon belief. As a climax to these decades of work, he has published *The Annotated Book of Mormon*, the complete text of the Book of Mormon in the format of the study bibles and critical editions of great works of literature that pedants like myself have been absorbing all our lives. And speaking for myself, the book is marvelous—I might even say, if this doesn't date me too much, a marvelous work and a wonder.

Using the 1920 edition of the Book of Mormon's text, which is in the public domain, Hardy has structured the text with paragraphs, quotation marks, poetic stanzas, indentations, and assorted headings, all to make the reading of its often convoluted narrative more comprehensible. By so doing, Hardy has made visible the literary parallels, editorial breaks, shifts in perspective, historically revealing inconsistencies, and more, which too often have eluded even the closest readers of the text. His extensive introductions to the major demarcations in the book (the small plates of Nephi, as the editorial creation of Nephi; the large plates of Nephi, as the editorial creation of Mormon; and the additional material added by Mormon's son Moroni), as well as to each individual Book of Mormon book, plus the lengthy general essays, appendices, glossaries, and indices found at the book's conclusion are all very much worth reading, as they point out and reflect upon genre interpretations, narrative connections, literary constructions, alternative reading approaches (as literature, as fiction, as world scripture, etc.), and much more. But most fundamentally, I think it is Hardy's hundreds upon hundreds of explanatory footnotes, all of which bring new illumination to verses that many of us know well, that matter most of all. Consider a few samples, going from more specific to more general:

> 1 Nephi 2:15: *"My father dwelt in a tent*, a narrative detail that appears three more times in 1 Ne (9.1; 10.16; 16.6), always in the context of

> providing additional instruction regarding newly received revelation. It may be an allusion to the 'tent of meeting' (KJV: 'tent of the congregation') mentioned 34 times in Ex. This name of the Tabernacle emphasizes its role as a place of revelation, where the Israelites or the representatives met God." (17)
>
> Alma 7:7–8: "Despite the preeminent importance of the Incarnation, Alma does not know whether the Redeemer will visit the Nephites in his mortal body, and he seems unaware of Nephi's prophecies of a precise timeline and details of a post-resurrection visitation in the New World (1 Ne 10.4; 12.1–12; 19.8–11; 2 Ne 25.19; 26.1–9). Because 1–2 Ne was dictated after 3 Ne (which included an account of Christ's appearance among the Nephites), some have taken this as evidence that at the time JS dictated the book of Alma, he was still working out the plot of the BoM. Alternatively, it may be that Alma had not yet read the Small Plates—which were intended for the Lamanites (Jarom 1.2). In either case, Alma later comes to understand that Christ will indeed come among the Nephites after his resurrection (Alma 16.20)." (328)
>
> Helaman 12: "The Nephite/Lamanite decline from righteousness to wickedness in just five years (11.24–38) prompts Mormon to conclude the original ch. IV with a lengthy lament about human nature. This is the clearest exposition of the worldview of the BoM's primary narrator, whose pessimistic tone seems to be colored not just by his reading of historical records, but by his own experience living through the destruction, degradation, and iniquity that characterized the end of Nephite civilization. Mormon will interweave into his lament allusions to the ministries of Nephi2 and Samuel the Lamanite, related on either side of this editorial insertion." (540)

These three, and many more like them, make clear a few of Hardy's central assumptions:

First, he takes very seriously the relationship which the text of the Book of Mormon has to that of the Bible, both in terms of the influence the writings of the Hebrew prophets had upon what became the Nephite's religious tradition (primarily via the brass plates), but also through revelations recorded by Nephite prophets which reinterpreted and applied some of those prophetic teachings.

Second, he approaches the Book of Mormon as one who believes rather straightforwardly in the official received accounts of its translation and production: that is, he really does believe there were Nephites, and so he is fascinated to better understand these people through the records of them we have, particularly the way those records teach us about the Book of Mormon's three primary editorial voices—Nephi (self-confident as a youth, later bookish and insular, with familial regrets and personal realizations shaping how he presented his early history), Mormon (an ambitious editor, firm in his embrace of various Nephite patriots and prejudices, but always mournfully conscious of the tragedy which they enabled), and Moroni (a reluctant editor, thinking solely of a future he will not see, Christianizing an ancient Jaredite document to emphasize his father's belief that all of humanity will face the same, ultimate divine judgment).

Third, he approaches the Book of Mormon with a sense that its authors and compilers were, like him, thinking about what messages they had to share in a *literary* way: they were, that is, writers and transcribers and recordkeepers, deeply concerned with the preservation of the crucial truths which the words of prophets—and, ultimately, the words of Jesus Christ Himself—contained. In the *Annotated Book of Mormon*, the concern shown by Book of Mormon figures with preserving truth in the face of pluralism and dissent, in the midst of constant fears over lost records or misunderstood traditions, is an echo of the diligent, necessary work which Hardy has committed himself to here.

As a reader and believer (however heterodox) who is looking at the final third of my life, this remarkable accomplishment seems to fit my spiritual mood marvelously well. Historiographic and theological polemics have become less engaging to me, whereas understanding better the stories I have inherited—which in turn show me people trying to hold on to, sometimes losing, but always striving to recover or preserve, their own stories of faith and hope—have become more so. Thus for me, Hardy's project is a wonderful further scholarly step. It makes possible a reading, an interpreting, and a critiquing of this

keystone text that puts us (as it puts, in my imagination, Hardy himself) in the same position as the prophet Mormon in the old Arnold Friberg painting: sitting alone, surrounded by records (as Hardy surrounds us with a footnotes and references), reading and making notes, trying to see a story, which includes one's own story, through to its conclusion. I've owned many copies of the Book of Mormon in my life, but I know this is one that I will stick with until the end.

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Devotional Approaches to the Academic Study of the Bible and Book of Mormon

Charles Swift and Nicholas J. Frederick, eds. *They Shall Grow Together: The Bible in the Book of Mormon.* Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University and Deseret Book, 2022. xxii + 500 pp. Hardcover: $29.99. ISBN: 9781950304301.

