FRONT COVER:
Prepared to Receive
ANNIE HENRIE • 2013

© 2013 Annie Henrie. All rights reserved.
HOW MUCH WEIGHT CAN A SINGLE SOURCE BEAR? THE CASE OF SAMUEL D. TYLER’S JOURNAL ENTRY
Matthew Roper
Relying exclusively on Samuel D. Tyler’s journal account of 25 September 1838 to situate the Book of Mormon city of Manti is questionable.

THE RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF JOSEPH SMITH PAPYRUS I
Kerry Muhlestein
What did Egyptian priests know about biblical characters and how did they know? Why did they incorporate biblical names in their papyri?

KIRTLAND CAMP, 1838: BRINGING THE POOR TO MISSOURI
Alexander L. Baugh
S.D. Tyler’s journal was written during Kirtland Camp’s march to Adam-ondi-Ahman. This brief article explains the nature of Kirtland Camp.

WORTHY OF ANOTHER LOOK: REUSAGES OF THE WORDS OF CHRIST
John W. Welch
Jesus quotes significantly in 3 Nephi 15–18 from the Sermon on the Mount as recorded in 3 Nephi 12–14; a similar phenomenon is found in the New Testament.
My very first impression of the Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture [21/2] was “WOW!!!” What initially caught my eye on the cover was the word in Arabic; then I saw logos (in Greek), and I immediately realized the intent of the whole cover: you were going to give us some words about the word word! When I turned to page 2, my eye was drawn to the Paleo-Hebrew word there, and I guessed it was someone’s name: of course, it was Benjamin.

I immediately went to my historical notes on ancient linguistics, and sure enough, I found Paleo-Hebrew. Moses wrote in Paleo-Hebrew, but I believe that King Benjamin wrote in reformed Egyptian. Had King Benjamin been writing in 130 BC Jerusalem, he might have known Paleo-Hebrew, but the Aramaic script, brought over by the Jews of the Babylonian exile, was becoming popular by then. But it was interesting nonetheless.

JOHN NICHOLSON

Thank you for your enthusiastic welcome of the Journal. I appreciate feedback. I also admit taking artistic license with our illustrations: We have no clue what a Nephite script based on Paleo-Hebrew would have looked like after more than 350 years in the New World. But it would not have looked like the Aramaic block script adopted at least a decade or seven after Lehi left Jerusalem.

More Feedback

Today I was delighted to receive the Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture [21/2]. I always enjoy reading the wide variety of articles in the Journal. I wish to mention two issues.

1. I was intrigued by the cover. My immediate reaction was to search for use of the Deseret Alphabet, and you did not disappoint me.

2. A personal point: I am repeatedly disheartened to see illustrations of King Benjamin’s sermon that show in the background a beautiful pyramid in Maya style but then in the foreground a tall, rickety platform of timber on which King Benjamin is perched.
I have read that it was customary in that part of the world for succeeding kings to construct a new pyramid at the start of their reign, often on top of previous pyramids. The pyramids provide excellent speaking platforms, often with excellent acoustics. I do not read anything in Mosiah that suggests either that his tower was built at the last moment or that it was constructed out of logs. I wish, some day, to see an illustration of King Benjamin speaking in a more probable location, near the top of a towering pyramid.

KEITH SUMMERS

We try hard to find generic illustrations that do not presuppose a geographic location for Book of Mormon lands. But all too often we are forced to choose more familiar pictures. The text, however, does say that a tower was erected especially for the occasion (Mosiah 2:7) without naming the building material.

Illustrations

Thank you for the latest issue of the Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture [21/2]. I feel that the Journal is doing a good job of providing serious scholarship for its readers.

I hope you encourage feedback from readers. I feel that some of the illustrations in your publication betray the quality of the scholarship and writing in your pages. For example, on pages 36 and 37 we see the kinds of illustrations expected for a popular, less sophisticated audience. In the same issue, though, is a Minerva Teichert painting (p. 24), and a more impressionistic illustration (pp. 30–31), that do not make the reader feel he or she is reading a book made for readers who need straight, representational art—almost cartoon style, in some cases. The tone of your publication is diminished by the impressionistic illustration (pp. 30–31), Teichert painting (p. 24), and a more serious scholarship for its readers.

Thank you for the excellent articles by Matthew L. Bowen (“Becoming Sons and Daughters at God’s Right Hand: King Benjamin’s Rhetorical Wordplay on His Own Name”) and Steven L. Olsen (“The Covenant of the Chosen People: The Spiritual Foundations of Ethnic Identity in the Book of Mormon”) in the current Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture [21/2], I have an answer—one that is satisfactory to me, at least—to a question I was recently asked. That question was, why would Jesus’s Nephite disciples have had to ask about the name whereby we shall call this church” (3 Nephi 27:3)?

The answer comes in part from Bowen’s insights about King Benjamin invoking the covenant language of Deuteronomy to let the accountable “children of the Lord” (Deuteronomy 14:1) before him recognize they had become Christ’s “sons and his daughters” (Mosiah 5:7). It also comes from Olsen’s focus on “the covenant of the chosen people” in the Book of Mormon: those members of the “true church and fold of God” (2 Nephi 9:2) who were bound by moral law. Both authors focus on the people and the covenants they had made to “come to be identified simply as the children of Christ” because they have fulfilled the terms of the covenant and have become his spiritual heirs” (Olsen, p. 23). The pre-advent emphasis, then, had been on the people, designated variously as “the people of God,” “true believers in Christ,” or “the children of Christ,” etc. (cf. Mosiah 25:24; Alma 46:14; and Mosiah 5:7).

When “the church of God” is referred to, it easily denotes the churches of God—that is, congregations of those who “took upon them, gladly, the name of Christ” (Alma 46:15). Even when the church, singular, is mentioned, it often is followed by “churches.” Whether “church” or “churches,” the reference is to the congregants. Alma, for instance, “blessed the church, yea, all those who should stand fast in the faith from that time henceforth” (Alma 45:17). And when it was declared that “a regulation should be made throughout the church, . . . Helaman and his brethren went forth to establish the church again in all the land, [and] they did appoint priests and teachers throughout all the land, over all the churches” (Alma 45:21–22).

When the resurrected Savior fulfilled the law of Moses and rituals associated with it, he established his church anew, this time with emphasis both on the people who took upon them his name and on the overall organization that properly was to be known by his name. The “disputations among the people” (3 Nephi 27:3) about the name of the church probably came because they were holding on to the concept that it was only the people “who were baptized in the name of Jesus [who] were called the church of Christ” (Nephi 26:21). In response, Jesus taught that the overall organization in which they had membership properly was called the church of Christ: “Ye shall call the church in my name” (Nephi 27:7). Consequently, several subsequent references to “the church of Christ” refer to a single organization rather than to the people: “They were converted unto the Lord, and were united unto the church of Christ” (Nephi 28:23). The disciples of Jesus had formed a church of Christ” (4 Nephi 1:1). Apostate groups “began to deny the true church of Christ” (4 Nephi 1:26). “After they had been received unto baptism, and were wrought upon and cleansed by the power of the Holy Ghost, they were numbered among the people of the church of Christ” (Moroni 6:4).

RICHARD DILWORTH RUST

Thanks again for another astute observation about the Book of Mormon.

Images from the Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture may not be copied, distributed, or included in any print or electronic form without permission.
SEALINGS AND MERCIES:
Moroni’s Final Exhortations in Moroni 10

JAMES E. FAULCONER

James E. Faulconer gave the Book of Mormon Lecture sponsored by the Laura F. Willes Center for Book of Mormon Studies on 15 January 2013 in the Assembly Hall of the Gordon B. Hinckley Center on the BYU campus.

This is not a conventional essay. It is, instead, a reading of Moroni’s final message, meaning that I paid close attention to as many details as I could without having in mind what I would or would not find. I tried to allow whatever thesis or theses Moroni might have envisioned to come out as I read and thought about what I read.

Of course, reading this chapter again on another occasion, I might see things that I did not see this time. And, of course, I saw things that for one reason or another I decided against including in this essay, but I might later decide that I ought to include them in trying to understand what Moroni wrote. Or Moroni’s emphases might seem different on another reading than they did when I worked through his final message. Surely readers of this essay will see things that I have overlooked, and I hope I will point out a few things that some readers have not yet noticed. Sometimes I am likely to ask a question for which I have no answer, not even a speculative one. Often I will offer an idea on how to understand what Moroni says, but when I do I try to leave open whether my idea is the best understanding. And presumably his message has a unity, but rather than prejudge what that unity is, I have tried to read carefully and see what unity shows itself when we pay attention to the details of the chapter (though, of course, the title of my essay already says something about at least one kind of unity that I found).

The important thing about reading this way is not that I create a completely accurate “translation” of Moroni’s chapter into our concepts, nor is it that I decide what one or two or three things Moroni meant. The important thing is trying to hear Moroni speaking from the dust as he seals the record of the Book of Mormon. I am not trying to re-create what was going on in his mind. Instead, I am trying to allow the truth of his words to come out. Sometimes that truth has been obscured for us by old-fashioned language or grammar. That is especially true in the Bible, though it can also happen in modern scripture. Sometimes the truth is obscured by what we think we already know about the text, standard interpretations that may or may not be the best. That often happens when we are familiar with a text and have heard it interpreted often, as for most of us is the case with the Book of Mormon. It is easy to fall into the habit of thinking that we are reading when we are really just repeating to ourselves what we supposedly already know.

FROM THE EDITOR:
As the 2012–13 Laura F. Willes Center for Book of Mormon Studies lecturer, Professor James Faulconer once again impressed an audience with his perceptiveness and sophistication. Through his close reading of the text of Moroni 10 he was able to tease out connections and insights that many of us may have missed. What a delight it is to be instructed by a seasoned, faithful scholar!
Allowing the truth of Moroni’s words to show itself means, first of all, putting into question whatever we currently believe Moroni’s chapter says. That doesn’t require believing that we are wrong. It just means believing that we might be, that there might be things we haven’t seen or things we’ve misunderstood. It means allowing what we read to surprise us, to say things that we hadn’t expected.

In turn, that means listening actively to what we find in Moroni’s writing, and listening actively means allowing questions to arise from our reading, questions for us to think about. These are questions that we don’t bring to the text, but that come to us as we read. We could say that these are questions that the text asks us to think about.

There are a lot of such questions, and most of them come from paying attention to the details of the text since doing that will help us avoid falling back immediately on the interpretations of Moroni’s writing that we’ve learned to attribute to the chapter and now do so out of habit. Some such questions are: Has Moroni arranged his words in an unusual way? If so, why? Does he use words with meanings that we might not expect? What might we learn from such meanings? How do the parts of what he says relate to each other? For example, does he use parallelism (or other rhetorical structures), and if he does, what do those structures suggest to us? How does Moroni relate himself to his audiences? Who are those audiences? How does what he says connect to what other prophets have said, before or after him? Does he use language that makes implicit connections to other scriptures, particularly earlier passages from the Book of Mormon? Do these connections to the prophets and other scriptures shed light on what we find in Moroni 10?

The first thing I noticed is that the word *exhort* occurs over and over in this chapter in one form or another. Because of that repetition, my reading focuses on the eight exhortations of this chapter—six to the Lamanites (vv. 3, 4, 7, 8, 18, 19) and two to the ends of the earth (vv. 27, 30). As I did that reading, I tried to keep in mind what these exhortations have to do with the fact that Moroni is sealing up his book and sealing his testimony by the things that he teaches here. What Moroni says in this chapter puts the seal on the entire content of the Book of Mormon, and it gives us implicit directions for how we should approach the rest of the book.

In order to keep this essay at a reasonable length, I will deal in depth with the longer message to the Lamanites but gloss over the message to the ends of the earth.

**Verses 1–2**

Now I, Moroni, write somewhat as seemeth me good; and I write unto my brethren, the Lamanites; and I would that they should know that more than four hundred and twenty years have passed away since the sign was given of the coming of Christ. And I seal up these records, after I have spoken a few words by way of exhortation unto you.¹

Our first pericope (a term that means “a passage that forms a meaningful whole”) is verses 1 and 2. Here Moroni begins the Book of Mormon’s final chapter by writing “somewhat as seemeth me good.” It’s almost as if he says, “Let me jot down a few things.” Though most of the chapter is obviously the result of deep consideration, the first things that Moroni says have a more informal quality: “I am writing to my brethren, the Lamanites” and “I want them to know that more than 420 years have passed away since the sign of the coming of Christ.” (Is he perhaps counting in a base-20 system, as we find in Maya calendars?)

It is surprising that someone would write a letter to those who have destroyed his people—to his
enemies who want to kill him too—and amazing that the letter is one of counsel rather than complaint or demand for vengeance. Moroni’s relation to his enemies is unusual, even for a prophet. We ought to wonder at his charity, but that charity is a model for what we should imitate in our own lives. It isn’t easy to do that. Anyone who has been humiliated or seriously hurt by another knows how difficult is forgiveness, the love that imitates Christ’s redeeming love. It may be that, except for Jesus Christ, we have no better model than Moroni. As we will see, Moroni takes that love to be the heart of the gospel.

I found it puzzling that the first thing Moroni says by way of counsel is a reminder of how long it has been since the sign of Christ’s coming appeared to the people. Surely it is important for them to know that and also when Christ appeared among their ancestors. Believing that Jesus is the Messiah requires believing that he existed and that he has appeared to human beings. But Moroni doesn’t use Christ’s appearance as his baseline. He uses, instead, the date when the sign appeared. Why?

Samuel the Lamanite prophesied of the sign (Helaman 14:2-4). Five years later that sign appeared (3 Nephi 1:15-18). Nephi3 tells us that the Nephites—who, we must remind ourselves, were among the ancestors of those people to whom Moroni now refers as Lamanites—began to reckon their time from that date (3 Nephi 2:8). (Or perhaps that note is an editorial comment by Mormon.) Presumably, when Moroni writes this set of exhortations, the Lamanites still reckon time from the sign. So he is dating his letter, but he is also reminding its addressees of the event that gave them their dating system. Even if they deny Christ, they implicitly remember him and the prophets who prophesy of him through their dating system. As we will see, Moroni wants their memory of Christ and his blessings to be more than implicit. But he begins with what is implicit.

Moroni tells us what he is going to do in what remains of his record: he is going to give us a few words “by way of exhortation,” and then he is going to seal up the records. To exhort is to urge strongly, to make an urgent appeal, often including warning and advice. Moroni concludes his work with an urgent appeal, with advice and warnings, to his brothers who are also his enemies—and to the rest of the world.

To seal something is, of course, to secure it closed in some way. But the verb seal can also mean “confirm.” We know that part of the Book of Mormon remains sealed, but all of it is confirmed by what Moroni says in the following verses—and it can be confirmed to any of its readers. As we read more than once in this chapter, one of our duties is to ask ourselves in what ways Moroni confirms or seals the message of the Book of Mormon.
Verse 3

Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts.

We find the first of Moroni’s several exhortations in this verse. Here his hope is strong, if tempered somewhat by the reality he has experienced: he says “when ye shall read these things,” as if it is certain that they will read them. Then he backs up just a bit, adding “if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them.” He seems confident that they will be able to read them at some point, but he doesn’t want to appear to try to force the hand of God.

Moroni’s first exhortation reaches back to a theme that begins early in the Book of Mormon, in its first chapter to be exact. There Nephi begins his record by telling us about the mercies of the Lord to his family, and he recounts Lehi’s praise upon seeing a vision and reading a book revealed in that vision: “O Lord God Almighty! Thy throne is high in the heavens, and thy power, and goodness, and mercy are over all the inhabitants of the earth” (1 Nephi 1:14). Then Nephi concludes what has become the first chapter of the Book of Mormon with this familiar promise: “I, Nephi, will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance” (1 Nephi 1:20). The Book of Mormon begins with the theme of mercy. It ends with the same theme.

*The Fountain of Grace*, by the school of Jan van Eyck. Note the golden coins in the waters of grace that flow from under the throne of Jesus. As with many paintings from the time period, not only is grace being shown, but those who reject grace are depicted negatively. Album / Art Resource, NY.
If we think about the overall arc of the Book of Mormon as well as the record of the Jaredites, the promise that Nephi 1 makes may seem strange. One way to read the Book of Mormon, indeed a way to read almost all scripture, is as a record of human failure. Neither the Old Testament nor the Book of Mormon shows God’s people ultimately succeeding. Nor does the New Testament give us such a record. To name only a few, scripture tells us of the failure of the Jaredites, the failure of Israel in the wilderness, the failure of David’s kingdom, the coming failure of early Christianity, the failure of Alma’s mission to the Zoramites, the failure of the Book of Mormon peoples, the failure to build a temple in Jackson County, the failure of the city of Nauvoo, the failure of nineteenth-century Saints to live the law of consecration, and on and on. In spite of that, Nephi 1 tells us that the story of the Book of Mormon is not one of failure, but a story of the tender mercies of the Lord over the faithful. Presumably one could say the same thing about our other scriptures.

Nephi 1 isn’t just the little optimist who, finding his room full of horse manure, shouts, “With all this manure, there must be a pony in here somewhere!” He is a realist. Sometimes he is a self-tortured realist, as we see in what we often call the psalm of Nephi (2 Nephi 4:15–35). But Nephi 1 knows from experience that the Lord is merciful to us in our failure, merciful to us because, given our impotence, ultimately we cannot but fail if left to ourselves. Realists understand that without God’s mercy, failure is the only option. So they depend on God’s mercy. The Book of Mormon is clearly a record of the failure of those who are lights for themselves. But scripture records not only those people’s failure. As Nephi 1 reminds us, it also records that from Adam to the present the Lord has been merciful to his children, and we see in his record and the records of those who follow not only failure but also the Lord’s mercies. Often those mercies bless individuals or individual families; sometimes they bless a whole people. But when we see what we call the “pride cycle” in the Book of Mormon, or what we might more broadly call the cycle of repentance and dissolution, we ought to remember that the point of recounting those stories is not that we will see how often human beings have failed to live up to the covenant they make with God. Instead, the point is that he does not fail to keep his covenant. The point is for us to see God’s long-suffering mercies for his people.

As we read scripture, do we see those mercies? As we read of those mercies, do we recognize them as a prototype for what happens in our own lives, or do we see instead only our failures? If the latter, then we implicitly use our own will and power as the measure for our lives and deny the mercy of God. Moroni exhorts—urgently appeals to—the Lamanites to stop looking at the world in terms of their own power and their own will, for if they do they will ultimately see only a record of failure and destruction. But if, instead, they see the mercies with which God has blessed their ancestors and them, they will understand their lives in a completely different way. They will see themselves as children of God rather than masters of their own fate. As children of God, they will experience the happiness brought through his mercy.

Presumably the prayers we are to offer will be deepened and strengthened by our thoughtful remembrance. Real prayer requires that we remember the mercies and gifts of God and that we ponder what we have received. When we read the next couple of verses, we most often focus on the prayer required of us regarding the truth of the Book of Mormon. But notice that Moroni prefaces that exhortation to prayer with an exhortation in this pericope to remember and to ponder. He doesn’t just admonish us to pray, he admonishes us to remember, ponder, and then pray.

Presumably the prayers we are to offer will be deepened and strengthened by our thoughtful remembrance. Real prayer requires that we remember the mercies and gifts of God and that we ponder what we have received. Though Moroni doesn’t explicitly link the exhortation to remember to his exhortation to pray about the truth of the Book of Mormon, the juxtaposition of the two suggests that our prayers about that truth must be prefaced by our memory of and pondering on God’s mercy, to others and to us. But what does it mean to remember and ponder the mercies of the Lord beginning with Adam and down to our own time? As an analogy, think of
two ways in which we might remember our wedding anniversary dates. One would be to keep it in our calendar and to be able to recite the date when asked, but otherwise to let the day slide by as simply one more mark on the calendar. Another would be not only to remember when our anniversary occurs but to memorialize what happened on that day by what we do when we remember it. We may have different ways of memorializing, but we genuinely remember our anniversaries when we do something that marks the event as a sacred moment in our lives, something that takes us back to that sacred moment to relive it, though now with more knowledge and understanding than we had then. Our memorials now are surely more profound than those when we were first married, and part of that profundity is the consequence of remembering the years that have passed since our wedding day and memorializing those years.

To ponder is to weigh, and to weigh something in ancient times was, first of all, a means of deciding its value. The words *ponder* and *pound* are etymologically related. Pondering an event and its meaning, weighing it in our minds and comparing it to other things as we do so, is inextricably part of memorializing it. Even so, Moroni asks us to memorialize, not just memorize, the things we read about in the Book of Mormon record. He asks us to memorialize them as we might other important events in our lives and to weigh those things to count their value. One question we might ask ourselves is whether we memorialize the Book of Mormon and how we might do so.

**Verses 4–5**

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

This exhortation is the one with which most Latter-day Saints are probably most familiar. Again Moroni begins with “when ye shall receive these things” rather than “if ye shall.” He is confidently counting on the fact that his record will be revealed.

In this familiar pericope he gives his second exhortation to the Lamanites (or is it a repetition of his first?), urging them to ask God whether “these things” are true. To what does “these things” refer? The comparable phrase in Hebrew often means “these words,” but even if we can assume that more than one thousand years after the Nephites’ arrival...
in the New World they are still using Hebrew to record their sacred history, knowing that doesn’t clear up much. What words is Moroni referring to? We assume that he refers to the Book of Mormon as a whole, and he can profitably be understood to do so. But are there other reasonable interpretations of the phrase as it appears here? Perhaps there are, but the fact that “these things” in verse 3 seems to be parallel to “these records” in verse 2 suggests that Moroni means the Book of Mormon as a whole.

Nevertheless, the parallels between verses 3 and 4 suggest that we should also think about the connection between “these things” and the mercies of God:

Verse 3: When you receive these things, remember God’s mercy to human beings from the beginning.
Verse 4: When you receive these things, ask God whether they are true.

This parallel suggests that if we remember that God has been merciful in the past, we can count on him to be merciful now and to tell us whether the record is true. To ask about the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon is to appeal to the mercy of God.

Why is God referred to here as “the Eternal Father” rather than by one of his other titles? My guess is that because Moroni wants the Lamanites to remember the divine mercy that has been given to those who came before and to them, he speaks of God as their Father rather than, for example, their judge.

