The Testimony of Martin Harris

I cannot thank you enough for the article on Martin Harris (“‘Rest Assured, Martin Harris Will Be Here in Time,’” 20/1 2011: 5–27). This wonderful article added a great deal to my understanding of this great man. I have enjoyed your publication for a number of years, but this article is surely one of the best. My thanks to Professors Black and Porter for sharing their knowledge and insights with us. I was very touched by Martin's consistent and powerful testimony of the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith throughout his life, in spite of the hardships and disappointments he suffered. Thank you again for this outstanding article.

BEN BOEGH

Maxwell Institute Website

Thank you for sharing your website and thoughtful research on many interesting topics. I grew up in Tucson, Arizona, with many Latter-day Saint friends. I have spent time doing sports and other things with some of the “elders” and lately find myself drawn to and interested in LDS sites on the Internet.

Your site looks like a very valuable resource for people wanting to look further into the source documents of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

JONATHAN P. BENSON

ON THE FRONT COVER:
Salvation for Eternity
MICHAEL S. PARKER • 2011

This illustration by Michael Parker was meant to symbolize the central role that ordinances play in salvation for the living and the dead. In the background is a circle that represents the unending nature of eternity. The font stands for all the salvific ordinances. The weight of these ordinances—that is, the responsibility to provide these ordinances—rests on the backs of the twelve tribes of Israel.

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MORMON’S SOURCES
John L. Sorenson
Mormon’s compilation of Nephi’s records into the book that bears his name appears to depend primarily on the plates of Nephi with supplements from other archival records.

“A NATION NOW EXTINCT,” AMERICAN INDIAN ORIGIN THEORIES AS OF 1820: SAMUEL L. MITCHELL, MARTIN HARRIS, AND THE NEW YORK THEORY
Richard E. Bennett
This look at theories of the origins of the American Indian culminates in Mitchill’s New York theory that was in vogue at the time of the publication of the Book of Mormon.

REDEMPTION OF THE DEAD: CONTINUING REVELATION AFTER JOSEPH SMITH
David L. Paulsen, Judson Burton, Kendal J. Christensen, and Martin Pulido
Leaders of the church after Joseph Smith continued to add light and knowledge concerning redemption of the dead.

AN EGYPTIAN CONTEXT FOR THE SACRIFICE OF ABRAHAM
Kerry Muhlestein and John Gee
Middle Kingdom examples of human sacrifice shed light on the sacrifice of Abraham as presented in the Pearl of Great Price.

WORTHY OF ANOTHER LOOK: THE GREAT ISAIAH SCROLL AND THE BOOK OF MORMON
Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks
Some Isaiah passages from the Book of Mormon agree with the Great Isaiah Scroll but not with the King James Version.

NIBLEY AND THE ENVIRONMENT
Terry B. Ball
Hugh Nibley’s passionate views about our stewardship over the earth were informed by the disciplines of history, philosophy, and theology.
When Mormon saw that his Nephite people were about to be exterminated, around AD 380, he set out to “write a small abridgment” (Mormon 5:9) of the tribe’s records. This project began at the last location where the Nephites camped before they finally gathered to the land of Cumorah. The subsistence conditions the Nephites were enduring could not have been anything but harsh; the people were refugees many times over, with uncertain sources of food, clothing, and shelter. Mormon’s writing activity probably extended into the four-year period of preparation for the final battle agreed to by the Lamanite commander, but in any case the abridged history was completed and the archive was buried in the hill Cumorah well before the final conflict (Mormon 6:6).

Consider some of the limitations Mormon faced in realizing his aim.

1. The size of his new record would have to be severely restricted. The account was to be passed on to his son Moroni, who alone would survive the Nephite genocide, and the book had to be portable enough that Moroni could carry it to a safe location.

2. The physical product must be prepared to endure for centuries, and the only suitable technology available at that time called for inscribing a record on thin metal sheets compiled in book form.

3. Of the possible writing systems Mormon could use, only one was concise enough to allow the prepared history to fit on the planned artifact. That was the modified Egyptian script with which the ancient plates of brass brought from the land of Israel, as well as later Nephite sacred records, were inscribed.

4. He must severely discipline his editorial hand so as to construct a narrative of practical length that was faithful to the facts of history related in the archive of records he was summarizing and that would be phrased in a manner he considered appropriate.

5. The work schedule was short. Mormon may have thought he would have only a year to do the writing; it turned out that he had little more than three. He may not have had time even to read through all the archival records in his

Faced with the daunting task of abridging the Nephite records, Mormon supplemented the basic source of “the [larger] plates” with other sacred records.
hands, and there surely would be no time for stylistic fine-tuning or reediting of his account.

Given all these constraints, how did Mormon choose what information to include and what—we can suppose reluctantly—to omit? He tells us that he depended primarily on the writings on “the [large] plates of Nephi” to formulate his narrative. But they were a large record covering more than six hundred years. He still had many decisions to make.

The fundamental format of the plates of Nephi was that of annals. Annals are yearly summaries of salient events. This format is clearly reflected at many points in the Book of Mormon, for example in Helaman 6:15: “And it came to pass that in the sixty and sixth year of the reign of the judges, behold, Cezoram was murdered by an unknown hand as he sat upon the judgment-seat. And it came to pass that in the same year, that his son, who had been appointed by the people in his stead, was also murdered. And thus ended the sixty and sixth year.” That is how Mormon chose to summarize the record for that year.

Generally these annalistic entries were succinct. As an example, Mormon’s record for the twenty-six years documented in Helaman, chapters 2 through 6, averages fewer than seven verses per year. The contents of 4 Nephi are still more compact; the highlights of 285 years are there covered in only forty-nine verses. Mormon apparently considered that short version of the history to include all he wished, or needed, to say concerning the period.

Yet at many points he goes into considerable detail about obscure events and circumstances. A prime example is the account of the assassination of the Lamanite rebel leader Lehonti and of the Lamanite king, as told in Alma 47. It is unreasonable to think that those anomalous scenes were ever recorded in such detail in the official Nephite annals. We are not given as much as a hint of anyone who was an eyewitness of those events and who might have relayed the story to a Nephite record keeper.

This discussion is concerned with where Mormon obtained the information he included in the Book of Mormon. Except for his own short eyewitness entries, he obviously relied heavily on the archival record. What other written sources did he call on? How factually limited were those sources, and on what basis did he choose materials from them for inclusion in his record?

No doubt some will consider this a minor matter of questionable value. I do not. It seems to me that any light that analysis sheds on the Book of Mormon is to the good. If we discover that the materials used to construct the story were chosen or construed in particular ways by its sources and the compiler, the reader deserves to be made aware of that fact. Mormon implies as much by his (or Moroni’s) writing a detailed title page that acknowledges that human factors inevitably intruded into the project. If analysis shows that other influences were at work in the compiling and editing process of which even they were not fully aware, our understanding of the Book of Mormon could be increased by taking those factors into account.

This study also contributes to the persistent question of the authorship of the scripture. When analysis shows the multisource nature of the information in the book, our assurance is confirmed that it was written anciently using the words of a variety of persons and not by any person in the nineteenth century. Mormon’s primary source is obvious: the

FROM THE EDITOR:

Expanding in a major way on his past research, John L. Sorenson gave the second biennial Book of Mormon lecture sponsored by the Laura F. Willes Center for Book of Mormon Research on 8 September 2011 in the Assembly Hall of the Gordon B. Hinckley Center on the BYU campus. He entitled his lecture “Mormon’s Sources.” Dr. Sorenson again demonstrates his careful attention to detail and his ability to synthesize large amounts of data into a coherent theory. In this case, he presents his explanation of the various sources that Mormon used to compose his abridgment of the Nephite record. As with all good theories, this one explains some Book of Mormon anomalies.
larger plates of Nephi. We will review the nature of that record and then look at other apparent sources. Finally we will examine a sample section of the Book of Mormon that sheds further light on our questions.

The (Larger) Plates of Nephi

Mormon reported, “I made this record out of the plates of Nephi” (Mormon 6:6). The “plates of Nephi” in this sense have often been called by Latter-day Saint writers “the large plates of Nephi,” although the scripture itself never uses that exact phrase (only, at Jacob 3:13, “the larger plates”). The plates on which this master record was written were crafted by Nephi, not long after arriving in the American promised land (1 Nephi 19:1), around eleven or twelve years after his group’s departure from Jerusalem. On them he began to engrave a “record of my people,” including that of his father’s migrant party and their “journeyings in the [Arabian] wilderness.” Nephi likely drew this account from records on papyrus that he and his father had kept before this set of metal plates was made. On the plates he began to make “a full account” of the history of his people, specifically meaning to track such topics as “the reign of the kings, and the wars and contentions” of the people he and his successors ruled (1 Nephi 9:2–4). No doubt he was the originator of the annals format that became the norm for the record on these plates.

Subsequently he commanded the Nephite rulers who succeeded him that the history should continue to be recorded “according to the writings of the kings, or those which they caused to be written” (Jarom 1:14) from generation to generation on his plates (Words of Mormon 1:10–11). After kings no longer ruled the Nephites, care of the historical record was shifted to a line of religious leaders (Mosiah 28:20).

Nephi could not have anticipated how many metal plates this secular history would eventually require, so blank sheets of hammered metal must have been added periodically to his original set to accommodate the writings of later generations of historians; but the name of the record, “the plates of Nephi,” was retained for the enlarged set in honor of the founder of the tradition.

There is reason to believe that when successive portions of the master record were added, they were labeled “the book of so-and-so” even though they were integral parts of “the plates of Nephi.” While named after the principal individual who began each section, they sometimes also included records kept by that person’s descendants (e.g., Alma 63:17, “the account of Alma, and Helaman his son, and also Shiblon, who was his son”). It seems reasonable that each of the component books represented a number of metal plates manufactured at the onset of the named scribe’s tenure; these would have been filled up by him and his descendants, after which a new major writer would craft new plates and begin another installment of the ongoing historical record.

Just because a source record existed, that does not mean the writings could be understood in a straightforward manner. The Book of Mormon text reports at several points the difficulty the scribes had in making their statements clear.

We cannot be certain that individual writers on the key record did not use materials beyond the annals format in their entries. At least in one place we learn that a lengthy record was entered on the plates. “The more part of the things which he [Christ] taught the people” of Nephi were recorded on “the plates of Nephi” (3 Nephi 26:7), although Mormon reported that he was commanded not to include them in his record. And given the great detail provided about events for certain years, Mormon clearly exercised his own discretion about what he chose to incorporate in his record; nevertheless, the consistency and dominance of the annals format is apparent throughout his record from Mosiah 1 to Mormon 7.

Just because a source record existed, that does not mean the writings could be understood in a straightforward manner. The Book of Mormon text reports at several points the difficulty the scribes had in making their statements clear (Jacob 4:11; Ether 12:23–25, 40; Mormon 9:33). We may suppose that a similar difficulty was equally felt by all the writers. So when Mormon examined the older writings, he would have faced some problems with those “imperfections.” These obscurities were more than just a matter of the “awkwardness of our hands” that Moroni noted at Ether 12:24. That phrase might refer merely to the technical problem of making proper marks on
our language, we are not able to write” at all (3 Nephi 5:18). “Our language” in this sense obviously refers to their writing system, not to their spoken tongue. Moroni further tells us that these linguistic difficulties would not have occurred had they used Hebrew script, an alphabetic system, to keep their record; in that case there would have been “no imperfection” (Mormon 9:33). (However, he further explained that using Hebrew writing as their primary medium was precluded because that would have required many more metal sheets to accommodate the same record.) The “imperfections” the Nephite scribes reported seem clearly to have resulted from the unforgiving metal. But he went on to describe the problem beyond that, saying, “we behold our weakness, and stumble because of the placing of our words” (Ether 12:25). Moroni implies that the writing system of the Jaredites, which he considered superior to that of the Nephites, accounted for the greater clarity of that earlier record (as suggested by Ether 12:23–24). Thus it appears that the script system the Nephite writers were using contributed to the lack of clarity.

Since Mormon continued with the same writing system with which Nephi began the record, his writing would have suffered the same disadvantages. He said, “there are many things which, according to our language, we are not able to write” at all (3 Nephi 5:18). “Our language” in this sense obviously refers to their writing system, not to their spoken tongue.

Moroni further tells us that these linguistic difficulties would not have occurred had they used Hebrew script, an alphabetic system, to keep their record; in that case there would have been “no imperfection” (Mormon 9:33). (However, he further explained that using Hebrew writing as their primary medium was precluded because that would have required many more metal sheets to accommodate the same record.) The “imperfections” the Nephite scribes reported seem clearly to have resulted from

This example of Egyptian hieratic script is from the Saite period (664–525 BC), which is roughly contemporary with Lehi. The text is from Book of the Dead chapter 17. P. Köln 10207, sheet 4.
the particular writing system they were using to keep their sacred records.

The “characters” used for writing were called by Nephite historians “reformed Egyptian” (Mormon 9:32). This label for their writing system need not imply that the tongue or spoken language they wrote in was Egyptian. What Nephi initially said of the script used for their sacred records was that it consisted of “the learning [and surely the speech] of the Jews and the language [script] of the Egyptians” (1 Nephi 1:2). We know that Egyptian glyphs were occasionally used in ancient Palestine to write the sounds of Hebrew words. Initially, at least, Nephi began his record by writing in this “language of my father” (1 Nephi 1:2), apparently using glyphic signs to represent the Hebrew tongue; yet by the end of the record Moroni said, “none other people knoweth our language” (Mormon 9:34). That may mean that the system of writing they used for their sacred and historical records could convey more than one spoken language.

Based on the sample of characters published as “the Anthon Transcript,” which purports to be a copy of characters from the plates Joseph Smith translated, it is apparent that they were not modeled directly on Egyptian hieroglyphs. They look more like signs of hieratic Egyptian, a parallel sign system related to the hieroglyphs and used by the Egyptians when they employed brush and ink.

Some scholars have inferred that Lehi’s knowledge of Egyptian writing was learned from a contemporary source and probably for a utilitarian purpose, perhaps to engage in trade with that country. If that were the case, he would have learned the demotic form of Egyptian writing, a popularized cursive form of hieratic that was in routine use in Egypt in his day. But there is no indication in the text that this was what he had learned. Instead we infer from Mosiah 1:2–5 that Lehi’s primary reason for learning to use this script was to be able to read the record inscribed on the plates of brass. Having been taught the system, “he could read these engravings, and teach them to his children, that thereby they could teach them to their children” (Mosiah 1:4).

I have argued elsewhere that this manner of writing probably was introduced into northern Israel in connection with the settlement there of the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim, those descended from Joseph, that “virtual Egyptian” whose first-person writings appear on the brass plates. From that source Lehi quoted his ancestor’s words at some length as part of his last testament to his son Joseph (2 Nephi 3:4–22). Nephi too emphasized Joseph’s importance as a principal ancestor of Lehi’s people (2 Nephi 4:1–2). The Nephite system of writing with Egyptian characters seems to have been derived from a version of the hieratic script that came into use to write the Hebrew tongue beginning no later than the time of the original Joseph. (One possibility, pointed out by Gee, is that the sign system used may have been the little-known one labeled by modern scholars “abnormal hieratic,” a “reformed” cursive style developed between ca. 1550 and 1100 BC, the time when the Israelites lived in Egypt.)

The need for extensive memorization by Nephite writers is implied by Mosiah 1:2. Evidently, full mastery of the Nephite script system required that the meanings of hundreds of characters had to be committed to memory, along with a knowledge of their symbolic, geographical, and mythological backgrounds and contexts.
Failure to read a text with complete clarity might have something to do with a point made by Grant Hardy. Nephi, he noted, exclaimed centuries later, “Oh, that I could have had my days in the days when my father Nephi first came out of the land of Jerusalem . . . ; then were his people easy to be entreated, firm to keep the commandments of God, and slow to be led to do iniquity” (Helaman 7:7). But of course that was not true. Hardy comments, “It is hard not to smile at his misplaced nostalgia. Either he has been reading a very different version of early Nephite history or he hasn’t been paying attention.”

Possibly Nephi was confused by the difficulty of reading the old text clearly.

The ambiguities involved in the use of Egyptian characters for expressing the Hebrew language and Israelite culture appear to have been among the problems Mormon and his son encountered in reading the old plates and composing a clear historical record. An additional cause of “imperfections” the Nephite writer reported could have been that since hieratic Egyptian was mainly used to write cursively, its use to engrave a record on the medium of metal plates could mean that minor slips of an engraver’s hand without an effective “eraser” at hand to make corrections could result in misreadings of the characters.9

An even more serious problem for an accurate history would have been the fact that the Nephite annal keepers at tribal headquarters lacked, as far as we can tell, any reliable social apparatus for obtaining information about events taking place outside the capital.

system required that the meanings of hundreds of characters had to be committed to memory, along with a knowledge of their symbolic, geographical, and mythological backgrounds and contexts (compare Enos 1:1 and Mosiah 9:1).

This situation may relate to Nephi’s explanation that the scriptures on the plates of brass “were hard for many of my people to understand; for they know not concerning the manner of prophesying among the Jews” (2 Nephi 25:1), which they could only approach by means of the brass plates record. Nephi knew how to read and interpret that material from his experience living at Judahite Jerusalem in an advantaged household where he studied such matters while growing up. The necessity of a major time investment in order to become thoroughly familiar with the abstruse matters that framed this, or perhaps any, Nephite writing system is confirmed in 3 Nephi 6:32, where we are told that among the Nephites only the rich could achieve extensive learning, presumably because of the greater leisure at their disposal to master the writing system.

It is reasonable that this ambiguity was involved in the problem of “the placing of our words” spoken of by Moroni. Mastery of the meaning of records kept in any Egyptian script required extensive memorizing, but a particular passage might remain problematic. The need for extensive memorization by Nephite writers is implied by Mosiah 1:2, where we are told that King Benjamin’s sons were “taught in all the language [used on the plates of brass] . . . that thereby they might become men of understanding.” Evidently, full mastery of the Nephite script...
men and supplies to reinforce his beleaguered forces, what he said was never communicated to the chief commander, stationed on another front. Probably neither did his reports ever reach whoever was in charge of the annals at that time. At least the larger plates of Nephi seem not to have included any record of Helaman’s operations. If such loose handling of the report of a vital military action was the case, it is even more likely that communications of lesser urgency would have been treated offhandedly.

Other Sources

Supplementary documents were used at certain points in creating Mormon’s narrative. As noted previously, accounts prepared by earlier writers existed in the Nephite library under their own names, either as “books” that were part of the comprehensive larger plates of Nephi’s record or as stand-alone documents. Mormon sometimes referred to these sources. He noted at one point his dependence upon “[Alma’s] own record” (Alma 5:2; chapter 7, heading; 35:16).

Contemporary with Lehi, this bronze tablet from the reign of Pharaoh Necho (610–595 BC) bears Necho’s name and, in the hieroglyphs of the inscription, wishes him a long life. © BIBLE+ORIENT Foundation, Fribourg Switzerland.
He also phrased his account utilizing “the records of Helaman” and “of his sons” (Helaman, heading), and we also read of the “record of Nephi[3]” (3 Nephi 5:10).

These references leave unclear whether the records referred to were on physically separate sets of plates or whether they were merely sections in the expanding plates of Nephi. (The second option appears likely in the case of 4 Nephi, where verse 19 says that Nephi kept this “last record” “upon the plates of Nephi.”)

Sometimes Mormon also depended on other original writings that appear to be behind or beyond the annals, some of which he did not distinctly identify. Some cases where information from supplementary records were seemingly of this sort include

- the text of King Benjamin’s great discourse, Mosiah 2:9 through chapter 5;
- the record on the plates of Zeniff with the account found in Mosiah 9 through 22;
- Alma’s first-person preaching at Zarahemla, Gideon, and Melek quoted in Alma 5, 7, and 8;
- the story of Alma’s and Amulek’s experiences at Ammonihah in Alma 9 through 14;
- the detailed account of the ministry of the sons of Mosiah and their companions among the Lamanites in the land of Nephi and thereabouts, given to us in Alma 17 through 27;
- Alma’s discourses to his sons Helaman, Shiblon, and Corianton (“according to his own record,” Alma 35:16) in Alma 36 through 42;
- Moroni’s translation and abstract of Ether’s history of the Jaredites, prepared and appended by Moroni as the book of Ether; and
- Moroni’s excerpts from the writings of his father, Moroni 7 through 9.

At times Mormon’s sources provide mysteriously detailed information. We are left to infer that he had the advantage of writings by unacknowledged participants whose records are very unlikely to have found a place on the plates of Nephi. Obvious examples are the stories, as noted above, of the assassination of both the Lamanite rebel leader Lehonti and the Lamanite king, and related events (Alma 47).

A particularly strange point of interest is the experience of the Nephite multitude with the risen Savior as recorded in 3 Nephi 19. As his disciples were rapt in prayer to him, he made statements to them (vv. 35–36) that, presumably, they did not consciously perceive, yet the account records his words. How were they documented?

At yet other times Mormon appears to make historical inferences on the basis of quite general information. An instance is the sweeping assertion in 3 Nephi 5:1 that “there was not a living soul among all the people of the Nephites who did doubt in the least the words of all the holy prophets who had spoken.” Also the assertion at 3 Nephi 6:27–28 about the power and procedures of the secret groups of lawyers and high priests is not likely to have been based on information from directly knowledgeable informants. Moreover, Mormon could only have guessed that Jacob3, “seeing that their enemies were more numerous than they, he being the king of the band, therefore he commanded his people that they should take their flight into the northernmost part of the land, and there build up unto themselves a
land had become covered with buildings, and the people were as numerous almost, as it were the sand of the sea” (Mormon 1:7). Obviously, conditions in one land were not well known even in other places not far away. And when Alma’s son Corianton resettled in the land northward, only a modest distance from Zarahemla, he was abruptly dropped from the narrative as though he had gone to another planet (Alma 63:10–11). Clearly, factual reports of events and situations beyond the capital were in many cases lacking, so Mormon’s history must be seen as a minimal record at best. That is, at his best.