Reviewed by Colby Townsend

This collection of essays is the fourth volume in the Book of Mormon Academy Series from the Religious Studies Center at Brigham Young University. Earlier volumes focused on Abinadi, Ether and the Jaredite records, and Samuel the Lamanite. This volume brings together fifteen

essays of varying sizes and quality. These essays look at a variety of aspects that connect the biblical world to the Book of Mormon or analyze how the Book of Mormon takes up biblical themes or ideas, or quotes, alludes to, or echoes direct text from identifiable sources within the King James Bible. The essays throughout the volume have a devotional setting in mind from beginning to end and are thus not going to be of interest to scholars working in broader fields of American religion unless they are studying how scholars within Mormonism approach issues relating to how the Book of Mormon engages with the Bible and related topics. Some of the essays demonstrate deep engagement with biblical studies and knowledge about the field, while others are only superficially aware of the scholarship. For the most part, though, this collection deals with questions relevant to an educated Mormon audience and tries to provide answers specifically to academically minded members of that reading audience.

Some of the authors engage directly in apologetics, often in more responsible ways than has been done in the past in Mormon circles, but others fall into what I consider problematic apologetic spaces. An example of the latter is an essay that continues the apologetic attempt to explain the "skins of blackness" that the Lamanites receive as a curse after Laman and Lemuel are separated from Nephi and his group. These attempts to explain away the text and create an alternative explanation are problematic for many reasons, but in this attempt, Jan J. Martin creates out of whole cloth a scenario where Lamanites gave themselves tattoos. This deals more directly than much previous scholarship in academic Mormon circles with the fact that the Lamanites are described not as wearing dark clothing—which at least one previous essay has argued—but as having dark skin (and often only wearing "a short skin girdle about their loins" [Enos 1:20], so not much clothing at all). The problem here, like this previous argument, is that the explanation shifts the one doing the action of the curse from God to the Lamanites, rather than God cursing the Lamanites with something that then continues through each generation, implying an inherited trait through

bloodlines. The description in the Book of Mormon follows far more closely the rhetoric surrounding interracial marriage, what would later come to be called "miscegenation."[1] Although similarly problematic, at least previous iterations of this argument were grounded in the text. For her argument, Martin makes up an entire series of possibilities about how Lamanites came to give themselves tattoos and why Nephite authors never mentioned them. The main impetus for these kinds of apologetic arguments seems to be an attempt to remove the Book of Mormon from the racism inherent in most early American literature, and thereby distance the book from its historical context. It is unclear to me whether or not Martin is aware that portraying global Indigenous communities' practices of tattooing in this light similarly racializes the practices that she describes (i.e., by connecting them to a curse). Criticizing this essay is also somewhat uncomfortable because it highlights another weakness of the volume: This is the only standalone essay, in a book of fifteen essays, that is written by a woman. The only other woman in the volume wrote with a male co-author.

There are some essays in this volume that I think will be of interest to scholars that study the reception history of the Bible in Mormon circles. Daniel L. Belnap's essay delves deeply into how some authors of the Hebrew Bible conceptualized execution and the implications execution, especially of being hung on a tree, had for understanding the individual's status with deity. Belnap's writing is dense and welcome reading in the context of Latter-day Saint work on the Bible in the Book of Mormon. In another example, Nicholas J. Frederick examines how some of the texts attributed to Paul appear throughout the Book of Mormon in subtle ways, rather than through lengthy quotations. This is incredibly important work, since some recent scholarship on the study of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon has cast doubt on scholars' abilities to do exactly this kind of work (i.e., identifying more subtle uses of a range

1. Elise Lemire, *"Miscegenation": Making Race in America* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 4.

of biblical passages in the Book of Mormon).[2] I think this volume will be one that BYU undergrads, grads, and alumni who have an interest in scholarly study, mixed with a heavy portion of devotional argumentation and evidence, will find interesting. There were times, though, in my reading experience where I had to wonder if the authors were mostly writing to each other, their colleagues, and the leadership in BYU's Religious Education department more than any other audience.

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The Wisdom of Fools

James Goldberg, Nicole Wilkes Goldberg, and Mattathias Singh. *Tales of the Chelm First Ward.* By Common Consent Press, 2024. 400 pp. Paper: $13.95. ISBN: 978-1-961471-03-0.

Reviewed by Sarah Nickel Moore

Picking up *Tales of the Chelm First Ward* is rather like picking up a chunky, beaded necklace that you might find at an esoteric gift shop that smells of incense and sells various crystals, tarot decks, and innocuous souvenirs for your loved ones back home. (You would be just as likely to find such a shop off the Royal Mile in Edinburgh, Scotland, as on a gravel road in McMinnville, Tennessee.) The necklace has a nice heft; the beads are a bit eclectic and chaotic but, taken together, they form a delightfully cohesive piece of art.

2. Joseph M. Spencer, *A Word in Season: Isaiah's Reception in the Book of Mormon* (University of Illinois Press, 2023), 7, 226n30.

Tales of Chelm is a delightful collection of short stories centering on the follies of a small church congregation in Chelm, Poland. You, of course, already know that Chelm is (in)famous for the disproportionate number of fools that live there, due to an accident when the angel of God who was assigned to evenly distribute fools around the world tripped in Poland, leaving the town "fool-flooded and wit-less" (xii). Each of the stories offers the kind of guileless wisdom you could only find in a place where "the wisdom of the world is foolishness with [Chelm]" (1 Cor. 3:19). Indeed, when visiting Chelm you will almost certainly encounter Fruma Selig, a Relief Society president who loves to magnify her calling and who recently learned, much to her distress, that it is tragic to have a child marry "outside the church" (4). You may watch as Fruma carries this news to the ward council, where they earnestly discuss what exactly it means to marry "outside the church." It may take several meetings and a well-intended, but confusing, church activity, but they will finally determine that marrying in the Church means to marry someone who lives within the geographical boundaries of the Chelm First Ward. And although this discovery is a comfort to Fruma, who has one daughter soon to be married at the local city hall, she is also heartbroken for her other daughter, who will be tragically married in the distant Latter-day Saint temple in Freiburg, Germany. You may be tempted to correct Fruma, to explain that a marriage that starts in a temple is exactly the kind of "in" marriage encouraged by church leadership. But you pause. And you listen. And you realize that, perhaps, the secret to a happy marriage lies more in the ongoing support of a community, and less in a single location. And like Fruma, you begin to suspect that "everything was somehow all right" (19).