And they must ask in the name of the Messiah, Christ, the anointed Savior of Israel and of all humankind. Clearly Moroni is not only teaching them how they should pray, he is also underlining the theme of mercy: the Father is merciful, but they must ask him in the name of the One through whom that mercy comes, namely Jesus the Messiah, who died to bring mercy to us.

Why are the Lamanites told to ask “if these things are not true” rather than “if these things are true”? Why not omit the word not since the two clauses mean the same thing in English, the language that, for us, is the base language of the book? The difference is rhetorical, but it is an important rhetorical difference. If I say, “Is this true?” I am just asking a question. The person I address can answer either yes or no. But if I say, “Isn’t this true?” I am implicitly assuming the truth of what I ask about when I ask. My addressee can say no, but I am urging him or her to say yes. Moroni is assuming the truth of what he asks them to pray about and urging them toward a particular answer, but he isn’t just playing mind games with his readers.

This question of the Book of Mormon’s truth is not a scientific question to be approached by first removing myself from as much connection with the outcome as I can, insulating my history and existence from my inquiry. There are important questions to be pursued in that way. The sciences are perhaps the best example of doing that. But not all questions are of that kind. Indeed, because some questions are about my history and existence, about my relation to the question I am asking, about my relationship with the rest of the world, it is impossible to ask them in a scientifically rigorous way. I cannot avoid beginning with some predisposition toward the outcome if I want to find a truthful answer to the question. Moroni exhorts the Lamanites to begin with the predisposition to accept the truth of what they ask about.

That doesn’t mean that those who pray about the Book of Mormon cannot genuinely ask, that their questions are inherently misbegotten and insincere. It only means that they have a stake in the answer and that they cannot avoid that stake. In fact, recognizing that they have a stake in the outcome of their question, those who heed Moroni’s exhortation to pray must do so “with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ.”

Their heart, which probably means for Moroni, as it did for other people in the ancient world, their whole human being and not, as it does for us, just their emotional being, must be sincere: whole, pure, genuine. And their intent, that on which their gaze is
fixed, must be permanent and immovable. Since the next thing mentioned is faith in Christ, presumably the intent of the one praying should not simply be to know the truth of the Book of Mormon. Clearly Moroni urges his readers to want to know that truth. But their ultimate intent, that on which their gaze should be fixed, is salvation, which is why they must have faith in Christ. The truth of the Book of Mormon may seem irrelevant if we are not concerned about our salvation, and our salvation is impossible if we do not have faith in Christ. So the Lamanites are told to ask God to tell them, in his mercy, whether the record is true, and they must do so with their whole being, with a gaze fixed on salvation and with faith in the mercy of their Savior, Jesus Christ.

Moroni understands the power of the Holy Ghost as the power of divine revelation. Those who pray as they’ve been exhorted to pray will receive revelation through the Holy Ghost. Obviously, the power to be transformed is directly related to the power of revelation, but the two aren’t quite the same thing, and Moroni has the second in mind more than the first.

Moroni’s promise is that if they offer that kind of prayer, then God will manifest, in other words reveal, the truth of the record (now “it” rather than “these things”). How will he do so? By the power of the Holy Ghost.

Mormon’s thinking is often similar to that of Paul, as we see in Moroni 7:40–48, where Mormon explains charity. We may see parallels here too between Moroni’s thinking about the Holy Ghost and Paul’s. But there are also differences. For Paul, the power of the Holy Ghost is the divine power to transform people, as he was transformed and as happens in resurrection. But that doesn’t seem to be Moroni’s meaning. Instead, he appears to be thinking in terms like those of Nephi, who said that Lehi saw things in a vision and spoke by the power of the Holy Ghost, “which power he received by faith on the Son of God . . . [and] which is the gift of God unto all those who diligently seek him” (1 Nephi 10:17). Moroni understands the power of the Holy Ghost as the power of divine revelation. Those who pray as they’ve been exhorted to pray will receive revelation through the Holy Ghost. Obviously, the power to be transformed is directly related to the power of revelation, but the two aren’t quite the same thing, and Moroni has the second in mind more than the first.

What does it mean to “know the truth of all things”? In context I take it to mean seeing whatever has been revealed.

Verses 6–7

And whatsoever thing is good is just and true; wherefore, nothing that is good denieth the Christ, but acknowledgeth that he is. And ye may know that he is, by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore I would exhort you that ye deny not the power of God; for he worketh by power, according to the faith of the children of men, the same today and tomorrow, and forever.

The third exhortation to the Lamanites occurs in verse 7, but consider first what leads up to that exhortation. It looks like Moroni begins this pericope with a definition of the good: the good is what is just and true. Philosophers like that kind of thing, and this definition fits well with ancient philosophical understandings of the good. But Moroni is no philosopher. He is unlikely to have had any influence whatsoever from Greek thought. Perhaps instead he has in mind Deuteronomy 32:4, which, speaking of God, says, “Just and right [or true] is he.” In English, originally both just and true meant “conforming to an original or a standard.” (By coincidence, the Hebrew of Deuteronomy 32:4, ṣaddiq w yašar, is similar in root meanings to the root meanings of the English “just and right.”) Since God is the ultimate instance of what is good, that which is just and true conforms to him. And, of course, nothing conforming to the Father could deny the Son. In fact, whatever is conformed to the Father must acknowledge and affirm the Son. And how do we come into conformity with the Father? By the power of the Holy Ghost, by the revelation from him who, as a member of the Godhead, is in accord with the Father.

That brings us to the third exhortation: do not deny the power of God. As we will see, this is something that Moroni repeats several times in this chapter, so it is clearly an important part of his
message. If we deny that power, then we cannot know of Christ; but if we do not deny it, then God’s mercy can work in us through our trust (in other words, our faith) in him. Our faith reveals his power.

**Verse 8**

And again, I exhort you, my brethren, that ye deny not the gifts of God, for they are many; and they come from the same God. And there are different ways that these gifts are administered; but it is the same God who worketh all in all; and they are given by the manifestations of the Spirit of God unto men, to profit them.

Moroni’s fourth exhortation to the Lamanites is closely related to the third. In fact, perhaps they are the same; perhaps “do not deny the power of God” and “do not deny the gifts of God” mean the same. In verse 7 Moroni exhorts the Lamanites not to deny God’s power, specifically his power to reveal the Son. In verse 8 he exhorts them not to deny God’s gifts, the things he gives us in his mercy. However, since his greatest gift, his Son, is the ultimate manifestation of his mercy, these two exhortations are of a piece. Perhaps that is why Moroni begins this exhortation by saying, “And again, I exhort you.” He hasn’t previously explicitly exhorted them not to deny the gifts of God, but if we see the connection between denying the power of God and denying his gifts, we can perhaps see how Moroni understands this exhortation to be a repetition of the immediately previous one.

Why does Moroni tell his audience that the gifts “come from the same God”? Are the Lamanites polytheists, attributing some blessings to one god and other blessings to another? Perhaps, but whether or not they are, Moroni seems to be concerned that because there are different ways in which the gifts of God are administered and made manifest, people might be led to believe that they come from different gods.

Do we suffer under that same delusion, not recognizing the ways in which all good things come from God? When we see a tomato in our garden, do we experience it as a gift from God or as something that our industry and the facts of nature have produced so that “gift from God” is merely a metaphor? Do we genuinely understand the technologies we use to be gifts from God, or do we use them as if they were powers in themselves, little gods in our lives that bless us—and command us? My experience is that it is more difficult than it might seem to recognize the gifts of God because I tend almost always to see the things I deal with as the consequences
of natural, social, or scientific processes. Of course they are that. It would be a mistake to think they are not. But if I see them as only that, then I am likely to fail to see them as something given to me by my Father in Heaven. In that case, I fail to recognize his mercy and love.

Moroni's reminder that all gifts come from the same God may be as timely for us as it would have been for the people of his time. However, though there is only one God who gives all blessings, there are multiple manifestations of his Spirit. Moroni says that is the case so that we can profit from their variety. I wonder why we need a variety of manifestations of the Spirit in order to profit from those manifestations. Is this like the Lord's statement in Doctrine and Covenants 1 that "these commandments . . . were given unto my servants in their weakness, after the manner of their language, that they might come to understanding" (D&C 1:24)? Perhaps our weaknesses mean that the Spirit must manifest itself in a variety of ways so that we will notice and understand it according to our ability and experience.

Is "the Spirit of God" in Moroni 10:8 the same as the Holy Ghost, or does it refer to the Spirit of the Father? Since I'm not sure what it means for the Spirit of Christ; and they come unto every man severally, according as he will.

Moroni's reminder that all gifts come from the same God may be as timely for us as it would have been for the people of his time. However, though there is only one God who gives all blessings, there are multiple manifestations of his Spirit. Moroni says that is the case so that we can profit from their variety. I wonder why we need a variety of manifestations of the Spirit in order to profit from those manifestations. Is this like the Lord's statement in Doctrine and Covenants 1 that "these commandments . . . were given unto my servants in their weakness, after the manner of their language, that they might come to understanding" (D&C 1:24)? Perhaps our weaknesses mean that the Spirit must manifest itself in a variety of ways so that we will notice and understand it according to our ability and experience.

Is “the Spirit of God” in Moroni 10:8 the same as the Holy Ghost, or does it refer to the Spirit of the Father? Since I’m not sure what it means for the spirit of the Father to manifest something, unless we are talking about his power and influence, I might assume this refers to the Holy Ghost. But perhaps “Spirit of God” here means something like the Light of Christ. Since verse 8 speaks of God’s gifts being given to human beings generally, perhaps that is a better understanding of the phrase.

Verses 9–17

For behold, to one is given by the Spirit of God, that he may teach the word of wisdom; and to another, that he may teach the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; and to another, exceedingly great faith; and to another, the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; and again, to another, that he may work mighty miracles; and again, to another, that he may prophesy concerning all things; and again, to another, the beholding of angels and ministering spirits; and again, to another, all kinds of tongues; and again, to another, the interpretation of languages and of divers kinds of tongues. And all these gifts come by the Spirit of Christ; and they come unto every man severally, according as he will.

We saw that Moroni’s fourth exhortation to his brothers and sisters, the Lamanites, was not to deny God’s gifts. Now he lists some of the gifts of the Spirit.

Clearly Moroni’s list and that of Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:8–11 are similar. In Moroni’s version I mark the most important phrases that differ between the two in italics. In addition, Moroni’s version omits some significant parts of Paul’s text, and those are marked with an ellipsis between square brackets.

For behold, to one is given by the Spirit of God, that he may teach the word of wisdom; and to another, that he may teach the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; and to another, exceedingly great faith; and to another, the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; and again, to another, that he may work mighty miracles; and again, to another, that he may prophesy concerning all things; and again, to another, the beholding of angels and ministering spirits; and again, to another, all kinds of tongues; and again, to another, the interpretation of languages and of divers kinds of tongues. And all these gifts . . . come by the Spirit of Christ; and they come unto every man severally, according as he will.

Most of what is unmarked is identical to or very similar to what we find in 1 Corinthians. There are any number of possible explanations for these similarities between what Paul and Moroni have written, from both authors depending on the same, lost ancient text, to Joseph Smith falling back on familiar wording when he came to translate a passage with ideas similar to those with which he was familiar, to God inspiring both men to say the same things. But I am not interested in pursuing that question, because it takes us away from the more important question of what Moroni teaches in chapter 10. One way to think about that is, I believe, to focus on the differences between Paul’s text and Moroni’s.

Notice what I take to be the most important difference. In Moroni’s version the emphasis at the beginning, an emphasis that I believe carries throughout the passage, is on teaching wisdom rather than on having it. His version of this list shifts the passage’s meaning from its focus on the gifts we may be given to the ways in which we can use those gifts to serve others: to teach wisdom and knowledge, to heal, to work miracles and prophesy, to behold or discern spirits, and to interpret the variety of languages. God gives a variety of gifts so
that we may serve one another better, and Moroni's readers ought not to deny those gifts. In serving one another, we become more like our Savior and our Father. God’s mercy is to give us what we need so that we, too, can be merciful.

Surely the irony of this message isn’t lost on Moroni. As I said earlier, he writes to the descendants of those who have killed his people and would like to kill him, but his message is that they ought to remember the mercy of God and serve one another.

I wonder what we should make of the distinction in verses 9 and 10 between teaching wisdom and teaching knowledge. Of course, this may be merely a pleonastic parallel, Moroni saying the same thing in different words. In that case the words wisdom and knowledge have the same meaning.

But perhaps there is a difference. Perhaps wisdom refers to knowledge that comes from God and knowledge refers to a human capability (which, of course, must still be in accord with God). Thomas Aquinas, for example, has made such a distinction, distinguishing between the things we can learn because we have been given the capability of discovering them ourselves and the things we can know only because God has revealed them. The problem with this speculative division, as tempting as it may be, is that I don’t find any clear scriptural warrant for it. The fact that verse 9 speaks of what is given “to one” and verse 10 speaks of what is given “to another” is perhaps some warrant, but it is weak. I take it, therefore, that Moroni is using parallelism in verses 9 and 10 rather than making a point about two different things: the Spirit gives some the ability to teach knowledge, or wisdom.

A key point in this series of verses concerning the gifts of the Spirit is the clarification that Moroni gives in verse 17. He has spoken of the Spirit and of the Spirit of God. Both of those are ambiguous. They could refer to the Holy Ghost, or they could refer to the Spirit of the Father, which I again assume means his power and influence. But in verse 17, Moroni makes it clear that he has been talking about the Spirit of Christ: “all these gifts come by the Spirit of Christ.” Whether that is the same as the Light of Christ, a term that Mormon used and Moroni quoted in Moroni 7:18-19, isn’t obvious, but I assume they are the same. One reason to make that assumption is that just as the Light of Christ is available to all people, the gifts given by the Spirit of Christ are available to all: “they come unto every man severally [individually] according as he [Christ] will.”

This, too, marks an important difference between what Paul says and what Moroni says. Whereas, for Paul, the gifts of the Spirit are given to those who are part of “the body” of the church, Moroni understands them to be available to all human beings. The Lamanites . . . should recognize the gifts of God and ought not to deny them.

Verses 18-19

And I would exhort you, my beloved brethren, that ye remember that every good gift cometh of Christ. And I would exhort you, my beloved brethren, that ye remember that he is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and that all these gifts of which I have spoken, which are spiritual, never will be done away, even as long as the world shall stand, only according to the unbelief of the children of men.

The fourth exhortation, not to deny God’s gifts, is followed by two admonitions. Moroni exhorts his readers to remember that every good gift comes from Christ and to remember that because he is the same, those gifts will always be with us, unless we do not believe. In the previous pericope, the fourth exhortation, enumerating the gifts of God, ended by telling us that these gifts come by the Spirit of Christ. In these verses, the fifth exhortation repeats that: “every good gift cometh of Christ.” Then the sixth exhortation expands that claim, explaining it: Christ is the same forever, so if he gave gifts in the past, he continues to give those gifts today and will do so in the future. And his gifts will never be taken away, except as a consequence of unbelief.

What does it mean, though, to have said that the gifts are given to all people (v. 16) and also that the gifts
may be taken away because of unbelief? If belief refers to “belief in the teachings of the only true church,” then there is an implicit contradiction between the two. It cannot be true that the gifts of the Spirit of Christ are given to everyone and that they will be taken from those who do not believe the teachings of the only true church. That contradiction is good evidence for rejecting the interpretation of belief as belief in the teachings of the true church. Moroni must have something broader in mind when he says that the gifts may be taken away because of unbelief.

In context this appears to refer to belief in Christ, making the claim less restrictive: the gifts are available to all Christians. But the 1978 First Presidency statement that the great religious leaders and philosophers, such as Socrates, received part of God’s light and that all people receive “sufficient knowledge to help them on their way to eternal salvation” suggests by implication that the gifts of the Spirit are also available to non-Christians. What, then, might it mean to say that the gifts may be taken away because of unbelief? Surely there are those who do not have the gifts of the Spirit, and Moroni appears to believe that the Lamanites whom he addresses are among them. How do we deal with this tension between the gifts being given to all and their being taken away because of unbelief?

One solution is to understand the word unbelief to mean “disbelief”: those who refuse to believe the light and knowledge that they have been given, whatever that is, may lose the gifts of the Spirit that have been given to them. I find that solution satisfactory but wonder whether there might not be better ways of dealing with the issue.

**Verses 20–22**

Wherefore, there must be faith; and if there must be faith there must also be hope; and if there must be hope there must also be charity. And except ye have charity ye can in nowise be saved in the kingdom of God; neither can ye be saved in the kingdom of God if ye have not faith; neither can ye if ye have no hope. And if ye have no hope ye must needs be in despair; and despair cometh because of iniquity.

Moroni has finished his exhortations to the Lamanites, but those exhortations have further consequences. He makes that apparent when he begins verse 20 with wherefore, indicating that what comes afterward is a consequence of what has just been said. It isn’t obvious how to link the word wherefore to what came before. Is it saying, “Given what was said in verses 18 and 19, therefore . . . ,” or is it saying, “Given everything I’ve said about gifts, therefore . . .”? I think it makes more sense to understand it in the latter sense: Since (1) you can know the truth of all things by the Holy Ghost, and since (2) the Lord gives his many gifts to all in a variety of ways, and since (3) he is the same always, therefore (4) we must have faith; we must trust God. We must continue to trust the Savior, understanding that he can do for us what we cannot do for ourselves, that he knows what we do not, and perhaps cannot, know.

But faith without hope is inconceivable. If I trust that the Lord can do what he says he will do, then I also have hope that he will. I look forward with anticipation for the fulfillment of his promises. Not to have that hope is not to trust him, because if I trust him, then I assume that what he says will come about.

Less obvious, however, is the necessity of charity. If I have faith, I must also have hope. As we’ve seen, that is almost a logical tautology. But why is it also true that if I have hope, I must also have charity?

The key is to remember what I hope for: salvation. I trust that the Father, through the merits of his Son, Jesus Christ, will save me, and I hope for that salvation.

In logic there is an argument form, modus tollens, that is rec-
ognized as valid. Any argument that has that form is valid: if its assumptions are true, then so is its conclusion. The basic form of the *modus tollens* argument is “if S, then P; not P, so not S.” Examples of this argument make the validity of the form obvious: “If it is raining, then the sidewalks are wet” is true (assuming that we are speaking of ordinary, uncovered sidewalks). So, if the sidewalks are not wet, then it hasn’t been raining.

If we collapse what Moroni has been saying into a brief statement, we can say, “If I have faith, then I have charity.” But by *modus tollens* that means that if I do not have charity, then I do not have faith. If I believe the first claim, “if faith, then charity,” then logically I must also believe that if I do not have charity, then I do not have faith. A sure guide to the strength of our faith is our godly love for others. That is why Moroni can say, “Except ye have charity ye can in nowise be saved in the kingdom of God” (Moroni 10:21).

Without charity I cannot enter the Father’s kingdom, because I would not be like him. If I do not trust him—have faith—then I cannot enter his kingdom, because I cannot be trusted to do what he asks me to do. Without hope, I cannot foresee the fulfillment of his promises, so I will not trust him. Faith, hope, and charity are equally necessary to salvation.

Perhaps having in mind the situation in which the Lamanites find themselves as he is writing, Moroni adds, “If ye have no hope ye must needs be in despair” (Moroni 10:22). In despair there is no meaningful future; there is no way forward. There is no real hope. But the additional claim that despair comes because of iniquity is not a claim that psychological despair is caused by sin. It is a claim about the human condition, not an accusation against people who are depressed. To live in the world without the hope of the gospel, which is to be in iniquity, is to be in despair. Regardless of how psychologically happy people without the hope of the gospel may be, they live in despair because they live without the hope that life is ultimately meaningful.

For all I know, the famous twentieth-century mathematician and philosopher Bertrand Russell was a very happy person. Nevertheless, as he testifies in “A Free Man’s Worship,” he lived in despair: “Brief and powerless is Man’s life; on him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter...
rolls on its relentless way; . . . Man [is] condemned . . . to lose his dearest, [and] to-morrow himself to pass through the gate of darkness.” That is a view of life devoid of faith and hope. It is despair, however psychologically happy Russell may have been.

Verse 23

And Christ truly said unto our fathers: If ye have faith ye can do all things which are expedient unto me.

With these words Moroni concludes his exhortations to the Lamanites. Seeing their despair, a despair that has resulted in massacre and genocide, he seals his last words to them with an exhortation to faith.

Is what he attributes to Christ an otherwise unrecorded saying of Jesus? It appears to be since it doesn’t occur elsewhere in the Book of Mormon. That Christ said this to “our fathers” tells us that this may not be something that he said to his disciples in the Old World, and we don’t in fact find it in the New Testament. The closest thing to this saying is what Alma says in Alma 32:21, “If ye have faith ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true.” But that is not one of Jesus’s sayings as currently known. So I assume that this is something that the Savior said to the Nephites that is on one of the records that was not included in Mormon and Moroni’s compilation.

As his final message of hope, Moroni has preserved a saying of Jesus: “If you have faith, you can do anything that I need you to do.” This is the opposite of Russell’s despair, a despair that is gradually enveloping much of the world. Though Moroni finds himself in circumstances that could easily warrant despair and anger, he offers a message of faith and, therefore, also one of hope and charity.

Verses 24–33

Following the address to the Lamanites, we come to a long passage that I will gloss over, hitting what I think are some of its high points.

Having spoken to the Lamanites, Moroni turns to address “all the ends of the earth” in verse 24, and he repeats key points of his exhortations:

1. A reminder that if the gifts are not present, it is because of unbelief
2. An exhortation to remember “these things,” for what Moroni has written is declared by God to be true
3. An exhortation to come to Christ and lay hold on every good gift

And he concludes with the promise that if the Lamanites come to Christ and allow him to perfect them, then they can be sanctified (Moroni 10:32–33).

Notice how much of this overlaps with what he has said to the Lamanites, which is not surprising. But two points are notable about what Moroni says here. The first is that he does not repeat the part of this chapter with which we are most familiar, Moroni 10:4–5, the admonition to ask God whether “these things” are true. Perhaps, however, that is built into his exhortation to remember these things, particularly since we need to remember them because God declares them to be true.