A minor kind of mistake is of the sort that every historian and writer encounters at times. Whether they come from a poor memory or errors caused by errant hands (the equivalent of modern “typos”), no writer can avoid a certain number of “slips of the stylus.” They may be among the “faults” alluded to by Moroni on the title page of the Book of Mormon that are “the mistakes of men.” They include the erroneous report of the capture of the city of Nephihah (Alma 51:26; contrast 59:5), and a mistake where the same event is said in one passage to have taken place in the twenty-sixth year of the judges (Alma 56:9) and in another in the twenty-eighth year (Alma 53:22–23). Such flaws show the human side of the historian’s task, although they need not cause us any serious problem in reading the account.

The key sacred records were kept on metal to ensure their permanence; accounts kept on any more perishable substance would, they assumed, become unreadable over time.

The Record Mormon Wrote

The key sacred records were kept on metal to ensure their permanence; accounts kept on any more perishable substance would, they assumed, become unreadable over time.
Mormon said several times that his abridgment could not treat more than a fraction of the historical material found on the large plates of Nephi (Words of Mormon 1:5; Jacob 3:13-14; 4:1; 3 Nephi 5:8; 26:6). How, then, did he make his selection of materials among the records he set out to abridge? His primary criterion comes through repeatedly in his book. The aim was to ensure that his readers, especially the future inhabitants of the American promised land and particularly Lehi’s descendants, grasp the significance for them of the promise and prophecy given to father Lehi: “Inasmuch as ye will keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land” (Jarom 1:9). Actually, it is Amaron’s negative version of Lehi’s dictum to which Mormon gives prime attention: “Inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall not prosper in the land” (Omni 1:6). Even the long sections on warfare emphasize that theme; overwhelmingly, Mormon’s writings depict the Nephites poised on the edge of destruction due to their failure to meet the condition of Lehi’s law of survival. He uses little of his narrative to describe people’s happiness and prosperity. Details of the society in the era of peace following the appearance of Christ among them might interest us, but that was not the point he wanted to underline in his history.

His lessons draw the contrast between good and evil dramatically. His characters emphasize the opposites of obedience and virtue on the one hand versus stubborn villainy on the other. His scoundrels are thoroughly evil and deserve their fates; his heroes are praiseworthy in almost all respects. Sometimes the contrasts are almost over the top. The bad guys inhabiting the city of Ammonihah are wiped out to a man by a Lamanite army, while the virtuous young warriors under Helaman all survive their key battle. Characters in the gray zone of morality are barely noted. Mormon wanted to leave no question in the minds of his readers that good is capital-G Good, and Bad is its polar opposite (note Mormon’s own words on the contrast in Moroni 7:5-19).

How objectively factual were the reports by the original scribes? In many cases, obviously, they put down what they had directly observed, but our experience tells us that different people see the same event or situation in quite different ways. Mormon himself certainly colored some of his reporting with personal interpretation. This stance is often signaled

Mormon’s editing activity was carried out under limitations of time and conditions that were at best highly inconvenient for writing a history.

Mormon gave the following explanation of how he proceeded with his writing project:

After I had made an abridgment from the plates of Nephi, down to the reign of . . . king Benjamin, . . . I searched among the records which had been delivered into my hands, and I found . . . plates [unquestionably among other sets of plates], which contained this small account of the prophets, from Jacob down to the reign of this king Benjamin, and also many of the words of Nephi. . . . [However, the] remainder of my record I shall take from the [larger] plates of Nephi . . . which had been handed down by the kings, from generation to generation. . . . And they were handed down from king Benjamin, from generation to generation until they have fallen into my hands. (Words of Mormon 1:3, 5, 10–11)
by use of a phrase like “and thus we see” (for instance, in Helaman 3:23–31; 4:11–15, 20–26).11

A Sample of Sources
To examine an actual portion of the text displays the complexity of Mormon’s use of ultimate and intermediate sources more clearly than a general discussion. Table 1 lays out twenty-seven factual assertions from Helaman 1 through 3 with my suggestions of the sources Mormon relied on for each.

My interpretation in this table of possible sources may, of course, be in error. It might be that some of the record keepers wrote much more detail on the large plates about certain incidents than seems generally to have been the case, although there is no direct evidence for such exceptionalism, and we still could not explain how the factual information reached the annalist. It seems to me more likely that where lengthy, specific details are included in the narrative, Mormon must have supplemented the primary record by seeking out further facts from one detailed source or another in his archive. I suspect that in some cases his personal curiosity was so piqued that he was motivated to search out “the rest of the story.”

Summary
1. Mormon’s editing activity was carried out under limitations of time and conditions that were at best highly inconvenient for writing a history.
2. He was forced to rely on the official archive of his people for his data. The basic source for his narrative was “the larger plates of Nephi.”
3. These plates were an open-ended master historical record consisting of successive entries engraved by official scribes on metal plates. Major subdivisions consisted of “books” named after primary record keepers that were added throughout Nephite history.
4. Apparently all the Nephite historical documents in Mormon’s possession were written in a script derived from Egyptian hieratic. The nature of this system was such that scribes encountered difficulty in expressing clearly some information and perhaps in reading earlier records with complete assurance.
5. The fundamental format of the master record was annals—yearly summaries of the most salient events known to the record keepers at the chief Nephite centers.
6. The ultimate sources and authors of information processed into this annals format are unspecified; the relevant facts seem to have been assembled by the annalists only in an unsystematic and probably subjective manner.
7. Some of Mormon’s material beyond that in the annals likely came from extended writings of the early primary record keepers that they interlaced with their annal entries.
8. Still other records or documents were also kept in varying detail, at times on different metal plates; a large number were accumulated in the Nephite record collection that Mormon possessed. (Lamanites only occasionally kept written records but had no archive that was mentioned by Nephite scribes.)

In some ways his inspired accomplishment in producing the Book of Mormon was just as surprising and admirable as Joseph Smith’s later achievement in translating the record in such short order.

9. Rarely, short periods of history were written up by the scribes from their personal recollections, possibly with the aid of records kept on perishable materials.
10. Mormon (and Moroni) supplemented his record from the annals by adding material from other documents found in the archive.
11. Mormon acted as far more than an editor in compiling his account; he included comments that interpreted the significance of his materials and filled in gaps in his data with observations about general social and historical situations and trends as he understood them.
12. At no point is there reason to think that Mormon “manufactured” any history. All indications are that what he wrote was fundamentally based on documentary sources available to him.
13. At a few points we are unable to identify the sources for the pieces of information he used. It is clear that the creation of the Book of Mormon was a complicated business. Consider the
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Table 1. Helaman 1–3, analysis of sources
Mormon did not seem to use a sacred implement like the “interpreters” in his creation task!

Mormon and Moroni present their “brief” record to their future readers as a unique kind of interpretative history. They conferred it on the ages to come not as a historian’s history but as a powerful moral message intended to school readers in the lessons the two men had learned in long, arduous service to their people and to their God. They used the best sources they had available in the most efficacious way they knew how. The labor and dedication their work displays have been for our gain and for that of their descendants.

They have my profound thanks.

The combination of all those tasks was a daunting feat, especially given the “field” conditions in which he had to work and his competing duties in commanding his forces as they prepared for the final battle. That he did not find occasion to clarify exactly how he proceeded in his editing or “abridgment” is not surprising.

In some ways his inspired accomplishment in producing the Book of Mormon was just as surprising and admirable as Joseph Smith’s later achievement in translating the record in such short order. And Mormon did not seem to use a sacred implement like the “interpreters” in his creation task!

NOTES

I am honored to participate in this lecture series remembering the studies, life, and legacy of Professor Hugh Nibley. I did not have the privilege of personally knowing Professor Nibley. He retired before I joined the faculty at BYU, but I do happen to have two stories to contribute to the corpus of Nibley lore—both of which, in contrast to many others I have heard, I know to be actually true! Story 1: As part of my master’s degree research I did a study of the ritual theory of myth and its application to the ancient Near East—a topic about which Nibley had much to say. I quoted the good professor several times in the subsequent paper I wrote on the topic and submitted a draft to Nibley’s esteemed bibliographer, Gary Gillum, for review. To this day I am uncertain whether one sentence in the draft I sent to Gillum contained a typo or a Freudian slip. In that sentence I meant to write “according to Hugh Nibley,” but somehow I managed to substitute the letter i for the u in Hugh. Consequently, the sentence read “according to High Nibley.” I much appreciated Gillum’s sense of humor when, rather than suggesting a correction, he simply wrote above the sentence “perhaps.”

Later, while working on my PhD here at BYU, Geza Vermes, the renowned Dead Sea Scrolls scholar, came to give a lecture on campus. I arrived at the lecture hall a little early to hear Dr. Vermes and saw Professor Nibley sitting in the front row. Thinking it an opportunity to get close to the legend, I quietly slipped in a seat in the row just behind him (I wanted to be able to boast to my wife that I sat next
to Hugh Nibley that day.) Shortly after I took my seat, Dr. Vermes arrived. As he made his way to the front, he spotted Professor Nibley and stopped to talk to him. I enjoyed eavesdropping on their conversation. Speaking as one crony to another, Vermes asked how Nibley was doing. With his eyes fixed on Vermes’s balding white head and likely thinking of his own as well, the elderly Nibley responded in Hebrew, “Yesh sheleg al heharim” (There is snow on the mountains). His comment elicited a chuckle from Vermes. I suspect there was something of both humor and pathos meant by Nibley’s response.

While I did not have the chance to know Nibley from personal interaction, like many of you, I feel I have come to know him somewhat through his scholarship. This evening I have been asked to review his thoughts and writings on a rather controversial issue—the environment. Nibley cared deeply about creation and was passionate about our stewardship concerning it. He was fierce in his defense of nature, seeming to feel that in this battle, truth did not need tact—just expression.

A popular folktale concerning Nibley claims that rather than give in to the political and neighborhood pressure to keep his lawn mowed, the eccentric professor simply bought a goat and staked it out in his yard to eat the grass down. His son-in-law and biographer Boyd Petersen observes that while this tale is false, it does reflect Nibley’s dislike for “the idea of trimming or cutting down any living thing”—a
As God’s appointed caretakers of creation, Nibley felt we should labor to improve our environment. He appreciated Brigham Young’s counsel on how the Saints were to care for the earth.

As we might expect, Nibley’s arguments in defense of the environment were not much informed by science but, rather, by the disciplines he knew better: history, philosophy, and theology (he especially resonated with the teachings of Brigham Young on the subject). From these beloved disciplines Nibley drew several principles that seem to have directed his thoughts and influenced his sense of our environmental stewardship.

**Principle 1: Humankind has a divine mandate to properly care for creation.**

In a piece first printed in the October 1972 *New Era* entitled “Man’s Dominion,” Nibley tackled the question of what exactly God meant in Genesis 1:28 when he commanded Adam and Eve to “subdue” and have “dominion” over the earth.² He explained that the Hebrew terms *kivshu* and *rodhu*, translated respectively as “subdue” and “have dominion” in the KJV, “both have a basic root meaning of exerting pressure—that being, however, merely a point of departure for a whole spectrum of derivatives.” He noted that “according to individual taste and temperament,” translators of the terms have variously interpreted them to mean to “plow,” to “violate,” or to “cherish.”³

Nibley felt that a clue to the true intent of the commandment to *kivshu* and *rodhu* could be found in Moses 5:1, “And it came to pass that after I, the Lord God, had driven them out, that Adam began to till the earth, and to have dominion over all the beasts of the field, and to eat his bread by the sweat of his brow” (Moses 5:1). He observed that in this passage the word *till* replaces *subdue* and applies specifically to the earth, while having dominion applies to animals. He then noted that after God commanded the animals to multiply and have joy, he gave the same commandment to Adam and made him “lord” over the whole earth and gave him dominion over it. Accordingly, he reasoned, “lordship and dominium are the same thing.”

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¹ Petersen suggests, that grew out of Nibley’s childhood experiences in the “the lush green forests of Oregon,” witnessing “their destruction at the hands of his own grandfather.”

² Nibley felt that a clue to the true intent of the commandment to *kivshu* and *rodhu* could be found in Moses 5:1, “And it came to pass that after I, the Lord God, had driven them out, that Adam began to till the earth, and to have dominion over all the beasts of the field, and to eat his bread by the sweat of his brow” (Moses 5:1). He observed that in this passage the word *till* replaces *subdue* and applies specifically to the earth, while having dominion applies to animals. He then noted that after God commanded the animals to multiply and have joy, he gave the same commandment to Adam and made him “lord” over the whole earth and gave him dominion over it. Accordingly, he reasoned, “lordship and dominium are the same thing.”

³ Drawing on the original meanings...
of the terms, he further pointed out that the words refer to one who is “the lord of a household,” one who has the responsibility to be a benefactor and care for those under his dominion. Thus, he summarized, man is not to be “a predator, a manipulator, or an exploiter of other creatures but one who cooperates with nature as a diligent husbandman.”

Nibley observed that “the ancients” equated this dominion or lordship with priesthood, “the power to act for God and in His place.” Likewise, Brigham Young taught that “the Spirit of the Lord and the keys of the priesthood . . . hold power over all animated beings.” Thus man is to be in charge of the things God created and see that they are preserved and cared for on God’s behalf.

As God’s appointed caretakers of creation, Nibley felt we should labor to improve our environment. He appreciated Brigham Young’s counsel on how the Saints were to care for the earth. The
prophet instructed, “‘There is a great work for the
Saints to do. Progress, and improve upon, and make
beautiful everything around you. Cultivate the earth
and cultivate your minds. Build cities, adorn your
habitations, make gardens, orchards, and vineyards,
and render the earth so pleasant that when you look
upon your labours you may do so with pleasure, and
that angels may delight to come and visit your beau-
tiful locations.’” Nibley commented, “For Brigham,
improvement meant ‘to build in strength and stabil-
ity, to beautify, to adorn, to embellish, to delight, and
to cast a fragrance over the House of the Lord; with
sweet instruments of music and melody.’”

Specifically, Nibley observed, “the one way man
can leave his mark on the whole face of nature with-
out damage is to plant, and President Young ceaselessly
counseled his people to do as Adam was commanded
to do in Eden—when he dressed and tended the gar-
den: Our work is ‘to beautify the whole face of the
earth, until it shall become like the garden of Eden.’”
As the prophet declared, “‘The very object of our exis-
tence here is to handle the temporal elements of this
world and subdue the earth, multiplying those organ-
isms of plants and animals God has designed shall
dwell upon it.’” Nibley felt Brigham Young gave the
wisest summary of what man’s dominion of the earth
means, “‘Let me love the world as [God] loves it, to
make it beautiful, and glorify the name of my Father
in heaven. It does not matter whether I or anybody
else owns it, if we only work to beautify it and make
it glorious, it is all right.’”

Humankind has a divine mandate to properly
care for creation.

**Principle 2: Spiritual health and environmental
health are linked.**

On 16 February 1989, Nibley delivered a speech
titled “Stewardship of the Air” at a Clean Air Sympo-
sium held at Brigham Young University. He opened
the speech by commenting on the “miasmic exhal-
ations” of Geneva Steel that he had been obliged to
breathe over the past forty years of his life. He then
observed that

we learn even from the Word of Wisdom, body
and mind—the temporal and the spiritual—are
inseparable, and to corrupt the one is to corrupt the
other. Inevitably our surroundings become a faithful
reflection of our mentality and vice versa. The right
people, according to Brigham Young, could convert
hell to heaven, and the wrong ones heaven to hell.
“Every faculty bestowed upon man is subject to
contamination—subject to be diverted from the
purpose the Creator designed it to fill.”
Nibley continued, “This principle meets us in the law of Moses: ‘Ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood it defileth the land. . . . Defile not therefore the land which ye shall inhabit, wherein I dwell: for I the Lord dwell among the children of Israel’ (Numbers 35:33–34).” Then turning to the Doctrine and Covenants, Nibley added, “Today we are told that ‘the whole world lieth in sin, and groaneth under darkness and under the bondage of sin. . . . For shall the children of the kingdom pollute my holy land?’ (D&C 84:49, 59). ‘I have promised . . . their restoration to the land of Zion. . . . Nevertheless, if they pollute their inheritances, they shall be thrown down; for I will not spare them if they pollute their inheritances’ (D&C 103:13–14).”

Like Brigham Young, Nibley seemed to feel that wickedness could pollute the land just as much as industry. As the Saints first settled in the Great Basin, Brigham Young admonished them, “‘You are here commencing anew. The soil, the air, the water are all pure and healthy. Do not suffer them to become polluted with wickedness. Strive to preserve the elements from being contaminated by the filthy, wicked conduct and sayings of those who pervert the intelligence God has bestowed upon the human family.’”

Nibley resonated with the prophet’s instructions to “‘keep your valley pure, keep your towns as pure as you possibly can, keep your hearts pure, and labour what you can consistently, but not so as to injure yourselves. Be faithful in your religion. Be full of love and kindness towards each other.’” Commenting on Brigham Young’s instructions, Nibley observed, “There is nothing mysterious or abstruse in this identifying of the defilement of man with the defilement of nature.”

Nibley found an endorsement for the doctrine in a bicentennial address delivered by President Spencer W. Kimball.

But when I review the performance of this people in comparison with what is expected, I am appalled and frightened. Iniquity seems to abound. The Destroyer seems to be taking full advantage of the time remaining to him in this, the great day of his power. . . . I have the feeling that the good earth can hardly bear our presence upon it. . . . The Brethren constantly cry out against that which is intolerable in the sight of the Lord: against pollution of mind, body, and our surroundings.

The ability to appreciate the beauties and wonders of nature is a spiritual gift. That gift—that ability to appreciate nature and loathe its destruction—has been essential to our survival.

Indeed, Nibley felt that spiritual health was to be found in nature. Drawing again from the teachings of Brigham Young, he observed, “At a time when ‘free as air’ signified that a thing was of negligible worth, Brigham Young was insisting that the greatest physical asset the Saints possessed and one they should treasure most highly was pure air. ‘What constitutes health, wealth, joy, and peace? In the first place, good pure air is the greatest sustainer of animal life.’ ‘The Lord blesses the land, the air and the water where the Saints are permitted to live.’”

The ability to appreciate the beauties and wonders of nature is a spiritual gift, in Nibley’s opinion. He agreed with Brigham Young’s teaching “When the Spirit of revelation from God inspires a man, his mind is opened to behold the beauty, order, and glory of the creation of this earth.” That gift—that ability to appreciate nature and loathe its destruction—has been essential to our survival, Nibley observed. “Without being able to tell exactly why,” he said, “we take immediate offense at such statements, made by men in high positions, as ‘I do not believe in conservation for conservation’s sake,’ or ‘I do not believe in clean water for the sake of clean water.’” But we
soon learn that our shocked first reaction is a healthy one; when the forest is reduced to the now proverbial one redwood, it is too late.”19 “The voice of revelation has told the Saints . . . where to put their priorities,” Nibley declared; as the Lord said, “And out of the ground made I, the Lord God, to grow every tree, naturally, that is pleasant to the sight of man; and man could behold it’ (Moses 3:9). Trees were made in the first instance to be looked at and enjoyed,” Nibley continued. “We are aware of that before research and experience show our intuition to be quite sound—but the feeling for beauty must come first if we are to survive.”20 “We should love the earth,” says Brigham. ‘We should love the works which God has made. This is correct; but we should love them in the Lord.’ We should look forward to a time when this earth ‘will be given to the Saints, when they and it are sanctified and glorified.’”

Spiritual health and environmental health are linked.

**Principle 3: Creation obeys, reverences, and provides for man, as man righteously cares for creation.**

Nibley mingled the teachings of latter-day prophets with ideas and traditions from Jewish midrashic, mystical, pseudepigraphic, and apocryphal texts to teach that as God’s appointed steward over creation, man enjoys the reverence and cooperation of nature only as he righteously and lovingly rules over and cares for it.

Brigham Young taught that “the dominion God gives man is designed to test him, to enable him to show to himself, his fellows, and all the heavens just how he would act if entrusted with God’s own power.”

Nibley noted that the Zohar, the foundational work of Jewish mystical thought known as Kabbalah, teaches that “even the fierce beasts of prey fear man . . . as long as he keeps his covenant, his kingly dignity, and his eye fixed on God in whose image he is” and concludes that “God formed man in his own heavenly form and made him to be Lord over them. Whenever man stands upright and lifts his eyes toward heaven, then all the animals raise their heads too, and look to man, fearing and trembling in his presence.”22 Nibley found in other ancient Jewish literature traditions that Adam, Noah, and Abraham each had exceptionally nurturing and loving relationships with the creatures of the earth and were blessed for and by it.23

However, if man fails in his duty to care for creation, disaster follows. The second-century-bc writings of Ben Sirach teach that “the rule over the world is in the hand of God . . . and at the right time He setteth over it one that is worthy,” but, Nibley summarizes, “if that rule is ever exercised in an arbitrary or arrogant manner, it is quickly taken away and given to someone else.” Furthermore, the pseudepigraphic Book of Adam and Eve warns Adam, if you fail in your duty, “the beasts, over whom thou didst rule, shall rise up in rebellion against thee, for thou hast not kept my commandment”; and, Nibley adds, “all creatures are quick to recognize the hand of the oppressor and impostor.”24 According to what Nibley describes as “one of the best-known teachings of the Jews,” “when man (Israel in particular) falls away from God, all nature becomes his enemy.”25

Nibley saw in these ancient texts an endorsement for what he recognized as a “favorite theme” of Brigham Young, which, he summarized, teaches that “the dominion God gives man is designed to test him, to enable him to show to himself, his fellows, and all the heavens just how he would act if entrusted with God’s own power; if he does not act in a godlike manner, he will never be entrusted with a creation of his own, worlds without end.” All the rest of God’s creations will surely abide by God’s commandments and progress to exaltation, but man will only join them in paradise and happiness by doing the same. Nibley saw in this doctrine an admonition to “proceed with reverence and care” and scolded that “it is only because the Latter-day Saints are ignorant of these things, according to President Young, that God has not already cursed them for their brutal and callous treatment of God’s other creatures.”26 He further reminded us that while Aristotle, the doctors of Alexandria, and normative Judaism and Christianity reject the notion that animals have any rights or ability to reason or speak, the Latter-day Saints “have divine knowledge” that each creature God created has a spirit, was created...
spiritually before receiving a body, and, as President Joseph F. Smith taught, has “an equal right to live.” Nibley summarized, “Granted there are different levels and degrees that exist within as well as between species, still it is the privilege of every form of life to multiply in its sphere and element and have joy therein. Adam’s dominion was a charge to see to it that all went well with God’s creatures; it was not a license to exterminate them.”