Perhaps I misspoke earlier. Reading *Tales of Chelm* is less like choosing a beaded necklace and more like returning to your childhood school. You walk through the same double front doors. The main hallway still leads through the school. You walk into the classroom where you spent countless hours staring out through the window. The desks are even in the same place, the pencil sharpener still hangs from the wall, and the

floors are still the same scuffed linoleum tile. But the posters are different. And the walls of the classroom seem shrunken, as if you don't quite fit properly in this room anymore. The tree outside the window is larger, while the desks inside seem smaller. When you visit the Chelm First Ward, everything seems to be in its proper place, but somehow . . . different. Everyone in the congregation has a calling, the ward council is well intentioned and ineffective, the primary children sing with gusto—even the foyer has well-worn couches, scuffed walls, and regular attendance.

And yet.

And yet the people of Chelm invite you to see the familiar in a new way. Zelda invites you to see the foyer as a place of quiet worship, where the small tear in the couch and orange crayon mark on the wall are evidence of community. Bishop Levy asks you how to assign callings to difficult members, despite knowing that "God did not have a strong track record of stopping people just because there might be a disaster" (108). You even find yourself reconsidering the adage of the wise man and the foolish man, when an object lesson reveals that structures built on a pile of hard rocks are more likely to fall down than those built on a bed of soft sand. You find yourself singing along with the Chelm First Ward Primary:

> The wise man built his house so it would stand
> The wise man built it somewhere on the land
> The wise man built a house like God had planned
> And he didn't let the rains get him down.

About three-quarters of the way through *Tales of Chelm*, you start to get a little worried. These people are starting to make sense, you realize. You step away from the book for a bit to pick up something familiar, something grounding. Perhaps, like me, you reassure yourself with the cadences of Chaucer, peel an orange, and go for a walk. You then pick up the book back up and return to Chelm.

You find yourself in bed with Shayna and her despondent husband. Since moving to Chelm, Stefan has become more and more disoriented as he tries to make sense of the town's chaos. Trying to comfort her

husband, Shayna retells the old Jewish tale of the rabbi and the king. The kingdom's grain supply is tainted, she says, and will cause everyone to go mad. There is only enough good grain left for two people, who could remain sane while everything around them spins into chaos. They choose, together, to reject sanity and eat the tainted grain along with the rest of the kingdom with the precaution that they mark their foreheads first, so that when they gaze upon each other they will know that "of all the people in the world, we, at least, will know that we are insane" (257).

You gaze at the book. The book gazes back. And you sigh softly, accepting, perhaps, that you, like the rest of Chelm and perhaps the world, are insane.

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Transcending Both Orthodoxy and Disbelief

David G. Pace. *American Trinity: And Other Stories from the Mormon Corridor.* By Common Consent Press, 2024. 188 pp. Paper: $11.95. ISBN: 978-1961471023.

Reviewed by Sarah Nickel Moore

American Trinity: And Other Stories from the Mormon Corridor is a collection of short stories that grapples with the inescapable loneliness of disillusionment, while offering a glimmer of hope in a conviction

that "transcends both orthodoxy and disbelief" (188). Immersed in the Mormon experience, Pace's writings do not shy away from the grief, fear, and disorientation that so often accompany a so-called loss of faith. In prose that sometimes rivals Hemmingway for its brutality, Pace delivers characters that confront the impossibility of human existence in a world in which the first noble truth is the inevitability of suffering.

Pace frames his stories by utilizing the mythos of the "Three Nephites"—apostles of Christ who, according to the Book of Mormon, chose to remain on Earth, ministering unto its inhabitants, until the Second Coming. In so doing, they linger in the world for two thousand years in a state of undeath: eating, walking, breathing, and yet completely separate from everyone surrounding them. Of all the people who have lived and died, they alone seem to have perfected the command to be "in this world but not of it" (John 15:19). It is into this liminal space that Pace presses: The characters in Pace's stories ask us to sit with them in the discomfort of existence in the isolation of faith—however it manifests—and the inability to move on.

The collection opens with the story of Zeb, the youngest of the Three Nephites, who has reached the point in which his ongoing ministering is no longer sustainable. He seeks for connection with the people surrounding him by craving the one human experience he cannot have: death. He finds himself at the theater, again and again, participating in the "vicarious life on stage" until its "pre-digested" suffering becomes sterile and too easily "dismissible once [he] walks out the door" (21). So he follows the only option left to him and he seeks out the Nephite god to beg release. When the sleeping god does not respond to his pleas, he finally bids Him, and his faith, goodbye, "not as I want Him to be, but as He is" (23).

What follows is a collection of stories that (re)create Zeb's journey. We encounter Jack, drowned in a river, whose unfound body remains in that same liminal space Zeb wandered for so many years. We find Zeb again in the awkward tension between the two strangers Paul and Saul, religious doppelgängers of Mormon and Jewish faith who find

themselves sharing a hotel bed. Like Paul, we consider the "second skins" we variously cover ourselves with—the garment and the *kippah*, the circumcised foreskin shared by Mormons and Jews alike, and finally the "thin skin of a plane" that separates us from death as we fly, the flimsy coverings we use to hide from God, others, and ourselves (41, 44–45). Pace demands that we acknowledge the cowardice of a faith that cannot offer healing through justice, for "justice requires courage" (94). Queerness and airplane travel reoccur in "Flying Bishop" as Danny's queer self-loathing clashes with his desire to be seen as "good, truly good" (127).