The second notable thing is the structure of the three key points listed above. Rhetoricians call that structure inclusio, or “inclusion,” where one idea is sandwiched between the same idea or related ideas. Here, of course, since the structure is a general structure that we have deduced from the themes of verses 27–30 rather than from specific words or phrases, most rhetoricians would probably not call this inclusion. In spite of that, seeing that general structure helps us see more clearly what Moroni is doing. He places his exhortation to remember (and, implicitly, to find out through prayer) between his reminders that we should seek the gifts of the Spirit. By doing so, he reminds us that the central message of his
farewell letter is not that we should get a testimony of the Book of Mormon through prayer (though we certainly should). Moroni’s message in these verses is that we must seek the gifts that God in his mercy makes available to all people—and those gifts include the knowledge of the Book of Mormon’s truth.

**Verses 31–33**

And awake, and arise from the dust, O Jerusalem; yea, and put on thy beautiful garments, O daughter of Zion; and strengthen thy stakes and enlarge thy borders forever, that thou mayest no more be confounded, that the covenants of the Eternal Father which he hath made unto thee, O house of Israel, may be fulfilled.

Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God. And again, if ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy, without spot.

In these verses Moroni concludes his exhortations to all the world with a beautiful piece of poetry modeled on Isaiah 52, poetry that repeats the major themes of this concluding chapter: come to Christ as the bride comes to the bridegroom, accepting the gifts that he offers (in other words, the bride-price of his grace); come to Christ and be perfected in his mercy by refusing ungodliness, all that which is not like him; come to Christ and receive salvation and sanctification.

**Verse 34**

And now I bid unto all, farewell. I soon go to rest in the paradise of God, until my spirit and body shall again reunite, and I am brought forth triumphant through the air, to meet you before the pleasing bar of the great Jehovah, the Eternal Judge of both quick and dead. Amen.

Having finished his exhortations, Moroni bids all farewell, sealing his work with an exhibition of the very things he has just written of: trust in God, hope, and charity. He trusts that his death will mean entrance into paradise. In other words, he has faith in the plan of salvation. He hopes for resurrection and for the judgment, which will be pleasing because the mercy of God will have made his repentance possible. He looks forward to God’s judgment because he knows that he has been made clean and whole through the atoning sacrifice made by Jesus Christ. Moroni has exhibited charity from the beginning to the end of his final address, lovingly exhorting his mortal enemies to repent and to seek the gifts of God, and counseling even those whom he cannot know to come to Christ. His final testimony is a testimony of God’s love for us and the hope that love has given Moroni. Having exhorted his readers to come to Christ and recognize the Lord’s gifts and love, Moroni seals his record with his testimony of what that mercy and love means for him.

**NOTE**

THE RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF JOSEPH SMITH PAPYRUS I

KERRY MUHLESTEIN

We can better appreciate the text of the Book of Abraham as we learn more about the culture and history in which it was created. Hence studies about Egypt, Canaan, and Mesopotamia during Abraham’s day are important. Studying the era when the papyri we still have were created can also offer important insights. While we do not currently know what the source of the Book of Abraham was, we do know the papyrus from which Facsimile 1 was taken was part of a larger roll owned by a priest in Thebes who lived about 200 BC. Thus if we study what Egyptian priests knew of biblical characters in that time period, we can better understand why this priest would possess a drawing associated with Abraham. This study is aimed at better understanding the milieu from which the

FROM THE EDITOR:

Most Latter-day Saints today recognize that the extant fragments of the Joseph Smith Papyri date at the earliest to a few hundred years before the birth of Christ. Yet they contain material that reaches back to the time of the Hebrew patriarchs. Professor Muhlestein tackles the question in this paper of how, when, and why Hebrew content found its way into authentic Egyptian material. It is a fascinating chapter in our understanding of Book of Abraham beginnings.
The original, extant fragment of Joseph Smith Papyrus I was used to produce Facsimile 1 in the Book of Abraham. Joseph Smith Papyrus © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.
original of Facsimile 1 arose. While this article attempts neither to prove nor to disprove the veracity of Joseph Smith’s interpretation, it does address some of the issues involved.3 Joseph Smith’s interpretation cannot be proved by studies such as this one, but understanding those interpretations can be enhanced by it.

**Egyptians and Other Religious Ideas**

In the twilight of ancient Egyptian history, biblical names and figures were used in Egyptian contexts. Some studies have pursued the use of these figures in attempts to understand other aspects of Egypt.4 However, much remains to be done to understand what these uses can teach us of Egypt and Egyptian religion itself5 and hence the likely background of the Book of Abraham. This brief survey endeavors to answer those questions that must first be addressed if we are to move further in the study of such texts. These questions are (1) Who used biblical figures and stories? (2) What figures and stories did they use? (3) How did they use them? (4) Why did they use them? (5) When did they use them? (6) How did they learn of them? And (7) When did they learn of them? This study represents an initial phase of answering these questions and as such represents a necessary incipit to the academic study of the Book of Abraham.

**Who Used Biblical Figures and Stories?**

The majority of the texts we will examine here come from a few important papyri caches. Many aspects of these papyri are international and intercultural. They come largely from within Egypt, and those that do not were found in the vicinity of Isis temples, which fact denotes an Egyptian association.6 Most of the existing texts were written in Greek, though a significant number were written in Demotic—a script that most likely was used only by Egyptians themselves.7

There has been some debate as to which culture gave birth to these texts. While they show some similarities with Greek magical culture,8 these similarities are minute when compared with Egyptian religious texts.9 The texts follow the basic patterns of the Book of the Dead and do not demonstrate a notable shift from earlier Egyptian “magical” texts.10 Instead the texts seem to represent another smooth step in the ongoing flow of Egyptian religious texts, with no noticeable break or change.

This is true for the other attestations of biblical figures in Egyptian contexts, such as funerary stelae (stone inscriptions). This study incorporates these uses that go beyond the examples found in papyri collections, but does not claim to be a comprehensive list of such sources. In all cases investigated, the material, historical, and geographic context, literary form, and genre are congruent with an Egyptian context.11

Figures from a variety of cultures were employed in these types of texts. Canaanite, Mesopotamian, Israelite, Greek, and Egyptian deities and figures are all used.12 However, the majority of figures are Egyptian, suggesting an Egyptian backbone to the textual history of the manuscripts under study.

Additionally, most of these texts seem to have been owned by Egyptian priest—especially priests from Thebes. Those texts outside the Greek Magical Papyri corpus appear to have been composed by Egyptian priests. Furthermore, these texts fit into a chronological continuum: Christian magical texts from Egypt succeed the Greek Magical Papyri and use the same patterns, only discontinuing the use of Egyptian and Greek gods over time.13 Yet these later texts are clearly Egyptian and thus support the argument that the earlier texts are also Egyptian in origin.

Taken together, all these evidences lead to the conclusion that these texts are Egyptian in nature. Surely they exhibit the influence of other cultures, but they are essentially Egyptian.

The aforementioned chronological continuum introduces a difficulty in categorizing the texts. For some texts, the dates and nature of language and figures employed make it certain that they represent either Egyptian or Christian religious ideas. However, a number of texts cannot be as easily classified; they may represent either Christian Egyptians using typical Egyptian texts, or they might be practitioners of Egyptian religion using these texts at a time when much of Egypt had become Christian. This study only uses texts that are comfortably categorized as Egyptian religious texts.

While we cannot discuss at length the term magical in connection with such texts,14 I maintain that these texts are essentially religious in nature and do not represent anything out of the norm for Egyptian religion and religious practice. Thus magical is not the most accurate term because it denotes to the modern reader a practice that lies outside the
normal religious practice of any given culture. These texts seem to fit very well within mainstream religious practice in Egypt as carried out by those who were part of the religious establishment. However, the majority of texts used in this study are from the so-called Greek Magical Papyri, and even though I feel they are only partially Greek in script and language and I do not think they are magical in nature, it would be too confusing to refer to them by some other name.

What Biblical Figures and Stories Were Used?

In order to determine what figures and stories were used, as well as when, where, and how they were employed, I entered each example into a spreadsheet. I examined over 750 examples. This allowed me to sort them according to which names and associated stories were used and how frequently. The number of biblical (and extrabiblical but still Jewish) figures and stories used in an Egyptian religious context is astonishing. A noncomprehensive list of nondivine names includes Abimelech, Abraham, Adam, Ammon, Aziel, Dardanos, David, Emmanuel, Gabriel, Gomorrah, Isaac, Israel, Jacob, Jeremiah, Jerusalem, Judah, Lot, Lot’s wife, Michael, Moses, Solomon, and even Osiris-Michael. Names for the Israelite deity include Adonai, Adonai Sabaoth (as well as just Sabaoth, which is more common), Elohim, El, God of the Hebrews, Yaho (IAO, short for Jehovah that was often employed by Jews in Egypt), and blessed Lord God of Abraham along with many variations and combinations of these names and titles that undoubtedly refer to the Hebrew God, such as “He who drew back the Jordan River,” or referencing the God who drove the winds at the Red Sea and met someone at the foot of the Holy Mount to reveal his great name.

Naturally some of these names were used with much greater frequency than others. The names of deity, as a general rule, were employed more often than human names. Among these, Yaho (IAO, short for Jehovah) was by far the most common, followed by the second most common, Sabbaoth (“hosts”), either appended to another form of the divine name (such as Yaho (“Jehovah of hosts”) or Adonai (“Lord of Hosts”)) or standing by itself; and Adonai, which is the third most common divine name. All other forms of the divine name were used much less frequently than these three.

The biblical stories concerning Moses hinge around his coming into the presence of God. The burning-bush incident on Sinai and Moses’s ability to be with God when all of Israel was afraid to approach God are the hallmarks of Moses’s story.

Among nondivine personal names were three that were used much more frequently than any others. Michael was most often turned to in the texts. Abraham was equally popular, and Moses was employed nearly as frequently. Among mortal figures, the names Moses and Abraham were most used in Egyptian texts.

We must also note which stories and accompanying elements were most commonly employed. Stories about Moses, typically referring to his experience on Mt. Sinai, were most common, although other events were also linked with him. Stories about Abraham were a close second. Few other figures had any story associated with them in the papyri at all.

How Were Biblical Figures Used?

The most common types of texts that featured biblical figures include love charms, medical rituals such as salves for fevers, invocations to various deities (including Egyptian deities), rites for driving away hostile forces such as demons, amulets for success, rituals designed to bring supernatural figures and aids, rituals for helping to manage a spouse, charms for becoming invisible, spells for catching thieves, rituals for prophecy, charms for restraining anger, and even initiation rituals.

Little consistency is evident regarding what kind of text employed specific figures. As an example, texts commonly associated with Michael include spells for helping with fevers, for restraining anger, for love charms, for seeking favor, and for revelation or foreknowledge. It is tempting to conclude that Michael has some tie with these kinds of things, perhaps in particular with spells related to heat since fever, anger, and love are all associated with heat,
but a closer examination reveals that the frequency of associating these spells with Michael matches the overall frequency of these spells within the corpus. In other words, we do not see a pattern of connecting concepts with Michael that is any different than the pattern of associating things with biblical figures in general.

This same statement is true of all but two of the biblical figures. With the exception of Moses and Abraham, no biblical figures seem to demonstrate a pattern associated with any specific type of religious text. With Moses and Abraham a faint pattern exists, but it is not attested in high enough numbers to dictate any firm conclusions. Nevertheless, these patterns are worth discussing.

Unsurprisingly, Moses is associated with theophanies. This cannot be coincidental since the biblical stories concerning Moses hinge around his coming into the presence of God. The burning-bush incident on Sinai (Exodus 3) and Moses's ability to be with God when all of Israel was afraid to approach God (Exodus 20 and 33, Deuteronomy 5 and 6) are the hallmarks of Moses's story. Thus the Egyptians used him for spells such as “Reveal yourself to me here today in the manner of the form of revealing yourself to Moses which you made upon the mountain.”54 Another manner of referring to Moses follows the typical Egyptian fashion of adopting the identity of the figure who had already done what you hoped to do, a practice I have termed “preternaturalization.”55

In other words, throughout Egyptian history we find a common practice of persons identifying themselves with other beings as a way of taking on the desired qualities of those beings. For example, if one were bitten by a snake, one might invoke a spell that insists that the person bitten by the snake has become Horus. This identification is valuable since Horus was believed to have survived a poisonous snake bite. By becoming Horus, a person hoped to take on his ability to survive what is normally a deadly experience.56 This tendency toward identifying oneself with the preternatural is expressed in desires to be identified with both divine and famous figures from Israelite texts. Thus one spell says, “I am Moses your prophet to whom you have transmitted your mysteries.”57

In the typical international pattern that many of these texts demonstrate, this same spell continues immediately with the declaration that “I am the messenger of Pharaoh Osoronnophris; this is your true name which has been transmitted to the prophets of Israel.”58 Yet, when the summoned deity is named, Adonai is among the many names listed, but most are fully unintelligible and seem to be only strange conglomerations of sounds. Thus we see that the story of Moses on the mount, while maintaining its Israelite essence, is mixed with a number of elements from other cultures. It also demonstrates the age-old custom of Egyptians preternaturalizing themselves and their circumstances by identifying with a preternatural character in hopes of bringing about the same success that individual had in the past.59 The connection between Moses and the name of deity

expressed in the aforementioned spell is another of the traits associated with Moses in Egyptian religious texts. Again this is not surprising since one of the most remarkable moments in Moses’s first theophany is asking God for his name and the revelation of “I am that I am” (Exodus 3:14). This element of Moses’s story is similar enough to the Egyptian desire to learn the names of deity that it is incorporated into a number of texts. One further example comes from a text that names itself the “book of Moses” and describes itself as being “the ritual using the name that encompasses all things. It also has directions for a meeting with the god.”

Again, this spell incorporates the two defining moments of Moses’s first Sinai experience: coming into God’s presence and learning his name. Clearly the priests who authored this spell were familiar with the biblical story and saw parallels between its significant elements and their own religious endeavors.

The other distinguishable pattern is of a different nature. While the stories associated with Moses dictate the use of his name in Egyptian religious texts, it is not entirely clear why Abraham became associated with Osiris. Again, the pattern is not strong, but it exists. It is curious to note that in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man—a parable that has a number of parallels with an earlier Egyptian tale known as the Setna II story—in the place Osiris would have occupied in an Egyptian context, Jesus instead mentions Abraham. This may indicate that the parallel was first conceived of in Jewish thought, though we cannot be sure.

In any case, there are enough instances in which Abraham appears in contexts normally occupied by Osiris that we must conclude the Egyptians saw some sort of connection between the two. John Gee has pointed out one of the strongest associations, noting that in a number of instances the phrase “live in the presence of Osiris” was replaced in Greek by “rest in Abraham’s bosom.”

Similarly, in a drawing that accompanies a text for a love charm, the text specifically notes that the drawing is associated with the spell. The vignette depicts a mumiform figure on a lion couch. Here we would typically expect to identify the figure with Osiris, but the text notes that it is Abraham on the couch. All these instances occur within an Egyptian religious context, making it clear that for whatever reason, the Egyptians viewed Abraham as an appropriate parallel for Osiris—if not the most appropriate parallel.

In summary, biblical figures were used by Egyptians in basically the same manner that Egyptian figures were used. As with Egyptian characters, when a particular story highlighted a desirable attribute, Egyptians sought to identify themselves with the figure in that story in order to garner that attribute to themselves. On the whole, the use of biblical figures in Egyptian religious texts did not represent any kind of shift or change but rather should be viewed as an expansion of who was being used in the search for interaction with the supernatural. Biblical figures joined a host of others in the Egyptian penchant for preternaturalization.

Why Were Biblical Figures Used?

With this rudimentary understanding of how biblical figures were used in Egyptian religious contexts, we must ask why they were used. I assert that the use of these figures merely represents the natural progression of propensities that had been present in Egyptian religion for millennia. The Egyptian tendency had always been to keep old religious ideas while adopting new ones when encountered. Thus the rise of Ra in religious thought did not lead to the exclusion of Osiris but rather to an expanded core
of important deities. Similarly, the subsequent increased attention to Amun allowed for the expansion of religious focus. Far from displacing Ra, sometimes even an increased attention to the sun god was witnessed, as well as to the unified form of Amun-Ra.

This same pattern was exhibited not only intramurally, but also with extramural expansion, including Levantine religious figures. Examples include the well-established Sethian interpretation aegyptiaca of Ba’al and his various versions. Familiarity with Byblian gods is attested as early as the Old Kingdom and continued thereafter, but the practice of mixing Egyptian gods and practices with foreign gods and religious elements truly flourished in the Ptolemaic era, as witnessed by the Serapis and Isis cults. Jacco Dieleman has argued that many of the texts in the Greek Magical Papyri demonstrate signs of Egyptian priests having studied and then incorporated both Greek characters and characteristics of Greek religious texts. Rather than asking why the Egyptians would incorporate the religious figures of the Israelites, we would instead be surprised if they did not.

In fact, Israelite religious beliefs and stories had a number of things to offer the Egyptians. As Arthur Nock has pointed out, Israelite religion could offer the Egyptians stories associated with sanctity and sacred space, amulets, angels, a personal relationship with deity, and a god who acted in history.

We can actually turn to an ancient eyewitness to ascertain at least some of the reasoning behind the practice of using biblical figures in Egyptian religion. Origen, while decidedly biased against the trend, reported that “many also of those who give themselves to the practice of the conjuration of evil spirits, employ in their spells the expression ‘God of Abraham,’ pointing out by the very name the friendship (that existed) between that just man and God. And yet, while making use of the phrase ‘God of Abraham,’ they do not know who Abraham is! And the same remark applies to Isaac, and Jacob, and Israel; which names, although confessedly Hebrew, are frequently introduced by those Egyptians who profess to produce some wonderful result by means of their knowledge.”

Origen is explicit about what could already be implied from the Egyptian custom of co-opting other cultures’ religious characters. It would seem that they believed that if more gods and supernaturally connected characters existed, they gained an advantage within the tomb of Nefertari, Nephthys and Isis support the composite figure of Osiris and Ra. In this unusual depiction, the inscriptions say they are “at peace” with each other. © Borromeo / Art Resource, NY.

**ORIGEN**

Origenes Adamantius (ca. 185–255) grew up in Alexandria, Egypt, and studied in the Christian Catechetical School under Clement of Alexandria. He knew the works of Philo (a Jewish philosopher who lived about the time of Christ) and studied pagan philosophy as well as Christian thought. After becoming the head of the Catechetical School in 203, he learned Hebrew to study the Old Testament and by his efforts became the first great Christian scholar. Because of a controversy with his bishop in 231, Origen settled at Caesarea in Palestine, where he set up a major library and research center. His numerous compositions included textual criticism of the Bible, biblical commentary, systematic theology, apologetics, and sermons. He shares a number of beliefs with Latter-day Saints, including the premortal existence of souls, moral agency, the belief that the Father and the Son are separate persons though one in will, and the belief that God exalts his faithful servants to become gods.
in appealing to these preternatural options as well as to those they had known previously. In typical Egyptian fashion they attempted to heighten their chances of obtaining their desires from the divine realm by appealing to an ever-increasing spectrum of potential preternatural allies. They attempted to heighten their chances of obtaining their desires from the divine realm by appealing to an ever-increasing spectrum of potential preternatural allies. 

If we consider syncretism in the broader sense in which it is not just a harmonizing of various deities but an amalgamation of various aspects of religion, then what we witness in the case of biblical figures is a typical example of Egyptian syncretism. Indeed, it is the specific manifestation of a trait attested in Egypt and throughout the Near East.

When Were Biblical Figures Used?

Having established this embryonic idea of why biblical figures were employed by Egyptians in their religious practices, we must also attempt to learn when they began doing so. In this attempt, we must keep in mind the inherent limitations that beset us in ascertaining such dating. Not only are we forced to use rough dates based on paleography, style, and so forth, but we also know that we are basing our evidence on limited information. Most of our data stems from one major cache, with a few other attestations from other contexts. This accident of both preservation and excavation must be kept in mind when purporting a terminus post quem, or date after which the practice must have begun. The practice likely began before the attestations that have been found. Having acknowledged this, we can do nothing other than employ the data we have, while always bearing in mind its limitations.

Papyrus Amherst 63 contains the oldest known version of any biblical psalms. The papyrus was written in Demotic during the Persian era, about the fourth century BC. While this does not tell us how these figures were regarded or employed, the fact that it was written in Demotic says something of its author and indicates a date when at least some Egyptians were becoming familiar with biblical texts.

The earliest known employment of something biblical in an active Egyptian religious context is from the first century BC. Another papyrus from this same time period is so fragmented that little can be made of it, but at least part of it deals with a Syrian woman.

During the next century the attestations begin to multiply, especially the use of the names Yaho and Adonai. This trend continued during the second century AD and flourished during the third. During the fourth century the continual proliferation of biblical uses reached a height that would remain steady for some time. Thus while the practice would flower in the early centuries AD, these centuries were merely continuing a trend that began some time before, clearly at least by the first century BC. It is interesting to note that the use of biblical figures in Egyptian religion does not seem to be affected by periods of anti-Semitic or anti-Christian movements.

How Did the Egyptians Learn of Biblical Characters?

Significant numbers of Jews had been in Egypt for hundreds of years by the time elements of their religious texts began showing up in Egyptian religious texts. They had come largely as refugees or mercenaries. They lived throughout Egypt, especially in
Alexandria. The largest non-Alexandrian concentrations were in Edfu, Thebes, Leontopolis, and the Fayoum during the time period of the texts we are studying. The Jews built temples and synagogues, and while many remained somewhat separate from their host culture, a significant number had assimilated much of Egypt into their lives and had become active participants in Egyptian society.

While most of our textual evidence from Jews appears to be in Aramaic, employing this criterion to determine when to use the label “Jewish” is somewhat problematic. Anything that a Jew wrote in some form of Egyptian or Greek is less recognizable as Jewish in origin.

A thorough investigation into the Jewish presence in Egypt would comprise a major monograph, so we will establish only a basic framework of potential Jewish-Egyptian interaction in order to understand something of how biblical figures came into use in Egyptian religion. Jewish-Hellenistic interaction will also be highlighted because it serves as a conduit into Egyptian religious culture as well. We will first look at some of the more important forms of evidence for a Jewish presence, and then we will examine only a few of the higher-profile examples of opportunity for the diffusion of Jewish ideas and literature into the larger Ptolemaic and Roman Egyptian culture.