Nibley saw irreverent treatment of creation as a rejection of the gospel and reminded all that Brigham Young warned, “Where people refuse the gospel . . . that land eventually . . . will become desolate, forlorn, and forsaken,” for nature will refuse “her bounties.” “Having made himself allergic to almost everything by the Fall,” Nibley explains, “man is given the choice of changing his nature so that the animal and vegetable creation will cease to afflict and torment him, or else of waging a truceless war of extermination against all that annoys him until he renders the earth completely uninhabitable.”

But, as we righteously and gently use the earth and its resources, it willingly provides for us, Nibley believed. He reminded us that the products of the earth are “to please the eye [that always comes first!] and to gladden the heart; yea, for food and for raiment, for taste and for smell, . . . to be used with judgment, not to excess, neither by extortion” (D&C 59:18–20). We may neither waste nor exploit what we find around us; Merriam-Webster defines extortion as the obtaining “from an unwilling or reluctant person by physical force, intimidation, or the abuse of legal or official authority.” We have a right to take what we need, but when we would extend that right to justify taking things we do not need, that is extortion, and is expressly forbidden: “It is our privilege and our duty,” says Brigham Young, “to search all things upon the face of the earth, and learn what there is for man to enjoy, what God has ordained for the benefit and happiness of mankind, and then make use of it without sinning against him.” Sinning against him? “It is not our privilege to waste the Lord’s substance.”

This understanding appears to have led Nibley to be a promoter of recycling. He wrote, “All waste on this earth becomes garbage—waste is in fact the proper English word for garbage. To throw anything on the trash heap is to cast it aside in contempt; what do we know about its true worth? Who are we to despise what we do not understand?” Nibley reminded us of Brigham’s counsel, “Never
let anything go to waste. Be prudent, save everything!' Even sewage has its uses: 'Everything, also, which will fertilize our gardens and our fields should be sedulously saved and wisely husbanded, that nothing may be lost which contains the elements of food and raiment for man and sustenance for beast.'

Creation obeys, reverences, and provides for man, as man righteously cares for creation.

Principle 4: We should not sacrifice environmental health on the altar of temporal wealth.

Nibley was deeply troubled by the refusal of some Latter-day Saints to recognize the sanctity of all life. To illustrate his distress he recounted the following experience.

One morning just a week after we had moved into our house on Seventh North, as I was leaving for work, I found a group of shouting, arm-waving boys gathered around the big fir tree in the front yard. They had sticks and stones and in a state of high excitement were fiercely attacking the lowest branches of the tree, which hung to the ground. Why? I asked. There was a quail in the tree, they said in breathless zeal, a quail! Of course, said I, what is wrong with that? But don’t you see, it is a live quail, a wild one! So they just had to kill it. They were on their way to the old Brigham Young High School and were Boy Scouts. Does this story surprise you? What surprised me was when I later went to Chicago and saw squirrels running around the city parks in broad daylight—they would not last a day in Provo.

He blamed the boys’ malicious actions on the teachings of their leaders, even in the church, lamenting that “like Varro’s patrician friends, we have taught our children by precept and example that every living thing exists to be converted into cash, and that whatever would not yield a return should be quickly exterminated to make way for creatures that do.” He called this vicious doctrine the Mahan Principle, referring to the “great secret” that Satan revealed to Cain (Moses 5:31), that one may kill to enrich oneself. In his mind, the killing included not only the taking of life, but also the destruction of nature.

Nibley understood the Mahan Principle taught by Satan to be directly opposed to what God intended when he gave man dominion over the earth. Mahan’s doctrine is a wicked counterfeit for true and righteous dominion. Master Mahans exercise dominion over the earth by exploiting it for wealth and power with no regard for the sanctity of life or the well-being of the environment, while Adamic stewards exercise dominion by nurturing, protecting, and reverencing creation. Nibley explained that “God and Satan both presented plans of dominion to Adam and then to his son Cain. The father chose one plan, the son the other.” Nibley observed that according to early Jewish literature, Noah and Abraham were likewise offered the choice between the two types of
dominion, as was Moses when Satan tempted him, “If thou . . . wilt worship me, all shall be thine” (Luke 4:7; compare Moses 1:12–19). 35

He saw Pluto of Hades, the underworld god of wealth as another ancient example of a Master Mahan. “All the riches of gems and precious metals hidden beneath the earth are his, but he owns no property above the ground,” so, Nibley summarizes, “he brutally kidnaps the fair Proserpine, who represents all the beauty and harmony of nature, to establish his claim over the earth.” 36 Nibley graphically described the abduction:

Pluto, in his black quadrige or black stretch limousine, sweeps out of his subterranean realm amidst choking clouds of sulphur dioxide, carbon monoxide, and assorted particles, and snatches Proserpine away from the scene to go down and live with him as a very rich but unhappy bride. . . . With her departure all the upper world becomes as dull and gloomy as Pluto’s own busy factories, foundries, and smelters. This makes Pluto’s claim to rule over the earth complete. He takes the treasures of the earth and with them creates the wealth and the armaments that enable him to rule through the ages with blood and horror. 37

Nibley observed that in earliest mythology Pluto was an agrarian figure, but with advancing society was transformed into a wealthmonger—much like Cain, who too began as a farmer and then turned to murder and plunder. 38 He saw both as types for the Destroyer, the Prince of Darkness, who is “most often and most widely described as the lord of the underworld who sits in his Stygian realm upon all the mineral treasures of the earth, worked by toiling slaves amidst foul and pestilential vapors.” He continued, “Our lord of the underworld rules under many names—Satan, Loki, Mammon, Mulciber, Hephaestus, etc.; and his workers are the gnomes, trolls, kobolds, the dwarfs, and other grimy, hard-working creatures.” He saw this characterization of mines, miners, and its effect on the environment as “plainly taken from prehistoric mining regions such as the immensely old Varna works in Yugoslavia [Bulgaria] and others in Asia Minor and Cyprus” and from Spain “with its blighted regions of mines, smelters, and foundries—all worked by starving, filthy, driven slaves, converting the landscape into barren wastes of slag and stunted vegetation.” 39

Not surprisingly, Nibley’s review of the historical and mythical characterization of mine workers as oppressed gnomes, trolls, kobolds, and the dwarfs earned him the ire of Utah County residents whose livelihood depended on Geneva Steel. Some were deeply offended, feeling he was putting them in the same class. It created enough of a public outcry that Nibley felt compelled to write a letter to the editor of the local newspaper clarifying his comments [in his talk “Stewardship of the Air”]. The opening of the letter reads:

Dear Sir:

People often say they do not understand me. They say it so often that I should have the sense to shut up in public. And now I have gone and done it again. Since it is a preacher’s duty to make himself understood, when he fails he owes his hearers an apology. And I fail every time I step into the past, where I prefer to spend my days. There my students lose me. The past simply does not exist for us today, except in old costume movies revived on TV. So the idea of the age-old confrontation between agriculture and industry in days long past rings no bells. For example, nothing is more beyond dispute than that people who worked in mines and mills have throughout history been underpaid and overworked, living in unspeakably dismal conditions. Most of them right down to modern times have, in fact, been slaves. I have written feelingly about them. But to interpret the above statement as a description of the workers at Geneva, where friends and relatives of mine have worked from the beginning at far better wages than I ever received, is about as far as misunderstanding can go. And to say that it depicts them as hideous and deformed dwarves, forging the fatal Rheingold, either makes me the world’s worst communicator or denotes a hair-trigger predisposition to jump at conclusions.

Nibley closed the letter with resignation.

Time did not allow me to give the conclusion to the talk, which was to declare that I no longer worry much about Geneva, that the only time it really got to me was on those sweet spring nights when every breath from the west reminded me of what I was missing. Unfortunately, breathing was not optional.
or I could have escaped that prejudice too. Today I see in Geneva a smoking fumarole at the base of a mighty volcano which is just about to blow. . . . I take small comfort in the conviction that before long circumstances are going to settle the problem for us.
Sincerely,
Hugh Nibley

Nibley’s closing conviction proved prophetic. The mill stumbled along for another decade and then went bankrupt in 1999, closing forever in November of 2002.

He mocked and derided the insensitive, money-groping modern bureaucrats, politicians, industrialists, attorneys, and businessmen whose wealth-driven myopia prevented them from seeing the beauty and significance of these ancient people and their lands.

Nibley felt that few in the history of the world have been able to resist Satan’s Mahan bargain that requires one to sacrifice the life and the welfare of the environment on the altar of wealth. “The first to accept was Cain, who ‘loved Satan more than God’” (Moses 5:18). “The ‘great secret’ of success that he learned from his new teacher [Satan] was that he could get anything in this world by the calculated use of force, with no need to be ashamed since it could all be done in the sacred name of freedom; instead of being appalled at the blood on his hands, Cain ‘gloried in that which he had done, saying: I am free; surely the flocks of my brother falleth into my hands.’” Later, according to ancient Jewish literature, Noah’s son Ham bought into Satan’s version of oppressive dominion, followed by Nimrod—both exploited creatures and creation for their own gain. All this fits Satan’s designs well, Nibley observes, for he is “spitefully determined to destroy everything that God has commanded to live.”

In Nibley’s view modern-day Mahans abound. In an address given in 1992 at the J. Reuben Clark Law School at BYU, he condemned the United States Government, big oil and mining companies, and attorneys—including Ernest L. Wilkinson—for applying the Mahan Principle to wrest mineral- and oil-rich lands from Native Americans, breaking contracts, violating treaties, sacrificing integrity, and destroying the environment in the process.

Nibley had great admiration for Native Americans; he especially loved to visit the Hopi, who lived simple lives free from the plague of materialism. He honored them for clinging to ancient customs, rites, traditions, lands, and religion. He extolled their culture that was “completely religious and therefore completely consistent.”

In contrast, he mocked and derided the insensitive, money-groping modern bureaucrats, politicians, industrialists, attorneys, and businessmen whose wealth-driven myopia prevented them from seeing the beauty and significance of these ancient people and their lands. With disgust he derided them for deceitfully exploiting Native Americans and their lands in their pursuit of wealth. He identified them as the wicked latter-day Gentiles whom the resurrected Savior warned as he taught the Lehites, “Wo . . . unto the unbelieving of the Gentiles . . . [who] have scattered my people . . . and have . . . trodden [them underfoot]. . . . At that day when the Gentiles shall sin against my gospel, and shall reject the fulness of my gospel, and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations, and above all the people of the whole earth, and shall be filled with all manner of lyings, and of deceits, and of mischiefs, and . . . hypocrisy, and murders, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, and of secret abominations” (3 Nephi 16:4, 8–10).

Here Nibley interjects, “Note that lying comes first in the list, a judgment that few will dispute today.” Then continuing from the Book of Mormon, “If they shall do all those things, and shall reject the fulness of my gospel, . . . I will bring the fulness of my gospel from among them. And then will I remember my covenant which I have made unto my people . . . and I will bring my gospel unto them . . . The Gentiles shall not have power over you; . . . and ye shall come unto the knowledge of the fulness of my gospel. But if the Gentiles will repent and return unto me . . . behold, they shall be numbered among my people, O house of Israel. And I will not suffer my people . . . [to] tread them down” (3 Nephi.
Nibley observes this is “an ominous note” and then continues,

The promise is repeated in the last speech to the Nephites: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, thus hath the Father commanded me—that I should give unto this people this land for their inheritance” (3 Nephi 16:16). “And it shall come to pass that all lyings, and deceivings, and envyings, and strifes, and priest-crafts, and whoredoms shall be done away. . . . But if they will repent . . . I will establish my church among them, and they shall come in unto the covenant and be numbered among this the remnant of Jacob, unto whom I have given this land for an inheritance; And they shall assist my people, the remnant of Jacob, and also as many of the house of Israel as shall come, that they may build a city, which shall be called the New Jerusalem” (3 Nephi 21:19, 22–24).

As he concluded his remarks to the attorneys gathered at the law school, Nibley observed, “Throughout these explicit prophecies it is the Gentiles who join ‘the Lamanites and those who have become Lamanites,’ not the other way around. If we are to be saved we must move in their direction.”

Nibley suggested a taxonomy that should inform our pursuits and our environmental decisions in this life. Borrowing from Aristotle, he observed that there are two kinds of goods which we are after in this life, goods of first intent and goods of second intent. Goods of second intent are good because they help us obtain other things. Thus a pencil, a watch, shoes, a hammer, a stove, etc., are all useful for obtaining something beyond their own value. Goods of first intent, on the other hand, are good in themselves and need no excuse; they are not the means but the goal. Thus millions of people take the plane to Hawaii—the plane is a good of second intent and gets us there; but the delights of the islands are goods of first intent, whose enjoyment needs no explanation or excuse. People crave them for what they are and actually need them more than any of the amenities.

He felt that goods of first intent fit the purpose of creation revealed to Joseph Smith, “All things which
come of the earth . . . are made for the benefit and the use of man, both to please the eye and to gladden the heart, . . . for taste and for smell, to strengthen the body and to enliven the soul’ (D&C 59:18–19).”

While we may not all agree with Nibley’s environmental perspective, we can agree that he was clear about where he stood in regards to humanity’s stewardship over creation.

To Aristotle’s dichotomy of goods Nibley added a third—goods of third intent. This he defined as “the one and only thing which is not good of itself and not useful of itself but is prized above all else—it is money” and the environment-wrecking practices that pursue it. He identified Geneva Steel and its pollution-belching mill as an example of a third-intent good, as well as the nuclear waste dump in Beatty, Nevada, the slash harvesting of thousand-year-old redwood forests by Pacific Lumber Company, the strip-mining of the sacred Blue Canyon, and the slaughter of whales for soap and shoe polish.

The Doctrine and Covenants expressed well for Nibley the struggle between the pursuit of mammon and our stewardship over the earth. Therein we are told

(1) that “the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and that which cometh of the earth, is ordained for the use of man for food and for raiment, and that he might have in abundance” (D&C 49:19). We may take what we need, but (2) “we be unto man that sheddeth blood or that wasteth flesh and hath no need” (D&C 49:21). We may not take more than we need. (3) Above all, we may not use this substance to exercise control and dominion over each other. “But it is not given that one man should possess that which is above another, wherefore the world lieth in sin” (D&C 49:20). The sweeping indictment against the whole world gets down to fundamentals: “Before the blighting influences of inordinate appetite and love of this world . . . the strength, power, beauty, and glory that once adorned the form and constitution of man have vanished away.” Zion has ever been supplanted by Babylon, which is ever bent on converting the treasures of God’s world into the “substance . . . of an idol, which waxeth old and shall perish in Babylon, even Babylon the great, which shall fall” (D&C 1:16); while with Zion the earth is to “be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory” (Tenth Article of Faith).

Nibley invited those who wish to pursue temporal wealth at the expense of environmental health to consider Moroni’s ominous warning, “For behold, ye do love money. . . . O ye pollutions, . . . who sell yourselves for that which will canker, why have ye polluted the holy church of God? . . . Why do ye build up your secret abominations to get gain, and cause that widows should mourn before the Lord, and also orphans, . . . and also the blood of their fathers and their husbands to cry unto the Lord . . . for vengeance upon your heads? Behold, the sword of vengeance hangeth over you; and the time soon cometh that he avengeth the blood of the saints upon you, for he will not suffer their cries any longer (Mormon 8:37–41).”

We should not sacrifice environmental health on the altar of temporal wealth.

Conclusion

While we may not all agree with Nibley’s environmental perspective, we can agree that he was clear about where he stood in regards to humanity’s stewardship over creation. His passionate reasoning and fervent writings on the topic invite each of us to consider several important questions:

- What does it mean to have dominion over the earth?
- How does God want me to care for creation?
- What is the relationship between spiritual and environmental health?
- How should nature and humanity cooperate?
• Can humanity progress without compromising or destroying natural resources?
• What is the proper balance between financial prosperity and environmental welfare?

I believe that we are indebted to our brother, the good Professor Nibley, not only for raising these important questions, but also for providing his well-reasoned perspectives to inform our contemplations, our conclusions, and our actions.

NOTES
6. Nibley, “Subduing the Earth,” 98 (Nibley’s published works show the original sources for his quotations throughout).
24. Nibley, “Subduing the Earth,” 100. Ben Sirach was a Jew living in Egypt around 180 BC. The Book of Adam and Eve, also known as the Conflict of Adam and Eve, is a Christian pseudo-pigraphical work thought to date from the fifth or sixth century AD.
“A NATION NOW EXTINCT,” AMERICAN INDIAN ORIGIN THEORIES AS OF 1820:

SAMUEL L. MITCHILL, MARTIN HARRIS, AND THE NEW YORK THEORY

RICHARD E. BENNETT

Samuel Mitchill (1764–1831) met with Martin Harris to review the Anthon transcript.
The anthropological study of the origins of the American native peoples has for centuries proved a daunting and most controversial enterprise, and the arguments still continue. The first purpose of this paper is to trace and comment on the leading interpretations of the provenance of the aboriginal peoples of the Western Hemisphere from shortly after Christopher Columbus down to the time of the translation of the Book of Mormon, a period of over three hundred years. Secondly, it is also a careful probing of where these theories stood among leading American scientific inquirers in the early nineteenth century at the time of, or contemporary to, the translation and publication of the Book of Mormon. Finally, it will also show that the essentials of one leading school of American thought—what I will denominate the New York theory—as propounded by Professor Samuel L. Mitchill (1764–1831) of Columbia College and De Witt Clinton (1769–1828), governor of the Empire State, had much in consonance with Book of Mormon history and anthropology.

As I have demonstrated in a recently published companion article, Professor Mitchill, on meeting with Martin Harris in February 1828 and after studying carefully his so-called Anthon transcript, set it down as a genuine linguistic record of an ancient American people which was “now extinct” and “which he named.”¹ A delicate people he called “Australasians” were ultimately destroyed by a harder, more warlike Asiatic people in a protracted series of ferocious wars culminating in one final battle of extermination, which both Mitchill and Governor Clinton traced to the Boughton Hill region near Palmyra, New York. After his meeting with the celebrated Professor Mitchill, who showed such interest in his findings, Harris returned to Palmyra confirmed and more committed than ever before to mortgage his farm, if necessary, to finance the printing of Joseph Smith’s “gold Bible.”

The Early Theories

In order to be understood and appreciated, the New York theory must be put into the long line of ever-changing interpretations of Indian origins. Like

Martin Harris (1783–1875) returned to Palmyra after his visit with Professor Mitchill committed to finance the printing of Joseph Smith’s “gold Bible.”
a long, slow-moving freight train going by, one theory follows after another. From almost the moment Christopher Columbus first landed in the Americas in 1492, European explorers and later colonists have attempted to account for the puzzling provenance of the Native American aborigines of both North and South America. As Benjamin Smith Barton once wrote, “The opinions of writers concerning the origin, or parental countries, of the Americans are as numerous as the tribes and nations who inhabit this vast portion of the earth.” This topic still has closely guarded secrets and adamantly defies casual explanation. However, as Lee Huddleston has shown in his excellent study, Columbus himself never questioned the existence of peoples in the New World for the simple reason that “he did not know it was a New World.” A generation passed before Europeans began to realize that America was not just an eastern extension of India and Asia. The realization that the Americas were indeed a New World probably began with the explorer Amerigo Vespucci, who, after charting coastlines from Argentina to Carolina, wrote of a “Mundus Novus,” or New World, in the early 1500s, one that at least could not be Asia.

As far as we know, neither Columbus nor Vespucci ever speculated on the origins of the peoples they discovered. Probably the first to do so was Pedro Mártir de Anglería, whose highly popular Décadas del Nuevo Mundo was first published in 1511. Basing his chronologies and narratives on firsthand reports from returning conquistadores, he speculated that at least some of the Native Americans were Scythians from northeast Asia who had somehow anciently come over to the Americas, thereby giving rise to one of the most enduring of all origin theories.

The most popular early explanations were some variant of the so-called Atlantis theory in which ancient Middle Eastern and African peoples and animals had migrated to the west either by land via the ancient lost continent of Atlantis or by dint of their navigational prowess. The legend of Atlantis, of there having been an advanced civilization on a giant island in the Atlantic Ocean, is said to have been taught by Plato and Aristotle. This massive, now-sunken continent, extending from the Canary Islands west to the Americas, purportedly served as a land bridge for the earliest populations of the Americas. Though discredited by most careful observers as early as 1600, the lost continent theory has lived on in folklore and superstition, most recently popularized in the nineteenth-century writings of Charles Stephen Brasseur de Bourbourg and Ignatius Donnelly.

FROM THE EDITOR:

If you have ever wondered why Martin Harris would return from his visit with Charles Anthon and promptly commit to support the publication of the Book of Mormon, Professor Richard E. Bennett has produced an answer. Though Anthon in the end gave an entirely negative response to Martin and, in his later recollections of the event, warned Martin that he was being duped, the other messages Martin received on that same journey must have helped him decide that Joseph Smith was not trying to swindle him.
A slightly more credible and enduring version of the Atlantis theory is the Carthaginian, or Phoenician, theory, which put sufficient stock in the navigational abilities of the ancient Carthaginians of North Africa and in the Phoenicians to have found, by crossing the Atlantic in sailing ships, the New World. Unable to explain sufficiently the navigation and settlement of vast numbers of animals, human families, and culture, this theory likewise lacked popular support.  