Magic realism infuses the text more and more as the collection progresses. High in the Himalayas, a mangy, whining, clinging puppy becomes a metaphor for failure in Eli's life—failure in marriage, in faith, in himself. The metaphor lies so thick in the dog's dark fur that it is impossible to separate the creature itself from the weight of all it represents, and the eyes of the Buddha statue, watching Eli as he holds the pup, seem sentient, if indifferent, to their joint suffering. Later in "Angels in Utah" we encounter tiny Ministering Angels, mysterious angels who monitor the progress of the redemption of the dead and the living and in so doing turn Salt Lake City into a surveillance state. Finally, "Dreamcatcher" offers a talking Sphynx, a reticent but sentient statue, and an owl who snatches the "dreams of the city" (180). *American Trinity* ends as it begins by weaving together reality and myth to enable us to see how even the most ordinary of moments is imbued with the heavy weight of . . . something. An unanswered question, the reach of eternity, and the absurdity of life.

The unflinching honesty of these tales brings Pace—and Zeb—together in the belief that the real threat to our lives is not disbelief or secret wars but rather the loss of a record, of a book—not the loss of *our*selves but of the "literary self" (22). Pace's stories here are a type of sacrificial offering to Zeb, a gift that gives voice to those whose lives have "passed away as it were unto us a dream" (22).

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Opening Hearts and Minds and Chapels

Kerry Spencer Pray and Jenn Lee Smith, eds. *I Spoke to You with Silence: Essays from Queer Mormons of Marginalized Genders.* Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2022. 202 pp. Paper: $24.95, ISBN: 978-1-64768-079-3

Reviewed by Robert A. Rees

Kerry Spencer Pray and Jenn Lee Smith have given an invaluable gift to the Latter-day Saint community in gathering and editing this impressive collection of stories by and about LGBTQ+ Mormons. These stories open closets and unveil histories that, in turn, hopefully, will open not only hearts and minds but also arms and chapels for a growing segment of our culture that too often has been marginalized and kept in the shadows or imprisoned by our ignorance.

I finished reading the thirty-nine stories in this collection on the same day the reading from the Come Follow Me lesson included Alma 4. Alma, witnessing the discrimination by members of the Church against the poor, the hungry, the naked, the oppressed and others from whom they have withheld comfort and fellowship, uses an unusual construction in noting that they have been led by "one piece of iniquity to another" (Alma 4:11). In seeing their unequal treatment, not in general, but rather in "pieces," I believe Alma intends us to see such treatment in its multiple specific and concrete ways—and to see its contagion. We are told, "Seeing inequality, [Alma] began to be very sorrowful" (Alma 4:15), which describes my feelings upon reading some of the stories in this collection, which are described aptly by Lisa Diamond in her foreword as "powerful, absorbing, inspiring and heartbreaking" (ix).

In their introduction, Pray and Smith focus on the paucity of queer Mormon women's voices in the conversations and dialogues that have taken place over the past seventy years, a time in which this community

has become increasingly visible and increasingly marginalized in Mormon culture. They note, among other realities, that, traditionally, female queerness, just as female sexuality, has been neither as visible nor as seriously considered as male queerness and sexuality. This book is a bold, essential step toward correcting that inequity.

Pray and Smith organize their stories into four categories: "Essays on Identity," "Essays on Relationships," "Essays on Shame, Suicide and the Closet," and "Essays on the Church." The stories in "Essays on Identity" include the complexity of queerness with the added issues of race (Jenn Smith's "Immersive Theater"), race and disability (Melissa Malcolm King's, "The Silence That Echoes"), and autism (Mette Harrison's "My Agender, Autistic Mormon Life"). Other stories deal with the complexities of being trans in a strictly binary culture. In "I Give You a Name (& This Is My Blessing)," Aisling "Ash" Rowen reports declaring as a twelve-year-old, "I'm no good at being a girl, and I never will be! I don't get it! I don't know what's wrong with me! I'm doing it wrong!" (32). Years later, accepting their real identity, they announced triumphantly, "I'm trans! . . . I know it, and I know God knows it, and I cannot deny it!" (36).

By way of contrast, in his story, Frank Pellet, a "44-year-old software developer employed by the Church," boldly announces his recent revelation that he is "a transgender woman" (26) "wholly attracted to women, and my wife in particular" (27). As a faithful, recommend-holding couple, they plan to remain true to their marriage covenants and trust God for whatever happens in eternity. That kind of trust is common among the authors of these narratives. At odds with the Church over their sexual desires and gender identities, many hope for human acceptance in this world and Divine acceptance in the world to come.

The section "Essays on Relationships" includes, as one would expect, a wide variety of relationships within the LGBTQ+ spectrum. One I found particularly moving is "I Spoke to You in Silence" by

"Anonymous." It recounts a decades-long close friendship between two women in love with one another but reluctant to act openly to affirm or express that love. Both, married and with children, and aware of the forbidden nature of their desires for intimacy and aware of its risks, consider leaving their husbands, but remain faithful to their marriages and committed to keeping their families together at the sacrifice of their love. As the narrator summarizes at the end:

> We had never, not even once, crossed the line.
> But we didn't need to touch to have bonded,
> That was the greatest lie of all.
> That this was only a sin if we touched.
> That this was only *real* if we touched.
> That this . . . it can't be gay if you never, ever touch.
> But I loved you.
> I loved you.

So much love spoken over so many years with so much silence. The story ends with these sad words, "I don't know if you ever heard."

Some of the stories are about finally finding queer love (often after an arduous, painful journey) and then celebrating it. In "Ordinary Magnificent," coeditor Pray, once married to a gay man and now married to a woman, says, in speaking of queer relationships: "Our identities and relationships, as different as they seem, aren't defiant. We are as we were created, and this is meaningful. Our inability to convey the strange, mythic beauty of our human variety doesn't diminish it" (82). In recounting a small ordinary moment of shared, intimate tenderness, the kind that takes place in any ordinary loving relationship, she says: "That is what it [queer love] means. In this life, in other lives, throughout history, which is all it has ever meant" (82).