While there was certainly Israelite interaction with Egypt before the seventh century BC, there was a quantitative leap at that time, when large groups of Jews entered Egypt permanently as both refugees and mercenaries. The influx of refugees was significant but not steady, similar to the inflow of Jewish men who served as part of the Egyptian army. Though some of these immigrants would settle in primarily Egyptian areas, most formed into Jewish colonies. These colonies were typically portions of an already settled area. Later, under the Ptolemies, the Jewish population of Egypt witnessed a “steady increase” with Jews often considered Hellenes who served in a variety of high and low civic positions. Eventually over twenty-five Egyptian towns contained a synagogue, and some of these housed more than one. As the third largest ethnic community in Egypt, Jews were a significant enough group to have attracted the attention of both the ruling and the native populations. Equally significant is the fact that people of influence from these cultures were familiar with and looked positively upon Jewish culture, as will be demonstrated below.

As we now turn to specific instances that demonstrate possible conduits of intercultural influence, concentrating specifically on those from this general time period, we will see that some of the earliest examples come from an early Ptolemaic presence in Egypt. Hecataeus of Abdera wrote favorably of the Jews in about 300 BC. Hecataeus was known in Egypt during the reign of Ptolemy I and is reported to have written a work about Abraham in Egypt. In this work he extolled Moses, spoke very highly of the Jews, and claimed that the Bible was a sacred book. Similarly, the roughly contemporary Zosimus, probably an Egyptian practicing Egyptian religion, referred to a Jewish text—either Genesis, Jubilees, or Enoch—as “our book.”

Other possible influences from this same time period include the high priest Hezekiah joining Ptolemy I. According to Hecataeus, Ptolemy I granted the Jews the status of politeuma, allowing them to live according to their ancestral laws. With large groups of Jews throughout the country, especially in Alexandria, the opportunity for knowledge of their traditions was ample. Many of them associated with non-Jews quite freely, even to the point that Alexandrian Jews were allowed to be titled “Macedonians.” Jews served in various high military and civil positions. Because some of these Jews kept their “ancestral laws” (the laws of Moses), their rulers and employers also had to develop some degree of familiarity with Jewish culture. Hence knowledge of Jewish customs and ideas spread to some degree among the elite in Egypt out of necessity. Works such as Demetrius’s (ca. 220 BC) On the Kings of Judea arose from this milieu, as Jews and those familiar with them published things Jewish couched in trappings and vehicles recognizable to Hellenes.

We know of a number of circumstances that would have piqued a favorable interest in Jewish ideas and texts among Egypt’s Hellenic rulers. For example, one second-century BC Jew from Alexandria said the God of the Jews also protected Ptolemy.
We know of a number of circumstances that would have piqued a favorable interest in Jewish ideas and texts among Egypt’s Hellenic rulers. For example, one second-century BC Jew from Alexandria said the God of the Jews also protected Ptolemy.\(^{101}\) The Sibylline Oracles, documents from about 150 BC in Egypt, contain the writings of Jews who spoke of things Israelite but who also hailed the Ptolemaic king as a messiah sent to save them.\(^{102}\) Philo of Alexandria, a first-century AD Jewish priest, wrote that the Bible taught Middle Platonic ideas, as well as that Abraham was both a philosopher and lover of God. He cast the revelations to Abraham as an oracle.\(^{103}\) Such a perception seems similar to those held by the priests who incorporated Abraham and others into Egyptian spells and other religious texts. Hence Egyptian priests must have known of biblical texts at this time.

The creation of the Septuagint under Ptolemy II would have greatly facilitated the spread of biblical knowledge throughout Egypt. This was a subcurrent in the larger torrent of internationalization that characterized the onset of the Hellenistic period, and Egypt was no exception. Soon thereafter, Greek-style literature popularized Jewish characters and probably spread such knowledge even further than the Septuagint.\(^{104}\) Noncanonical stories about figures like Joseph, Jacob, and especially Abraham seem to have been particularly popular. In the Abrahamic extrabiblical sources, a common theme is Abraham’s arrival in Egypt to teach things like astronomy to the Egyptians. Eupolemus wrote during the mid-second century BC that Abraham lived in Heliopolis with priests and taught them astrology.\(^{105}\) Sometime before the first century BC, Artapanus wrote that Abraham came to Egypt and taught astrology to Pharaoh.\(^{106}\) Philo, the epic poet who wrote in the third or second century BC, referred to Abraham as “far-famed”; all the instances we have considered thus far attest that he indeed became such in Egypt.\(^{107}\)

**When Did They Become Familiar with Biblical Figures?**

While this paper provides only the briefest of surveys regarding how knowledge of biblical texts and characters could have spread to practitioners of Egyptian religion, it has made clear that there were abundant avenues and that the *zeitgeist* of intercultural exchange was such that we would be surprised if the Egyptian elite were not familiar with the Jewish texts. Now we must ask when they became so. The question here is not when a few people became familiar with a few texts, but when knowledge of the texts became common enough among those who shaped Egyptian religious practice that they started to incorporate Jewish ideas into their religious thought and practice on a large scale.\(^{108}\)

We must not yield to the temptation to generalize geographically. There is no reason to assume that those who were familiar with biblical figures at this time period were representative of the entire country. Of course we cannot ascertain such a date with any degree of certainty. Instead we can look at the evidence we have, employ a few well-thought-out assumptions, and come up with a tentative date range.

As mentioned above, the earliest known religious texts to employ Jewish names are from roughly the first century BC. We must assume that the priest(s) who authored these ritual texts had been familiar with the characters long enough to have worked them into the composition of such spells when the occasion arose to create new religious texts. Thus we can safely posit a date of about 100 BC as the latest point at which priests in Thebes became familiar with both biblical and extrabiblical Jewish stories.

This date is based on an assumption of how long it would have taken for knowledge of biblical figures to work its way into Egyptian religious texts. We have no firm evidence on which to calculate this...
date. We must rely on the commonsense notion that it would indeed take some time, but we can use clues to more precisely hone our estimate. We can look at the dates noted above that indicate that influential people were familiar with such characters, even if these people were not those who would eventually incorporate them into Egyptian religious texts. Our earliest significant figures whose writings demonstrate that they knew well both canonical and noncanonical stories associated with biblical characters are Hecataeus of Abdera, Zosimus, Philo the epic poet, Eupolemus, and Artapanus. These men, dating from 300 to 150 BC, demonstrated a respect for and familiarity with Jewish figures. These dates correspond well with the earliest Egyptian religious texts that employ such figures, and they even push the date a little earlier. If we harmonize these dates with the date of our earliest known attestation of using biblical figures, we can say that these texts were known by at least 150 BC—perhaps even 300 BC or earlier. A very safe and likely date would be ca. 200 BC. The fact that Hor, priest of Thebes in about 200 BC, owned an Egyptian drawing that was somehow associated with Abraham is another piece of evidence that suggests this date is correct.

Conclusions

While there is much more research to be done, a few things have become clear in this survey that are of interest to Latter-day Saints. First, in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt, biblical stories and characters were employed in Egyptian religious practice. These stories and characters were added to the already existing repertoire of Egyptian, Canaanite, and Greek gods and mythical characters. Biblical figures were used in a manner similar to Egyptian figures. They were used in a variety of contexts with no clear pattern emerging. Two of the characters who loom largest in the Jewish canon—Abraham and Moses—were used in contexts that were in keeping with their biblical stories. These uses demonstrate that the creators of these religious texts were thoroughly familiar with both canonical and noncanonical texts about these characters. Our current evidence indicates that a group of priests from Thebes possessed, read, understood, and employed biblical and extrabiblical texts, most especially texts about Abraham and Moses.

This process likely began around 200 BC and continued for hundreds of years in a pattern that eventually morphed into Christian practices in Egypt. While a few textual examples from elsewhere in Egypt suggest that this practice was widespread, at this time our sample of evidence only allows us to make these conclusions for the Theban area, the area in which the priest who owned the original of Facsimile 1 lived and served. Further discoveries may allow us to refine or expand these conclusions.

As a result of these conclusions we can better understand why Hor, a Theban priest in 200 BC, would possess papyrus associated with Abraham. He was a product of his times who was informed by his culture and in turn had opportunity to inform that culture. His interest in biblical characters and his possession of both biblical and nonbiblical stories about these characters was part of his occupation. Hor would undoubtedly have been interested in any religious stories that could have been incorporated into, and thus given more power to, his priestly duties.

Interestingly, we know that Hor was involved with rituals that had to do with calling on preternatural aid to ward off potential evil forces. These rituals often involved either real or figurative human sacrifice. Now that we know that priests from Hor’s era and geographic location would have used biblical figures to augment their religious rituals and spells, we better understand why he would have been interested in the story depicted on Facsimile 1, that of a biblical figure who was saved from sacrifice by divine intervention. Hor’s possession of this drawing matches what we would expect of a priest in this time and place based on the understanding of that culture gained from this study.

Kerry Muhlestein received his PhD in Egyptology from UCLA. He is an associate professor of ancient scripture, teaches classes in ancient Near Eastern studies, and is the associate chair of the Department of Ancient Scripture at Brigham Young University. He is the director of the BYU Egypt Excavation Project and has held office in the American Research Center in Egypt.
NOTES


10. Gee, “Abracadabra, Isaac and Jacob,” 44. For examples of this, see Dieleman, Priests, Tongues, and Rites, 170–82.

11. See Dieleman, Priests, Tongues, and Rites, 282–84.


16. Stela BM 1360.

17. Greek Magical Papyri (PGM) XIII, 973–74.

18. PGM CXXII, 1–55.


20. PGM IV, 1716. This seems to be Darda from 1 Kings 4:31.


23. PGM XXIIa, 18–27.

24. PGM XXXVI, 295–311.


26. PGM XXXVI, 295–310.

27. PGM IV, 1234.

28. PGM IV, 3041.

29. PGM XLIV, 1–8.


31. PGM XXXVI, 295–310.

32. PGM XXXVI, 295–310.

33. PGM LXXX, 1–5.
44. The temple at Elephantine was dedicated to Yaho. For more, see Peter C. Nadig, “We Beg You, Our King! Some Reflections on the Jews in Persian and Ptolemaic Egypt,” in Scandinavia, 18–32.


49. Dieleman, Priests, Tongues, and Rites, 293–94.


52. Origen, Contra Celsum 1.22.


57. PGM V, 109, as in Betz, Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, 103.

58. PGM V, 115.


60. PGM XIII, 345–47, as in Betz, Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, 182.

61. For example, note the importance of learning names in the Setna cycles, or the lengths Isis goes to in her attempts to learn Re’s secret name.


63. John Gee, “A New Look at the ‘ḥḥ p3 by Formula,” in Actes du IXème congrès international des études démotiques: Paris, 31 août - 3 septembre 2005, ed. Ghislaine Widmer and Didier Devauchelle (Cairo: Institut Français Archéologie Orientale, 2009), 143. While Gee has discovered many more than this, in his article he notes KSB I, 429, 430, 433, 460, 601–2, 606 and BM 607. In some cases the phrase includes Isaac and Jacob along with Abraham.


81. See PGM XVI and LVII for several uses.
82. See PGM XXXIIa, PDM XIV, PGM LXXXI, and PDM IV for several uses.
83. See PGM VII, PGM CV, and PGM CVI for many examples.
85. My thorough cataloguing of onomastic evidence, gleaned from Jan K. Winnicki, Late Egypt and Her Neighbours: Foreign Population in Egypt in the First Millennium BC, trans. Dorota Dzierzbicka (Warsaw: Institute of Archaeology of Warsaw University, 2009), reveals that of 551 names examined, by far the four most common origins are as follows: 156 are from the Fayoum (28.3%), 119 from Edfu (21.6%), 75 from Leontopolis (13.6%), and 26 from Thebes (4.7%), though this last figure is colored by the fact that at some point a number of Jews from Thebes moved to the Fayoum (see below). Also see S. Honigman, “Abraham in Egypt: Hebrew and Jewish-Aramaic Names in Egypt and Judea in Hellenistic and Early Roman Times,” Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 146 (2004): 290, 295.
87. See Modrzejewski, Jews of Egypt, 25.
89. Both Hecataeus and Diodorus note how exclusive and separatist the Jews generally were.
90. Nadig, “We Beg You, Our King!” 86.
92. Cities with a notable Jewish population and synagogue include: Athribis: See OGIS I, 96, as in William Horbury and David Noy, eds., Jewish Inscriptions of Graeco-Roman Egypt (Cambridge: University Press, 1992), 45–47; see also Winnicki, Late Egypt, 241. Leontopolis: See PDM I, as in Victor A. Tcherikover, Corpus Papyrus Judaicarum, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 44–46. See also Mathias Delcor, “Le temple d’Onias en Égypte,” in Revue biblique 75 (1968): 188–203; see Kasher, Jews in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt, 119–35; Winnicki, Late Egypt, 241; and Nadig, “We Beg You, Our King!” 89–91. Krokothiopolis: See P. Cowley 81 and 82; see also Kasher, Jews in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt, 158–60; and Winnicki, Late Egypt, 247. Edfu: See Winnicki, Late Egypt, 248–49. Of course, there was also a large Jewish presence in Alexandria itself.
94. Doran, “Pseudo-Hecataeus,” 906. Raphael Patai, The Jewish Alchemists: A History and Source Book (Princeton University Press, 1994), 56. Gee, in “Abracadabra, Isaac and Jacob,” 45 and n. 125, disagrees with Patai, Jewish Alchemists, 56, seeing no reason to assume that Zosimus was a Jew. Patai’s main reason for doing so was the phrase our book, but in light of what is presented in this paper, it is clear that such a phrase does not necessarily indicate he was a Jew.
95. Borgen, Early Christianity and Hellenistic Judaism, 77. See also Letter of Aristeas 310.
96. Josephus, Jewish War 2.18.7. See also Borgen, Early Christianity and Hellenistic Judaism, 78.
97. Josephus, Jewish War 2.18.7. See also Borgen, Early Christianity and Hellenistic Judaism, 78.
99. For a discussion on this, see Erich S. Gruen, Heritage and Hellenism: The Re-invention of Jewish Tradition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), xiv. Examples of such texts include the tragedy of Ezekiel and the epics of Theodotus and Philo.
100. Letter of Aristeas 15. My gratitude to Erich S. Gruen for pointing this reference out to me in the lecture “The ‘Assimilated’ Jew: Hellenism and Judaism at the Border,” given at Brigham Young University, September 2009.
102. De Cherubim 7; De Somnis 60; De Abrahamo 60–62, as in Tvedten, Hauglid, and Gee, Early Life of Abraham, 35, 38.
107. See Gee, “Abracadabra, Isaac and Jacob,” 75.
ABRAHAM AND IDRIMI

JOHN GEE
Comparing examples of literature produced in the same time and place is useful in a number of ways. Such a comparison can reveal something about that time and place and can also highlight distinctive features of individual authors.

In order to compare the Book of Abraham with other literature from its time and place, we need to first establish when and where Abraham lived. Fortunately, research on both the time and place of Abraham has already been done and needs only to be summarized.

Let us start with place. In the Bible, Abraham is told to leave his native land (Genesis 12:1); later he sends his servant back to his native land (Genesis 24:4–7) — “back to,” as the Hebrew text states, Aram-Naharaim and the city of Nahor (Genesis 24:10). Aram-Naharaim (“Aram of the two rivers”), in all its biblical attestations, is located in upper Syria, probably in the land bounded by the great western bend of the Euphrates and the Balikh or Khabur Rivers.

With the place identified, it is relatively easy to determine the time. Historically Egyptians were in the area of Aram-Naharaim during only three time periods: in the Middle Kingdom during the reigns of Sesostris III and Amenemhet III, during the New Kingdom between the reigns of Thutmosis I and Amenhotep III, and during the reign of Ptolemy III. Ptolemaic times are much too late for Abraham, since the literature mentions Abraham before that time. Situating Abraham in the New Kingdom allows no time for Joseph and the Exodus story. The Middle Kingdom dates (2000–1800 BC) fit best for Abraham.

With an approximate time and place resolved for Abraham, it should be relatively simple to compare the Book of Abraham with other autobiographies of the same time and place to see if the literary forms are similar.

Unfortunately, only one such autobiography is known to exist. It belongs to Idrimi, the ruler of the town of Alalakh, thus placing him in the vicinity of Abraham’s homeland. A statue of Idrimi covered with an inscription was discovered in 1939 at Tell Atchana/Alalakh in Syria, and the text was published in 1949. “It has become one of the principal sources for studying the history of Syro-Palestine in the middle of the second millennium B.C.E.” Fortunately, Idrimi’s autobiography compares well with Abraham’s autobiography in both subject and form, even though Idrimi’s autobiography dates about two hundred years later.

These ancient works are called autobiographies because they are presented as first-person narratives. Nevertheless, we do not know if such ancient autobiographical texts were written by the individuals themselves, dictated to scribes, or ghostwritten by scribes. Ancient Egyptian autobiographies, for example, can often be so formulaic that one might be forgiven for wondering if the individual is reflected in the text at all. In other words, it is unlikely that Idrimi carved the words on his statue, but he may have been directly responsible for the content of the text.

Similarities

The Book of Abraham and the autobiography of Idrimi both deal with similar topics. Abraham’s autobiography records that he had to leave his homeland and travel to another land with his family. Later he left that land and traveled again in hopes of finding a place for himself and his posterity. Likewise, Idrimi’s autobiography also relates that he had to leave his homeland and travel to another land with his family. Later he left that land and traveled again, hoping to find a place for himself and his posterity. His journey ended at Alalakh, where he was made king and reigned for thirty years.

Not only are the general themes of the two autobiographies similar, but they also open in a similar manner. The first verse of the Book of Abraham divides neatly into four clauses, parallels to each of which appear at the beginning of the autobiography of Idrimi:

FROM THE EDITOR:

Thanks to John Gee we might now be able to say of Abraham, “He’s been there and done that.” Only a John Gee would have noticed the close parallels between Abraham of the book of Genesis and Idrimi, a ruler in northern Syria during the Middle Bronze Age. So unheralded and unique are the parallels that Gee has found that we had to commission a new map just to situate the places into their geographical context.
“In the land of the Chaldeans, at the residence of my fathers, I, Abraham, saw that it was needful for me to obtain another place of residence” (Abraham 1:1). We will consider each of these clauses in turn.

“In the land of the Chaldeans”

The first clause in the Book of Abraham specifies the general geographic location at which the action initially takes place. For Abraham that location is “the land of the Chaldeans”; for Idrimi it is “in the city of Aleppo” (ina al Halabki). Contemporary Egyptian autobiographies do not record the location where the action takes place because the Egyptian officials generally remained in one place. Abraham and Idrimi both moved about, and the major portion of their careers did not occur in the place where they were born and raised. This means that both need to report how it was that they ended their lives in a different place and requires them to specify the place where the initial action takes place. The similarity of their life stories explains why both autobiographies mention the location where the initial action occurs.

“At the residence of my fathers”

Abraham not only designates the land but also explains that it was at his ancestral home. Idrimi likewise specifies that the action occurred “in the house of my fathers” (bit abiya). This phrase is a typical expression for an “ancestral home.” The family was extremely important in the ancient world. As Idrimi’s autobiography shows, he went to stay with his mother’s family when he left Aleppo. What will distinguish Abraham’s record as unusual is that he later leaves all his family and strikes out on his own.

“I, Abraham”

Abraham identifies himself simply by stating just his name. Idrimi begins the same with “I, Idrimi” (anâku Idrimi) but adds his father’s name and the names of the gods that he worships: “son of Ilimilimma, servant of Teshub, Hebat, and Ishtar, lady of Alalakh, my lady.” Abraham omits the names of his fathers and their gods, perhaps because he has rejected the local gods and his fathers’ worship of them (Abraham 1:5) and because his father has tried “to take away [his] life” (Abraham 1:30). Introducing an autobiography with this sort of identification clause (i.e., “I, Abraham”) is common in West Semitic inscriptions but is not known in Mesopotamian inscriptions until Neo-Assyrian times under the influence of Aramaic. This demonstrates that Abraham is not from Mesopotamia.

“Saw that it was needful for me to obtain another place of residence”

Idrimi gives his reasons for departure from Aleppo as follows: “an incident occurred and we fled to the people of the city of Emar, my mother’s brethren, and we dwelt in the city of Emar.” Idrimi does not elaborate on the incident that led to their abrupt departure. The term used, mašiktu, refers to something bad or a bad reputation. The late distinguished Assyriologist, A. Leo Oppenheim, referred to this as “guarded understatements” on Idrimi’s part. This masking of mistakes is typical for ancient Near Eastern literature. Abraham goes into much more detail about why he left (Abraham 1:5–30) but only touches on how his own actions precipitated his near sacrifice (Abraham 1:5, 7). Idrimi “fled”; his
In Aleppo, my ancestral home, a hostile [incident] occurred so that we had to flee to the people of Emar, my mother's relatives, and stay there. My older brothers also stayed with me, but none of them had the plans I had. So I, Idrimi, the son of Ilumilamma, devotee of İM, Ḫebat, and my lady İstār, lady of Alalaḫ, thinking to myself, “Whoever <seeks> his patrimony is a great nobleman, but whoever [remains] among the citizens of Emar is a vassal,” took my horse, chariot, and groom and went away.

I crossed over the desert and came among the Sutu warriors. I spent the night with them in my covered chariot. The next day I set forth and went to Canaan. The town of Ammiya is located in Canaan.

People from Aleppo, Mukišhe, Ni'i, and Nuḫašše were living in Ammiya, and when they realized that I was their lord's son, they gathered to me. I said the following: “I have become chief, I have been appointed.”

Then I stayed over the Ḫapiru warriors seven years. I released birds and practiced extispicy.

In the seventh year İM became favorably inclined toward me, so I made ships and had auxiliary troops board them and proceeded via the sea to Mukišhe. I reached land at Mount Zise, Ie, Uluzina, and Zaruna, these Zisse, Ie, Uluzina, and Zaruna, these

Now, when my country heard of me they brought me large cattle and small cattle, and in one day, in union, the countries of Ni'i, Nuḫašše, Mukišhe, and my own city Alalaḫ became reconciled to me. When my allies heard, they came to me. And when they concluded a treaty with me, I established them truly as my allies.