The other sideline explanations—which included the Canaanite, Ophirian, and Welsh theories—also did not gain much acceptance. The Canaanite theory, first espoused by Suárez de Peralta, claimed that the Indians had descended from Ham, son of Noah, who had been cursed of God along with all his descendants. The Canaanite theory generated little support, based as it was on an excessively narrow reading of the Old Testament and detached from careful field observations.  

In 1681 Diego Andres Rocha proposed the Spanish origin theory. Convinced that God had purposely allowed Spain to discover the New World and its native peoples because such were of ancient Spanish origin, Rocha maintained that the West Indies, after Noah’s flood, “began to be populated by the descendants of Japheth, son of Noah. From Japheth descended Tubal, who settled Spain . . . (with) his descendants . . . and these, as they were neighbors to the Isla Atlántida, came as settlers by way of it and arrived at Tierra Firme.” Because of his sloppy scholarship, a priori arguing, and lack of new evidence, Rocha was never taken seriously, either in Spain or anywhere else.

One of the most popular early theories of the origins of the Indians proposed the migration of peoples to the west via the ancient lost continent of Atlantis. Athanasius Kircher’s map of Atlantis (ca. 1665). Note the orientation.
The Ophirian theory gained only slightly greater attention, despite its biblical moorings. First proposed by Benito Arias Montano in 1572 and again ten years later by Miguel Cabello Valboa, it traced native origins to a great-great-great-grandson of Noah named Ophir, who “after the confusion of tongues . . . moved to the Far East where he became the ancestor of the seafaring peoples of that area. From there the descendants of Ophir went to America where they settled in Peru.” The theory lacked credibility and generated few followers after 1600.

In 1589, at a time when Spanish writers dominated the native origins debate, Richard Hakluyt published his twelve-volume work, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*. Hakluyt revived an old theory, first presented by David Powell, that the Welsh Prince Madoc, in order to escape civil wars, had migrated in about AD 1170 to the West, where he and his people joined up with other unknown, more ancient inhabitants in settling the Americas. Certain it was, he argued, that “Christians had been there before the coming of the Spaniards.” As British interest in the Americas grew in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this ancient Welsh legend took on more prominence. In 1797 George Bruder revisited Hakluyt’s work and argued anew for similarities between Indian and Welsh dialects, thereby justifying Great Britain’s expense in exploring and settling the New World. Of only passing interest, this theory also generated few followers.

The question of origins proved so puzzling that some began to propose a pre-Adamite or polygenism
theory—that is, that the New World Indian originated from a separate creation of God altogether different from the biblical account of the Garden of Eden. Philippus Theophrastus, a German physician born just one year after Columbus’s discovery, was one of the first to make this claim. Other observers—including Sir Walter Raleigh, Thomas Harriot, and Christopher Marlowe—believed likewise and thus brought down upon them the ire of the Roman Catholic Church. Isaac de la Peyrere, a French Calvinist writing in the mid-seventeenth century, nevertheless echoed the same sentiment when he argued for a “double creation,” only one of which was destroyed by the great flood.12

A century later Bernard Romans, a British cartographer who traveled extensively among the Seminole tribes in Florida, wrote that God “created an original man and woman in this part of the globe, of different species from any in the other parts.”13 In America, perhaps the latest and most revered defender of the theory was Benjamin Smith Barton (1766–1815), who argued that certainly the animals of the New World were of a separate creation than those of the Old, that it was “highly probable” that there was a “separate creation in the old and in the new world,” and that the Old World languages descended from those in the New World.14 Nonetheless, the pre-Adamite theory never gained wide acceptance, as it never could be made to square with the dominant belief in the scriptural, or biblical, account of creation.

The Lost Tribes of Israel Tradition

By contrast, arguably the earliest and surely the most popular and doggedly persistent of all the traditions was the belief that the Native Americans had originated from the lost ten tribes of Israel. Having been forced out of Palestine into parts of the Assyrian empire by King Shalmaneser in the first half of the eighth century BC, remnants of these Israelites, or Hebrew peoples, so the theory argues, eventually made their way over land and sea to the New World. Though tied more to theological discourse, biblical exegesis, and evangelical fervor than it was to careful scientific observation, the lost tribes theory proved remarkably resilient to recurring, ever more devastating scholarly criticism. On both sides of the Atlantic its supporters promoted their viewpoint more in response to contemporary, religiously motivated, and humanitarian causes in defense of the downtrodden and exploited Indian tribes rather than associating it with the growing body of scientific data. Still, by the early 1800s it was once more in full flower in America as it had been in England a century and a half before.

The theory was first put to paper in 1567 by Joannes Fredericus Lumiensis. More given to “abstruse” theology and to biblical exegesis than to careful study of geography, Lumiensis laid out the staples of this theory: that according to the book of Esdras in the Apocrypha—and supported by 1 Kings, 2 Chronicles, and Isaiah in the Old Testament—the lost ten tribes somehow escaped from their Assyrian captors and crossed the great waters to Arsareth, or America.15 Over the next few years, several Spanish friars working in Mexico—including Juan Suárez de Peralta, Diego Durán, and Juan de Tovar—arrived at the same conclusion, although with slightly differing interpretations. For instance, Peralta did not believe that the lost tribes were the only ancient peoples to come to the Americas, but that they followed others, likely the Carthaginians.16

Most of the great Spanish scholars, however, derided this theory. Juan de Torquemada and Antonio Calancha discredited it on the basis that Esdras was an apocryphal writing and therefore lacked biblical authority, that there was no way of knowing if Arsareth was indeed the Americas, that the Assyrians would hardly have allowed their captives to leave, and that most, if not all, would have died in the wilderness making the attempt. Without more concrete evidence, these critics argued, why should anyone believe in such a claim?17

With the rise of competing economic and nationalistic interests in the New World after the early 1600s, particularly from England, Holland, and France, Spanish scholarly dominance gave place to other European interpreters of the Americas.
European interpreters of the Americas. But like their Spanish counterparts, few of them put any stock in the lost tribes theory, including the noted Englishman Edward Brerewood and the two great Dutch controversialists, Hugo Grotius and Joannes de Laet. What did rekindle interest was a confluence of factors, including an unsubstantiated rumor of the finding of an ancient Jewish people in Peru, early attempts at Christianizing Indian tribes in the American colonies, and a campaign to readmit Jews into Great Britain.

Its popularity notwithstanding, the lost tribes theory gained little traction among serious European scholars, who viewed it as a thinly disguised religious and political argument devoid of careful consideration and reasoning.

The rumor was the marvelous tale of a Portuguese Jew, Antonio Montesinos, who claimed he had been led of God to discover a “Holy People”—a tribe of ancient Jews—in the mountains of Nueva Granada in 1641. Basing his claim on similarities of sacramental rites, customs, and language between this group and those of ancient Jews, Montesinos caused a flurry of new interest in the theory in Amsterdam and in London. Many turned to one of the few respected Jewish scholars of the day, Rabbi Manasseh ben Israel (a man who knew nine different languages), to confirm or reject Montesinos. Sensing his opportunity to advance the cause of his people, Manasseh ben Israel published in 1650 his famous *Hope of Israel* in which he strongly argued in favor of the lost tribes in America, claiming that they had mingled with Tartaric or Asian tribes in ancient Scythia before coming to America. Presenting remarkably little hard or new evidence, he nevertheless capitalized upon the renewed controversy to show that God’s ancient people, the Jews, had indeed been scattered and dispersed to the four quarters of the earth. Recognizing that only England and a few other countries continued to restrict the entry of the Jews, he suggested that if England would allow for Jewish emigration, the second coming of Christ would become imminent.\(^\text{18}\)

Simultaneously, the Reverend Thomas Thorowgood published his *Jewes in America; or, Probabilities* *That the Americans Are of That Race*, arguing in like manner that native myths and similarities in customs, rites, and speech all supported Montesinos’s interpretations.\(^\text{19}\) The writings of ben Israel, Thorowgood, and John Eliot, the early Massachusetts missionary and so-called apostle to the Indians,\(^\text{20}\) struck a receptive chord in an England then beset with premillennialist fervor. Such discourse eventually led to a policy change under King Charles II, allowing for the reentry of Jews to the British Isles after an absence of some five hundred years.
Its popularity notwithstanding, the lost tribes theory gained little traction among serious European scholars, who viewed it as a thinly disguised religious and political argument devoid of careful consideration and reasoning. Writing in 1651, Hamon L’Estrange saw evidence that the Indians had come to the West long before the lost tribes. And Gottlieb Spitzel wrote so “thorough a denunciation” of it in 1661 that many thought it finally dead and buried. John Ogilby, John Josselyn, and others followed suit. Support for the tradition, however, flowered in early America, where several leading colonists subscribed to it, including Roger Williams and William Penn. This interest no doubt derived from constant American contact with the various tribes. Basing his views on similar physiologies, sacred rites, and ceremonies, Penn wrote in 1683: “I am ready to believe
them of the Jewish Race, I mean of the stock of the Ten Tribes.”

By far the most persuasive of all Americans to defend the lost tribes theory was the historian and anthropologist James Adair, who, following the tradition of the great French Canadian missionary Pierre-François Charlevoix, spent forty years among the American Indians. In his *History of the American Indians* (1775), Adair was perhaps the first to argue less on biblical grounds and more on a scientific basis that the Indians had originated from Jewish stock. Refuting the pre-Adamic theory, he believed that the “Indians have lineally descended from Adam.” Adair carefully observed Indian cultures: their rites, festivals, and religious ceremonies; their monotheistic belief in the one god of the Great Spirit; their reckoning of time; their traditions of sacred men and prophets; their Levirate marriages; their anointings and purification ceremonies; and other practices and beliefs. His thorough anthropological observations, systematic research, and comparative analyses were certainly impressive, even if later scholars disagreed with him. Adair infused the lost tribes theory with a scientific foundation it had sorely lacked.

John Wesley’s Methodist evangelical movement in England in the late 1700s, the organization of the British Foreign Bible Society in 1804, the rising British Sunday School movement, the development of missionary societies (to Jews, American Indians, Polynesian Islanders, and many others), and the budding interest in New World archaeology all tended to support an interpretation of the Indians as a people waiting to be Christianized. And if further evidence could show that they were a part of God’s ancient chosen people, all the more fuel to the missionary fire!

This evangelistic influence, when added to the rising humanitarian interest in the American Indian (in contrast to the harsh and cruel expulsion and removal policies of the new nation of America), gave rise to a reconsideration of views toward the American Indians. Believing that the Indians were descendants of the lost tribes, Charles Crawford showed well this rising concern. “Sentiments more favorable to the Indians than were formerly entertained,” he wrote in 1801, have of late years been generally adopted by the people of the United States. There were some, several years ago, who contended for the utter extirpation of the Indians. The belief that the Indians are descended from the ten tribes must have a tendency to soften the minds of mankind towards them. This belief is generally gaining ground, and even among some who once violently contended against the doctrine.

Such arguments as Crawford’s were later elucidated by Elias Boudinot, founder of the American Bible Society, in his famous *A Star in the West* (1816). Offering little by way of new evidence, Boudinot nonetheless argued evangelistically that many (though not all) of the Indians were Israelites and that just as God had brought the ancient Israelites across the Red Sea, so later he led the ten lost tribes (minus Judah and Benjamin, who were carried off to Babylon and later scattered by the Romans) across the possibly frozen “straits of Kamschatka” to the Americas where they set up “an ensign for the nations.” “They are to be converted to the faith of Christ,” Boudinot asserted,
and instructed in their glorious prerogatives, and prepared and assisted to return to their own land and their ancient city, even the city of Zion. . . . Let not our unbelief, or other irreligious conduct, with a want of a lively, active faith in our Almighty Redeemer, become a stumbling block to those outcasts of Israel. . . . Who knows but God has raised up these United States in these latter days, for the very purpose of accomplishing his will in bringing his beloved people to their own land. 27

Such a chosen people were to be treated more compassionately and more humanely than the policies of James Monroe, Andrew Jackson, and some other leading American politicians of the day called for.

Boudinot’s best-known disciple was Mordecai M. Noah (1785–1851), an American Jew who later wrote his Discourse on the Evidences of American Indians in 1837. 28 Another American book, owing much to Boudinot’s analysis and fervor in promoting the same lost tribes traditions, was published twelve years earlier in 1825 by the Reverend Ethan Smith. Entitled View of the Hebrews, this work quoted liberally from Old Testament scripture and prophecy but with little careful observation of any Indian tribes. Reverend Smith, like Boudinot, saw that to “christianize them, and wait the leadings of Providence” with regard to the restoration of the “remnant” of Israel, was the burden, blessing, and “first object” of modern Britain and America. 29

Finally, “no more masterly, no abler and more exhaustive defense” was ever made in behalf of the lost tribes theory than that of the indefatigable Englishman Lord Kingsborough, who bankrupted himself in publishing lavishly illustrated volumes of prints of American archaeological drawings in his zealous support of the lost tribes theory. 30 Much of Kingsborough’s work depended on the prior research, findings, and drawings of two men—Antonio de León y Gama (1735–1802), an astronomer who is sometimes considered the first Mexican archaeologist, 31 and Guillermo Dupaix. Dupaix was one of the first Europeans to observe and describe the archaeological riches of Chiapas, Oaxaca, and Yucatan. Between 1805 and 1807, he led three expeditions to survey major Mexican archaeological sites, working in close concert with José Luciano Castañeda, an artist with the National Museum. Kingsborough’s published work, along with the elegant illustrations of Castañeda, were years in the making and provided the first European accounts of Aztec Mexican archaeology. 32

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The Scientific Tradition

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were neither prone to advance a theological reason for an evangelistic crusade nor anxious to fit their findings into a preconceived mold. They did not, however, dismiss outright the Adamic creation account, the dispersal of Babel, or Noah’s deluge. With the strengthening of the scientific tradition, interpreters abandoned preexisting biblical interpretation and began to entertain differing explanations, sometimes at the peril of their lives or professional reputations.

The first and most famous advocate of this trend in thinking was the great Spanish Jesuit missionary to Peru, Joseph de Acosta (1539–1600). After living several years in the Andes, he wrote in 1590 his landmark work *Historia natural y moral de las Indias*. Dismissing the Atlantis theory as frivolous and the Hebrew derivation as unsupportable since the ancient Israelites kept careful records and the Indians never did, he asserted that they came to the New World “little by little and that they came by land or across a narrow strait,” first as hunters and later with their families. He was the first to argue for a short land bridge—either with Greenland, Alaska, or Tierra del Fuego to the Antarctic—across which large migrations of men and animals might have come. His careful analytical approach set the ground rules for future observers. Serious interpreters, he argued, must derive their arguments not from what should accord to the Bible theologically but what agrees with the geographical, anthropological, ethnological, and linguistic realities of American Indian cultures. More than any one particular finding, Acosta set the tone for a careful, more “restrained” inquiry, what Huddleston and others have since called the “Acostan tradition.”

Juan de Torquemada, Juan de Solorzano, and Antonio de la Calancha, all writing in the early seventeenth century, must likewise be placed squarely in this tradition. Of special concern to these writers was not only how peoples but, more to the point, animals made the great migrations. As Acosta had argued a century before, Torquemada and particularly Calancha made an even more persuasive case for a land connection. Calancha posited that the Indians had descended from the Tartars of eastern Asia. The great English observer Edward Brerewood likewise advanced the Acostan tradition, arguing for a Tartarian origination via Alaska since most Indians frequented the west coasts of the Americas. One can see, albeit faintly, in these early seventeenth-century writings, the hint of later scientific explorations and nonbiblical interpretations of the nineteenth century. Georg Horne, writing a generation later, followed suit, as did Spitzel, Ogilby, and Josselyn. Ever so gradually the scientific tradition pried open the door to the possibility that the Native American peoples were of an entirely separate physical and cultural stock to those living in the Middle East. President Thomas Jefferson himself opened up a firestorm of criticism in which he was called a “howling atheist” when he wrote in 1787 that the languages of the ancient native peoples had divided a thousand-fold and that such linguistic and physical divergence from a common origin required “an immense course of time; perhaps not less than many people give to the age of the earth.”

By far the greatest world-traveling observer and naturalist of the late 1700s and early 1800s was the German/French scientist and intrepid explorer Alexander von Humboldt, who visited Mexico in
1810–11. His original thirty-volume magnum opus, Vues de cordillères et monuments, eventually earned him the title of father of the Bering Strait theory. Although others, as we have already seen, had advanced it as a possibility, Humboldt provided strong scientific evidence for it. Inspired by the emerging discoveries in Egypt by Napoleon’s armies and by the translation of ancient hieroglyphics on the Rosetta Stone by Jean-François Champollion in 1822, Humboldt based his conclusions on his careful and systematic expeditions, his on-site observations of various native tribes, and above all on his archaeological and hieroglyphic studies of ancient temples, zodiacs, and inscriptions in Mexico and Mesoamerica and on the likelihood of communication between these ancient cultures and those in Asia.37 From rigorous analysis, Humboldt laid out his convincing argument that the American Indian derived from northeast Asia, had begun crossing the Bering Strait about AD 544, and “represented a single, major prehistoric wave of migration that created a unified race throughout the Americas.”38 Others of the same stock may have followed, eventually assimilating one with another. Arguing less linguistically and more archaeologically that all Indian languages derived from a common source, Humboldt went on to refute the pre-Adamite view, arguing that the “common aspects found in remains of civilization around the world defeated the possibility of multiple origins.”39 On the strength of Humboldt’s research and the power and rationality of his arguments, most later scholars referred to him as the “touchstone,” or point of discussion, thus referring to the early nineteenth century as the “age of Humboldt.”

Humboldt studied archaeology and anthropology, while philology, or linguistics, based on the study of Indian languages became the topic of choice in Philadelphia’s famous American Philosophical Society in the period from about 1800 to 1820. Convinced that the study of syntax, idioms, grammatical structures, and dialects held the key to understanding Indian origins, such men as David Zeisberger (1721–1808), John G. Heckewelder (1743–1823), Caspar Wistar (1761–1818), Pierre du Ponceau (1760–1844), and Benjamin Smith Barton argued for the Tartaric origin of the Indians, for the Bering Strait theory, and for a common original language.40 Others of the early nineteenth century in the scientific tradition who relied heavily on Humboldt and on Captain James Cook’s recent discovery of the eighteen-mile separation of the Bering Strait between Asia and North America were Hugh Williamson (1735–1819), Hugh Murray (1799–1846), James McCulloh (1793–1879), Benjamin H. Coates (1805–87?), and C. S. Rafinesque (1783–1840).41

**Samuel L. Mitchill and the New York Theory**

The famous Pacific Ocean voyages and explorations of Captain James Cook (1728–79) and later those of his British countryman Captain George Vancouver (1757–98) give rise to our point of last discussion—the Polynesian origin theory. When their observations were coupled with a rising interest in the origins of the Mound Builders civilization of the Ohio and Mississippi River valleys (so called because of the several thousand earthen mounds filled with bones and artifacts left behind)42 and the overwhelming acceptance of Humboldt’s Asiatic origins of the Native Americans, the Polynesian theory clearly comes to the fore.43

Confident enough in his own thinking to begin teaching these theories to his college classes in 1816, Mitchill believed that both North and South America had been formerly populated fundamentally by two great races.
New York Indian chief. Stemming from his work with the Five Indian Nations (Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca) and from his years in the United States Senate as chairman of the Committee on Indian Affairs, Mitchill’s theories on Indian origins began to change and evolve. “My faith in the transatlantic doctrines began to be shaken in 1805,” he wrote, “when my intercourse with the Osages and Cherokees led me to entertain of them very different opinions from those I had derived from the books I had read.”

From his study of the burial mounds of the Ohio and Mississippi River valleys, his examination of mammoths and mummies found in Kentucky and Tennessee, and a series of long field studies he personally had conducted through western portions of the state of New York, he began to formulate his threefold interpretation of American Indian origins and history:

1. that three races of Malays, Tartars, and Scandinavians contributed to make up the American population;
2. that the Tartars eventually overwhelmed and destroyed the other two races over a fairly long period of time; and finally
3. that the final battles of extermination were fought in upstate western New York not too far south of Lake Ontario.

Confident enough in his own thinking to begin teaching these theories to his college classes in 1816, Mitchill believed that both North and South America had been formerly populated fundamentally by two great races, not only the “hyperborean or inhabitants of the north” but also the “australasian, or inhabitants of the south,” the former Tartars and the latter Malays and Polynesians. A prominent member of the American Philosophical and American Antiquarian Societies, Mitchill—though not the first to propose such a dualistic Asiatic origination of American peoples (Humboldt had given broad provision for such a view, as had de Laet)—was certainly very much in the vanguard of such a viewpoint and was clearly the first American scholar to do so in such a systematic fashion.

As to the Tartars (or eastern Asians, including the Chinese) being the ancient ancestors of the more northerly tribes of North American Indians, Mitchill based his claim on four considerations: (1) the similarity of physiognomy and features; (2) the affinity of their languages, as so well argued by his contemporary Professor Barton; (3) corresponding customs such as smoking of the pipe; and (4) the kindred nature of American Indian dogs to those found in Siberia.