In her introduction to "Essays on Shame, Suicide and the Closet," Kimberly Anderson cites research showing that nearly three fourths (73.4 percent) of LGBTQ+ people raised in the Church have been exposed to "strong damaging language" (106). Claiming that she herself

is "an expert on shame, guilt, fear, the closet and suicidality" (103), Anderson reveals that the only thing that kept her from taking her own life was "not knowing how to operate" the hunting rifle owned by her adopted father (104).

The stories in this section chronicle how extremely difficult it is, especially for young people, to continually hear from the pulpit or the congregation that "anything other than straight and cisgender is a tragic, sinful character flaw. One that will keep them from joining with their family in Celestial Glory for the remainder of eternity" (105). I do not know the statistics on suicide in Utah these days, but I do know that for years it was ranked among the top ten states in the nation in the percentage of its population who committed or attempted suicide.

Although the fourth group of these stories falls into the category "Essays on the Church," nearly all the stories in this collection could be classified as such. The narrators of these stories identify the reason why the Church is so inhospitable to them. As Pray and Smith summarize so succinctly, "On a doctrinal level, queerness represents an existential threat not only to the salvation of the individual, but to the celestial family" (3). That threat is evident throughout this collection. Perhaps the most powerful story in the entire collection is Jaclyn Foster's "God Sits in My Kitchen Sometimes." This brief story is about a teenage girl who fears God will reject her for being bisexual. Ostensibly in a dream, she writes that coming home from school one afternoon and finding God sitting in "the kitchen of her childhood home" (195), she finally gets the courage to reveal her secret to her Heavenly Father. She says that instead of rejecting her, God (whom she intimately calls "Dad") "swept me straight up in his arms, bundled me into his being that thrummed with protective love" and together they get in the car and drive away. She ends by saying, "I came out to God, and God left the Church with me," adding, "I woke up crying," (195).

In such a short space, it isn't possible to do justice to so many stories, including so many that are well crafted and at times beautifully literary.

What I find affirming is that many of these writers, some exposed to decades of negative, rejecting sentiments—"Homosexuality is a major cause for the decay of the family" (23), "I had been taught that there was something dirty and shameful about being queer" (80), "These are the same ones who tell us queer marriage is somehow worse than attempted murder" (81)—have survived to find authentic love and even joy. That is no small thing. In the conclusion to their introduction, the editors speak of the silences that have been broken by these narratives, adding, "This anthology is just the beginning of breaking that silence. Within this silence is a sea of other silences" (10).

Pray is also the editor of *The Book of Queer Mormon Joy* (Signature Books, 2024), an excellent collection of essays by queer Mormons across the LGBTQ+ spectrum, highlighting the joy and beauty they have found in life. Had I the power, I would require the stories in both of these books to be read by every priesthood, Relief Society, and youth leader in the Church. While I understand how difficult it might be for such leaders to read these narratives, I believe that reading them would make them better leaders, better Latter-day Saints, and better Christians.

It is a colossal failure of our hearts and minds as well as our imaginations that as a Church we have refused to entertain the possibility that some of God's children, including those with whom we share pews, join in singing praises and offering prayers, and with whom we make weekly sacramental covenants, have real, genuine romantic and erotic feelings and desires for bonding, just as heterosexuals do, but with members of their own gender or both genders, or that they feel they have been born into bodies with which their true selves are at odds emotionally and spiritually as well as physically. In other words, we have refused to see such people as fully human as ourselves, as fully in need of expressing and celebrating romantic and conjugal love as we, their straight, gender binary fellow members do. Instead of comforting and weeping with them, instead of welcoming them into fellowship, we

have tended to marginalize and exclude them and judge them harshly when they feel unable or unwilling to accommodate to the stringent limitations we have placed on their desire for love.

Read these stories. They will open your mind and touch your heart.

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In Sacred Rebellion: Joseph White Musser

Cristina Rosetti. *Joseph White Musser: A Mormon Fundamentalist*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2024. Paper: $14.95. 128 pp. ISBN: 978-0-252-08775-2.

Reviewed by Cyrus D. Simper

Cristina Rosetti's *Joseph White Musser: A Mormon Fundamentalist* provides a comprehensive and analytically rich examination of Musser's life and theology, delving into his influential role in one of the more schismatic periods of Mormon history. The author's critique of scholars' overemphasis on the institutional perspective and her argument for a more balanced approach that recognizes the pivotal role of individual players in Mormon thought add a fresh perspective to the field. Throughout her monograph, the reader is invited to explore what it means to be part of the broader restorationist revisionist movement that made up early twentieth-century Mormonism. This volume is a must-read for those seeking a deeper understanding of the complexities

of early twentieth-century Mormonism, particularly its fundamentalist branches.

Rosetti's work is thematically structured, offering a multifaceted analysis of Musser's life and doctrinal innovations. She begins with a biographical narrative, tracing Musser's formative years, his ascent within Church leadership, and his eventual excommunication. This biographical foundation sets the stage for a nuanced examination of Musser's theological contributions and his persistent advocacy for what he viewed as the foundational principles of the Mormon faith. It contextualizes them within the broader sociopolitical milieu of his time, underscoring the significance of his life and work in the context of Mormon fundamentalism.

Rosetti provides a comprehensive narrative of Musser's life, emphasizing his unwavering commitment to faith and eventual divergence in the face of institutional change. Born in 1872, Musser was raised in a devout Mormon family. Musser was one of thirty-five children, and polygamy was an intrinsic part of his religious identity. This upbringing profoundly influenced his spiritual development and theological perspectives.