Now for seven years Barattarna, the mighty king, the king of the Hurrian warriors, was hostile to me. In the seventh year I sent Anwanda to Barattarna, the mighty king, the king of the Hurrian warriors, and told him of the treaties of my ancestors when they were allied with them, and that our actions were pleasing to the (former) kings of the Hurrian warriors for they had made a binding agreement between them.

The mighty king heard of the treaties of our predecessors and the agreement made between them, and with the treaty they read to him the words of the treaty in detail. So on account of our treaty terms he received my tribute. Then I presented the (gestures of) loyalty, which were considerable, I made great sacrifices, and restored to him a lost estate. I swore to him a binding oath as a loyal vassal.

Then I became king. Kings from all around attacked me in Alalaḫ. Just as they had heaped up on the ground the corpses of (my) ancestors, corpse upon corpse, so I, too, caused (their corpses) to be heaped up on the ground thus putting an end to their warfare.

Then I took troops and attacked Hatti-land. As for the seven cities under their protection, namely, Pašaše, Damarat-re'ı, Ḫulaḫḫan, Zise, Je, Uluzina, and Zaruna, these I destroyed. Hatti-land did not assemble and did not march against me, so I did what I wanted. I took captives from them and took their property, valuables, and possessions and distributed them to my auxiliaries, kinsmen, and friends. Together with them I took (booty).

Then I took troops and attacked Hatti-land. As for the seven cities under their protection, namely, Pašaše, Damarat-re'ı, Ḫulaḫḫan, Zise, Je, Uluzina, and Zaruna, these I destroyed. Hatti-land did not assemble and did not march against me, so I did what I wanted. I took captives from them and took their property, valuables, and possessions and distributed them to my auxiliaries, kinsmen, and friends. Together with them I took (booty).

Then I returned to Mukišhe and entered my capital Alalaḫ. With the captives, goods, property, and possessions which I brought down from Hatti I had a palace built. I made my regime like the regime of kings. I made my brothers like royal brothers, my sons like their sons, and my relatives like their relatives. The inhabitants who were in my land I made to dwell securely, and even those who did not have a dwelling I settled.

Then I organized my land, and made my cities like they were before. Just as our ancestors had established regular rites for the gods of Alalaḫ, and just as our forefathers had performed sacrifices, I constantly performed them. These things I did, and I entrust them to my son İM-nirari.

Whoever effaces this statue of mine, may the Heaven god curse him, may the Earth below destroy his progeny, may the gods of heaven and earth diminish his kingship. Let them have him executed (lit., measure him by a rope). Whoever changes or erases it, may IM, the lord of heaven and earth, and the great gods extirpate his progeny and seed from his land.

Şarruwa is the official scribe. He has written, copied and reviewed (the text). And now may the gods of heaven and earth keep Şarruwa, the scribe, who has written (the text of) this statue for him, in good health; may they protect him and be his guardian. May Samaš, lord of the upper and nether worlds, lord of the spirits, be his protector.

I reigned for 30 years. I inscribed my achievements upon my statue. Let [the people read it] and continually bless me.

account employs a verb (ḫalāqu) that is normally used of runaway slaves, deserting soldiers, and fugitive criminals.\(^{22}\) Abraham says simply that he “left” (Abraham 2:4) or “departed” (Abraham 2:14).

These four clauses are found near the beginning of both autobiographies, but their order is not necessarily the same in various translations.\(^{23}\)

Other Similarities

Both Abraham’s and Idrimi’s autobiographies report their journeys through Canaan. For Idrimi, Alalakh is part of Canaan,\(^{24}\) and so Canaan seems to have included the whole Levant. Abraham, after leaving Ur, dwelt more within the southern end of the land of Canaan (Abraham 2:15–18).

Both Abraham and Idrimi emphasize in their autobiographies that their travel to their new residence was the result of divine inspiration; for Abraham it was the Lord speaking to him (Abraham 1:16) and appearing to him (Abraham 2:6); for Idrimi it was the result of consulting omens.\(^{25}\)

Both Abraham and Idrimi refer in their autobiographies back to promises made to their ancestors for whom they have records. Idrimi refers to his ancestors’ treaties in dealing with the Hurrian king Barattarna.\(^{26}\) “The biographical inscription of Idrimi states clearly that good relations, which formerly obtained between his ancestors and the kings of Ḫurri, were interrupted for a time until Idrimi returned to the fold.”\(^{27}\) Abraham refers back to the “records of the fathers” that were “preserved in mine own hands” (Abraham 1:31).

Both Abraham and Idrimi describe in their autobiographies that they worshipped the way that their fathers did. Idrimi emphasizes the performance of the sacrifices,\(^{28}\) while Abraham makes the distinction that he worshipped not as his immediate fathers did but as his more distant ancestors did (Abraham 1:2–7).

Both Abraham’s and Idrimi’s autobiographies deal in covenants. Idrimi’s inscription has been used to show how covenants worked in the ancient Near East.\(^{29}\) One of Idrimi’s covenants, found on another tablet from Alalakh,\(^{30}\) deals mainly with the return of fugitives; this is somewhat ironic since Idrimi himself was a fugitive, as was Abraham. Abraham records a covenant that God made with him (Abraham 2:6–11).

Thus both autobiographies are shaped around similar themes. While their lives have certain similarities, they also have distinctive differences. Yet the autobiographical form seems to require the mention of certain topics, including (1) continuity with the past tradition through references to the house, gods, and records of their fathers and (2) piety to the gods they serve by describing their explicit service and following the revelation they receive from their god.

Wider Contrasts

According to Edward Greenstein and David Marcus, “The story of Idrimi is unlike Mesopotamian literature both in content and style.”\(^{31}\) The story, as Oppenheim describes it, is “without parallel in texts of this type from Mesopotamia and Egypt.”\(^{32}\) This led him to conclude that “all this seems to me to bespeak the existence of a specific literary tradition, totally different in temper and scope from that of the ancient Near East.”\(^{33}\) Thus Oppenheim considered the autobiography of Idrimi to be unusual even for the ancient Near East. But the Book of Abraham belongs to the same specific literary tradition as Idrimi’s autobiography. More inscriptions like Idrimi’s from Syria dating to the Middle Bronze Age would enable a better comparison, but it is at least worth asking, How did Joseph Smith manage to publish in the Book of Abraham a story that closely matched a Middle-Bronze-Age Syrian autobiography that would not be discovered for nearly a hundred years?\(^ {34}\)

John Gee is a senior research fellow and the William (Bill) Gay Research Professor at the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship at Brigham Young University and chair of the Egyptology and Ancient Israel section of the Society of Biblical Literature. He is the author of numerous articles on Egyptology and has edited several books and journals.
3. Both the Wycliffe and the Matthew Bibles are more accurate in their translations of Genesis 24:7: “fro the lande where I was borne,” respectively.
4. The King James translation “Mesopotamia” for Aram-Naharaim is misleading because “Mesopotamia” today usually denotes the land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers—that is, Babylonia and Sumeria.
13. Inscription of Idrimi, line 3, author’s translations throughout. The Akkadian version is conveniently located in Greenstein and Marcus, “Akkadian Inscription of Idrimi,” 64–66; see sidebar for their translation, 67–68. For the reading “city,” see the comments in Greenstein and Marcus, “Akkadian Inscription of Idrimi,” 69, under al Alalah.
16. Inscription of Idrimi, line 1.
17. Inscription of Idrimi, lines 2–3.
20. Chicago Assyrian Dictionary (CAD), M 1:323–24; Concise Dictionary of Akkadian, 199; see also the commentary in Greenstein and Marcus, “Akkadian Inscription of Idrimi,” 70.
22. CAD, H 38.
23. See, for example, Greenstein and Marcus, “Akkadian Inscription of Idrimi,” 67.
24. Inscription of Idrimi, lines 18–20, 38; see also Greenstein and Marcus, “Akkadian Inscription of Idrimi,” 74.
26. Inscription of Idrimi, lines 42–51.
32. Oppenheim, review of Statue of Idrimi, 199.
33. Oppenheim review of Statue of Idrimi, 200.
THE ZORAMITES AND COSTLY APPAREL:
Symbolism and Irony

PARRISH BRADY AND SHON HOPKIN

Previous studies have focused on the historical function and nature of Nephite and Lamanite dress, particularly in times of war, but none have analyzed how the ancient authors in the Book of Mormon used clothing as a literary tool. The Zoramite narrative of Alma 31-35 and Alma 43-44, in particular, contains many subtle details regarding the importance of costly apparel and riches as an outward evidence of pride woven into a richly symbolic account, but that may be overlooked by the casual reader. This literary analysis will focus on how Mormon’s editing hand structured the Zoramite narrative, using clothing as a metaphor to show the dangers of pride and the blessings afforded by humble adherence to God’s teachings and covenants. This study will also demonstrate the complexity of the Book of Mormon as a religious text that continues to provide opportunities for fresh literary analysis over one hundred and eighty years after it was first offered to the world.

The Zoramite pride and prosperity—as evidenced by their costly apparel, gold, silver, and fine goods (Alma 31:24-25, 28)—stand in tension in the narrative with the foundational teaching of the Book of Mormon that the obedient will “prosper in the land” (1 Nephi 4:14; Mosiah 1:7). The story develops this tension by using the metaphor of clothing to set up several dramatic ironies. The rich and wicked Zoramites, who had believed themselves prosperous and chosen in part because of their costly apparel and riches, eventually discover the weakness of their position when they are defeated in war by Moroni’s army. That army includes the poor Zoramites (Alma 35:14), whose clothing—designed by Captain Moroni for functionality rather than for ostentation—truly gives them an edge of superiority. Mormon’s editing choice to include the Zoramite battle (the battle of Zarahemnah) with the war chapters (Alma 43–63) in one sense obscures the dramatic conclusion to the story of the Zoramites and leaves the modern reader to reconnect the narrative thread of Alma 31-35, which is separated from its metaphoric conclusion in Alma 43-44 by Alma’s counsel to his sons. This editorial decision will be discussed below.

FROM THE EDITOR:
The abridgment of the plates created by Mormon, as others have pointed out, is a sophisticated tour de force in literary composition. Beginning with John W. Welch’s groundbreaking work on chiasms in the Book of Mormon, scholars have produced major and minor pieces on its literary aspects. What else is left to do? Plenty! I suspect that we have barely begun to scratch the surface of the depths of the Book of Mormon. The present article by Parrish Brady and Shon Hopkin discusses the use by Mormon of a leitmotif through multiple, though interrupted, chapters in the middle of the book of Alma. With this article I am delighted to welcome Brady and Hopkin to the pages of this Journal.
The Culture of the Zoramites—The Rameumptom and Extravagant Dress

Alma 31–35 introduces a Nephite splinter group known as the Zoramites, named after their leader at the time. Alma visited the Zoramites to preach the gospel to them because he had heard rumors that Zoram was leading them “to bow down to dumb idols” (Alma 31:1). From the first mention of the Zoramite people, Mormon indicates that they displayed an adoring regard for tangible objects, possibly referring to the worship of items that they had created with their own hands. Mormon never overtly describes the nature of the “dumb idols” purportedly being worshipped by the Zoramites. Instead, once Alma witnessed the Zoramite culture firsthand his concerns shifted from the worship of idols to the Zoramite obsession with “costly apparel” and their apostate religious practices.

Mormon devotes considerable space to a negative description of the Zoramites’ unique form of worship at a stand known as the Rameumptom. He records that the top of the stand would admit only one person at a time (Alma 31:13) and that the participants who came to pray would offer exactly the same prayer, with uplifted hands stretched forth to the heavens. Mormon then provides Alma’s description of the Zoramites as he prayed to the Lord for strength. Alma was “astonished beyond all measure” (31:19) by the prayer of the Zoramites in which they thanked God that they were chosen by the Lord to be his holy children, while all others would be cast “down to hell” (31:17). Thus Mormon almost immediately focuses the narrative on a form of worship that emphasizes Zoramite superiority and pride, in which one worshipper at a time is on display before the rest of the congregation.

In his prayer, Alma reveals a defining characteristic of Zoramite culture—their extravagant forms of dress:

They are puffed up, even to greatness, with the vain things of the world. Behold, O my God, their costly apparel, and their ringlets, and their bracelets, and their ornaments of gold, and all their precious things which they are ornamented with; and behold, their hearts are set upon them. (Alma 31:27–28)

While it is unclear whether Mormon purposefully connects the early mention of idolatry with the emphasis on costly apparel, the Zoramites’ adoring regard for clothing—things made by human hands that have no inherent power—is in some ways consistent with idol worship.

The two salient features of Zoramite culture described by Mormon—the Rameumptom and an obsession with “costly apparel”—actually have much in common that makes them useful rhetorical devices for Mormon as he warns against the damaging
effects of pride. In Mormon’s description the rote prayer upon the Rameumptom was the only religious practice in which the Zoramites engaged (Alma 31:23). Although the prayer’s constantly repeated themes were certainly important in establishing and maintaining doctrinal focus and consistency, the position upon the Rameumptom during the prayer also provided a perfect opportunity for the individual at the top to show off his or her attire and adornments to the rest of his community. The ritual form of prayer—with arms outstretched to the heavens—further maximized this opportunity, allowing precisely those ornaments that Alma had noticed—the bracelets, ringlets, and ornaments of gold—to be displayed for all to see. In the way that Mormon structures the narrative, the worship at the Rameumptom was one of the few ways in which Alma could have determined that the hearts of the Zoramites were “set upon” their adornments, because he saw them in essence parading that costly attire and elevating it upon the holy stand during their weekly worship. Alma could see that their fine adornments perfectly complemented the inflated rhetoric of their prayer and became an outward evidence of Zoramite pride.

Mormon chooses to place his description of Alma’s humble prayer precisely after the prayer on the Rameumptom. With this placement—and with Mormon’s earlier description of Alma as the leader of church members who did not wear costly apparel (see Alma 1:27)—Alma’s words and appearance act as a literary foil to emphasize the irony of the Zoramite statements. Alma’s prayer was everything that the Zoramite prayer was not. It reflected the heartfelt needs of the moment rather than the rote and complacent lack of need of the Zoramites. Alma’s words openly acknowledged his own weaknesses and then

Left: This Guatemalan woman demonstrates the laborious process of turning cotton into thread with a hand spindle. D. Donne Bryant. Used by permission. Right: An Aztec mother teaches her daughter to weave (Codex Mendoza). MS. Arch. Selden. A. 1, fol. 60r. Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.
focused on the needs of others. The Zoramite prayer contained none of these elements. The tension between the outward appearance of success among the rich Zoramites and the reader’s awareness of their truly foolish and degraded state becomes very clear to the reader when placed side by side with the behaviors and appearance of Alma, without need for any editorial commentary, a typical Hebrew literary device.

**More Evidence of the Zoramite Obsession with Clothing—the Outcast Status of the Poor**

In his description of Alma’s teaching, Mormon further develops the connection between the costly apparel of the Zoramites and their form of worship. Mormon reveals that the Zoramite people contained a lower class, a poor group that had been cast out of the synagogues “because of the coarseness of their apparel” (Alma 32:2). Since Mormon has already taken care to emphasize the centrality of the prayer on the Rameumptom in their worship, then according to that description the poor Zoramites were in reality being excluded from this weekly rite. Their coarse clothing—no other determining factor is mentioned in the text—demonstrated their unworthiness to participate and again emphasizes the centrality of that literary feature to the Zoramite story line.

According to Mormon’s narrative, for which he accessed the records of Alma, the poor Zoramites originally “labored abundantly” (Alma 32:5) to build the synagogue, apparently anticipating their participation in the worship of the community. After the completion of the synagogue, however, the poor Zoramites found that their labors did not merit their inclusion in the community’s central religious ritual. Since the form of that ritual was uniquely designed to emphasize appearances, it became clear that the poor Zoramites were not appropriately prepared. Given the Zoramites’ love of fine adornments, it would have been difficult to justify their central doctrine of superiority if those who were poorly attired were allowed to be seen in the influential position atop the Rameumptom.

The decision to cast out the poor was actually consistent with the purpose of the Zoramite prayer and connected with the method of worship. The prayer solidified and reinforced the fundamental views of the community. Fine clothing and costly adornments became primary evidences that the Zoramites were chosen by God, and individuals were given opportunities on a weekly basis to demonstrate that they still deserved to be numbered with the chosen ones. Even the poor Zoramites accepted these social values, fully believing that their inability to worship appropriately was in direct correlation to their poverty as demonstrated by their clothing. Although the poor did not appreciate the worldview of the dominant culture, they had still absorbed it to the point that they no longer believed they could engage in any form of legitimate worship outside the Zoramite ritual structure as described by Mormon (Alma 32:10).

The humility of the poorly dressed Zoramites juxtaposed with the attitude of the richly attired serves as another literary foil in the text, vividly differing in appearance and behavior from each other. Mormon’s emphasis on Alma’s desire to teach the poor—withstanding their coarse attire—stands in stark contrast to his rejection of the arrogant...
attitudes of the rich. After the poor approached Alma to humbly ask a question, he immediately changed his focus from the sumptuously adorned to those who were prepared to listen, creating a clear image of his prophetic priorities and the lack of consideration he gave to worldly evidences of status. “And now when Alma heard this, he turned him about, his face immediately towards him, and he beheld with great joy . . . that they were in a preparation to hear the word. Therefore he did say no more to the other multitude” (Alma 32:6–7). While those who were adorned with the luxuriant trappings of the world were ironically thanking God for their chosen status, Alma’s behavior provided a visual demonstration that God favors those who exhibit humility and a desire to learn.

**Theology of the Zoramites Compared with the Theology of Alma and Amulek**

Alma’s and Amulek’s teachings to the poor Zoramites continued to highlight the tension caused by outward appearances compared to a true state of being chosen. First, while the rich Zoramites had built synagogues and promulgated the belief that God could only be appropriately worshipped in those sacred spaces by those who were properly attired—an idea consistent with a weak understanding of the law of Moses but completely inconsistent with the true intent of the law that they had rejected—Alma immediately emphasized that anyone, including the poorly dressed, can worship outside of these designated spaces. Not only did he proclaim to the “outside” group that they could worship “on the outside,” he also turned the Zoramite view of “chosen-ness” on its head. “I say unto you, it is well that ye are cast out of your synagogues, that ye may be humble. . . . And now, because ye are compelled to be humble blessed are ye” (Alma 32:12–13). Since it was the clothing of the poor that caused them to be cast out of the synagogues, Alma was proclaiming that the coarseness of their clothing had compelled them to be humble and was therefore directly connected to their blessed state. Ironically, by the end of the story the rich Zoramites would be placed in a similar position to the poor, having been compelled to be humble through their defeat in battle. However, unlike the positive example of the poor Zoramites, the narrative never shows the rich seeking repentance because of that compulsion. These literary ironies are once again made possible through the contrast in appearance of the poorly and richly dressed Zoramites.

Alma explained to the poor Zoramites that though their outward appearance excluded them from worshipping inside the Zoramite synagogues, their inner humility allowed them to worship outside the confines of the synagogues they helped to build. He taught the poor that they could pray with great effectiveness in their fields, in their closets, in the midst of their congregations (i.e., in their synagogues), and when they were “cast out and [had] been despised by [their] enemies” (Alma 33:10), as they had been because of their coarse apparel. His quotation of Zenos provides dramatic foreshadowing of the future defeat of the rich Zoramites: “Yea, thou didst hear my cries, and wast angry with mine enemies, and thou didst visit them in thine anger with speedy destruction” (33:10). He then introduced the testimony of Zenock that led to the people “ston[ing] him to death” (33:17). Alma’s choice of Zenos and Zenock, two righteous prophets who were persecuted and outcast, was purposeful. Indeed, stoning was one of the primary evidences of being cursed and rejected in biblical societies, but in this case it was ironically used on the most righteous.

By quoting Zenos and Zenock and alluding to the story of the brazen serpent, Alma paved the way for Amulek to conclude with the most important concept of their message, the centrality of faith in Christ, no matter the circumstance or physical appearance. The atoning sacrifice of Christ provided the poor Zoramites with the ultimate example that they could be chosen precisely because of the humility induced by their clothing-challenged status. According to the words of Isaiah earlier quoted by Abinadi and recorded by Alma the Younger’s father, this Christ—like the poorly attired Zoramites—had
“no beauty that [man] should desire him” and was “despised and rejected of men” (Mosiah 14:2–3). Alma and Amulek taught the poor Zoramites that the Son of God would suffer for the sins of the world in the greatest dramatic irony ever known: the greatest became the least; the righteous One was not “blessed in the land” but was crucified in order that mankind—the true sinners, the true “fallen” and “lost”—might be saved (Alma 34:8–9). After providing the example of Christ, Amulek directly addressed the inherent tension in the situation of the poor by challenging them to “not revile against those who do cast you out because of your exceeding poverty, lest ye become sinners like unto them; But that ye have patience, and bear with those afflictions” (34:40–41). He clearly stated that the richly attired are the sinners and that the poorly adorned, if they remain humble, are the righteous ones. He then taught them that the moral inconsistency of the wicked rich prospering and the righteous poor suffering would be resolved someday. Their afflictions would be relieved if the Zoramites would maintain “a firm hope that [they should] one day rest from all [their] afflictions” (34:41).

Throughout their discourses Alma and Amulek demonstrated that true religion is also concerned with physical or material things, such as clothing, and they never ignored the reality that God chooses and blesses those who are faithful to him. Both Alma and Amulek taught that God will grant both material and spiritual blessings to those who pray to him in faith (see Alma 33:4–10; 34:20–27). Amulek advised the poor that they must pay attention to the physical needs of others and “impart of [their] substance, if [they] have, to those who stand in need” (34:28). According to Amulek, if they did not approach material blessings in appropriate ways, then they would truly be “as dross, which the refiners do cast out (it being of no worth) and is trodden under foot of men” (34:29). With these words Amulek overtly called attention to the theme of being cast out while teaching a group who would have been very sensitive to those terms. However, in his warning to the poor he connected that state to religious hypocrisy and implicitly condemned the prayer of the rich upon the Rameumptom: “If ye do not any of these things, behold, your prayer is vain [implicitly, like the prayer of the rich Zoramites, which was the prayer the poor were familiar with], and availeth you nothing, and ye are as hypocrites who do deny the faith” (34:28).