In regards to the Malays, he based his conclusions on several mummies he and others had recently discovered in limestone caves in Kentucky and Tennessee. He argued that the fabrics of cloth wrapping, the shawls, and the feathered plumes
attending them were “perfectly analogous” to those found in the islands of the Pacific that had been sent to him by American sea captains and explorers over the years. In addition, he based his conclusions on the similarities of the net meshes, the bark construction of moccasins, the fortifications and other works of defense in the Ohio and Mississippi River valleys compared to the “hippas or fighting stages of the Society islands,” and the shape of the skull in the mummies corresponding with those of the Malays. 48

By 1816 he was arguing that “the colonies of Malayan emigrants who people South and North America as far as Mexico, formerly possessed the fertile region east of the Mississippi and quite to the shores of Ontario. They were the constructors of the fortifications so much admired.” 49

In addition, Mitchill allowed for the settlement of northeast North America by emigrants from Lapland, Norway, Finland, and even Wales. In this view he was not alone. Hugh Williamson, a contemporary, had argued for much the same thing. “Some of the Northern Indians,” he said, “emigrated from Europe. It can hardly be questioned that the Esquimaux Indians are the diminutive sprouts of Norwegian ancestors.” Williamson also gave place for the possibility that some natives came from India via the islands of the Pacific. Mitchill, however, believed they never penetrated much further south than the St. Lawrence River valley. 50

As to the colonies of Australasians, or Malays, Mitchill maintained they “landed in North America, and penetrated across the continent in process of time to the region lying between the Great Lakes and the gulf of Mexico. There they resided, and constructed the fortifications, mounds and other ancient structures, which are the wonder of all who have seen them.” 51 These “tribes of the lower latitudes seem to have [had greater proficiency] in the arts, particularly of making cloths, clearing the ground, and erecting works of defence.” 52

All went well with these Polynesian derivative peoples until their confrontation with the encroaching Tartars. Colliding with both the Europeans and the “more delicate race” of Australasians, the Tartars overwhelmed and destroyed both peoples in a long series of terrible conflicts centered primarily in upstate New York. “As China, Hindustan, . . . Palestine, . . . Greece, Italy and the shores of Africa, have been conquered by the swarms which proceeded, numberless times . . . so have Canada, the regions bordering on the Missouri, the Lakes, the Mississippi, the Ohio, and the countries where New Spain and its intendencies now are, quite to Mexico, been subdued by hordes of savage adventurers from . . . beyond the Arctic Circle.” 53 He went on to ask: “What has become of [these Australasians]?” and answered:

They have probably been overcome by the more warlike and ferocious hordes that entered our hemisphere from the northeast of Asia. These Tartars of the higher latitudes have issued from the great hive of nations, and desolated, in the course of their migrations, the southern tribes of America, as they have done to those of Asia and Europe. The greater part of the present American natives are the Tartar stock, the descendants of the hardy warriors who destroyed the weaker Malays that preceded them. 54

De Witt Clinton—a student and admirer of Mitchill, a keen observer of the Iroquois and the other Five Nations Indian tribes, New York City mayor, later governor of New York, and one-time candidate for president of the United States—ardently subscribed to this theory. He was particularly interested in Indian burial sites and fortifications, in their monuments and relics, languages, treaties, and in

[Clinton wrote of] the existence of a vast population, settled in towns, defended by forts, cultivating agriculture, and more advanced in civilization than the nations which have inhabited the same countries since the European discovery.

the biographies of great Indian leaders. After making an extended tour of western New York in 1810 during which he gained inspiration for the Erie Canal, Clinton also “proceeded to his favorite theory . . . that the ancient forts in central New York [several of which he had personally studied] and in the Western territory, from the Ohio westward beyond the Mississippi, were the work of a civilized people, preceding the Iroquois as well as the Spanish and French explorers.” 55 Such fortifications were beyond the ability of the Iroquois to erect. Ancient fortifications
Great Lakes, “extirpated” those people who occupied the region. “I am persuaded,” he wrote in 1817, “that enough has been said to demonstrate the existence of a vast population, settled in towns, defended by forts, cultivating agriculture, and more advanced in civilization than the nations which have inhabited the same countries since the European discovery.”

The town of Camillus provided further evidence; there excavators, upon discovering an ancient well, found human bones that “pulverized on exposure to the air—evidence, Clinton believed, of an ancient settlement.” Building on his interest in Indian antiquities, Clinton became a strong supporter for more humanitarian concern and aid for the Indians and in safeguarding their rights.

Much of what Mitchill argued was accepted by C. S. Rafinesque, another prominent naturalist and student of Mitchill’s (though not as precise an investigator), and also by Josiah Priest, whose work *American Antiquities and Discoveries in the West* was first published in Albany, New York, in 1833. Deferring liberally to Mitchill, although providing for the inclusion of vestiges of the lost tribes in parts of ancient America via an ancient land bridge with Africa, Priest believed the Tartars, in Hunlike fashion, completely destroyed the more southerly people, who left behind some three thousand burial mounds and fortifications in present-day Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. “The skeletons found in our mounds never belonged to a people like our Indians,” he asserted. “Their foreheads were low, cheek bones rather high. . . . We think we ascertain the inhabitants to have been white, like the Europeans.” Calling the more civilized peoples the “Eries,” he believed they were so exterminated by the Tartars or Scythians that “but one member of that nation, a warrior, remained.”

Elements of the New York theory have gained qualified support over time. John D. Lang, well-known British missionary to the South Seas, argued in 1834 that the South Sea Islanders derived originally from Asia, including India, and that the Malayan race was an “amphibious nation” that, driven from island to island, hopscotched their way across the Pacific, eventually peopling Mexico and Peru. Basing his arguments on similarities of tribal government, property rights, handcrafts, theologies, and architecture, he maintained that “there is abundant reason to believe that America was originally peopled from the continent of Asia; not, as is generally supposed, by way
of the Aleutian Islands at the entrance of Behring’s Straits, but by way of the South Sea Islands and across the widest part of the Pacific Ocean. These people landed on the west coast “somewhere near the isthmus of Panama” approximately 1500 BC; rather than being exterminated, their immediate descendants, traveling northward and southward, “formed powerful and flourishing empires in both continents, far surpassing in point of civilization the more recent empires of Montezuma and of the Incas of Peru.”

B. H. Coates likewise argued that same year that the South Sea Islanders were “the principal source of American population,” basing his claim on similarities of dialects, habits of navigation, and facial similarities. John Delafield, based on his study of philology, echoed Mitchill when he wrote in 1839 that there were “two distinct races” in the Americas—“one civilized, comprehending the Mexicans and Peruvians,” and the other “savage and nomadic, embracing all the families of the North American Indians.” The “civilized inhabitants” of the more southerly realms were “expelled thence by the subsequent immigration and successive conquests of the Indian tribes who came from the north of Asia and appear to be of Mongolian origin.” A few years later, Marcius Willson wrote that while many came over the Bering Strait, “there is no improbability that the early Asiatics reached the western shores of America through the islands of the Pacific.”

E. M. Ruttenber, in his 1872 History of the Indian Tribes of Hudson’s River, quoted Mitchill at length. As late as 1933 Professor Clark Wissler in his ethnological studies of the American aborigines credited Mitchill for being among the first to argue that even the Aztecs were Malayan.

Polyracial theories on the origin of the American Indians have been continually advanced by a host of other scientists since Mitchill, including Armand de Quatrefages, Paul Rivet, D. J. M. Tate, Ulrich Schmidt, B. H. Coates, John D. Baldwin, Erland Nordenskiold, and Charles Correa. While theories change and “crystallize in new directions,” the conviction of a Polynesian connection to America intensifies. Philology, osteology, and archaeology, they argue, all point to such. “The date when the Australians and Melaniasians arrived in America cannot, naturally, be fixed with precision,” Aleš Hrdlička wrote in 1935, “but it is at all events possible to affirm that it was very ancient.”

Thor Heyerdahl’s 1947 Kon-Tiki expedition, in which he proved that an east-west crossing of the Pacific on a raft was possible, served to intensify research on the Polynesian derivation theory. We may leave the last word to Rivet, writing in the mid-twentieth century:

Whatever one may decide . . . all the facts and testimony indicate that America was no more ignorant of Oceania than Oceania was of America, and that more or less regular relations of a commercial nature united the two worlds. It is certain that, thanks to these commercial relations, cultural elements and useful plants passed from one continent to the other.

. . . Contrary to what might be supposed a priori, and to the Europe-centric idea which influenced research for centuries, the peopling of America was effected from the West, and not from the East. The Atlantic remained almost inviolate until the great voyages of discovery [penetrated this] . . . veritable wall between the Old and New Worlds. The western shores of America were, on the other hand, open to multiple migrations along their entire length. Far from being an obstacle, the Pacific was a link between the Asiatic and Oceanic worlds and the New World.
Mitchell Meets Martin Harris

We will now return to the New York theory and discuss its conjunction with early Mormon history. It was this same Professor Samuel L. Mitchill whom Martin Harris visited in February 1828. What precisely Harris showed to the famous doctor is not known. The so-called Anthon transcript of characters taken from Joseph Smith’s early work on the large plates of Nephi may or may not have been what scholars assume it to have been. Nor is it clear that Joseph Smith and Harris had begun work on the 116-page manuscript of the book of Lehi. How much Harris knew then about the account of ancient Book of Mormon warring peoples in the Americas is not known. However, it seems plausible that Joseph Smith had told him about the coming of the angel Moroni five years before and about the record of ancient American peoples, and also that Moroni represented a stock of peoples entirely destroyed by another ancient warring people also written of extensively in the plates.

Although the Book of Mormon speaks of the seed or tribe of Joseph through Lehi and Manasseh settling somewhere in the ancient Americas, it is not synonymous with the lost tribes of Israel theory. Nowhere does the book purport to be a history of the lost tribes leaving from ancient Assyria to the Americas. Rather, it speaks of a branch of Israel—of the coming of the seed of Joseph—to the Western Hemisphere. Other parts of the Book of Mormon, particularly the book of Ether, are of pre-Israelite derivation and migration. How much Harris knew of either of these peoples and their accounts in 1828, a year before the translation and publication of the Book of Mormon as we now know it, is yet unknown. But that he did speak to Mitchill of ancient American peoples, of the extinction of one by the other, and of the continuation of one such people down to later times seems now most plausible. Thus there was much in common between Book of Mormon history and the New York theory of one of the contemporary leading scholars in America, enough to stir comment, interest, and some validation.

In what might be the very first written record of Harris’s visit east, James Gordon Bennett, then associate editor of the Morning Courier and New York Enquirer, wrote in 1831 that he had interviewed Charles Butler, the lawyer-philanthropist from whom Harris had attempted to borrow money for the printing of the Book of Mormon. Harris told Butler, as Bennett recorded, that he carried the engravings from the plates to New York and
showed them to Professor [Charles] Anthon who said that he did not know what language they were—told him to carry them to Dr. Mitchell—Doctor Mitchell examined them—and compared them with other hieroglyphics—thought them very curious—and (said) they were the characters of a nation now extinct which he named. Harris returned to Anthon who put some questions to him and got angry with Harris.71

This account is elaborated upon in Bennett’s published article entitled “Mormon Religion—Clerical Ambition—Western New York—The Mormonites Gone to Ohio” that appeared in the (New York) Morning Courier and Enquirer on 1 September 1831.

They attempted to get the Book printed, but could not raise the means till Harris stepped forward, and raised money on his farm for that purpose. Harris with several manuscripts in his pocket, went to the city of New York. And called upon one of the Professors of Columbia College for the purpose of shewing them to him. Harris says that the Professor thought them very curious, but admitted that he could not decipher them. Said he to Harris, “Mr. Harris you had better go to the celebrated Doct. Mitchell and shew them to him. He is very learned in these ancient languages, and I have no doubt will be able to give you some satisfaction.” “Where does he live,” asked Harris. He was told and off he posted with the engravings from the Golden Plates to submit to Doc. Mitchell—Harris says that the Doctor received him very “purtlyly,” looked at his engravings—made a learned dissertation on them—compared them with the hieroglyphics discovered by Champollion in Egypt—and set them down as the language of a people formerly in existence in the East, but now no more.72

Whether Mitchill endeavored then and there to translate what Harris brought to him is open to question. Certainly he studied the “characters” most carefully. His assertion that the characters thereon were “of a nation now extinct which he named” speaks directly to his own richly developed theories on the extinct Australasian race of ancient America, that “delicate race” destroyed by the Tartars ultimately somewhere in upstate New York not far from where Harris farmed near Palmyra. Is it any wonder that Harris returned to Palmyra confirmed and committed to assisting in the work of translating the Book of Mormon?73

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has not been to portray modern twenty-first-century views on the origin of the American Indian; rather its thrust has been to identify the state of development of the American Indian origins theory as of 1820. In doing so, it has placed the major theories in one of three dominant traditions: the early theories that never generated much support, the lost tribes theory that persisted through centuries of criticism, and the scientific traditions stemming from Acosta and on through Humboldt and beyond. It has also focused on the pioneering research and careful interpretations of Professor Samuel L. Mitchill and those of like mind as they pertained to a growing awareness of the Polynesian derivation of many of the Americans, their extermination at the cruel hands of the Tartars, and the upstate New York location of these final battles. Thus a scientific belief in warring ancient American peoples, some from the north, others from the Polynesian islands, wherein the former exterminated the latter in a series of great battles in upstate New York, was very much in vogue among many respected observers at the time of the publication of the Book of Mormon.

It can now be proven that Professor Mitchill, one of the leading proponents of the ancient American peoples theory, and Martin Harris met together in February 1828, that Mitchill showed more than a passing interest in what Harris had to show and say, and that he went so far as to identify these people.74

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5. See Wauchope, Lost Tribes and Sunken Continents.

6. Nevertheless, the Carthaginian/Phoenician theory revived in the mid-nineteenth century, especially after the archaeological discoveries in the Yucatan. See Ira Hill, Antiquities of America Explained (Hagers-town: Bell, 1831); and Reverend George Jones, The History of Ancient America, Anterior to the Time of Columbus (1843). Jones argued that the Tyrians, or Phoenicians, had built the Mexican temples and pyramids. See also Johann Vater, Untersuchungen über Amerika’s Bevölkerung aus dem alten Kontinente (Leipzig, 1810).


10. Richard Hakluyt, The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation (London, 1589), 506. See also Huddleston, Origins of the American Indians, 57. Hakluyt spent just 2 of over 900 pages dwelling on Madoc’s voyages, giving it space but little commentary.


13. Bernard Romans, A Concise Natural History of East and West Florida, 2 vols. (New York: Atiken, 1776), 1:38, as cited in Vogel, Indian Origins, 37. Vogel argues that the pre-Adamite theory gained much consideration and attention; however, the opposite seems closer to the truth.


17. Huddleston, Origins of the American Indians, 84–85. “I am not convinced that these Indians are those [Lost] Tribes.” See Juan de Torquemada, Primera parte de los veinte i un libros rituales i monarchia indiana, con el origen y guerras de los Indios Occidentales, 3 vols. (Madrid, 1613), 1:22; and Antonio de la Calancha, Cronica moralizada del orden de San Augustin en el Peru con sucesos egenpares en esta monarquia (Barcelona, 1638). In all the years between 1600 and 1730, besides Rocha (who argued for a derivative explanation that the tribes came later in history and mixed with the Spanish original races), only one other Spanish scholar—Pedro Simón—bought into the theory. See his Primera parte de las noticias historiales de las Conquistas de Tierra Firme en las Indias Occidentales (Cuenca, 1627); and Huddleston, Origins of the American Indians, 85–86.


19. “But the question is not in what age, before, or since the Incarnation of our Lord the Jews took their long journey, & planted there; but how the way was passable for them.” Thomas Thorowgood, Jews in America; or, Probabilities That the Americans Are of That Race (London, 1602), 43. Unlike Manasseh ben Israel, who allowed for the possibility that peoples other than the lost tribes may have come to the New World, Thorowgood argued that only the lost tribes settled the Americas. See Cogley, “Ancestry of the American Indians,” 313.

20. Eliot lived among the Indians from the 1640s to the 1680s and not only taught them the Christian gospel out of the scriptures but also tried hard to improve their temporal and
social conditions. An opponent of Indian slavery and a man of immense courage, Eliot was referred to as “our benevolent apostle.”


27. Elias Boudinot, *A Star in the West; or, A Humble Attempt to Discover the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel, Preparatory to Their Return to Their Beloved City, Jerusalem* (Trenton, NJ: Fenton, Hutchinson, and Dunham, 1816), 297. That many missionaries and visitors to America believed likewise is evident in the writings of the English minister Reverend E. Howitt, who, while visiting Geneva and Canandaigua, New York, in 1819, put it this way: “An American writer congratulates his country, on being the only Christian country in the world which has not persecuted the Hebrews. Perhaps, however, it will appear, that it does not constitute so amiable an exception; and that America will have to unite its efforts with every other Christian realm, to wipe away the stain of injury towards the most remarkable and most abused people in the globe. . . . They have been barbarously and ungratefully treated, and that, as Christians bear the blot of that infamy, every Christian should be anxious to wipe it away. If it be proved that these interesting people are really the descendants of Jacob, it will afford an awful instance of the deep and incrustable workings of Providence, and will awaken a strong and (for them, I trust), propitious interest in every Christian mind.” E. Howitt, *Selections from Letters Written during a Tour through the United States, in the Summer and Autumn of 1819* (Nottingham: Dunn, 1820), 184–85.

28. “If the Indians of America are not the descendants of the missing tribes, again I ask, from whom are they descended? From the Egyptians? . . . Are they part of the fierce Scythians? . . . but where among those barbarians do we discover the belief in one Great Spirit, together with the softer virtues, the purity and talents of the Indians? . . . The Indians have distinct Jewish features, and neither in mind, manners, nor religion, bear any affinity to the Tartar race.” Mordecai M. Noah, *Discourse on the Evidences of the American Indians Being the Descendant of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel* (New York: Van Norden, 1837), 33.

29. Ethan Smith, *View of the Hebrews; or, The Tribes of Israel in America* (Poulteny, VT: Smith and Shute, 1825), 199; see also 209.


32. Once published, Kingsborough published other selections of them; however, in the process he introduced a number of distortions into Castañeda’s drawings, making them look more Egyptian or Hebraic than New World. See Guillermo Duipaix, *Viajes de Guillermo Dupiax sobre las antigüedades mexicanas (1805-1807)*, 2 vols.; also in Kingsborough, *Antiquities of Mexico*.

33. Fray Joseph de Acosta, *Historia natural y moral de las Indias publicada en Sevilla, año de 1590*, 2 vols. (Madrid: Angles, 1894). Considered one of the most learned members of the Jesuit order by Pope Clement VIII, Acosta believed that the early Americans came not deliberately but by accident, that they probably came by land and not by sea, that they brought animals with them, and that they were illiterate. Acosta’s careful field studies, his “collection, arrangement and evaluation of widely differing types of evidence” (similar to that of modern anthropologists), and his willingness to consider daringly new possibilities were well ahead of his time. See Saul Jarcho, “Origin of the American Indian as Suggested by Fray Joseph de Acosta,” *Isis* 50/4 (1959): 435.


37. “A small number of nations, far distant from each other, the Etruscans, the Egyptians, the people of Thibet, and the Aztecs, exhibit striking analogies in their buildings, their religious institutions, their division of time, their cycles of regeneration, and their mystic notions.” Alexander von Humboldt, *Researches, Concerning the Institutions and Monuments of the Ancient Inhabitants of America*, trans. Helen M. Williams (London: Longman et al., 1814), 10–11. Humboldt knew Thomas Young, the great English Egyptologist and Champollion competitor. See Letter of Alexander von Humboldt to Thomas Young [n.d., 1816–1822?], *Royal Society of London; copies in the American Philosophical Society*. 

43. Hugh Williamson, Observations on the Climate in Different Parts of America (1811); Hugh Murray, Historical Account of Discoveries and Travels of North America, 2 vols. (London: Longman et al., 1829); James H. McCulloh, Researches, Philosophical and Antiquarian, Concerning the Aboriginal History of America, 2nd ed. (1817); John McIntosh, The Origin of the North American Indians (New York: Sheldon, Blakeman, 1853), and C. S. Rafinesque, The American Nations; or, Outlines of a National History of the Ancient and Modern Nations of North and South America (1836).

44. Thomas Jefferson commissioned Henry Marie Brackenridge (1786-1871) to study these mounds in Louisiana and Missouri. In his On the Population and Tumuli of the Aborigines of North America (1813), Brackenridge favored “an advanced culture, race, and set of origins for the Mound Builders distinct from those of the American Indians.” Caleb Atwater (1778-1867), in his Descriptions of the Antiquities Discovered in the State of Ohio and Other Western States (1820), believed the Mound Builders were from various origins but that the most advanced were Mexicans. See William Bartram (1739-1823), Travels through North and South Carolina (1791), who first proposed that they were a pre-Indian race; and Wadyko, “Alexander Von Humboldt,” 143.

45. Roland B. Dixon, “Contacts with America across the Southern Pacific,” in The American Aborigines—Their Origin and Antiquity, ed. Diamond Jenness (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1933), 315. As early as the mid-seventeenth century, de Laet had suggested the possibility of Polynesian or Pacific peoples populating the New World. See John de Laet, Extracts from the New World, or a Description of the West Indies (Leiden, 1625); reprinted in Collections of the New York Historical Society, 2nd series, vol. 1 (New York: Printed for the Society by Ludwig, 1841).


47. Discourse of Samuel L. Mitchill in the College of Physicians at New York, 2 November 1816, in Archaeologia Americana, 338–44.

48. Samuel L. Mitchill to De Witt Clinton, 31 March 1816, as published in section IV, “The Original Inhabitants of America shown to be of the same family and lineage with those of Asia, by a process of reasoning not hitherto advanced,” in Archaeologia Americana, 325-32. For several years Mitchill kept these “Indian mummys” in his collection. One visitor described them thus: “This dryed up human body was sent to Hickson W. Field from Kentucky by a Mr. Rogers about the year 1820. It was an Indian girl [who] was scalped, and had garments wrought of turkey feathers on a fabric, a kind of net. [The] work was exhibited in Warren St. New York but it did not take with the public. It is now in the American Museum.” List of Maps, Print, etc., of Issacher Cozzens, Cozzens Collection of 44 items, New York Historical Society.

49. Unpublished letter of Samuel L. Mitchill to John Wakefield Francis, 13 September 1816. Courtway Library of Medicine, Harvard University Library, Boston, Massachusetts, Mitchill Collection. Mitchell also compared the artwork of several Mexican paintings. “They are done upon the fabric of pounded bark, exactly like the paper-cloth manufactured at this day in the Society and Friendly Islands. . . . I speculated the like preparations of Ptaheite and Tongababoo; showing a similar state of the arts from America through the Polynesian islands to Australia.” Unpublished letter of Samuel L. Mitchill to P. S. DuPonceau, 24 February 1819, American Philosophical Society.