In 1892, Musser married Rose Wimmer, and seven years later, the couple received the second anointing, a sacred ritual believed to bestow the highest spiritual blessings. Despite the spiritual bond they shared, Musser's increasing advocacy for polygamy, amid ongoing legislative and Church opposition, strained their marriage. This personal struggle, along with his familial responsibilities, often intersected with his commitment to his faith, influencing his decisions and theological stances. Rosetti's detailed account of these personal and spiritual conflicts humanizes Musser and adds depth to his character.

Musser remained a fervent advocate for "celestial" or plural marriage, viewing it as a divine commandment and a cornerstone of Mormon theology despite the Church's recurrent renunciations of polygamy. He believed that the 1890 Manifesto, commonly called the

"To Whom It May Concern" statement, did not apply to him or other high-ranking Church officials, as evidenced by their post-Manifesto plural marriages. His steadfast support for the principle eventually led to his excommunication in 1921. This period was highly influential, as changing teachings on celestial marriage created a doctrinal divide between the Church and its members, underscoring the enduring tensions between traditionalist and reformist factions.

Much of the book is dedicated to Musser's role in the study group criminalized under President Grant and comprised of those disillusioned with broader Church narratives. Selected individuals from that study group would later form the Council of Friends under the direction of Lorin Woolley. Rosetti's detailed analysis of Musser's defense of celestial marriage provides important insights into the theological and cultural underpinnings of the fundamentalist movement and its resistance to the government. Rosetti also explores the Church's push to end the practice both publicly and privately, writing that it was "as much a matter of reputation and embarrassment as a matter of policy and obedience (24)."

Rosetti examines the doctrinal disputes and personal conflicts that emerged in the wake of Musser's leadership. The tensions between Musser and others, such as John Y. Barlow and Joseph Lyman Jessop, are presented with a nuanced understanding of the theological and sociopolitical factors at play. This section of the book provides valuable insights into the complexities of religious leadership and the challenge of maintaining unity within a dissident religious movement. Her examination includes a discussion of Musser's writings and sermons, which grew to articulate the significance of the second anointing in achieving spiritual exaltation and maintaining the integrity of the priesthood.

Musser's economic views and advocacy for a United Order form another focal point of the volume, as Rosetti explores his financial difficulties and critiques of the US monetary system, which he believed were ultimately incompatible with the principles of the restored gospel.

In the last chapter, she examines Musser's promotion of the United Order, a system of communal living and economic consecration, within his broader theological framework. Rosetti highlights Musser's writings on tithing and the formation of the United Effort Plan, emphasizing these foundational principles as vital to early fundamentalist theology. These principles, she argues, allowed participants to survive and navigate their treacherous economic environment.

Throughout the book, Rosetti situates Musser within the broader historical and sociopolitical context of Mormonism, particularly during the turbulent period surrounding the Church's renunciation of polygamy. She meticulously examines the legislative pressures and internal conflicts that shaped Musser's beliefs and actions, offering a nuanced understanding of the complex environment in which he operated. The book relies on a diverse array of primary and secondary sources, including Musser's journals, letters, and contemporary accounts. Rosetti's adept navigation of the available materials allowed her to present a detailed portrayal of Musser's life and thoughts. Her inclusion of direct quotations and personal reflections from Musser enables readers to engage deeply with his experiences and theological perspectives.

While Rosetti's work is thorough, expanded analysis of certain topics would be welcome. Further work could elaborate on President Heber J. Grant's centralization of second anointings and its impact on the stratification of authority within the Church. Additionally, a deeper exploration of Musser's relationships with his contemporaries in the Council of Friends would provide a more holistic understanding of his motivations and connections with his eventual successors. Perhaps Weber's theory of routinization of charisma could enhance this analysis.

Overall, Rosetti's book is essential for anyone interested in the history of Mormon fundamentalism. Her meticulous research and engaging narrative shed light on the complexities of Musser's life and his enduring influence on Mormon thought. Her analysis offers a

critical lens through which to explore the intersections of theology, authority, and social change, making the book a pivotal text for ongoing discussions in the field by sociologists, theologians, and historians alike.

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Julie Yuen Yim, *Mary Hath Chosen the Better Part*, 2023,
Chinese brush painting, 27.5" x 23"

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AND CONFRONTING THE BIODIVERSITY CRISIS

Josh Gilman

A version of this talk was delivered on July 14, 2024, to the Döbling Ward in Vienna, Austria.

As a Latter-day Saint who studies sustainability, I have pondered the spiritual practices and beliefs that sustain our faith community over the long term. Prayer, scripture study, worship, and sacred ordinances are core practices that sustain the faith of members and, in turn, the Church itself. All of this happens within the framework of the restored gospel, which provides access to priesthood keys, a living prophet, and continuing revelation. Together, these have enabled remarkable growth since the Church was restored in 1830.

Today, my purpose is to focus on another principle that, although less frequently discussed, is equally vital to the sustainability of our faith, and that is the health of our planet Earth. Specifically, I wish to discuss biodiversity, which is intimately connected to our spiritual well-being, as evidenced by scripture, architecture, and personal spiritual experiences.

What Is Biodiversity?

Wikipedia's definition of biodiversity is simple and elegant: "The variety and variability of life on Earth."[1] If you look closely, you can see

1. Wikipedia, s.v. "Biodiversity," last modified June 13, 2024, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biodiversity.

biodiversity everywhere. From the main entrance of this building here in Vienna, you can see at least twenty unique species of plants—all with different forms and functions. Some highlights are a holly with pointy leaves, a spruce with needles, a horse chestnut with spiky seed-pods, a Japanese pagoda tree with white blossoms, and three varieties of roses. From the main entrance of my home church building in Arizona, you will see a different sight—a hardy community of desert cactuses and shrubs. Together, the unique plants, animals, and eco-systems across the world contribute to the variety and variability of life on Earth.