By directing his discourse in this way, Amulek did not indicate that clothing had no importance whatsoever but rather taught an appropriate focus on material things and the blessings of God. Earlier Alma had emphasized inward evidences that come by experimenting upon the word of Christ rather than on outward indications of elect status before God. These inward evidences—made available through humility and faith (Alma 32:16, 27)—include knowledge (32:34), feelings of enlightenment (32:34), expansion (32:34), light (32:35), growth (32:41), and sweetness (32:42). The teachings of Alma and Amulek underscore the stark contrast that has been provided in the narrative by the poor and rich Zoramites, showing that true intent and faith in Christ are at the center of a chosen status and that the evidence of God’s blessings are most importantly to be found in the joy of the inward man and in future promises of salvation. They teach that God does not judge according to outward indicators but instead grants chosen status according to the humility of his disciples, as would be shown perfectly in the incarnation of Christ, who would “take upon him the transgressions of his people, and . . . atone for the sins of the world” (34:8). This atonement would in turn enable the righteous, resurrected with physical bodies, to be blessed with pure and holy clothing granted by God. In a pointed statement, Amulek promised that “their garments should be made white through the blood of the Lamb” (34:36). Thus an emphasis on humility and sacrifice rather than on superiority and selfishness will enable the true disciple to obtain holyDuring the difficult process of refining metals by fire, the impure dross rises to the top and is skimmed away, leaving the pure metal. Photo by Jennifer Hamblett.
clothing that will have lasting value, rather than the ephemeral “costly apparel” of the rich.

After describing the doctrines taught by Alma and Amulek, Mormon indicates that these teachings angered the wealthy Zoramites because they “destroy[ed] their craft” (Alma 35:3). While Mormon never describes precisely what the craft of the rich Zoramites was, Book of Mormon usage of the word is always negative, referring to some type of deceptive skill or manipulation, and is consistently connected with false teachings. When the poorly clothed Zoramites accepted Alma’s teachings, they became convinced that the societal values of the richly adorned were incorrect. Knowing that they did not need to enter the synagogues in order to pray to God, they no longer needed to curry favor with the wealthy. Realizing that their inner humility and faith, rather than their outer trappings, were the best evidence of their value in the eyes of God, they no longer worried about their acceptance by the false standards of others. Indeed, Alma’s teachings threatened to undermine the very foundations of Zoramite societal structure. The wealthy Zoramites lost their ability to exert pressure on the poor in order to get gain, and their craft was destroyed.

The Expulsion of the Poor

Mormon continues to build the Zoramite story line around the metaphor of clothing. When their craft was destroyed by the teachings of Alma, the richly dressed Zoramites chose to completely expel the poor from their society (Alma 35:6). Mormon records that the poor Zoramites were received by the people of Ammon, who “did clothe them, and did give unto them lands for their inheritance; and they did administer unto them according to their wants” (35:9). The religious teachings of the rich allowed a situation in which the poor did not have ready access to better clothing and therefore could not worship in the synagogues that they had built. However, when the poor were completely cast out of the community and should have found themselves destitute, the people of Ammon exemplified the teachings of Alma that true disciples should impart of their substance to the needy and provided those poor with exactly that which they lacked.

While the attitude of the wealthy toward their clothes had dictated their beliefs and proud behaviors, the attitude of the converted poor toward clothes was subordinate to and constrained by their religious beliefs. The attitude of the wealthy led to increased societal controls and to final failure, while the attitude of the poor led to increased freedom and to final fulfillment and success. The poor did not have to wait until the next life for their situation to be reversed or for their hopes to be fulfilled. The initial literary tension set up by Mormon through the use of clothing at this point begins to be reversed as the obedient and humble truly began to prosper in the land, while the proud and wicked began to lose their material blessings.

The Zoramite/Lamanite Alliance

In Alma 35:10 Mormon declares that “the Zoramites . . . began to mix with the Lamanites,” after which they “began to make preparations for war against the people of Ammon” (Alma 35:11) because the Ammonites had chosen to take in the poor Zoramites. An interlude follows in which Mormon interjects the teachings of Alma to his sons. These discourses were apparently motivated by the imminent war and by the wickedness Alma saw around him. While these chapters demonstrate some of the reasons why the rich rejected the teachings of Alma, they also divide the Zoramite story into two parts and separate the main body of that story from its conclusion in Alma 43-44.

While this editorial choice obscures some of the themes and ironies in the Zoramite narrative that would have been clearer were the story line seamless, Mormon’s choice may have been motivated by another editorial decision: a desire to keep the war chapters (Alma 43-63) connected to the introduction of the main protagonist of that narrative, Captain Moroni. In addition to the break in the story line, when Mormon picks up the narrative in Alma 43 he no longer overtly discusses the theme of the Zoramites’ obsession with clothing. Instead, Mormon begins to emphasize a new—but closely related—literary theme based on clothing: the careful attention Moroni gave to arming his troops with appropriate military clothing as contrasted with the Lamanite nakedness. Beginning in Alma 43, then, the story of the rich and poor Zoramites is subsumed into the broader story of the Nephites and the Lamanites. However, although Mormon chooses to no longer emphasize the narrative of the Zoramites, he has provided all the details in
Alma 35 that demonstrate their involvement in the war of Moroni and Zarahemnah. It is left to the reader of the text to recognize the final ironies in the Zoramite story line that play out in the ensuing battle. The Zoramite war in Alma 43—connected by Mormon with the great war narrative of Alma 46–63—concludes the Zoramite story line of Alma 31–35 and brings closure to its message.

Mormon’s description of that which inspired the Nephites may indicate his belief that the Zoramites and Lamanites were fighting for monarchy, power, and material gain, echoing the motivations of the wealthy Zoramites.

Alma 43:4 picks up the thread of Alma 35:10–11 by explaining that “the Zoramites became Lamanites.” The society that had prided itself on its costly apparel and that had cast the poor from its synagogues because of the coarseness of their clothing was now forced to unite with and rely on a people that Mormon describes as going into battle “naked, save it were a skin which was girded about their loins” (Alma 43:20). Mormon clarifies, however, that the rich Zoramites did not follow the Lamanite customs of war dress: “yea, all were naked, save it were the Zoramites and Amalekites” (43:20). His description of the rich Zoramites running into battle with the naked Lamanites provides a strong visual image that emphasizes the incongruence of the new Zoramite situation. Mormon indicates that “the Zoramites became Lamanites” (43:4) or that the Zoramite identity was subordinated under the Lamanite identity rather than the other way around. The people who had separated from the Nephites in order to rejoice in their superiority were now a subset of the Lamanites.

The Clothing of the Outcast Zoramites under the Leadership of Moroni

The descent of the Zoramites into a union with the Lamanites—a downward move providing evidence of the failure of their social ideology—contrasts with the shift in the clothing of the poor Zoramites. As has been mentioned, the poor were first blessed by the clothing they received from the people of Ammon. In addition, Mormon had earlier recorded that the poorly dressed Zoramites who came to Jershon took up arms to defend their newly obtained lands (Alma 35:14) against the approaching threat of the Lamanites, Zoramites, and Amalekites. Thus while the wealthy Zoramites were allied with the nearly naked Lamanites in order to assuage their wounded pride and possibly to regain power and support their material desires, the poor Zoramites were engaged with the Nephite army under Moroni in order to “preserve their rights and their privileges, yea, and also their liberty, that they might worship God according to their desires” (43:9) and in order to protect the people of Ammon who had rescued them. Mormon details that Moroni had provided his armies, including no doubt the outcast Zoramites, with special clothing: “Moroni, had prepared his people with breastplates and with arm-shields, yea, and also shields to defend their heads, and also they were dressed with thick clothing” (43:19). The repentant Zoramites, who had once been coarsely dressed, gained an additional layer of well-crafted clothing and armor that would distinguish them from the wealthy Zoramites and that would even place their manner of dress at a level above that of their former persecutors, at least in military matters. While the clothing of the rich Zoramites had been inappropriately focused on appearance, the clothing of the outcast Zoramites was designed with functionality and utility in mind.

These contrasting images, centered on clothing, serve a symbolic as well as a functional purpose in Mormon’s narrative. The Lamanites and the Zoramites had desired freedom from the constrictions of the Nephite society and religious code. Korihor, who had died among the Zoramites, had described those societal rules as a “yoke” (Alma 30:13) and as “foolish ordinances and performances which are laid down by ancient priests, to usurp power and authority over [the people], to keep them in ignorance, that they may not lift up their heads, but be brought down” (30:23). The rich Zoramites echoed those sentiments in their prayer, referring to the Nephite beliefs as “childishness” (31:16). Nevertheless, much as the Book of Mormon teaches that obedience to God’s commands will allow the people to “prosper in the land” (1 Nephi 4:14), the choice of
the Nephites to restrict and protect themselves with “thick clothing” and with the power of their newly found religious beliefs ensured their victory. 

Additionally, the poor Zoramites displayed a symbolic spiritual progression relating to the clothes they wore. At first their coarse clothes can represent a state of spiritual confusion as well as a state of humility that prepared them to hear the word of the Lord. After they were converted to the correct principles taught by Alma they received new clothes from the Ammonites (Alma 35:9). Finally, the armor and thick clothing provided them by Captain Moroni after accepting his call to defend their lands and their families can symbolize a more advanced covenant level of giving their lives to God in order to support and defend their freedom and religion, reminiscent of the armor-of-God imagery used by Paul in Ephesians 6.

In his account Mormon emphasizes the importance of the clothing for the Nephite victory:

And the work of death commenced on both sides, but it was more dreadful on the part of the Lamanites, for their nakedness was exposed to the heavy blows of the Nephites with their swords and their cimeters, which brought death almost at every stroke. While on the other hand, there was now and then a man fell among the Nephites, . . . they being shielded . . . by their breastplates, and their armshields, and their head-plates. (Alma 43:37–38)

Mormon teaches that the clothing of the Nephites, however, was not the sole reason for their victory. Rather, he connected their victory to a “better cause, for they were not fighting for monarchy nor power but they were fighting for their homes and their liberties, their wives and their children, and their all, yea, for their rites of worship and their church” (Alma 43:45). Mormon’s description of that which inspired the Nephites may indicate his belief that the Zoramites and Lamanites were fighting for monarchy, power, and material gain, echoing the motivations of the wealthy Zoramites.

While Mormon demonstrates that the success of the Nephites can be found in the correlation between their appropriate clothing and their religious motivations for fighting, he shows that Zarahemnah, the leader of the Zoramite/Lamanite army, suffered from an inappropriate focus on clothing—the battle attire of the Nephites—while ignoring the power of religious faith. Zarahemnah completely overlooked the powerful motivations that spurred the Nephites to victory and attributed their victory solely to their clothing and their cunning: “We do not believe that it is God that has delivered us into your hands; but we believe that it is . . . your breastplates and your shields that have preserved you” (Alma 44:9). That the connection had been misunderstood by the enemies of the Nephites is demonstrated in a subsequent war (led by Amalickiah and Ammoron, descendants of the original Zoram, according to Alma 54:23) in which the Lamanites chose to copy the Nephite mode of armor but failed again to be guided by true, empowering religious principles (49:5–6). As a result, their overreliance on clothing and on material strength again led to their defeat.

Resolution

The ferocious battle between the Nephites and Lamanites in Alma 43–44 provides a stunning array of contrasting images, ironies, and tensions based on the metaphor of clothing, all of which

This Zapotec funerary urn (about 400 AD) illustrates the intricate symbols included in this elaborate clothing. Colección Museo Amparo. Fotografía Carlos Varillas.
are resolved by the end of the story line. The appropriately clothed Nephites were arrayed against their constant enemies: the naked Lamanites, the apostate Zoramites, and the power-hungry Amalekites. Although they are not overtly mentioned by Mormon after Alma 35, the poor Zoramites, joined together with the Nephites and dressed in their thick clothing and armor, were engaged in hand-to-hand combat with the rich who had despised them for their coarse apparel, who had sought power over them, and who had finally cast them out. The repentant Zoramites (Alma 35:14), now counted again among the Nephites, cried “with one voice” (43:49) together with the people from whom they had formerly been estranged and separated. In that moment of humble reliance upon the Lord they began to conquer those whose clothing had been a symbol of their oppression, inflicting wounds upon the unprotected bodies of the Lamanites and the rich Zoramites while being protected by their own clothing, provided them as a result of their new beliefs and their union with God’s people. Engaged face to face in the brutal struggle of war, the wealthy Zoramites were forced to witness their complete defeat directly at the hands of the Nephites and the supposedly inferior Zoramite poor, now well dressed, well protected, and resolute.

The tension created by the promise of the Book of Mormon—that the obedient will “prosper in the land”—is resolved. At the end of the story the outward appearances have turned to match the inward reality of the blessings of the Lord upon those who humble themselves in righteousness. Whether or not the rich Zoramites ever understood the dramatic irony of their situation, Mormon’s narrative uses their clothing to develop that irony in order to teach the reader important truths about pride and humility, the power of faith in God, the dangers of an obsession with material things, and the appropriate place of material things in the scope of true worship. The story of the poorly adorned Zoramites contrasts powerfully with that of their well-clothed brethren, whose tale ends in complete humiliation and failure steeped in bitter irony, while Mormon demonstrates that in the end the obedient will indeed prosper in the land.

Parrish Brady is currently engaged in postdoctoral research at the University of Texas at Austin, where he is studying camouflage in fish and insects. He received his PhD in plasma physics at the University of Texas at Austin in 2008. He served an LDS mission in Norway and has spent many years teaching advanced gospel topics in the LDS Primary organization.

Shon Hopkin received his BA and MA degrees in ancient Near Eastern studies from Brigham Young University and his PhD in Hebrew studies from the University of Texas at Austin. He taught for the Seminaries and Institutes program for fourteen years and is currently an assistant professor in ancient scripture at Brigham Young University.
1. William Hamblin, for example, has provided a discussion focused on the functional nature of wartime clothing such as the thick clothing provided by Captain Moroni. See William J. Hamblin, “Armor in the Book of Mormon,” in Warfare in the Book of Mormon, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 400–424.

2. For a discussion of Mormon’s influence as the main editor of the Book of Mormon, see Grant R. Hardy, “Mormon as Editor,” in Rediscovering the Book of Mormon, ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), 15–28. In this article Hardy mostly discusses evidence of an editor’s presence that can be recognized because of “seams” or inconsistencies in the story line when multiple sources are connected together to create a narrative. In the Zoramite story line, the evidence of editing is less overt and is revealed mainly in the story being framed in such a way that themes—the theme of clothing or certain dramatic ironies—run consistently throughout. Although Mormon does not overtly insert his famous “and thus we see” perspective at any point in the Zoramite story line, he does reveal himself as editor in Alma 32:4. In identifying the poor Zoramites, he calls them “those of whom we [i.e., Mormon and the readers] have been speaking.” This curious choice of words may reveal Mormon’s attitude toward his work and his awareness of his “audience,” the future readers of his book, with whom he pictures himself having a conversation by means of the text. We are grateful to Dan Belnap for pointing out this interesting phrase.

3. The Zoramite story is not unique in this regard. Although some have considered the Book of Mormon a very simplistic account of good versus evil—for example, see Thomas F. O’Dea, The Mormons (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 33—the tension between obedience, wickedness, and prosperity can be seen in almost every section of the book, such as when the righteous followers of Alma the Elder are persecuted, when Noah’s followers seem to prosper, or in the numerous situations in which the prosperity of the people of God almost immediately leads them into pride and wickedness. Indeed, this tension creates what is often known as the “pride cycle,” in which a prosperous state in the Book of Mormon predicts with high accuracy subsequent wickedness, while a humble economic state predicts future righteousness and blessings. This theme has been approached previously in Todd M. Compton, “The Spirituality of the Outcast,” Journal of Book of Mormon Studies 2/1 (1993): 139–60. According to John Sorenson, Mormon’s primary purpose throughout his abridgment was to show the truthfulness of the promise that the obedient would prosper in the land and that the wicked would be cut off. See John L. Sorenson, “Mormon’s Sources,” Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture 20/2 (2011): 12. The Zoramite narrative closely fits those editorial goals.


5. Although not claiming that the data are conclusive, Sherrie Mills Johnson has posited that the Zoramites were descendants of the original Zoram and that they separated from the Nephites for ethnic and sociological reasons. One of the most significant points in her reasoning is that Am-moron (and by extension Amalickiah) claimed to be a descendant of the original Zoram. This knowledge of original ancestry, mentioned so close in the narrative to the Zoramite story line, increases the probability that the group named themselves Zoramites in part because of this knowledge. See Sherrie Mills Johnson, “The Zoramite Separation: A Sociological Perspective,” Journal of Book of Mormon Studies 14/1 (2005): 74–85. Nevertheless, the connection is not necessary to understand Mormon’s description of the Zoramite narrative. Interestingly, the original Zoram (introduced in 1 Nephi 4:20–37) was a participant in the first recorded Book of Mormon event in which clothing was important. In this account Nephi dressed in the garments of Laban and used clothing to cause Zoram to misidentify him (as Judah misidentified a disguised Tamar in Genesis 38). Thus authors and editors of the Book of Mormon (in this case Nephi) early on showed an awareness of the power of clothing to create an identity that would be interpreted by others. Zoram failed to grasp Nephi’s true identity because he was too focused on the outward appearance of clothing. Another literary irony of this nominal connection to the original Zoram with the Zoramites is that he entered the Book of Mormon story as a slave, while the Zoram of Alma 31 believed in his chosen status and sought to enslave others.

6. The phrase dumb idols shows up twice in the King James Version of the Bible, first in the writings of Habakkuk (2:18), a prophet whose ministry likely coincided with that of Lehi and whose writings may or may not have been included on the brass plates. In Habakkuk 2:18 the phrase dumb (i.e., mute) idols (יוֹםִיא דִּבְרָיו/ ἐκλίθει ἰδέα) creates a poetic play on words and refers to the creation of physical idols rather than to a symbolic worship of material wealth, which is the interpretation often given to idolatry by modern readers. The second instance is found in the writings of Paul (1 Corinthians 12:2). In this case Paul is explaining that although the Gentiles had previously been carried away unto the “dumb [i.e., mute] idols” (יוֹםִיא דִּבְרָיו/ εἴδωλα τα ἄφωνα), now the Spirit of God would give them true power and gifts, most importantly the ability to declare that Jesus is the Lord. Thus, Paul’s usage also seems to refer to the actual worship of handmade idols, which continued to exist in his time, but could also be understood metaphorically as an inappropriate focus on worldly substances that have no power within themselves. The phrase does not exist anywhere else in the Book of Mormon but is also found in Abraham 1:7—here it again refers to the creation and worship of actual physical idols.

7. Mormon provides a translation for the Rameumptomin as a “holy stand” (Alma 31:21). If the word was originally derived from Hebrew, the first part of the word Ram- would coincide with the Hebrew רָמ (rāmā), meaning “height, high place,” with rămā- likely corresponding to the masculine plural construct form
of *ramim*, meaning “the heights of.” Although some difficulties remain with the second half of the word, it could be related to the Hebrew נַפָּר (naphar), or place of standing, with the nominalizing suffix *om* placed at the end. This word with possible Hebrew roots could literally be interpreted as the “exalted stand.” (A number of factors could influence the minor differences between *omad* and *umpt-* when rendered in English. For example, consider the form of the word *re redemption* resulting from a combination of *redeem* and -tion.)

8. In addition to their costly apparel and jewelry, the rich Zoramites also seemed to be ornately decorated with other effects, probably unusually so, based on the statement “all their precious things which they are ornamented with” (Alma 31:28).

9. This interpretation, which connects the worship of dumb idols with a love of material things, seems to represent a modern understanding of the concept of idol worship (see D&C 1:16) rather than an ancient viewpoint in which idol worship was seen as an attempt to access the divine through man-made objects that looked like, represented, or were vehicles for the gods. This modern concept of idol worship suggests a couple of conflicting possibilities that bear mentioning: (1) Possibly Alma and Mormon had a broader understanding of the concept of idol worship as it is often understood in modern religion. Just as the Nephite understanding of other Mosaic concepts often reflects a more modern view of ritual behavior (such as a clear perception that ordinances under the law of Moses centered symbolically on Christ), the Nephites may also have understood that the dangers of idol worship extended to an obsession with material things. (2) On the other hand, if Alma and Mormon instead shared a simple view of idol worship that did not include a connection with material things, then it would indicate, contrary to Mormon’s description, that the Zoramites had some other form of worship besides the Rameumptom. However, even if Mormon did not intend to connect the worship of idols with the costly clothing of the Zoramites, the text demonstrates that when Alma arrived among the Zoramites he discovered that the obsession with costly apparel—including its use as a justification to cast the poor Zoramites out—was an important feature of the Zoramite apostasy. In other words, the theme of costly apparel functions in the narrative whether it was connected by Mormon to the worship of dumb idols or not.

Additionally, Mormon’s mention of Alma being concerned about the worship of “dumb idols” by the apostate Zoramites may serve to remind the reader of Alma’s own apostate history as an “idolatrous man” (Mosiah 2:7–8). Not only did Alma have personal experience with idolatry, but he also had extensive familiarity with clothing as an external evidence of inward attitudes. After Alma’s repentance, Mormon describes the humility of Alma and his people by stating that “they did not wear costly apparel, yet they were neat and comely” (Alma 1:27). In other story lines surrounding Alma’s ministry, the description of costly apparel appears in connection with Nehor (1:6) and later with the arrogance of the Nephites, referring to “those who did not belong to their church” (1:32). Indeed, costly apparel appears as one of the chief evidences of pride that caused Alma to leave his position as chief judge (4:4–7) in order to preach the word, and Alma mentioned the “costly apparel” of the people of Zarahemla in his encouragement to them to repent (5:53). Thus Alma, the repentant idolater and opponent of pride, stands in the text as a foil for the wealthy Zoramites. The idolatrous Zoramites could have humbled themselves as Alma had but chose to maintain their corrupt attitudes. Instead the poor Zoramites, whose unostentatious mode of dress matched that of Alma much more closely, did take advantage of the opportunity Alma’s teachings provided them.