51. Josiah Priest, American Antiquities and Discoveries in the West, 2nd ed. (Albany: Hoffman & White, 1838), 296. See also Mitchill letter to Clinton, in Archaeologia Americana, 329.

52. Mitchell letter to Clinton, in Archaeologia Americana, 326.


56. De Witt Clinton, “Memoir of the Antiquities of the Western Parts of the State of New York Read before the Literary and Philosophical Society of New York by De Witt Clinton, Albany, 7 October 1817,” in Archaeologia Americana, 48. For more on the mentor/student relationship between Mitchill and Clinton, see Dorothy Bobbe, De Witt Clinton (New York: Minton, Balch, 1933), 64-65.

57. Hopkins, “De Witt Clinton and the Iroquois,” 129. For a series of articles on this subject and to confirm Clinton’s interests, see those by William A. Ritchie in Researches and Transactions of the New York State Archaeological Association 7-12 (1930–54); also his Indian History of New York State, Part 1, Pre-Iroquoian Cultures; Part 2, The Iroquoian Tribes (Educational Leaflet Series, nos. 6 and 7, New York State Museum, March 1953 and July 1953).


59. Priest, American Antiquities, 222.
and 240. Rafinesque, however, put no stock whatsoever in the lost tribes theory. A derivative of the Mitchillian theory and variation of the pre-Adamite theory was Mitchill’s view, similar to Thomas Jefferson’s, that “America was the cradle of the human race,” that the Garden of Eden was in ancient America, and that the great early migrations of man had originally traveled westward from the Americas to Asia, Europe, and Africa before eventually returning later to the Western Hemisphere; see Archaeologia Americana, 331. Priest likewise bought into this view in American Antiquities (1838 ed.), 135.

60. Priest, American Antiquities, 43.


62. Lang, Origin and Migrations of the Polynesian Nation, 238.

63. B. H. Coates, “Annual Discourse Delivered before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, on the 28th day of April, 1834, on the Origin of the Indian Population of America” (Philadelphia: McCarty and Davis, 1834), 48. Coates believed that the “Malay or Oceanic race of the South Seas . . . probably furnished the largest share to the population of the two Americas.” “Annual Discourse,” 50.

64. John Delafield Jr., An Inquiry into the Origin of the Antiquities of America (Cincinnati: Burgess, 1839), 102.


69. Paul Rivet and James H. Labadie, “Early Contacts between Polynesia and America,” Diogenes 4/16 (1956): 87, 89. Recently, researchers have analyzed skulls from a tribe in isolation in Mexico from 2,000 to 2,700 years ago and have found that they are similar to those of ancient Australians. See the writings of Rolando Gonzalez-Jose in the journal Nature as referred to in “Skulls Point to New Theory on Early American Migrants,” Deseret Morning News, 8 September 2003.


73. For much more on the visit of Martin Harris to Professor Mitchill, Charles Anthon, and Luther Bradish, see my article “‘Read This I Pray Thee,’” 178–216; see note 1.
Joseph Smith’s revelations and teachings shed new light on long-standing questions concerning the salvation of the dead. Joseph taught that all men would be judged according to their obedience to the measure of light given them, that “eternal punishment” was not necessarily unending, that the dead could receive the gospel, and that living Saints could do vicarious ordinance work on their behalf. Baptisms, among other temple ordinances, were performed—as in ancient times—by living proxies on behalf of the deceased to ensure their opportunity to partake of salvation in God’s kingdom. Joseph’s illuminating and comforting revelations largely resolved the soteriological problem.

FROM THE EDITOR:
This is fourth and last installment on the history of the doctrine of the redemption of the dead produced by Dr. David L. Paulsen, Judson Burton, Kendel J. Christensen, and Martin Pulido. Previous installments treated early Christian understandings, later Christian attempts to make sense of the doctrine, and the introduction of the doctrine and practice of redemption of the dead during the lifetime of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Now, finally, the authors turn to the development of the practice and doctrine from 1844 through the 1918 revelation to Joseph F. Smith. Never before has the history of the doctrine of the redemption of the dead been handled so thoroughly.
of evil and added a distinctly loving element to postmortem salvation: the dead and living are saved together through temple work.  

After Joseph’s death, church leaders further elaborated upon many of these themes. While the Saints recognized that the principal element of the soteriological problem of evil had been resolved (namely, the damnation of those who did not have the opportunity to receive the gospel in this life), nonetheless, the Saints continued to probe and ponder questions still not fully answered, including:

1. What was the nature of Christ’s visit to the spirit world, and what precisely did the harrowing of hell accomplish?  
2. Who was commissioned to preach the gospel to the departed spirits, and when did they do so?  
3. What are the repercussions for neglecting the gospel in this life? Can one who understands and ignores the gospel in mortality repent and progress after death?  
4. Why are temple ordinances performed for those who do not warrant celestial glory?  

In this concluding article of our four-part series, we will explore responses Latter-day Saint leaders have made to these and related questions. We will also provide context for Joseph F. Smith’s vision concerning the spirit world now canonized as section 138 of the Doctrine and Covenants. We will then consider the implications of this vision on our restored doctrine and practice of salvation for the dead.  

**The Harrowing of Hell: Post Joseph Smith**

In the wake of Joseph Smith’s death, Latter-day Saint leaders were left to sort out and elaborate on the many statements left by the Prophet. While rich and revealing, these statements nevertheless left open a broad array of questions concerning the exact nature of Christ’s personal visit to the spirit world. For example, did Christ personally visit both the righteous and the wicked? And how many of the wicked were actually redeemed at the time of his visit? Did postmortal evangelism continue after Christ’s descent to the spirit world? If so, how and by whom? Current Latter-day Saints, familiar and satisfied with Joseph F. Smith’s vision, give little thought to these questions, but before his vision these questions were of serious concern, as the salvation of the vast majority of mankind rests upon these issues. The early responses to these questions were diverse and not always in full agreement with each other. However, by examining the initial variety of responses, as well as subsequent agreement among church leaders, we can begin to understand how important and revealing Joseph F. Smith’s vision was for the church.

To begin with, nearly all church leaders following Joseph continued to emphasize the salvific nature of the Savior’s visit to the spirits in prison. At a funeral in 1855, Apostle Orson Pratt (1811–81) described the message Christ gave to the spirits in prison:

> What did he preach? Did he preach, “You must remain here to endless ages without hope of redemption?” If this were the proclamation, what was the use of going to proclaim it? What would be the use of telling those beings that they were to remain in misery, and that there was no chance of escape? No use of proclaiming such news in the ears of any one. . . . This was the object, then, that they might have the same Gospel that men have in the flesh.

Further, Elder Pratt later asserted, representing Jesus’s message to the spirits in prison as one of damnation was an apostate sectarian notion: “What would you think [Jesus] preached? Says one—‘If he
followed the examples of our sectarian preachers, he would go and tell them that their doom was irrevocably fixed, that they were cast down to prison, never to be recovered." Thus Pratt demonstrated the incomprehensibility of Thomist and Lutheran orthodox theologians’ belief that Christ’s message to the imprisoned had been a rebuke or declaration of their damnation.7

Pratt was not alone in stressing the salvific nature of Christ’s postmortal ministry. In November 1884 President George Q. Cannon (1827–1901) expressed his belief that this joyous message of the Savior to the dead “penetrated the depths of hell, the gloom of darkness, and it awakened hope within their hearts.”8 In a message on the necessity of temples, Elder James E. Talmage (1862-1933) concurred:

His preaching must have been purposeful and positive; moreover, it is not to be assumed that His message was other than one of relief and mercy. Those to whom He went were already in prison, and had been there long. To them came the Redeemer, to preach, not to further condemn, to open the way that led to light, not to intensify the darkness of despair in which they languished.9

The Brethren taught that Christ’s message was not only joyous but efficacious in releasing the repentant souls of the dead.10 On 12 June 1853, Elder John Taylor (1808–87) taught that “[Christ] preached to [the spirits in prison], and they came forth out of their confinement.”11 On 14 November 1877, as president of the Quorum of the Twelve, John Taylor asked regarding these spirits, “Were they redeemed? Yes, if Jesus preached the Gospel to them, and which he most assuredly did.”12

In his Articles of Faith, written in 1899, James E. Talmage reechoed these sentiments: “Upon all who reject the word of God in this life will fall the penalties provided for such act; but after the debt has been paid, the prison doors shall be opened, and the spirits once confined in suffering, now chastened and clean, shall come forth to partake of the glory provided for their class.”13 Such was the case for the wicked of Noah’s day. Yet Talmage clarified that “deliverance from hell is not admittance to heaven [meaning the celestial kingdom].”14 Nonetheless, the repentant spirits were clearly redeemed and liberated by Christ in a significant manner. Hence, as Elder Parley P. Pratt’s (1807–57) Autobiography makes clear, after the Savior’s death, Christ “could descend to the dark and gloomy abodes of the spirits in prison and preach to them the gospel—bursting off their shackles and unlocking their prison doors; while these once dark abodes were now brilliant with light, and, instead of prison groans, were heard joyful acclamations of deliverance to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.”15 Elder Talmage’s Jesus the Christ affirmed that Christ’s redeeming message applied to the imprisoned of all times and dispensations, that “all whose wickedness in the flesh had brought their spirits into the prison house were sharers in the possibilities of expiation, repentance, and release.”16

George Q. Cannon (1827–1901) explained that in the spirit world Christ would have selected ministers with priesthood authority to preach the everlasting gospel to the spirits who died in ignorance of or disobedience to the gospel.
So it was clear that Christ visited and liberated the spirits in prison. This, however, led the Saints to another question: Did Christ also minister to the righteous in paradise? And if so, what was the nature and purpose of his visit to them? Some church leaders affirmed the former and believed that Christ organized the missionary work for the dead while visiting the righteous in paradise. For instance, in November 1884, President George Q. Cannon asserted that while Christ was in the spirit world, he doubtlessly, chose His ministers, the men who had the authority of the Holy Priesthood, and set them to the same labor that was commenced on the earth, the labor of preaching His everlasting Gospel to all the spirit world, to the millions of spirits who had died either in disobedience to the Gospel of Christ, or in ignorance of that Gospel, never having heard the sound of it.17

While this concept is common and even second nature in the church today, it had not yet been conclusively settled by revelation in Cannon’s day. Yet, Cannon was not alone in his feelings. In October 1887, Elder Erastus Snow of the Twelve (1818–88) concurred:

[Christ] visited the spirits in prison and preached the gospel unto them, and without doubt organized the labor among the dead the same as he organized it before his crucifixion among the living, by the appointment of apostles and seventies and elders of Israel and others to be as witnesses to continue the work upon the earth which he commenced, to be his fellow-laborers and to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth. So, without doubt, he organized his work and ministered among the dead.18

On 2 February 1884, Elder Snow shared that “[Christ] opened the door and offered the message of life and salvation, and having done this, His fellow laborers—the Seventies, Elders and others whom He ordained to the ministry—as fast as they finished their ministry in the flesh—continued their work among the spirits in prison.” At a funeral in 1911, President Joseph F. Smith expressed a similar sentiment: “I have always believed, and still do believe with all my soul, that such men as Peter and James, and the twelve disciples chosen of the Savior in His time, have been engaged all the centuries that have passed since their martyrdom for the testimony of Jesus Christ, in proclaiming liberty to the captives in the spirit world and in opening their prison doors.”

This topic of missionary work led to another question: “How many were redeemed at the time of the Savior’s visit?” Some believed the number of spirits prepared for the Lord’s ministration was small. For example, on 2 February 1884, Elder Snow taught the Saints that “while [Jesus’s] body lay in the tomb his spirit visited the spirits in prison, turned the key and opened the door of their prison house, and offered unto them the Gospel of salvation. How many of them were prepared to avail themselves of it at that time? Comparatively few.”21

Other authorities expressed a different view. For example, Wilford Woodruff in the April 1894 general conference declared a general principle relating to acceptance of the gospel in the spirit world. He claimed that “there will be very few, if any, [in spirit prison] who will not accept the Gospel. Jesus, while his body lay in the tomb, went and preached to the spirits in prison, who were destroyed in the days of Noah. After so long an imprisonment, in torment, they doubtless gladly embraced the Gospel, and if so they will be saved in the kingdom of God.”22 Church Patriarch Eldred G. Smith agreed with President Woodruff. Speaking in the April 1962 conference, well after President Joseph F. Smith’s...
vision, Patriarch Smith proclaimed that a great many continue to receive the gospel in the spirit world and that this success in the spirit world has been taking place since Christ first introduced the gospel upon his postmortal visit.\(^{23}\)

The wide array of ideas following Joseph’s death concerning the nature of Christ’s visit to the spirit world is not completely surprising. After all, Joseph’s revelations, while rich and numerous, did not fully clarify all these issues. Importantly, these are the very matters that would receive clarification in Joseph F. Smith’s vision.

**Vicarious Temple Work and Kingdoms of Glory**

In conjunction with the doctrine of postmortem evangelism and the consequent redemption of the dead, Latter-day Saint temple work has been understood, since the Nauvoo era, as a necessary component in availing mankind with the fulness of gospel blessings.\(^{24}\) In Elder Orson Pratt’s September 1856 tract, “Water Baptism,” he taught that by accepting the gospel in the hereafter rather than in mortality when they first were given the opportunity, spirits in prison could be redeemed into the terrestrial but not into the celestial kingdom, for they had not accepted the ordinance of baptism when first offered to them.\(^{25}\) Baptism had been taught as a necessary requirement for entrance into the celestial kingdom (see Mark 16:15-16; John 3:5; D&C 76:51).\(^{26}\) Doctrine and Covenants, section 76, taught that the heirs of the terrestrial kingdom include spirits in prison who did not accept the gospel during mortality but did when it was preached to them in prison (see D&C 76:72-75). On 31 December 1876 John Taylor elaborated on this passage by saying that these spirits would inherit the terrestrial glory: “because they were found not worthy of propagating their species, they were not worthy to become fathers and mothers of lives.”\(^{27}\)

It “may be possible for especially gifted and faithful characters” to pass from one kingdom to another.

If so many were to receive a lesser kingdom of glory, were those who were known to be wicked or to have rejected the gospel while in the flesh to be baptized? In 1901, President Joseph F. Smith was aware that in the process of performing vicarious temple work, the ordinances would be done for many unworthy persons. He explained that “it does not follow, however, that they will receive any benefit therefrom, and the correct thing is to do the work only for those of whom we have the testimony that they will receive it. However, we are disposed to give the benefit of the doubt to the dead, as it is better to do the work for many who are unworthy than to neglect one who is worthy.”\(^{28}\) Furthermore, some Saints were not sure whether baptism was a requirement only for the celestial kingdom or whether it was also a requirement for the terrestrial kingdom. Given this uncertainty, it was not clear whether temple work for wicked spirits in prison would be needed. The issue was undecided.\(^{29}\)

Besides the question of the efficacy of priesthood ordinances for salvation in kingdoms lower than the celestial, there was also the question of the possibility of eventual progression between kingdoms of glory in the eternities. If such progression were possible, would not the ordinances of salvation still need to be in place? While no church leaders during this time period claimed revelation regarding such progression, most who considered it were favorable toward it. Ironically, later church leaders would doubt the possibility of progression between kingdoms for the same reasons that many traditional Christians had rejected postmortem evangelism: the potential negative impact it would bring upon gospel living within mortality.\(^{30}\) Additionally, many members maintain that progression from one kingdom to another is not possible due to the fixed nature of our resurrected bodies. Paul taught that some would be resurrected with celestial bodies, other terrestrial, and still others telestial; latter-day revelations seem supportive of that notion. If the resurrected body constitutes an eternal and immutable union of spirit and flesh, then it seemingly would be unchangeable and therefore would prevent an individual from progressing to a higher kingdom. While this seems a strong argument, specific revelation has not been received on this matter. As a matter of policy, the church has announced at two separate times, occasioned by inquiring members (in 1952 and again in 1965), that General Authorities have accepted many positions but that officially the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has no definite doctrine on the matter.
Brigham Young, B. H. Roberts, Lorenzo Snow, and James E. Talmage accepted the possibility that over eons of time and with much effort, there could be progression between kingdoms.\(^{31}\) If so, universal exaltation remained an open possibility in the eternities. In November 1910, President Joseph F. Smith explored the possibility of progress between kingdoms.\(^{32}\) He believed there is eternal progress along different tracks in the different kingdoms of glory. Nonetheless, he admitted that it “may be possible for especially gifted and faithful characters” to pass from one kingdom to another. While Joseph Smith’s vision of the three kingdoms taught that partakers of the telestial glory cannot go to where God and Christ dwell, “worlds without end,” President Joseph F. Smith asked, “Who knows but in the providences of God there may be exceptions, because all his judgments are not made known to us?”\(^{33}\) The ultimate answers to such questions have not yet been provided by authoritative sources.

Sentiments such as these left the question concerning ordinance work for telestial and terrestrial heirs wide open. However, as President Joseph F. Smith explained, it is better “to give the benefit of the doubt to the dead, as it is better to do the work for many who are unworthy than to neglect one who is worthy.”\(^{34}\) Ultimate resolution will await future direction through continuing revelation. That is why the Lord gives us prophets.

Social Consequences and Gospel Neglect

Both Saints and people of other faiths . . . worried that people would indulge in carnal pleasures while on earth and ignore the gospel until they received an opportunity to accept it in the spirit world.

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Social Consequences and Gospel Neglect

Both Saints and people of other faiths had expressed concern that the possibility of salvation after this life may weaken the incentive to embrace the gospel in mortality.\(^{35}\) They worried that people would indulge in carnal pleasures while on earth and ignore the gospel until they received an opportunity to accept it in the spirit world. Some thinkers, as we explored in our previous article, thought that postmortem evangelism would consequently take “the wind out of the sails of missions.”\(^{36}\) This concern is closely linked to the above eschatological issues (namely, do vicarious ordinances bring everyone into the celestial kingdom or will some individuals, regardless of receiving ordinances posthumously, inherit a lesser glory? And if so, then why perform the ordinances for all individuals?). However, in this context the eschatological question becomes an ethical one—namely, should we teach this doctrine if it encourages indifference toward the gospel?

To address this concern the Saints first carefully distinguished the kingdoms of glory from the temporary abode of the world of spirits. This distinction was drawn to answer those who thought the penitent thief on the cross was received directly into heaven upon death due to the Savior’s promise that they would be together in paradise (see Luke 23:43).\(^{37}\) Many Christians disagreed with the Latter-day Saint Church about the necessity of baptism and other ordinances of the gospel because of this interpretation of the consoling words of the Savior, to which the Saints responded that paradise is not the same as the kingdom of heaven. As Elder Orson Pratt observed in November 1848, “We have no evidence to believe the thief was taken into heaven or into the celestial kingdom of God.”\(^{38}\)

The Saints cited the scriptures to distinguish between paradise and heaven. First, both the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants describe paradise not as God’s heaven, but as a place of rest where spirits await resurrection (see Alma 40:12; Moroni 10:34; compare D&C 77:5). The New Testament, in their eyes, also proved this point. In the New Testament, the Savior told the thief he would be with him in paradise that day (see Luke 23:43). However, three days later, the resurrected Jesus told Mary he had not “yet ascended to [his] Father” (John 20:17).\(^{39}\) Assuming that heaven is the place where God dwells, the Saints considered this proof that the Savior and the thief had not gone there, but to a different realm. As evidenced by an article in the Gospel Reflector, the Saints believed as early as 1841 that “it was not improbable . . . that this paradise is synonymous with the prison that Peter mentions.”\(^{40}\) According to Wilford Woodruff, Joseph Smith made similar remarks during a sermon on 11 June 1843:
I will say something about the Spirits in prison. There has been much said about the sayings of Jesus on the Cross to the thief, saying this day thou shalt be with me in paradise. The commentators or translators make it out to say Paradise but what is Paradise? It is a modern word. It does not answer at all to the original that Jesus made use of. There is nothing in the original in any language that signifies Paradise. But it was this day I will be with thee in the world of spirits & will teach thee or answer thy inquiries. The thief on the Cross was to be with Jesus Christ in the World of Spirits.

Many church leaders later echoed Joseph’s explanation. By clarifying the nature of Christ’s liberation of the wicked and the distinction between the spirit world and the kingdoms of glory, church leaders were equipped to address the question concerning whether postmortem evangelization maintained the needed incentive for gospel living in mortality.

Church leaders’ response to the question of a “second chance” was tripartite. Intentionally delaying acceptance of the gospel until the postmortem spirit world results in:

1. Suffering many of the consequences of sin during mortal life,
2. Ineligibility for a celestial resurrection, and
3. Longer imprisonment and sorrow in the spirit prison.

In respect to the third consequence, resisting the gospel in mortality results in being separated longer from one’s body than is the case for celestial resurrection, or receiving “a fulness of joy” (D&C 93:33). In 1855, Elder Parley P. Pratt noted how the righteous Saints were resurrected shortly after the resurrection of Christ, while the wicked were confined to the spirit world to wait thousands of years. Likewise, he observed that at the second coming of Christ, the righteous will be resurrected at the sound of a trump, while the obstinate, wicked, and ignorant will have to wait in the spirit world another thousand years.

On 12 June 1853, Elder John Taylor spoke about those who felt comfortable neglecting or rejecting the gospel in this life because of the Savior’s mercy and mission to the spirits in prison. Taylor denounced this attitude and mentioned the imprisonment and punishment that would come upon those who procrastinate the day of their repentance. Some Saints looked at the suffering in the hereafter of the rich man who had slighted Lazarus as a type for the wicked (see Luke16:19–31). Still, the bondage of the antediluvians was the clearest indicator of the consequences of rejecting the gospel taught by God’s prophets.