Biodiversity Is an Inherently Spiritual Concept

To me, biodiversity is an inherently spiritual concept. To demonstrate how let's work through a thought exercise that admittedly requires a little imagination. Suppose you are in Heavenly Father's shoes imme-diately after developing the plan of salvation. You have the theory for the premortal existence, life on Earth, the spirit world, and the three degrees of glory, and the only thing left to do is create the Earth. You might begin by drafting the oxygen levels in the atmosphere. But it gets tricky. If oxygen levels are too low, we all suffocate. If they are too high, all living things could spontaneously erupt in flames. Remember, this is just one of many elements that needs to be right!

One solution to this challenge is biodiversity. Today, the diverse plants and animals around the globe help to regulate the levels of oxygen, carbon, nitrogen, and phosphorus in ecosystems from the Sahara Desert to the Amazon rainforest. The plants and animals we never see—either because they are too small or endangered—play especially important roles in the Earth's life-supporting cycles. Because biodiversity is essential for a healthy planet, a decline in biodiversity can severely impact our ability to gain a body, experience joy, and exercise our agency—all core tenets of the plan of salvation. Perhaps this is why the creation story repeatedly highlights the importance of "everything

that creepeth upon the Earth" (Genesis 1:26; Moses 2:26). Without all of God's creations, the Earth cannot fulfill its divine purpose.

The connection between biodiversity and the plan of salvation is highlighted in the ordinances and architecture of our temples. Stained glass, carvings, paintings, and murals depicting natural landscapes are commonly seen in buildings where our most sacred ordinances take place. One striking example is the Mesa temple, which has a large mural depicting a landscape you might see near Saltzburg, with mountains, a freshwater lake, pine trees, meadows, deer, and birds. This vivid imagery symbolizes the profound connection between the environment and our spiritual progression.

In addition to theological connections in scripture and temples, I have my own spiritual connection to biodiversity. Over the past few years, I have been on quite the spiritual journey. Some years ago, I began to feel that my sense of right and wrong was not shared by many, if not most, of the people and institutions around me. During this period, I was enveloped by conflict, disillusionment, and spiritual turmoil. For the first time in my life, it was unclear how I fit in with the Church, or even if I fit in at all.

One Saturday morning, my wife and I decided to go on a hike in the Superstition Mountains, which are located about one hour east of Phoenix. For centuries, the Superstitions have attracted treasure hunters looking for the Lost Dutchman's gold, which, according to legend, is buried somewhere out there in a long-lost mine.[2] After some light four-wheeling in our Toyota Prius, we arrived at the trailhead and started our journey. Following a steep uphill climb, we came to a rough and rugged canyon surrounded by towering rocks that looked like giant fingers rising out of the ground. After a few moments, I decided it was the most intensely biodiverse patch of desert I had ever seen. We passed by scrub oak, bunchgrasses, yucca, cholla cactuses, barrel

2. Robert Joseph Allen, *The Story of Superstition Mountain and the Lost Dutchman Gold Mine* (Pocket Books, 1971).

cactuses, saguaro cactuses, wild succulents, pine trees, and wildflowers—all growing together. To this day, my wife and I refer to that place as "The Garden of Eden." It was almost like the movie *Holes*—when Stanley Yelnatz and Zero find refuge at the top of God's thumb after running away from Mr. Sir. The only difference being that we did not find the Lost Dutchman's treasure!

However, on that day, I made an important personal discovery. I was reminded that there is beauty in the world. Up there on the mesa, I felt peace. Today, the desert continues to be my preferred place for pondering all things spiritual. In fact, much of this talk was organized in my head as I hiked across sandy washes in the remote desert to the south of my house in Arizona. For me, the idea that the diverse beauty of the Superstition Mountains or the Lower Austrian Alps is solely the result of natural causes—and that there is no higher purpose behind them—is not satisfactory. For me, these places testify of a higher spiritual power.

Church teachings have given me greater appreciation for these principles. In 2022, Presiding Bishop Gerald Causse gave a conference talk titled "Our Earthly Stewardship." In the talk Bishop Causse said, "As God's children, we have received the charge to be stewards, caretakers, and guardians of His divine creations." He goes on to say: "Our Heavenly Father allows us to use Earthly resources according to our own free will. Yet our agency should not be interpreted as license to use or consume the riches of this world without wisdom or restraint."[3]

Our role as environmental stewards has been confirmed by President Nelson. In the spring general conference of the year 2000, then Elder Nelson admonished us to "care for the Earth, be wise stewards over it, and preserve it for future generations."[4] This counsel by

3. Gérald Caussé, "Our Earthly Stewardship," Oct. 2022, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2022/10/31causse?lang=eng.

4. Russell M. Nelson, "The Creation," Apr. 2000, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2000/04/the-creation?lang=eng.

President Nelson parallels a landmark report in 1987 by the Brundtland United Nations Commission, which defines sustainability as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."[5] Because biodiversity is central to the plan of salvation, we have a spiritual responsibility to be good stewards of the environment.

Biodiversity Is Declining Across the Earth Due to Human Activities

How well are we fulfilling our spiritual responsibility to preserve biodiversity? One of the symbols of the American Southwest is the iconic saguaro cactus. Often shown in cowboy western movies, these cactuses are recognizable by their characteristic silhouette, with a tall trunk and two arms pointing skyward. One of the most majestic saguaros I ever saw was on our neighbor's property in Phoenix. This hundreds-of-years-old cactus had everything you want to see in a saguaro: It had the imposing height—easily ten meters high; it had the broad arms—eight or ten extended in a gradual upward curve; it also had the rich color—deep green with no blemishes. It even had a woodpecker nest in the trunk that really tied the whole look together. We thought of it as the talisman of our neighborhood—watching over and protecting our comings and goings.

Then one day it fell over. I came home to see a cleanup crew hacking it to pieces with a chainsaw and loading it onto a trailer to haul it away. A week later, another mature saguaro in our neighborhood fell over. Then others around town collapsed. Saguaros take over one hundred years to reach adulthood, and normally they are a model for stability in the scorching desert. What was causing seemingly healthy saguaros to fall over and die?

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5. World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* (Oxford University Press, 1987).