10. This form of prayer was also used in places of worship in Old Testament times, as evidenced by Psalm 63:4. Although the Zoramites had rejected the rituals of the law of Moses, they may have retained certain imbedded behaviors from their prior lives with the Nephites. See Johnson, “Zoramite Separation,” 80–81.

11. See also note 9, second paragraph.

12. The Book of Mormon shows a nuanced understanding of the poor, as does the Bible, often portraying them as the group truly prepared to follow God because of their humility and encouraging the rich to provide help to the poor without judging them. See Lindon J. Robinson, “No Poor among Them,” Journal of Book of Mormon Studies 14/1 (2005): 86–97. See also Compton, “Spirituality of the Outcast,” 139–60.

13. The theme of the righteous outcasts may even receive subtle development through Alma’s next example of the brazen serpents and the Israelites, who had been slaves at the bottom levels of Egyptian society before being chosen as God’s people. Notwithstanding their slave status, they were chosen. Notwithstanding their chosen status, those who would not humble themselves or look upon the brazen serpent died. Only those who continued to be humble and righteous were truly “blessed” in the land and saved in the end. See Johnson, “Zoramite Separation,” 83.

14. Although no direct textual evidence supports the supposition, it is possible that the inconsistency of a suffering God—a concept diametrically opposed to the Zoramite understanding of chosen-ness—was one of the issues that caused the rich Zoramites to reject the concept of Christ. Throughout the Book of Mormon—including the examples of Sherem, Nehor, Korihor, and the priests of Noah—a rejection of Christ is often connected with an inappropriate emphasis on materiality, at times revealed by an obsession with costly apparel and other times by a prideful request for palpable signs. Alma also mentions the desires of the wicked for signs in Alma 32:17.

15. The connection of clothing in these chapters with Alma’s account of a tree of life growing to fill the inward man alludes—probably unintentionally—to the story of Adam and Eve. In contrast to Adam’s and Eve’s attempts to cover their nakedness with clothes made from a tree, Alma indicates that the tree should grow naturally inside the soul of the truly humble, filling the spiritual hunger and nakedness of those who exercise their faith in Christ and who have received true spiritual knowledge. In this way the Zoramites will have “clothing” of real significance, granted by God’s power and authority (as was the garment given to Adam and Eve by the Lord in the garden) and indicating their true spiritual standing before the Lord. Even the morphology of biblical Hebrew conveys a negative connotation for worldly human clothing but has a positive viewpoint of coverings when obtained through ordinance or when provided by God. The Hebrew word
meaning “clothed/dressed” (לָבָּה / lāḇāh) is phonetically similar to the infinitive form for “to be ashamed” (לָבָּד / lāḇāḏ), perhaps pointing to the original attempt of Adam and Eve to cover their nakedness because of their shame. Additionally, one of the Hebrew words for “clothing” (בֶּגֶד / beged) takes on the meaning of “to act treacherously or deceitfully” in its verbal form (בֶּגֶד / bāḏad). On the other hand, the Hebrew word to describe the act of atonement through sacrifice (כָּפָר / cāpar) also means “to cover.” This word implies that God is covering one’s sins as with a garment and has no negative connotations.

16. Compare a similar statement by Jacob in 2 Nephi 9:14, “and the righteous shall have a perfect knowledge of their enjoyment, and their righteousness, being clothed with purity, yea, even with the robe of righteousness.”

17. Noah Webster’s 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language indicates that the English word craft referred to some type of strength, skill, power, or ability and in many uses displayed negative connotations. Historically it could also refer to a spell or enchantment. In Joseph Smith’s day craft could have meant an art, ability, or skill, often in a manual profession; or it could have referred to an artifice or guile employed to deceive or control through words. Each of these senses exists in the KJV, in which Paul’s skill as a tentmaker is considered a “craft” (Acts 18:3), while the schemes of the chief priests to put Christ to death are also described with the same word (Mark 14:1). The skillful work of idol makers in Acts 19:25 probably demonstrates a combination of the two meanings in which “craft” is the manual skill of idol manufacture. This craft is meant to deceive in order to make a profit, and Paul’s teachings threaten that profit because they expose the falsehood of idolatry. This final usage shows interesting parallels with the Zoramite story line in which the teachings of missionaries destroy the craft of the rich, who had earlier been described as bowing down to dumb idols.

18. In Book of Mormon usage, the word craft occurs infrequently outside the Zoramite narrative. Typically it appears as part of the word priestcraft, which was defined by Nephi and was later used by Alma the Younger to describe Nehor’s false teachings that allowed him to lead others away from the truth in order to get gain (Alma 1:12). Interestingly, Nehor is also described by Mormon as someone “lifted up in the pride of his heart, and to wear very costly apparel” (1:6), a textual precursor to Mormon’s description of the Zoramite society. According to Nephi, “priestcrafts are that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world” (2 Nephi 26:29). Nephi’s definition closely mirrors Mormon’s description of the Zoramite prayer and focus on material riches. The only use of the word craft in the Book of Mormon outside of the word priestcraft is also connected to an inappropriate use of words in order to get gain. It describes the work of Gadianton, “who was exceedingly expert in many words, and also in his craft, to carry on the secret work of murder and of robbery” (Helaman 2:4).

That the true teachings of Alma and Amulek “destroyed” the Zoramite craft further strengthens the tie between the Zoramites’ religious beliefs and their craft, as well as increases the likelihood that Mormon is referring to a type of priestcraft in which the wealthy sought to get gain or praise of the world through the tenets of their false religion. Indeed, the poor had indicated to Alma that they were the ones who had “labored abundantly to build [the synagogues] with [their] own hands” (Alma 32:5). In the end the synagogues profited only the rich because they insisted that costly apparel was necessary in order to worship therein. An additional possibility should also be considered that the craft of the Zoramites could have had something to do with the manufacture of idols. Although the use of idols is only mentioned once at the beginning of the narrative, this interpretation of the “craft” of the rich Zoramites would connect closely with a similar understanding in Acts 19. This possibility, while not discussed further in this paper, would not necessarily undermine the proposal of this study that the false religious teachings of the Zoramites as taught from the Rameumptom constituted the “craft” that was destroyed by the teachings of Alma.

19. The armor of the Nephites—consisting of “breastplates and . . . arm-shields, yea, and also shields to defend their heads, and also . . . thick clothing”—can be compared chiastically with the adornments of the rich Zoramites as described by Mormon: “costly apparel, and . . . ringlets, and . . . bracelets, and . . . ornaments of gold, and . . . precious things which they are ornamented with; and behold, their hearts are set upon them” (31:28). In the chiastic parallel costly apparel compares with the thick clothing, the ringlets that were likely worn on their heads compare with Moroni’s head shields, and the bracelets compare with the arm shields. Finally, the breast plates protect the hearts of the Nephites while the hearts of the Zoramites were set upon their precious ornamentations. If Mormon intentionally created this chiastic parallelism (which is admittedly unlikely considering the textual distance between the two statements), then it would be a remarkable example of skillful editing.

20. William Hamblin has discussed the possible nature of the Nephite armor provided by Moroni, which likely would have included breastplates and head armor made in part from heavy stone. See Hamblin, “Armor in the Book of Mormon,” 412–13.

21. Mormon’s literary use of clothing continues after the Zoramite battle. Captain Moroni used imagery of the nondecaying coat of Joseph (Alma 46:23–25) to inspire the use of his own coat to make the title of liberty. Moroni ignores the outward appearance of his clothing, renders it, and writes on the coat inspired words to protect the freedoms of the people (Alma 46:11–22). The title of liberty, written on clothes, is put on every city tower in the land, and strategically important cities are “clothed,” in a sense, or armored with surrounding mounds of dirt, becoming another divinely inspired victorious strategy from Moroni. Other Book of Mormon accounts not abridged by Mormon have also used clothing imagery; see, for example, the description of the great and spacious building from Lehi’s vision recorded by Nephi, where finely dressed individuals mock the righteous (1 Nephi 8:27), only to meet their demise at the end. This image serves as a literary parallel—whether consciously created by Mormon or not—to the Rameumptom stand upon which the richly apparelled Zoramites stood to profess their superior status only to be subsequently defeated in battle.
HOW MUCH WEIGHT CAN A SINGLE SOURCE BEAR?
The Case of Samuel D. Tyler’s Journal Entry

MATTHEW ROPER

Manti Utah Temple, about 1915. Many settlements that the Latter-day Saints laid out were named after Book of Mormon places. Manti, Utah, was one of these, but it was not the site of the Book of Mormon Manti. Warren S. Snow reported that Brigham Young told him that Moroni had “dedicated this piece of land for a temple site.” See Moses S. Farnsworth [Manti Temple recorder] to George Teasdale, 2 July 1888, in “Spiritual Manifestations in the Manti Temple,” Millennial Star 50 (13 August 1888): 521. Courtesy Church History Library and Archives.

FROM THE EDITOR:
One of the fundamental constituents of responsible scholarship is the ability to determine how much weight a single piece of evidence should receive. The Hebrew Bible teaches, “At the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established” (Deuteronomy 19:15). This article discusses how much weight can be put on a single witness, especially when that witness is contradicted by an equally plausible second witness.
In 1838, the Kirtland Camp traveled from Kirtland, Ohio, to Far West, Missouri. Two historical references associated with that group’s activities as they passed through eastern Missouri have led some to conclude that the ancient city of Manti, spoken of in the Book of Mormon (Alma 56:14; 57:22; 58:1, 13, 25–28, 39), was located in that region or that the Prophet Joseph Smith had learned of this by revelation. A closer look at these sources sheds light on the question.

The first reference is an entry from the journal of Samuel D. Tyler, an early member of the church who traveled with the Kirtland Camp. The Tyler journal entry for 25 September 1838 reads as follows:

We passed thro Huntsville, Co. seat Randolph Co. Pop. 450 & three miles further we bought 32 bu. of corn of one of the brethren who resides in this place (66) There are several of the brethren round about here & this is the ancient site of the City of Manti, which is spoken of in the Book of Mormon & this is appointed one of the Stakes of Zion & it is in Randolph Co. Mo. 3 miles west of the Co. seat.

The first issue is the source of Tyler’s information. If that source was Joseph Smith, then this could be significant, but if Tyler himself came to this conclusion or if he was merely reporting local hearsay, this would be less so. In this case, the source could not be Joseph Smith directly because the Prophet was not with the Kirtland Camp. At the time Tyler recorded this information in his journal Joseph Smith was already in Far West several counties away, having previously fled Kirtland months before with other church leaders. What then was the source of this idea? Was it based upon something Joseph Smith had said at another time, or did it reflect speculation among the local brethren in Randolph County or the Kirtland Camp? How accurately was it reported? The Tyler journal does not provide an answer to these questions.

The Manuscript History of the Church might seem to lend support to the information in the Tyler journal entry. The relevant entry for 25 September 1838 can be found on page 829 of that document and reads as follows:

The camp passed through Huntsville in Randolph County which has been appointed as one of the stakes of Zion, and is the ancient site of the City of Manti and pitched tents at Dark Creek, Salt Licks, seventeen miles. It was reported to the camp that one hundred and ten men had volunteered from Randolph and gone to Far West to settle difficulties.

This entry, however, was actually written down after the events in question by Willard Richards, who used the available sources. Comparative evidence strongly suggests that the 25 September 1838 entry of the Manuscript History was based on the account in Tyler’s journal. Evidence of this is italicized in the two documents below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYLER JOURNAL 25 SEPTEMBER 1838</th>
<th>MANUSCRIPT HISTORY, 1843?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We passed thro Huntsville, Co. seat Randolph Co. Pop. 450 &amp; three miles further we bought 32 bu. of corn of one of the brethren who resides in this place (66) There are several of the brethren round about here &amp; this is the ancient site of the City of Manti, which is spoken of in the Book of Mormon &amp; this is appointed one of the Stakes of Zion &amp; it is in Randolph Co. Mo. 3 miles west of the Co. seat. We progressed on 3 miles further to Dark Creek, Salt Licks, &amp; pitched ... 17 miles. 733 + 17 = 750 Miles. ... We hear that 110 men have volunteered to save being drafted &amp; have gone from this Co. to Far West to settle some disturbances between the Missourians &amp; Mormons &amp; that they are collecting forces from many other Co’s to settle perhaps they know not what themselves.</td>
<td>The camp passed through Huntsville in Randolph County which has been appointed as one of the stakes of Zion, and is the ancient site of the City of Manti and pitched tents at Dark Creek, Salt Licks, seventeen miles. It was reported to the camp that one hundred and ten men had volunteered from Randolph and gone to Far West to settle difficulties.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Manuscript History entry is clearly dependent on Tyler’s journal entry; however, as a later, derivative source, it has no primary evidentiary value in supporting Tyler’s 1838 statement. When this portion of the Manuscript History was first published in the *Millennial Star* in 1854, the entry read essentially the same as it did in Richards’s earlier handwritten manuscript. This has puzzled some subsequent students of the Book of Mormon. In 1892 George Reynolds’s *A Dictionary of the Book of Mormon: Comprising Its Biographical, Geographical and Other Proper Names* was published with appendices written by Janne Sjodahl. Sjodahl cited the Manuscript History passage from Jenson’s *Historical Record* and then noted, “Whether ‘the ancient site of Manti’ refers to the Manti in the Book of Mormon is a question that has been debated. Some prefer to regard it as reference to a later city of Manti, built by descendants of Nephi in Missouri” rather than the original city mentioned in the Lehite record. In 1938, Joseph Fielding Smith published an article in the *Deseret News* in which he cited the passages from the Tyler journal and the Manuscript History in support of a Missouri location for the Book of Mormon city of Manti, which was subsequently reprinted in a compilation of his earlier writings.

In contrast to the Tyler journal, another independent contemporary source provides a different view. Elias Smith, a cousin to Joseph Smith, also kept a journal of the travels and activities of the 1838 Kirtland Camp. On this same day, he recorded:

> We came through Huntsville the county seat of Randolph where we were told before we arrived there we should be stopped but saw nothing of the kind when we came through the town and heard no threats whatever, but all appeared friendly. 1½ miles west of Huntsville we crossed the east branch of Chariton and 1½ miles west of the river we found Ira Ames and some other brethren near the place where the city of Manti is to be built and encamped for the night on Dark creek 6 miles from Huntsville.

Elias Smith, significantly, did not equate the land near Huntsville, Missouri, with the ancient location of Manti but indicated that this was the place where a future settlement named after the ancient one was “to be built.”

When B. H. Roberts prepared the *History of the Church* for publication, he reviewed original sources upon which the Manuscript History was based and revised parts of the narrative accordingly. Roberts was able to utilize the Elias Smith account instead of the portion of the Manuscript History that had been based upon the Tyler journal. The entry for 25 September 1838 as first published in 1905 and all subsequent editions of the *History of the Church* says that the village of Huntsville, Missouri, was “near the place where the city of Manti is to be built” and omit any suggestion that the location of the Book of Mormon city was known.

All subsequent editions of the *History of the Church* say that the village of Huntsville, Missouri, was “near the place where the city of Manti is to be built” and omit any suggestion that the location of the Book of Mormon city was known.

Manti public school, another example of modern places receiving a name from the Book of Mormon.

We came through Huntsville the county seat of Randolph where we were told before we arrived there we should be stopped but saw nothing of the kind when we came through the town and heard no threats whatever, but all appeared friendly. 1½ miles west of Huntsville we crossed the east branch of Chariton and 1½ miles west of the river we found Ira Ames and some other brethren near the place where the city of Manti is to be built and encamped for the night on Dark creek 6 miles from Huntsville.
the place where the city of Manti *is to be built* and omits any suggestion that the location of the Book of Mormon city was known.11

Based on the Smith account, in light of the above, it would appear that the Missouri Saints in 1838 anticipated, at least initially, the establishment of a future stake and a settlement in the region that they *would* call Manti. The original sources upon which this idea is based, however, do not attribute these plans to Joseph Smith, nor do they sustain the view that the name of the proposed future settlement was based upon any revelation on the question of Book of Mormon geography.

Readers of the Book of Mormon, in the absence of prophetic revelation on the location of this Book of Mormon city, must, as always, ground their interpretations in the Book of Mormon text itself, “drawing all the information possible from the record which has been translated for our benefit.”12

Matthew Roper holds a BA degree in history and an MA degree in sociology from Brigham Young University. He is a research scholar at the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship. His current research focuses on questions of Book of Mormon authorship and the intellectual history of Latter-day Saint scripture.

---

NOTES

1. The Kirtland Camp refers to a company of Kirtland Saints who traveled to Missouri in 1838 and should not be confused with the 1834 Zion’s Camp.
3. Journal of Samuel D. Tyler, 25 September 1838, MS 1761, Church Historians Department, Salt Lake City, emphasis added.
10. Elias Smith, “Journal of the camp of the Seventies during their journey from Kirtland to Far West,” 25 September 1838, MS 4952, folder 2, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, emphasis added.
Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon’s abrupt departure from Kirtland on 12 January 1838 signaled an end to Kirtland as the headquarters of the Church. For months previous to this time, Church leaders and members had encountered mounting opposition from bitter apostates and unfriendly antagonists. Fearing increased hostilities and unwarranted vexatious litigation, the Prophet considered that the most viable option was for the Church’s leadership and those still loyal to the faith to relocate and unite with the Saints living in Caldwell County, Missouri. Mormonism was on the move once again.

In 1838, the Church members’ optimism in Missouri ran high and prospects were promising. In December 1836, the state legislature created Caldwell County exclusively for Mormon occupation, and in the months that followed “the Saints came marching in,” primarily from Clay County (where most had resettled following the expulsion from Jackson County in late 1833), but other Missouri counties as well. Land was relatively cheap, selling at $1.25 per acre; and in nearby Daviess County, which had not officially been surveyed by the federal government, a settler could stake a pre-emption claim up to 160 acres with no payment due until the land officially came up for sale. In a revelation received by Joseph Smith in April 1838, just a few weeks after his arrival in northern Missouri, instructions were given indicating that Far West “should be built up speedily by the gathering of my saints; And also that other places should be appointed for stakes in the regions round about” (D&C 115:17–18). The call to gather to Missouri resonated with the Saints in Ohio, as well as those residing in the outlying branches in the Eastern states, and even those living in Ontario, Canada. The fact that the Prophet had moved to Missouri intimated to many that the final establishment of Zion must be imminent.

During the spring and early summer of 1838, Mormon families from various localities packed their belongings, sold out, and made their way to the

FROM THE EDITOR:
Since the article immediately preceding this one, “How Much Weight Can a Single Source Bear? The Case of Samuel D. Tyler’s Journal Entry,” deals with Kirtland Camp, and because many members of the Church are not as familiar with this camp as they are with Zion’s Camp, a short historical article on Kirtland Camp seemed appropriate. I hope you enjoy it.
western frontier. But for many Saints, particularly those living in northeastern Ohio, it was not that easy, many of whom were still reeling from financial losses incurred as a result of the failure of the Kirtland Safety Society Anti-Banking Company and the depressed nationwide economic conditions from the “Panic of 1837.”

On 6 March 1838, the presidents and members of the quorums of Seventy in Kirtland assembled in the temple to discuss how best to facilitate moving their families to Missouri. In their discussions, plans called for the Seventies and their families to travel together in a “compact body” or large group. In this way, they felt they could support one another, especially those families who were poor or in destitute circumstances. During a meeting held the following week on 13 March, a formal constitution outlining the bylaws and rules of the group was adopted. However, when word of the Seventies’ plan circulated among the members of the other priesthood quorums who were also in need of assistance, the invitation was extended to include them. Zera Pulsipher, one of the seven presidents, wrote of the decision to help those whose families were not of the Seventy: “When they heard that we were going together and would help one another they wanted to join us and get out of that hell of persecution. Therefore, we could not neglect them . . . they were poor and could not help themselves.”

During the weeks that followed, Kirtland bustled with activity as families made preparations for the eight-hundred-mile journey, and instructions from the presidents of the Seventy were implemented. Once organized, the company became known as Kirtland Camp. Initially, plans called for the company to leave Kirtland in mid-May, but delays postponed their departure until 6 July. By this time, the camp was composed of over 170 household heads, totaling

**What Was the Kirtland Camp?**

- Kirtland Camp was the first organized Mormon migration company of more than 500 Latter-day Saints in one group. The company was organized under the direction of the seven presidents of the Seventy.
- Members of Kirtland Camp covenanted to live by a constitution that provided guidelines regarding the camp’s organization and set a code of conduct for its members.
- Kirtland Camp’s trek of over 800 miles began on 6 July 1838 in Kirtland, Ohio. The main company arrived at Adam-ondi-Ahman in Daviess County, Missouri, on 4 October 1838.
- For members of Kirtland Camp, their stay at Adam-ondi-Ahman was short-lived—about six weeks. Following the Mormon surrender to Missouri authorities in November 1838, they were forced to leave Adam-ondi-Ahman and temporarily relocate near Far West. They stayed there until February 1839, at which time they left Missouri by order of Missouri Governor Lilburn W. Boggs.

Zera Pulsipher, one of the seven presidents of the Seventy (1838–62), assisted in the organization of Kirtland Camp. Courtesy Church History Library.
The company was divided into four divisions. Within each division “tent overseers” were appointed to supervise a few families that shared a common tent.

In their westward journey, Kirtland Camp generally followed well-traveled roads, including the National Road (sometimes called the Cumberland Road), which in the 1830s ran from Maryland through southwestern Pennsylvania, central Ohio, and Indiana, and then terminated in Vandalia, Illinois (the original state capital). However, Mormons traveling from Ohio to Missouri generally left the National Road in western Indiana, striking out on a direct westerly course toward northern Missouri. The mere size of the company caused it to move considerably slower than if a family was traveling independently. Rules dictated that the company travel no more than fifteen miles a day. Travel delays were common because of sickness, broken wagons and equipment, river crossings, inclement weather conditions, problems with animals, and food shortages. Some families even stopped to find temporary work so they could have enough food and money to continue. Not surprisingly, on 24 September, upon arriving at Paris, Monroe County, Missouri (after two and one-half months of travel), Kirtland Camp had been considerably reduced in number. The camp record reads: “Reorganized the camp which had become rather disorganized by reason of so many stopping by the way. The third division was put into the first and second, as that division had become quite small.”