Elder Pratt described another likely outcome of rejecting the gospel in mortality: the opportunity to receive the gospel in the spirit world would not be available as soon as many might expect. In April 1853, Pratt declared, “I have not the least doubt but there are spirits [in the spirit world who] would be found . . . ignorant of the truths, the ordinances, powers, keys, Priesthood, resurrection, and eternal life of the body.” He discussed whether people who died without the gospel hear it soon after arriving in the spirit world. To provide an answer, Pratt thought we should refer to our experience in this world. He asked, “Do all the people in this world hear the Gospel as soon as they are capable of understanding? No, indeed, but very few in comparison have heard it at all.”

Parley P. Pratt (1807–1857) noted that the righteous Saints would receive priority in the resurrection—the wicked would have to wait longer to receive that blessing.
ignorant of the gospel even when it was present in their midst. From this, Pratt reasoned analogously that the situation in the spirit world is similar. Pratt declared, “I have not the least doubt but there are spirits there who have dwelt there a thousand years, who, if we could converse with them face to face, would be found . . . ignorant of the truths, the ordinances, powers, keys, Priesthood, resurrection, and eternal life of the body.”

Pratt further thought that the most wicked in the spirit world have not heard the gospel yet, as they are unworthy of gospel instruction.

On 6 October 1875, Elder Joseph F. Smith told the Saints at general conference that “if we do not conform to [God’s] will, obey his laws and yield to his requirements in this world, we will be consigned to the ‘prison house,’ where we will remain until we pay the debt to the uttermost farthing.”

In May 1893, George Q. Cannon taught that the sentence of punishment was strictly enforced for those who reject the gospel in mortality. He believed that only after Christ’s mission to the wicked of Noah’s day did they have “the opportunity of repenting.”

Elder James E. Talmage shared tersely how failure to respond to the gospel’s call and to repent in this life would not be easily repaired in the next. In his book *Articles of Faith*, he explained, “As the time of repentance is procrastinated, the ability to repent grows weaker; neglect of opportunity in holy things develops inability.”

In addition, the terms of repentance in the next life may be less favorable, and repentance becomes harder after a life of sin where we have continually placed ourselves in the power of the adversary. Later Elder Talmage explained that “refusal to hear and heed the word of God is no physical deafness, but a manifestation of spiritual disease resulting from sin. Death is no cure for such. The unrepentant state is a disorder of the spirit, and, following disembodiment, the spirit will still be afflicted therewith. What ages such an afflicted one may have to pass in prison confines before he becomes repentant and therefore fit for cleansing, we may not know.”

Furthermore, rejecting the gospel in the flesh may have the lasting consequence of inheriting, at best, the terrestrial kingdom. In May 1898, Elder Orson F. Whitney (1855–1931) taught that “they who reject the Gospel here, and put off the day of their salvation, and have to be preached to in the spirit world, . . . they who put off the day of their salvation, and think ‘we will have a good time here and will obey the Gospel hereafter,’ they must answer for this neglect, and after they have answered for it and realized what they have lost, they will be saved—not in the celestial kingdom, but in a lesser kingdom called the terrestrial.”

The Brethren also explained that even if the prospect of postmortem evangelism encouraged a few people to procrastinate their repentance until the spirit world, the doctrine was nevertheless undeniably consistent with the Lord’s tender mercies. In an 1899 article for the *Latter-day Saints Southern Star*, Elder Matthias F. Cowley asserted that even if some people would refuse to take the gospel seriously here, thinking they would accept it later, “the evil results following are incomparably less than would be those which offer salvation to some and deny it to others.” If people thought loved ones, friends, and many innocent persons were truly damned by lacking a mortal opportunity to hear the gospel, they would lose faith in the justice and mercy of God. Cowley likewise thought it repugnant that a murderer could be saved for accepting Christ on his deathbed while the victim lacked the opportunity and so went to hell. How could anyone take that gospel message seriously? Comparing these two options, Cowley considered postmortem evangelism a morally superior position.

**Joseph F. Smith: Prevision Teachings**

Joseph Smith’s revelations and teachings are by far the salient influence in guiding church practice and doctrine regarding the redemption of the dead. After Joseph Smith, one next instinctively thinks of Joseph F. Smith and his grand vision of the redemption of the dead.
redemption of the dead. However, before turning to this revelation, we will explore some important teachings President Joseph F. Smith had presented prior to his well-known vision. For several decades, President Smith had given long, thoughtful consideration to the salvation of the dead. Interestingly, some of his earlier teachings on the subject were confirmed by the revelation, while others were overturned.

One of these early teachings is the distinction Elder Joseph F. Smith, then an apostle, made between Christ’s mission to the antediluvians who died in the flood and Christ’s mission to apostates. In contrast with his later vision, Elder Smith expressly taught that the erring antediluvians were “actually visited in the ‘prison house’ by the Savior himself, and heard the Gospel from his own mouth after he was ‘put to death in the flesh.’” 56 They would be released from prison when they performed the first works of salvation—faith and repentance, which they had rejected while in the flesh—and through temple work would receive a glory according to their merits. Joseph F. Smith felt that preaching to them likely occurred because they had not been taught the fulness of the gospel. In December 1901, as president of the church, he wrote:

We are not told to what extent the gospel of Christ, in its fullness, was proclaimed to them, but are left to suppose that the message of Noah was not the fulness of the gospel, but a cry of repentance from sin, that they might escape destruction by the flood. They hardened their hearts against Noah’s message, and would not receive it, and were punished for this disobedience in their destruction by the flood; thus in part, paying the penalty for their disobedience; but, not having received the light, they could not be condemned as those . . . who had all the commandments of God given unto them.57

However, President Smith questioned whether apostate Saints would have the same opportunity to receive the gospel as the antediluvians, since they had denied the fulness of truth. In 1901, he taught:

He that believes, is baptized and receives the light and testimony of Jesus Christ, and walks well for a season, receiving the fullness of the blessings of the Gospel in this world, and afterwards turns wholly unto sin, violating his covenants, he will be among those whom the Gospel can never reach in the spirit world; all such go beyond its saving power, they will taste the second death, and be banished from the presence of God eternally.58

Earlier, on 8 April 1876, Elder Smith echoed the Prophet Joseph’s teaching that the spirits of deceased Saints would preach the gospel to the spirits in prison: “To those who have not heard the Gospel in the flesh, if they have not already heard it preached in the spirit, they most assuredly will, and that, too, by men who have previously preached it on the earth, who have died faithful servants, they will continue their labors in the spirit world.”59 Two years later, Elder Smith explained that the Saints’ work was not done until they have saved “all depending upon [them].”60

On 4 July 1892, President Smith, then second counselor in the First Presidency, elaborated:

The millions and millions that have lived upon this earth and have passed away without the knowledge of the Gospel here, will have to be taught them there, by virtue of the authority of this holy priesthood that you and I hold. The Church of God will be organized among them by the authority of this priesthood.61

President Smith also taught more specifically that the group of “faithful servants” sent to teach the

According to James E. Talmage (1862–1933), those who rejected the word of God in this life would pay the penalties for their actions but would eventually be able to partake of glory.
spirits in prison would include prophets, worthy priesthood holders, and righteous women. Five months later, Elder Smith would declare, as he would in his later vision, how church leaders were aiding in the ministering of the gospel in the hereafter:

Not one dead or living person will pass beyond the Father’s notice, or will be left without hope. They will be brought to where they may receive the fulness of the Gospel, that they may be saved and exalted in the presence of God; or, rejecting that, they become the sons of perdition and heirs of destruction. . . . There are millions on millions that have died without the knowledge of the Gospel who are as worthy of salvation as you or I are worthy. . . . As Jesus went to preach the Gospel to the antediluvians while his body lay in the tomb, so are Joseph the Prophet, President Young, President Taylor, and the Apostles that have died in this age in possession of the testimony of the truth, today preaching to the millions that have passed behind the veil without the knowledge of the Gospel.62

During a conference for the youth of the church, President Smith would proclaim that those who preach the gospel in the next life would include all faithful priesthood holders: “Not only are [prophets and church leaders] engaged in that work but hundreds and thousands of others; the Elders that have died in the mission field have not finished their missions, but they are continuing them in the spirit world.”63 At a funeral President Smith followed Orson Pratt in expanding the preaching of the gospel in the spirit world to the sisters of the church.

Who is going to preach the Gospel to the women? Who is going to carry the testimony of Jesus Christ to the hearts of the women who have passed away without a knowledge of the Gospel? Well, to my mind, it is a simple thing. These good sisters who have been set apart, ordained to the work, called to it, authorized by the authority of the holy priesthood to minister, for their sex, in the House of God for the living and for the dead, will be fully authorized and empowered to preach the Gospel and minister to the women while the elders and prophets are preaching it to the men.64

**Joseph F. Smith’s Vision**

With these earlier teachings in mind, we can better understand the doctrinal context of President Smith’s vision in 1918. It is also interesting to note the historical context. President Smith received the revelation at a time when the world was suffering pains and death almost unprecedented in its history. The Great War (World War I) and the deadly Spanish flu were raging across the world, combining to claim tens of millions of lives. It was in October 1918, to that point the deadliest month in American history,65 that President Smith received what is now known as section 138 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Perhaps the weight of world fatalities and the recent
loss of family members motivated President Smith to reflect “upon the great atoning sacrifice that was made by the Son of God, for the redemption of the world,” and ponder “over the . . . writings of the apostle Peter.” Consequently, it was during this deep contemplation that the “eyes of [his] understanding were opened,” and he beheld a vision of the Savior’s work among the spirits of the dead during the interval between the crucifixion and resurrection (D&C 138:1, 2, 5, 11).

The vision of the redemption of the dead offers several key insights into Christ’s role in the missionary work among the departed spirits and the way in which postmortem evangelization is performed. Initially, President Smith saw Christ ministering to the “innumerable company of the spirits of the just,” an observation directly affirming the popular Christian tradition. President Smith saw the disembodied Savior preaching to the spirits of the righteous “the everlasting gospel” and such doctrines as “the resurrection and the redemption of mankind from the fall” (D&C 138:19). Thus the vision affirmed the teachings of previous church leaders that Christ himself was the initiator of the redemptive work beyond the veil and that this work was commenced while his body lay in the tomb.

This is similar to the tradition held in the first and second century and preserved today in the Apostle’s Creed,66 but it has one important distinction: The biblical statement that Christ “went and preached unto the spirits in prison” (1 Peter 3:19), which President Smith had earlier accepted and taught, received clarification in the vision. God revealed that Christ “went not in person among the wicked,” the unrepentant, and those who rejected the prophets’ testimonies. “He could not go personally, because of their rebellion and transgression” (D&C 138:29, 37). Instead, the Savior “organized his forces and appointed messengers . . . and commissioned them to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in darkness” (D&C 138:30). Thus Christ personally visited the righteous spirits and there organized the missionary work that was to be conducted over these many centuries among the unrighteous spirits, effectively answering the question posed by Elder John W. Taylor and others about whom Christ actually visited.

Additionally, this key insight made all questions concerning the numbers of those saved by Jesus’s visit to the spirit world moot. After all, his visit was one of organization. The harvest would not be quantified in the brief period between his death and resurrection. Instead, his visit would organize the work that would subsequently last for millennia. Perhaps many or perhaps few were ready for the message at that time. Either way, Christ’s mission was one of establishment, not one of direct and personal ministration to the potential recipients of the gospel.

The vision can also still be interpreted to support the view that the Savior preached unto “the spirits in prison.” As Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85)
taught, much like the early conception of Sheol being the abode of both the righteous and the wicked, “it is clearly set forth that the whole spirit world, and not only that portion designated as hell, is considered to be a spirit prison.” Likewise, Joseph F. Smith’s vision noted how the righteous “acknowledged the Son of God as their Redeemer and Deliverer from death and the chains of hell” for “the dead had looked upon the long absence of their spirits from their bodies as a bondage” (D&C 138:23, 50). In this sense, President Smith placed the Mormon position on the harrowing of hell much more in line with those who admitted a *limbus patrum*, a place of waiting for the Old Testament patriarchs and prophets until Christ freed them from death and hell and opened the way to heaven.

In addition to the above insights, President Smith also saw that, upon passing through the veil into the spirit world, the righteous dead actively pursue missionary labors among the spirits in bondage (see D&C 138:57). As he and many other Saints had communicated in earlier sermons, not only were the prophets of old commissioned in the postmortem evangelism, but also his father Hyrum Smith, the Prophet Joseph Smith, other modern-day prophets, and “many of [Mother Eve’s] faithful daughters who had lived through the ages” were involved (D&C 138:53, 39). Thus President Smith confirmed the intimate link between the doctrine of salvation for the unevangelized and the undeniably strong missionary spirit of the church.

However, Christ’s visit to the righteous was not only a time of organization and instruction; Jesus also provided them with the means to their salvation. The Savior “gave them power to come forth, after his resurrection from the dead, to enter into his Father’s kingdom, there to be crowned with immortality and eternal life, . . . and be partakers of all blessings which were held in reserve for them that love him” (D&C 138:51–52).

**Conclusion**

Joseph Smith and subsequent church leaders provided an answer to the soteriological problem of evil that advanced substantially beyond the position of early and contemporary Christians. While the doctrine of the harrowing of hell had not been totally “lost” to the Christian world, Mormon leaders, through revelation,
clarified the nature and extent of the Savior’s redemptive mission to the spirit world and the postmortem evangelism that followed. These clarifications are better appreciated in the context of the long Christian dialogue on soteriology and Peter’s writings.

In addition to this, Joseph’s restoration of baptism for the dead resolved the tension between the Lord’s mercy and the necessity of obeying the Lord’s admonition concerning saving ordinances. The practice provided a means by which the dead could learn correct principles, repent, exercise Christian faith, and also comply with all of God’s gospel requirements, including being “born of water and of the Spirit” (John 3:5), to qualify for salvation in the celestial kingdom. The soteriological teachings of Joseph Smith and subsequent leaders certainly established for Latter-day Saints the possibility of universal, eternal salvation.

In contrast to theologians’ faith-weakening doctrines of an extremely limited salvation of mankind, God, through Joseph Smith, Joseph F. Smith, and other church leaders, provides a plan that truly is big enough for all his children. As Joseph F. Smith’s son, Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972), explained, “In the great plan of salvation nothing has been overlooked. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the most beautiful thing in the world. It embraces every soul whose heart is right and who diligently seeks him and desires to obey his laws and covenants.” These modern-day revelations not only explain how salvation is brought to pass, but also enable the redemptive work for every man, woman, and child, including those who died without receiving the saving ordinances of the gospel.

“Are there few that be saved?” Through the triumphant salvific descent of our Savior below all things, it need not be so. Through the revelations of his prophets a greater picture of love and completeness has emerged as to the salvation of God’s children, whereby no soul will pass the eternities unnoticed or unjustly condemned. Instead, all people will receive the ministry of the gospel, whether in this life or in the next, and receive the opportunity to accept the blessings of salvation. Through proxy ordinances by the living on behalf of the dead, and through the dead’s acceptance of these vicarious ordinances, salvation for the dead is made efficacious in an eternally palpable link between this world and the next. How great are the tender mercies of the Lord, and how blessed are those who receive him! ■

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This question was related to and toward that which was thought to be all encompassing: Christ’s initial visitation.

4. For Joseph’s emphasis on the positive nature of the Savior’s visit, see Paulsen, Christensen, and Pulido, “Redeeming the Dead,” 42–43.

5. Orson Pratt, in Journal of Discourses, 2:371–72. Pratt reiterated these remarks on 7 April 1872. See further Orson Pratt, in Journal of Discourses, 15:52–53. In 1895, B. H. Roberts (1857–1933) agreed with Pratt. He argued that “we can scarcely suppose that Messiah would preach the gospel to them if it could do them no good. He did not go there to mock their sufferings or to add something to the torture of their damnation by explaining the beauties of that salvation now forever beyond their reach. Such a supposition would at once be revolting to reason, insulting to the justice of God, and utterly repugnant to the dictates of mercy.” See B. H. Roberts, A New Witness for God (Salt Lake City: Cannon and Sons, 1895), 1:381. Anthon H. Lund (1844–1921) noted how “some have held that [Christ visited the spirits in prison] to tantalize them over what they had lost. Oh, no! That was not the mission of Jesus. He preached glad tidings unto them, and He opened their prison doors. An opportunity was given in the spirit world for them to receive and obey the Gospel.” Lund was second counselor in the First Presidency at the time. See Anthon H. Lund, in Conference Report, October 1903, 81.


7. See Paulsen, Christensen, and Pulido, “Redeeming the Dead,” 31–32.

8. George Q. Cannon, in Journal of Discourses, 26:84. During this time Cannon was the first counselor in the First Presidency.

9. James E. Talmage, The House of the Lord: A Study of Holy Sanctuaries Ancient and Modern (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1912), 69. Later Talmage would write that “progression, then, is possible beyond the grave. Advancement is eternal. Were it otherwise, Christ’s ministry among the disembodied would be less than fable and fiction. Equally repugnant is the thought that though the Savior preached faith, repentance and other principles of the Gospel to the imprisoned sinners in the realm of spirits, their compliance was impossible.” See James E. Talmage, The Vitality of Mormonism: Brief Essays on Distinctive Doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Boston: Gorham, 1919), 255.

10. Joseph’s 1830 revelation concerning Enoch’s ministry had already shown how Christ’s harrowing of hell had freed the righteous Saints from the prison of death and allowed the repentant spirits in prison to “clo[n]e forth, and st[an]d on the right hand of God” (Moses 7:57).

11. John Taylor, in Journal of Discourses, 1:158. John Taylor was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles during this time.


13. James E. Talmage, Articles of Faith (Salt Lake City: The Deseret News, 1899), 151. Talmage held the office of high priest when Articles of Faith was written, but he was later called to the apostleship. St. Augustine struggled with this concept, in particular with the allusion in Matthew 5:26. See Paulsen, Cook, and Christensen, “Harrowing of Hell,” 68–69.

14. Talmage, Vitality of Mormonism, 266. We learn from latter-day revelation that among the inhabitants of the terrestrial kingdom are “they who are the spirits of men kept in prison, whom the Son visited, and preached the gospel unto them, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh; Who received [accepted] not the testimony of Jesus in the flesh, but afterwards received [accepted] it” (D&C 76:73–74).

15. Parley P. Pratt, The Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt (New York: Russell Brothers, 1875), 40–41. Parley was an apostle from 1835 to 1857. Pratt also expressed the same concept in his Key to the Science of Theology (Liverpool: Richards, 1853), 61–62. Pratt’s writings echo many of the same sentiments of early Christians in the Odes of Solomon, as shown in our first article in this...


21. Erastus Snow, in *Journal of Discourses*, 25:33. It is not clear whether Elder Snow meant they would never accept the gospel or that they simply were not prepared to accept it in the moment in which it was offered to them.


26. In his writings, under a section entitled “Gospel Ordinances for Celestial Kingdom Only,” Elder Joseph Fielding Smith wrote: “Will those who enter the terrestrial and celestial kingdoms have to have the ordinance of baptism? No! Baptism is the door into the celestial kingdom. The Lord made this clear to Nicodemus.” In a follow-up section entitled “Baptism Saves Men from Lower Kingdoms,” Elder Smith claims, “The First Presidency have said in answer to a similar question: ‘We know of no ordinances pertaining to the terrestrial or the celestial kingdom. All of the ordinances of the gospel are given for the salvation of men in the celestial kingdom and pertain unto that kingdom.’” Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1955), 2:329–30. See also Paulsen, Christensen, and Pulido, “Redeeming the Dead,” 38–39. Elder Smith clarified: “We are not preaching a salvation for the inhabitants of the terrestrial or the celestial kingdoms. All of the ordinances of the gospel pertain to the celestial kingdom, and what the Lord will require by way of ordinances, if any, in the other kingdoms he has not revealed.” Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:329, emphasis in original.


30. See Bruce R. McConkie, “The Seven Deadly Heresies,” fireside given at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, 1 June 1980, which lists as his fifth heresy progression between kingdoms.

31. On 5 August 1855, Wilford Woodruff recorded that President Brigham Young taught in the temple that “none would inherit this Earth when it became celestial & translated into the presence of God but those who would be Crowned as Gods & able to endure the fulness of the Presence of God, except? they might be permitted to take with them some servants for whom they would be held responsible. All others would have to inherit another kingdom even that kingdom agreeing with the law which they had kept. Yet He thought they would eventually have the privilege of proving themselves worthy & advancing to a Celestial kingdom but it would be a slow progress.” Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, ed. Scott G. Kenney (Midvale, UT: Signature Books, 1983), 4:333–34. Young conceived of all life as being in a process towards digression or advancement. “All organized existence is in progress, either to an endless advancement in eternal perfections, or back to dissolution [...] where is there an element, an individual living thing, an organized body, of whatever nature, that continues as it is? It cannot be found” (*Journal of Discourses*, 1:349). Young explained that “righteousness tends to an eternal duration of organized intelligence, while sin bringeth to pass their dissolution” (*Journal of Discourses*, 10:251; cf. 7:138–39). In October 1893, Lorenzo Snow (1814–1901) told faithful parents that “if you succeed in passing through these trials and afflictions and receive a resurrection, you will, by the power of the Priesthood, work and labor, as the Son of God has, until you get all your sons and daughters in the path of exaltation and glory. This is just as sure as that the sun rose this morning over yonder mountains.” Lorenzo Snow, “Preaching the Gospel in the Spirit World,” in *Collected Discourses*, 3:364. B. H. Roberts, in *New Witness for God*, 1:391–92, said he could “conceive of no reason for all this administration of the higher [kingdoms] to the lower [kingdoms], as described in D&C 761, unless it be for the purpose of advancing our Father’s children along the lines of eternal progression. Whether or not in the great future, full of so many possibilities now hidden from us, they of the lesser glories after education and advancement within those spheres may at last emerge from them and make their way to the higher degrees of glory until at last they attain to the highest, is not revealed in the revelations of God, and any statement made on the subject must partake more or less of the nature of conjecture.” In his first edition of *Articles of Faith*, James Talmage, who was not an apostle at the time, suggested that progress between kingdoms may be possible. Talmage, *Articles of Faith* (1899 ed.), 1:10. 