This happened at the end of last summer, after a series of record-setting heat waves. For every day in July—thirty-one straight days—the daily high temperature was 43 degrees Celsius (110 degrees Fahrenheit) or higher. During July, the nighttime low temperature did not dip below 32 degrees Celsius (90 degrees Fahrenheit) for sixteen straight days.[6] The constant heat stress—day and night—caused the saguaros to collapse.[7]

The heat wave can be attributed to a few factors, one of which is climate change. Human activities are changing the chemistry of the atmosphere, which is leading to altered precipitation patterns and increased temperatures in most areas of the world. Another factor is land use change. In Phoenix, we have transformed the natural desert into a vast expanse of asphalt and concrete, which traps heat during the day and releases it at night. Together, these factors were too much for the desert saguaros in the city.

This is a story that is playing out all over the world. From the Great Barrier Reef to the Amazon rainforest, climate change and land use change are surpassing the natural limits of plants, animals, and ecosystems. Today, most indicators show that biodiversity is declining across all continents. A recent report estimates that 1 million species—spanning all types of life: terrestrial, freshwater, and marine species, are now threatened with extinction.[8] Of particular concern are insects, which

6. Jorge Torres, "July 2023 Sets Multiple New Heat Records Across Arizona," *ABC15 Arizona*, July 31, 2023, https://www.abc15.com/weather/impact-earth/july-2023-sets-multiple-new-heat-records-across-arizona.

7. Terry Tang, "The Extreme Heat in Phoenix Is Withering Some of Its Famed Saguaro Cactuses, with No End in Sight," *Associated Press*, Aug. 2, 2023, https://apnews.com/article/heat-wave-phoenix-cactus-plants-974dfd0a5b19f804837d90a96b567ede.

8. Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), *Summary for Policymakers of the Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy*

are estimated to have already lost between 250,000 and 500,000 species over the last 150 years. Another imperiled group is the amphibians, of which 40 percent are threatened with extinction today.

We Have a Spiritual Imperative to Preserve Biodiversity

Other Christian denominations have spoken in detail about how we should respond to biodiversity loss and climate change. In 2015, Pope Francis wrote a 184-page encyclical titled, "Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home."[9] The Pope outlines how biodiversity loss, pollution, and climate change are rooted in humanity's prioritization of technological development over the health of the Earth. He views the current ecological crisis as a spiritual one, calling for us to undergo an "ecological conversion," which is his term for a spiritual and ethical transformation where we focus less on consumerism and more on humility, gratitude, and love toward God's creations. One of the most compelling arguments in the encyclical is that the world's poor are most vulnerable to the negative impacts of environmental degradation. Throughout the document, Pope Francis frames the need to act in the mandate to love thy neighbor, a cornerstone commandment of Christianity.

The Seventh Day Adventist Church, the Christian Reformed Church, the Greek Orthodox Church, and various Evangelical denominations have all provided similar statements about biodiversity loss and

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Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, edited by S. Díaz, J. Settele, E. S. Brondízio, et al. (IPBES Secretariat, 2019), https://www.ipbes.net/global-assessment.

9. Pope Francis, "Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home," Encyclical, Vatican, May 24, 2015, Vatican (website), accessed July 18, 2024, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html.

climate change.[10] Although the perspectives and language differ, the key points remain the same: (1) Human activities are causing major negative impacts on people and the environment, which are God's creations; and (2) We have a spiritual responsibility to reduce our impact on the environment.

Not surprisingly, these key points are at the heart of Bishop Causse's 2022 talk "Our Earthly Stewardship." In the talk, Bishop Causse stresses that we must respect and care for others with whom we share the Earth by citing Jesus' admonition to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:31). Bishop Causse defines neighbor not by geographic proximity, but by proximity of the heart. This expansive definition includes all people across the Earth who may be negatively impacted by environmental degradation.

Given the spiritual nature of biodiversity and rapid declines due to human activities, it is my belief that we have an urgent spiritual imperative to address global declines in biodiversity. When I say "we," I mean all of God's children on the Earth. I also mean the smaller subgroup of Christians. But I especially mean those who are members of our faith. We share a knowledge of the plan of salvation, which provides the spiritual context necessary for understanding our relationship with nature.

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10. Seventh-day Adventist Church, "The Dangers of Climate Change," Official Statement, General Conference, Dec. 19, 1995, Seventh-day Adventist Church General Conference (website), https://gc.adventist.org/official-statements/the-dangers-of-climate-change/; Christian Reformed Church, "Creation Care," accessed July 18, 2024, https://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/position-statements/creation-care; Theodota Nantsou and Nikolaos Asproulis, eds., *The Orthodox Church Addresses the Climate Crises* (WWF Greece and Volos Academy Publications, 2021), https://acadimia.org/images/pdf_doc_more/2021/02/orthodoxy__climate_crisis_complete.pdf; Dorothy Boorse, *Loving the Least of These* (National Association of Evangelicals, 2022), https://www.nae.org/loving-the-least-of-these/.

Closing Remarks

I will close with a short excerpt of a prayer from "Care for Our Common Home," by Pope Francis.

> Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
> to be filled with awe and contemplation,
> to recognize that we are profoundly united
> with every creature
> as we journey towards your infinite light.

I believe that Heavenly Father created "everything that creepeth on the Earth," just like it says in the creation story, and I believe that our spiritual and physical well-being is intimately connected with our environment. It is my prayer that we can embrace the spirit of the creation by doing all we can to preserve all of God's creatures. I say these things in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

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Julie Yuen Yim, *Mary and Baby Jesus*, 2023,
Chinese paper cutting, 10.5" x 13"

JULIE YUEN YIM, born and raised in Hong Kong, was trained in creating art using Western techniques and media while in school. She weaves Christian themes with her Chinese heritage in her artworks. She has shown in art exhibitions in Hong Kong, different art shows in Utah and the LDS Church's 11th and 12th International Art Competitions, in which she has won two Purchase Awards.