41. Such was not a new concern. It was a primary concern throughout the history of Christianity. Unsurprisingly, the theologians who expressed such concerns did not view biblical scriptures pertaining to Christ’s descent into hell as having salvific force for those who were visited. In some interpretations, ancient Christian thinkers rejected the literal nature of the passages altogether. See Paulsen, Cook, and Christensen, “Harrowing of Hell,” 68–70.
42. John Sanders, No Other Name: An Investigation into the Destiny of the Unevangelized (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 209.
44. Unsurprisingly, Luther, who gutted the Catholic doctrine of purgatory, would most likely have interpreted this passage as referring to heaven. See Paulsen, Cook, and Christensen, “Harrowing of Hell,” 69–70.
52. Talmage, Articles of Faith (1984 ed.), 104 (in section “Repentance Not Always Possible”).
53. Talmage, Vitality of Mormonism, 259.
57. J. F. Smith, “Editor’s Table: Redemption Beyond the Grave,” Improvement Era, December 1901, 146.

58. Joseph F. Smith, in Journal of Discourses, 18:93. President Smith made similar remarks in the December 1901 Improvement Era while serving as the first counselor in the First Presidency under Lorenzo Snow. He stated, “It is evident that [those who have received and rejected God’s law] have no chance for redemption, no matter what may be done for them in hope or by faith, for they will have sinned against life and knowledge, and are, therefore, worthy of damnation. It is nowhere revealed that such as these will ever be forgiven, although we are informed that all of God’s judgments are not given unto men.” J. F. Smith, “Editor’s Table,” 145.

59. Joseph F. Smith, in Journal of Discourses, 18:274. These remarks were delivered in 1876 at the 46th Annual General Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when Joseph F. Smith was serving as a counselor in the First Presidency under Brigham Young. Later as president of the church, he preached, “When we shall have finished our mission here and go behind the veil, with the Priesthood that has been conferred upon us here and its keys, authority and power, we will continue to administer for the redemption of those that have died without a knowledge of the truth, in the world of spirits, until every son and daughter of God that has lived upon the earth shall have had the privilege of hearing the sound of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and of embracing it, that their prison doors may be opened, and that liberty may be proclaimed unto them, the liberty of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, wherewith we are made free.” See President Joseph F. Smith, in Conference Report, April 1904, 5.

60. See Joseph F. Smith, in Journal of Discourses, 19:264. These remarks were delivered at the funeral of Emmeline B. Wells when Joseph F. Smith was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

61. Joseph F. Smith, “Rights and Order of the Priesthood,” in Collected Discourses, 3:99. These remarks were made at the conference of the four stakes of Zion in Arizona, held at Pinetop, Apache County, Arizona. Joseph F. Smith, “The Desert Blossoming as a Rose,” in Collected Discourses, 3:219. These remarks were delivered at the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City on 8 January 1893.


66. Despite the controversies discussed throughout our four-part series, to this day the Catholic Church continues to interpret the creed to mean that “the crucified one sojourned in the realm of the dead prior to his resurrection (Acts 3:15; Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:20; cf. Heb. 13:2),” and that “he descended there as Savior, proclaiming the Good News to the spirits imprisoned there.” See Catechism of the Catholic Church, part 1, section 2, chapter 2, article 5, p. 632.


68. See Paulsen, Cook, and Christensen, “Harrowing of Hell,” 66–68.

69. See Paulsen, Christensen, and Pulido, “Redeeming the Dead,” 45–46.


71. Luke 13:23, cited in Paulsen, Cook, and Christensen, “Harrowing of Hell,” 57. This was the quandary of the sages throughout the ages of time.
This gilded bed in the shape of a lion is from King Tutankhamun’s tomb (ca. 1300 BCE); it is probably the finest (and earliest) known example of a lion couch from ancient Egypt.
The existence of human sacrifice in ancient Egypt has been variously debated and denied. While Egyptologists generally admit that the practice existed in the formative periods of Egyptian society, opinions among Egyptologists for later time periods range from claiming that “there is no certain evidence for the practice of human sacrifice . . . from the Old Kingdom onwards” to asserting that there is “indisputable evidence for the practice of human sacrifice in classical ancient Egypt.” However difficult it may be for modern societies to accept that a practice we detest, such as human sacrifice, occurred in past civilizations we admire, further research and discoveries necessitate a reassessment of the possibility of this practice within Egyptian culture. While there is not a universally accepted definition of human sacrifice, for the purposes of this paper we will define human sacrifice as the slaying of a person in a ritual context.

Understanding this definition is somewhat hampered by a modern tendency to compartmentalize that which ancient societies were not prone to view...
separately (for all practical purposes, religion and civil government in ancient Egypt were one and the same). Whereas we make a distinction between execution and human sacrifice, this point of view was not necessarily the case with ancient Egyptians, at least partly because what we call “religious” aspects of culture they saw as just part of life. Any person deemed worthy of death would have been viewed as someone affecting both social and religious spheres, and hence his or her death would have both social and religious ramifications. All known cases of executions from ancient Egypt carry with them trappings of ritual and/or religious actions. Consequently, our definition of human sacrifice accounts for this by recognizing the ritual context of slaying, regardless of whether modern society would think of a given act as execution rather than human sacrifice. If ritual and religious aspects are present in the slaying of a person, then we will consider it human sacrifice.5

Furthermore, studies in Egyptian ritual and sacrifice have been hampered by a lack of differentiation between daily offerings and other types of sacrifices such as those involved in festivals6—a distinction that also needs to be made regarding the possibility of human sacrifice. Ancient Egyptian rituals occurred at both regular intervals (such as festivals)7 and irregular intervals (such as in celebrations of military victories, or rituals enacted against dangerous threats). While it is theoretically possible that ancient Egypt could have had regular programs and irregular individual occasions of human sacrifice, none of the evidence from the Middle Kingdom requires a regular program of human sacrifice; indeed, most of the evidence points to sacrifice having been an exceptional occurrence. We present this evidence in a topical order (from prescription to practice) rather than in chronological order.

While there is evidence for the practice of ritual slaying from all eras of Egyptian history,9 for this paper we will focus on the Middle Kingdom (ca. 2000–1750), which is the period during which Abraham most likely lived. Thus it is useful to compare the known historical evidence from Middle Kingdom Egypt to evidence presented in the Book of Abraham. We will show that the story presented in the Book of Abraham matches remarkably well with the picture of ritual slaying in Middle Kingdom Egypt. We begin with the Egyptian evidence.

1. A Middle Kingdom boundary stone inscription at Abydos written by the pharaoh Ugaf (1761–1759 BC)9 and later usurped by Neferhotep I (1737–1726 BC)10 instructs that “anyone who shall be found inside these boundary stones except for a priest about his duties shall be burnt.”11 The archaeological context of the inscription shows that the boundary stones that marked “sacred land” were part of a processional route between the temple and the cemetery.12 Those trespassing on sacred land were to be put to death by burning. While it is not known whether this law was ever violated and the punishment meted out, the penalty of being burned to death was part of Egyptian law; the decree carries ritual implications, especially in light of evidence presented below concerning burning. While our modern tendency is to compartmentalize various types of activities, we must divest ourselves of this compulsion when trying to understand ancient cultures. If an ancient Egyptian had broken this decree, it would have had “religious” implications. It is thus likely that any response would also have had religious connotations. In such cases the distinction between ritual slaying and execution may be meaningless. In the

The story presented in the Book of Abraham matches remarkably well with the picture of ritual slaying in Middle Kingdom Egypt. of ritual and/or religious actions. Consequently, our definition of human sacrifice accounts for this by recognizing the ritual context of slaying, regardless of whether modern society would think of a given act as execution rather than human sacrifice. If ritual and religious aspects are present in the slaying of a person, then we will consider it human sacrifice.5

FROM THE EDITOR:
The specter of human sacrifice is so repugnant that few people do not recoil from such a practice. One such sacrifice, the attempted offering of Abraham by the priest of pharaoh, however, has raised the question of whether or not the Egyptians ever indulged in such uncivilized and disgusting behavior. Drs. Kerry Muhlestein and John Gee present evidence that such a practice among ancient Egyptians was indeed performed.
following cases we can be certain of the presence of religious trappings during the slaying of a human. In regards to the Ugaf decree, we cannot be as certain. And while we will note that ritual connotations are implied, the idea of distinguishing between a sanctioned slaying with or without ritual connotations was probably a foreign idea to those who made the decree.

We cannot know if this decree was ever enforced. What is important for our purposes, however, is to understand that the inscription rises from a milieu in which slaying someone for desecration of sacred space was an accepted practice with ritual connotations.

2. That the penalty of human sacrifice (including burning) was carried out in some circumstances can be shown from a historical account left by Sesostris I (1953–1911 BC). Sesostris I recounts finding the temple of Tod in a state of both disrepair and intentional desecration, something he attributed to Asiatic/Semitic interlopers he thus deemed as enemies. In response, he submits the purported perpetrators to varying punishments: flaying, impalement, beheading, and burning. He informs us that “[the knife] was applied to the children of the enemy (ms.w ḫrw), sacrifices among the Asiatics.” Sesostris intended a sacrificial association to be applied to the executions he had just enacted. This point is augmented by the fact that some temple sacrifices were consumed by fire. While a lacuna makes it impossible to be certain, some of the victims may even have been stabbed with a knife before being burned. In other eras of Egyptian history, this practice of burning seems to have been carried out when ritually slaying a human. Clearly, when the sacred house of a god had been desecrated, the Egyptian king responded by sacrificing those responsible.

3. Finally, archaeologists have discovered evidence of human sacrifice. Just outside the Middle Kingdom fortress at Mirgissa, which had been part of the Egyptian empire in Nubia, a deposit was found containing various ritual objects such as melted wax figurines, a flint knife, and the decapitated body of a foreigner slain during rites designed to ward off enemies. Almost universally, this discovery has been accepted as a case of human sacrifice. Texts from this and similar rites from the Middle Kingdom specify that the ritual was directed against “every evil speaker, every evil speech, every evil curse, every evil plot, every evil imprecation, every evil attack, every evil rebellion, every evil plan, and every evil thing,” which refers to those who “speak evil” of the king or of his policies. The remains in the deposit are consistent with those of later ritual texts describing the daily execution rite, which was usually a wax figure substituting in effigy for a human sacrifice: “Bind with the sinew of a red cow . . . spit on him four times . . . trample on him with the left foot . . . smite him with a spear . . . decapitate him with a knife . . . place him on the fire . . . spit on him in the fire many times.” Again we see that the use of a knife was followed by burning. The fact that the site of Mirgissa is not in Egypt proper but was part of the Egyptian empire in Nubia informs us that the Egyptians extended such practices beyond their borders.

Bound and decapitated captives depicted in the tomb of Ramses IX. The iconography of these figures matches not only the descriptions of the execution rite, but also the execution figurines themselves (see page 75), as well as the archaeological remains of those rites.
In fact, throughout time we find that ritual violence was often aimed at foreign places and people. Their very foreignness was seen as a threat to Egypt's political and social order. Hence many of the known examples of ritual slaying are aimed at foreigners, such as those at Mirgissa or Tod. All three examples we have shared involve protecting sacred places and things, such as the boundary of a necropolis, a temple, or even Egypt itself.

In summary, certain traits demonstrated by the three individual cases of human sacrifice from the Middle Kingdom deserve notice:

A. The ritual nature of the sacrifice is clear in both the Sesostris I and Mirgissa cases and is implied in the Ugaf case.
B. In two of the cases, the sacrifice is for cultic offenses; lack of clear inscriptive evidence prevents a determination in the Mirgissa case.
C. In the two cases with inscriptions, the pharaoh is involved and the sacrifice is under his orders. The specific ritual context of the third case also argues for sacrifice for rebellion against the pharaoh.
D. The sacrifice could take place both in Egypt proper and outside the boundaries in areas under Egyptian influence, as discussed above.

This picture of Middle Kingdom Egyptian culture can lend some insight into the life of Abraham since the normal time period assigned to Abraham roughly coincides with this era. The first chapter of the Book of Abraham describes his near sacrifice by an Egyptian priest. There are some elements worth comparing. In the case of Abraham:

A. The ritual nature of the sacrifice is clear from the text, which describes it as an “offering”
(Abraham 1:7–9, 11, 15) and a “sacrifice” (Abraham 1:7); it is even termed a “thank-offering” in one case (Abraham 1:10); and “it was done after the manner of the Egyptians” (Abraham 1:11), indicating that something about the way the sacrifice was enacted was Egyptian (as opposed to local or Mesopotamian) in nature.

B. The sacrifice is arguably for cultic offenses: Abraham’s fathers “were wholly turned” to the “worshipping of the gods of the heathen,” including “the god of Pharaoh, king of Egypt” (Abraham 1:5–6), and Abraham says that his fathers “utterly refused to hearken to my voice” (Abraham 1:5). Thus he had apparently been decrying such practices. Other ancient sources indicate that Abraham had desecrated or destroyed sacred, idolatrous objects. While we must be careful in our evaluation of these non-canonical accounts, their number and consistency at least deserve notice. In any case, Abraham was clearly actively working against the religious order of his day. These actions would have been perceived as a threat against Egyptian cultural and cultic practices and potentially could have subjected Abraham to the execution rite as a human sacrifice. His story shares similarities with the Tod and Ugaf inscriptions in that the desecration of the sacred was deserving of a death sentence, a death that would be carried out with ritual trappings.

C. The pharaoh was somehow involved (Abraham 1:20), as evidenced by the fact that the sacrifice was attempted through his representative, “the priest of Pharaoh” (Abraham 1:7, 10; compare 1:20), and that pharaoh took an interest in the results.

D. The sacrifice takes place outside the boundaries of Egypt but in an area under Egyptian influence (Abraham 1:1, 10, 20).

Because of the temporal and categorical proximity of Middle Kingdom examples of human sacrifice, we can now come closer to an understanding of Egyptian ritual slaying and the story presented in the first chapter of the Book of Abraham. It is clear that during the Middle Kingdom, Egyptians engaged in such practices when they deemed it necessary, and that desecrations or perceived threats were some of the situations that seemed to justify the ritual slaughter of humans. This picture matches well with that depicted in the Book of Abraham. Our understanding of the picture painted by each context can now be informed by the other, allowing us to more fully understand each individual story and the larger context in which these people lived their lives and practiced their religious beliefs.

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6. This was also argued by Winfried Barta, *Die altägyptische Opferliste*, von der Frühtime bis zur griechisch-römischen Epoche (Berlin: Hessling, 1963).

7. See, for example, the Medinet Habu temple calendar, which lists over 45 festivals in the first 138 days of the year; a convenient translation into English may be found in Sherif el-Sabban, *Temple Festival Calendars of Ancient Egypt* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), 60-140.


12. Leahy, “Protective Measure at Abydos,” 49-54; a convenient map of the processional route may be found in Mark Collier and Bill Manley, *How to Read Egyptian Hieroglyphs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 54-56.

13. This same name is also often written in literature as Senusret or Senwosret.


15. As noted by Wolfgang Helck, “Politische Spannungen zu Beginn des Mittleren Reiches,” in *Ägypten—Dauer und Wandel: Symposium anlässlich des 75jährigen Bestehens des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo*, 10. und 11. Oktober 1982 (Mainz am Rhein: von Zabern, 1985), 49, this text fits a typical Egyptian pattern of the king finding a state of chaos and heroically restoring order. Contra Helck, this does not mean that the text lacks historicity; in fact, the king would have felt compelled to dispel chaos and restore order in action as well as text. Writing of an event ideologically does not mean the event did not occur; instead it argues for the importance of the event, making it even more likely it was historical.
16. Line X+32. Restoration of “the knife” is Redford’s (“The Tod Inscriptions of Senwosret I,” 42–44) based on traces of text and the context.
17. Dennis D. Hughes, Human Sacrifice in Ancient Greece (New York: Routledge, 1991), 4, discusses the problem of the terminology of human sacrifice in the study of Greek religion and the semantic wrestle that scholars of that field have that parallels the terminology problem outlined in this study. He concludes that the cases in which humans are sacrificed in the place of animals, or in which the slaying of humans is described using language identical to animal sacrifice, undoubtedly should be referred to as human sacrifice.
22. PT 23 §16.
26. In the past some Latter-day Saints have attempted to associate the human sacrifice in the Book of Abraham with the sed-festival, a ritual associated with renewal of kingship. The idea goes back to Hugh Nibley, “A New Look at the Pearl of Great Price,” Improvement Era, September 1968–January 1970; these materials have subsequently been reprinted in Abraham in Egypt, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 2000), and in An Approach to the Book of Abraham (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 2009). It has been kept alive in Latter-day Saint circles and may be found, for example, in the works of Allen J. Fletcher: Two Articles on the Facsimiles of the Book of Abraham (Stirling, Alberta, Canada: Fletcher, 1999), and Fletcher, A Study Guide to the Facsimiles of the Book of Abraham (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 2006), 37–60. At one time Egyptologists, following the theories of James Frazier’s extremely influential Golden Bough, hypothesized that this festival might involve the ritual slaying of a substitute king. More recent evaluations of the sed-festival find no evidence of a substitute king, much less his ritual killing; see Erik Hornung and Elisabeth Schacht, Studien zum Seifest (Basel: Ägyptologisches Seminar der Universität Basel and Centre d’études orientales de l’Université de Genève, 1974), 59–61. Egyptologists have thus rejected the connection of human sacrifice with the sed-festival for at least a generation. Connection of the Book of Abraham with the sed-festival was problematic for other reasons because it took place only in Egypt, while the Book of Abraham repeatedly states that the attempted sacrifice of Abraham took place outside of Egypt (Abraham 1:1–20); see also John Gee, “Hugh Nibley and the Joseph Smith Papyri,” in Hugh W. Nibley, An Approach to the Book of Abraham (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 2009), xxxiii–xxxv.
27. Many later sources also paint a picture that Abraham’s life was sought because he had broken down or otherwise desecrated idols; see John A. Tvedt, Brian M. Hauglid, and John Gee, eds., Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham (Provo, UT: Institute for the Study and Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts, Brigham Young University, 2001), 91, 125, 132, 140–44, and 171–72, for a few of many available examples. The other accounts are irrelevant to our analysis.
Does the text of the Great Isaiah Scroll support the Isaiah passages in the Book of Mormon that differ from those in the King James Bible?

The Book of Mormon contains lengthy quotations from Isaiah (see, for example, 2 Nephi 12–24). In many instances the wording of corresponding Isaiah passages in the King James Version of the Bible (KJV) and in the Book of Mormon differs. To date, no one has completed a comprehensive study comparing the Isaiah passages in the Book of Mormon with those in the KJV, the Hebrew Bible, the scrolls found at Qumran (notably the Great Isaiah Scroll, which contains all sixty-six chapters of Isaiah), and other ancient versions of Isaiah. Several readings of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon are supported by the Isaiah scroll. The following representative examples of these parallels have been adapted from Tvedtnes’s work.

1. In many cases passages in the Isaiah scroll and in the Book of Mormon contain the conjunction and, which is lacking in the corresponding KJV text. Compare the following:

   “and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not” (KJV, Isaiah 3:9)
   “and they declare their sin as Sodom, and they hide it not” (Isaiah scroll, Isaiah 3:9)
   “and doth declare their sin to be even as Sodom, and they cannot hide it” (Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 13:9 = Isaiah 3:9)

FROM THE EDITOR:

Since the discovery of the Isaiah scrolls among the Qumran texts, the scholarly world has made extensive studies of the various Isaiah textual families—that is, groups of ancient Isaiah texts that seem to come from a common source. The Isaiah passages in the Book of Mormon on numerous occasions do not line up with the Hebrew text behind the King James translation of Isaiah, as the article by Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks demonstrates on a small scale. Contrary to the gainsayers of the Book of Mormon who claim that Joseph Smith simply copied from the King James Bible, the Book of Mormon version of Isaiah belongs to a different textual family than the Masoretic text of Isaiah behind the King James translation.
2. Second Nephi 24:32 lacks the word *one*, which appears in Isaiah 14:32. The Book of Mormon version thus makes *messengers* the subject of the verb *answer*. The Hebrew Bible uses a singular verb, but the Isaiah scroll uses the plural, in agreement with the Book of Mormon:

“What shall *one* then answer [sing.] the messengers of the nation?” (KJV, Isaiah 14:32)

“What shall then *answer* [pl.] the messengers of the nations?” (Isaiah scroll, Isaiah 14:32)

“What shall then *answer* [pl.] the messengers of the nations?” (Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 24:32 = Isaiah 14:32)

3. In the KJV, Isaiah 48:11 reads, “for how should my name be polluted?” while 1 Nephi 20:11 reads, “for I will not suffer my name to be polluted.” The Isaiah scroll supports the Book of Mormon by having the verb in the first person, as follows:

“For how should my name be polluted?” (KJV, Isaiah 48:11)

“For how can I be polluted” (Isaiah scroll, Isaiah 48:11)

“For I will not suffer my name to be polluted” (Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 20:11 = Isaiah 48:11)

4. In the KJV, Isaiah 50:2 reads, “their fish stinketh, because there is no water,” and the Isaiah scroll reads, “their fish dry up because there is no water.” Second Nephi 7:2 essentially preserves the verb *stinketh* from the KJV and the phrasal verb *dry up* from the Isaiah scroll: “their fish to stink because the waters are dried up.”

5. Often a singular noun in the KJV is represented by a plural noun in the Book of Mormon. One example of this appears in Isaiah 9:9, where the KJV reads “inhabitant” and 2 Nephi 19:9 reads “inhabitants.” The Isaiah scroll supports the reading of the Book of Mormon with its reading of “inhabitants”:

“And the inhabitant of Samaria” (KJV, Isaiah 9:9)

“And the *inhabitants* of Samaria” (Isaiah scroll, Isaiah 9:9)

“And the *inhabitants* of Samaria” (Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 19:9 = Isaiah 9:9)

These examples of variant readings in which the Isaiah passages in the Book of Mormon agree with the Isaiah scroll but not with the KJV could be multiplied.

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**NOTES**

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