On 2 October, nearly three months after beginning their journey, the main company of Kirtland Camp arrived safely at Far West. At the time of their arrival, tension between the Mormons and the local inhabitants was increasing, especially in Daviess County, where during the previous month, vigilante groups had engaged in a number of isolated hostile actions against Mormon settlers. Hoping to strengthen the Mormon presence in the region, Church leaders directed Kirtland Camp members to move to Adam-ondi-Ahman, where they arrived on 4 October. Unfortunately, however, their stay in “Diahman” was short-lived. Soon after Church authorities surrendered to Missouri officials on 2 Nov-
ember, the Mormons residing in Daviess County (which included Kirtland Camp members) were compelled to relocate in Caldwell County.¹²

Throughout the month of October 1838, additional groups and families who at one time had been part of Kirtland Camp, but for one reason or another had lagged behind, continued to make their way to Far West. Sadly, several of these road-weary travelers became innocent victims of the Hawn’s Mill tragedy. Joseph Young, senior president of the Seventy, was leading one of these last groups of stragglers still on the road in late October. While passing through Livingston County, anti-Mormon raiders accosted the small party who threatened they would be killed if they proceeded; however, they were allowed to go on. Young’s party arrived at the Hawn’s Mill settlement on 28 October, two days before the fatal attack. Among their number killed were Warren Smith, husband of Amanda Barnes Smith, and their ten-year-old son Sardius. A second son, six-year-old Alma, was severely wounded. Nathan K. Knight, another Kirtland Camp member, incurred serious injuries but recovered.¹³

Ultimately, Kirtland Camp successfully assisted over five hundred Latter-day Saints to relocate from Ohio to Missouri. However, the unfortunate events associated with the Missouri-Mormon conflict and the executive order by Governor Lilburn W. Boggs calling for the expulsion of the Mormons from the state resulted in the Kirtland Camp members’ stay in Missouri being only temporary.

Alexander L. Baugh is a professor of Church history and doctrine at Brigham Young University. He received his BS from Utah State University and his MA and PhD degrees from Brigham Young University. He specializes in the Missouri period (1831–39) of early LDS Church history. He serves as editor of Mormon Historical Studies, as codirector of research for the Religious Studies Center at BYU, and as a volume editor for the Joseph Smith Papers.

NOTES

4. Zera Pulsipher, Autobiography, typescript, 8, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.
7. For accounts mentioning the divisions and “tent overseers,” see History of the Church 3:102, 105, 109.
9. History of the Church, 3:143.
12. The Mormons living in Daviess County were given until 20 November to leave. See Alexander L. Baugh, A Call to Arms: The 1838 Mormon Defense of Northern Missouri (Provo, UT: Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History and BYU Studies, 2000), 156.
The memorable and impressive words of the Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew 5–7; 3 Nephi 12–14) reverberate throughout corridors and chambers of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In many ways, the sermon stands at the heart of...
the teachings of Christ, and if people will build upon these words, by hearing and doing them, they will be built “upon the rock” (Greek ἐπὶ τὴν πέτραν, Matthew 7:24) that will withstand the winds and floods of destruction.

Jesus himself and his early disciples set an important example of building upon these words as they went forth to teach and administer. In this study, I draw attention to the fact that wording from the Sermon on the Mount is quoted or paraphrased in subsequent sections of the Book of Mormon more often than people typically realize. This pattern of drawing and building on the foundational words of that text was set by Jesus himself as he gave the sermon in 3 Nephi 12–14 and then quoted from it significantly in 3 Nephi 15–28. The same pattern can be observed in the New Testament. These uses point to the conclusion that the initial iterations of the Sermon on the Mount1 were accepted and used as a common denominator of what it meant to be a Christian at the earliest stages of Christian life and community.

Identifying and scrutinizing these subsequent quotations may offer modern readers a number of clues about the essential nature and fundamental importance of the sermon. Based on those clues, I have argued that the sermon is best understood as having come first and then having been quoted or used or built upon as a foundational text in laying down the Christian covenantal order.2 To illustrate this rarely observed intertextual feature, I begin with an examination of Jesus’s use of the words in 3 Nephi 12–14 in the ensuing chapters in 3 Nephi.

Use of the Sermon in 3 Nephi 15–28

The appearance of the Sermon on the Mount in 3 Nephi extends far beyond 3 Nephi chapters 12–14. Indeed, we are fortunate that pieces of the sermon continue to appear in the subsequent chapters of 3 Nephi, for these derivatives are used intelligently and not as random fractals or broken sherds. This magisterial sermon was not simply dropped into the book of 3 Nephi, either in whole or in subsequent parts, by a weary, unimaginative writer or translator, as some detractors have suggested.4 Much more sophisticated than that, as I will argue, is the way in which Nephi—the chief disciple who authored the original version of 3 Nephi—introduced the Sermon at the Temple and then composed the latter chapters of 3 Nephi to show Jesus’s implementation of the Sermon at the Temple. These derivative uses of the Sermon on the Mount show that the words of Jesus were understood and utilized from the very outset as an authoritative body of instructions that were intended to be used not merely as ethical or moral encouragement but as guides to religious practices and in the making and keeping of sacred covenants.

Of course, the Sermon on the Mount did not come into the Nephite world out of nowhere. Even before it was presented at the temple in Bountiful, the Nephites were probably aware of many of its words and phrases from their ancient Israelite scriptures and traditions.5 For example, “the meek shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5; 3 Nephi 12:5) comes straight from the Greek Septuagint version of Psalm 37:11. The desire to appear before the Lord in righteousness so that “I shall be filled (χορτασθῆσομαι)” (Psalm 17:15; LXX 16:15) anticipates the fourth beatitude’s promise that the righteous will be filled (Matthew 5:6), even with the Holy Ghost (3 Nephi 12:6).6 “Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity” in Psalm 6:8 is quoted directly in Matthew 7:23 and 3 Nephi 14:23. The fact that the sermon quotes from previous scriptures7 sets the stage for the sermon itself being subsequently quoted in a number of settings.

Then, commencing immediately after he concluded the sermon found in 3 Nephi 12–14 (which, like Matthew 5–7, takes about thirty-five minutes to read out loud and can be divided into twenty-five stages, which makes it possible to memorize and use in a covenant-making setting), Jesus continued to make use of passages from the Sermon on the Mount throughout the ensuing ordinance-inclusive chapters of 3 Nephi 15–28.
3 Nephi 12 in 3 Nephi 15–16

At first, the immediate reaction of the people was to marvel that “old things had passed away, and that all things had become new” (3 Nephi 15:2–3). In wondering this, they were quoting the words Jesus had spoken in 3 Nephi 12:47: “Old things are done away, and all things have become new.”

In response, Jesus first explained that “the law is fulfilled” (15:4–5), reiterating what he had previously said in 3 Nephi 12:18: “In me [the law] hath all been fulfilled.”

Second, he then went on to repeat, “I do not destroy the prophets” (15:6), and to reconfirm, “this is the law and the prophets” (15:10). Here he used words that quote and refer back to 3 Nephi 12:17 (“I am not come to destroy”) and 3 Nephi 14:12 (“this is the law and the prophets”).

Third, he went on to reaffirm, “Ye are a light” (15:12), reiterating the commission he had given to these people in 3 Nephi 12:14 (“I give unto you to be the light of this people”).

Fourth, after explaining what was meant by the saying “Other sheep I have which are not of this fold” (3 Nephi 15:14–16:5), Jesus turned his attention to the Gentiles and in this context used the image of the salt that had lost its savor. “Blessed are the Gentiles, because of their belief” (16:6), but “wo, saith the Father, unto the unbelieving Gentiles” (16:8). Jesus then went on to explain that “if the Gentiles will repent and return [unto the Father], they shall be numbered among [the people of the house of Israel],” who shall not be allowed to “tread” the Gentiles down (16:13–14). But if the Gentiles do not return to the original covenant given to them through the Bible, then the righteous “shall tread them down, and they shall be as salt that hath lost its savor, which is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of my people, O house of Israel” (16:15). These words draw from 3 Nephi 12:13. There the covenant people were told that if they failed to be the salt of the earth, as they had been commissioned to be, they would be “trodden under foot by men.” Now Jesus puts the shoe on the other foot. It is understandable that, having introduced this drastic consequence for covenant breaking in the sermon proper, Jesus could well invoke the same sanction in this elaboration about the Gentiles.

Repetition is always part of good pedagogy. It is an even better part of authoritative proclamation. “For God speaketh once, yea twice” (Job 33:14). Moreover, repetition in the reverse order of the original is thought by scholars to be a strong sign, according to what has been identified as Seidel’s Law, that this is a conscious form of quotation. In this light, it is noteworthy that Jesus’s four main points in 3 Nephi 15–16, immediately following the sermon, appear in the opposite order from their original order in the sermon. These four headlines had been introduced originally in the sermon in this order:

1. If the salt shall lose its savor (12:13)
2. Be the light unto men (12:14–16)
3. Think no that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets (12:16–17)
4. In me it hath all been fulfilled (12:18).

They appear in the opposite sequence in Jesus’s peroration in chapters 15–16:

4. The law is fulfilled (15:4–6, 8)
3. I do not destroy the prophets (15:6–7); keep the law and the prophets (15:9–10)
2. Ye are a light unto this remnant (15:12), as I fulfill my covenant (15:13–16:14)
1. Those who will not turn to Christ will be as salt that has lost its savor (16:15).

3 Nephi 11–12 and 14 in 3 Nephi 18

After administering the sacrament in 3 Nephi 18:1–11, Jesus ended his words to the Nephites on his first day in their midst by again revisiting and expressly applying several of the teachings that he had given in the sermon at the beginning of that day. No allusions back to the sermon occurred in connection with the healings of the sick and the blessings of the parents and children in 3 Nephi 17, but this does not mean that the sermon was not still on everyone’s mind.

Right after the people partook of the sacrament, witnessing their willingness to keep the commandments which he had given them (18:10), Jesus promised them that if they would keep that covenant, they would be built upon the rock. Their promise was to remember him always and to keep the commandments which he had just given them, namely in the sermon in 3 Nephi 12–14. By declaring that they will then be “built upon my rock” (18:12), Jesus referred back to 3 Nephi 14:25–26 (and even
further back to 3 Nephi 11:39). Likewise, his warning that “whoso among you shall do more or less than these are not built upon my rock” (18:13) echoed 3 Nephi 11:40, “Whoso shall declare more or less than this . . . is not built upon my rock.”

As Jesus prayed, his words were so sublime and sacred that they could not be written or “uttered by man” (3 Nephi 19:34), reflecting the sermon’s serious requirement that people must keep holy things confidential, “lest [the unworthy] trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you” (14:6).

Jesus then continued, “But [they] are built upon a sandy foundation; and when the rain descends, and the floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon them, they shall fall” (18:13), words mentioned previously at the end of the sermon in 3 Nephi 14:27–28 and anticipated in 11:40. Coming at the beginning of this day in chapter 11, then at the culmination of the sermon in chapter 14, and finally at the end of this day in chapter 18, these words draw together and encase everything that happened on that day, emphasizing the need to both hear and do the words of the Lord (14:24).

Second, Jesus promised the people, “Ask . . . behold it shall be given unto you” (18:20), quoting from the sermon, “Ask, and it shall be given unto you” (14:7).

Third, he also admonished, “Hold up your light that it may shine unto the world” (18:24), amplifying the sermon’s words in 3 Nephi 12:16, “Let your light so shine before this people.”

Finally, he pronounced, “Blessed are ye if ye have no disputations among you” (18:34), just as he had begun the sermon with the blessings of the Beatitudes and had commanded at the very outset that “there shall be no disputations among you” (11:28), nor shall you have “aught against” one another (12:23).

Once again, Jesus’s recapitulation of the sermon at the end of this day essentially reiterates these points in the opposite order:

1. No disputations (11:28), blessed are ye (12:1)
2. Let your light so shine (12:16)
3. Ask, and it shall be given (14:7)
4. Built upon a rock (14:24), not upon the sand (14:26)
4. Built upon my rock (18:12), not upon a sandy foundation (18:13)
3. Ask . . . it shall be given (18:20)
2. Hold up your light that it may shine (18:24)
1. Blessed are ye, no disputations (18:34).

Through the literary convention of inverted recapitulation, the Savior encapsulated and embraced the entirety of the sermon.

In the Sermon at the Temple, Jesus said, “After this manner therefore pray ye” (13:9) and then gave the Lord’s Prayer. Later, at the very middle of the stretch of text in 3 Nephi 18, Jesus instructed the people, “As I have prayed among you even so shall ye pray in my church” (18:16). Whether Jesus gave only general directions about how to pray at this point, his central words in 18:16 could well have alluded back to that central passage in the sermon.

3 Nephi 12–14 in 3 Nephi 19

This pattern of demonstrably implementing the words of the sermon continued during Jesus’s second day with the Nephites.

As they prayed unto the Father (19:6), they “did not multiply many words” (19:24). This attestation
confirms that their prayers were in conformance with 3 Nephi 13:7.

As the bodies of disciples became “white even as Jesus” (19:30), they saw the fulfillment of the sermon’s words, “Thy whole body shall be full of light” (13:22).

As Jesus prayed, his words were so sublime and sacred that they could not be written or “uttered by man” (19:34), reflecting the sermon’s serious requirement that people must keep holy things confidential, “lest [the unworthy] trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you” (14:6). The point is not just that human language is incapable of saying these things, but that they were “forbidden” to write certain things (27:23) and that it was “forbidden them that they should [even] utter” them (28:14).9

3 Nephi 12–14 in 3 Nephi 27

Carrying on in this same fashion, Jesus’s final days with his disciples also concluded with strong refrains from the sermon. Its words in chapters 12–14, which were now known verbatim by these disciples (19:8), had probably been repeated several times, especially to those who had missed the first day.

Then, as Jesus’s final hours with his disciples commenced, a new culminating beatitude was pronounced: “If ye do these things, blessed are ye, for ye shall be lifted up at the last day” (27:22). This echoes the promises of the Beatitudes at the beginning of the sermon that the righteous will “see God” and enter “the kingdom of heaven” (12:8, 10; 14:21).

A renewed plea was also made, “What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am, . . . and I am even as the Father” (27:27; 28:10), clearly using the same inviting mood as before: “I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect” (12:48).

In saying, “Ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (27:29), Jesus quoted two of the three phrases from 3 Nephi 14:8.

The regretful reference to those who will reject Christ in exchange for “that which moth doth corrupt and which thieves can break through and steal” (27:32) stands in unmistakable contrast to the incorruptible treasure laid up in heaven beyond the reach of moths and thieves (13:19).

And Jesus’s lengthy concluding admonition, “Enter ye in at the strait gate; for strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it; but wide is the gate, and broad the way which leads to death, and many there be that travel therein” (27:33), was quoted nearly exactly from, while inverting the order of, 3 Nephi 14:13 (about the wide gate and broad way of death) and 3 Nephi 14:14 (about the strait and narrow way of life). The previous order of wide/narrow here becomes narrow/wide, and so doing puts the way of life first and foremost in the minds of the disciples and of us as readers.

In sum, one sees in 3 Nephi a strong pattern of reuse, in short succession, of words from the Sermon on the Mount, just recently given to the people at Bountiful in the Sermon at the Temple. It may strike readers as a little odd or a bit redundant for

Jesus Kneeling in Prayer and Meditation, by Michael Jarvis Nelson. Used by permission.
Jesus to have quoted himself so often, but in doing so he taught his people the central importance of this primary sermon, which was to be remembered and used with precision, in some cases “nothing varying” from the words that Jesus himself had used (19:8).

Moreover, with these quotations, the Savior was able to refer back, conveniently and authoritatively, to the fuller teachings that he had already given, precisely because those words had been accepted by these people by way of covenant (18:10). Because of the sacred temple context in which the Sermon at the Temple had been given and received, these words were no longer seen as ordinary words. They were divinely revealed, indisputably established, and sacredly ordained. Thus, the reuse of these holy words by Jesus would have deeply impressed the Nephite audience, indelibly recommitting them to follow these teachings.

The use of these materials throughout 3 Nephi corroborates the idea that the sermon was immediately accepted as scripture, no doubt the most sacred scripture these people had ever known. Although it is unknown what else Jesus taught these people as he spoke to them “for the space of three days” and often thereafter (3 Nephi 26:6, 13), it is certainly possible that he recapitulated the whole of the sermon in the course of those instructions, for his quoting from the beginning (in 3 Nephi 15) and the ending of the sermon (in 3 Nephi 27) may be a clue that the rest of his teachings embraced it all.10

Use of the Sermon in the Writings of Mormon and Moroni

These uses by Jesus of texts from the Sermon on the Mount must have left a deep impression on the succeeding generations of righteous Nephites. Evidence of this is found in the words of Mormon and Moroni, the final abridgers who worked on 3 Nephi and the plates of Mormon, for even at the end of Nephite history these people remained deeply familiar with Jesus’s Sermon at the Temple.

Mormon’s Synagogue Speech

Notably, Mormon wove several crucial words and phrases from the Sermon on the Mount into his impassioned speech to his people, which is preserved in Moroni 7. The following echoes are unmistakable:

“By their works ye shall know them” (Moroni 7:5) has changed only one word from 3 Nephi 14:20, “fruits” to “works.”

“A man being evil cannot do that which is good” (Moroni 7:6) declaratively and deliberately answers the rhetorical question of 3 Nephi 14:16, “Do men gather grapes of thorns?” (inverting the good/evil to evil/good).

“Neither will he give a good gift” (7:10) makes the clearest sense when understood against the background of 3 Nephi 14:11: “If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children” (words in italics explain why).

“For with that same judgment which ye judge ye shall also be judged” (7:18, changes shown in italics) simply adds emphasis to the original words of the sermon: “For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged” (3 Nephi 14:2).11

Mormon’s promise, “Whatsoever thing ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is good, in faith believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be done unto you” (7:26), repeats, with important qualifications, the words of the sermon: “Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (14:7; see also 27:29).

Mormon’s emphasis on “meekness” (7:39, 43, 44), a virtue that was sorely lacking among his people, who were losing their lands, is likely an elliptical reference to the statement “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (3 Nephi 12:5).

Although some of Mormon’s words and teachings can be found scattered among the writings of earlier Nephites before the coming of Christ, the density and proximity of these apparent allusions to the Savior’s preeminent sermon make it the most likely source, rhetorically as well as authoritatively, for the urgent preaching to his faithful few by Mormon, who saw himself first and foremost as “a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, . . . called to declare his word” (3 Nephi 5:13).

The Sermon on the Mount in the Book of Moroni

Mormon’s son, Moroni, also was fully conscious of the instructions given by Jesus in the Sermon at the Temple. His invitation “that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ” (Moroni 10:32) picks up the crucial word perfect in the Lord’s own invitation made
at a salient point in the sermon: “I would that ye should be perfect even as I” (3 Nephi 12:48).

Moroni also incorporated Jesus’s instructions found elsewhere in 3 Nephi as he recorded important priesthood administrative rules about Nephite religious practices in Moroni 2–6. As Moroni described the religious practices of the Nephites, he faithfully reflected instructions established by the Savior himself in 3 Nephi. Moroni’s little handbook quoted the words spoken by Jesus in giving his
disciples the power to bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost (Moroni 2; see 3 Nephi 18:38–39). He quoted the sacrament prayers (Moroni 4–5; compare 3 Nephi 18:1–11) and made special reference to baptism (Moroni 6:2; see 3 Nephi 11:28; 18:16). He went on to use phrases such as “with a broken heart and a contrite spirit” (6:2; in the sermon at 3 Nephi 12:19), in the “name of Christ” (6:3; see 3 Nephi 18:11); cleansed and led by the Holy Ghost (6:4, 9; see 3 Nephi 18:37; 19:13), in order to “keep them in the right way” (6:4; compare the sermon at 3 Nephi 14:13). The Nephites met often to “fast and pray” (6:5, as directed in the sermon in 3 Nephi 13:9, 17) and to “partake of bread and wine” (6:6; following 3 Nephi 18:3–12). They allowed “no iniquity among them” (6:7; as instructed in 3 Nephi 18:28), and those who “repented not . . . were blotted out” (6:7; see 3 Nephi 18:31), but “as oft as they repented and sought forgiveness, with real intent, they were forgiven” (6:8; pursuant to 3 Nephi 18:32). Jesus had commanded his twelve disciples, “Ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do” (3 Nephi 27:21). This all seems to leave little doubt that Moroni was doing precisely that, namely using the very words and doing the very things that his predecessors had seen and heard the resurrected Lord do and say.

These texts from Mormon and Moroni, written more than three hundred years after the sermon and other instructions were given by the resurrected Lord at the temple in Bountiful, show that the words of Jesus were accepted by the disciples of Christ from the very outset as crystallizing the doctrine of Christ, the gospel of Christ, the will of the Lord, the word of the Lord, his plan of happiness, his path of holiness, the foundation of his new covenant written in the heart, and his covenantal pattern for the life of righteousness.

Subsequent Quotations in the New Testament

As the full 2010 version of this article goes on to show in considerable detail, just as the Sermon at
the Temple was subsequently quoted by Jesus and others in the Book of Mormon, likewise the Sermon on the Mount also reverberates throughout the New Testament. Indeed, Matthew, Mark, Luke, Peter, James, and Paul draw quotations out of the sermon, from its beginning to its end, often in sacred or covenantal contexts and in settings that make the best sense if one assumes that the authority of the sermon was already firmly established and accepted. From this, the 2010 article argues that Jesus Christ and his early Apostles used this text on many occasions to solemnize and reinforce the commitment of early church members to obey the teachings of Jesus, on pain of being cast out, trodden under foot, or excommunicated from the Christian community, and that those warnings, as well as the eschatological blessings promised in the Sermon on the Mount, take the sermon outside the sphere of mere moral admonition. This agrees with Hans Dieter Betz, who sees the “holy thing” mentioned in Matthew 7:6, which the initiate is told must not be cast before swine, as none other than some “esoteric saying” that was part of “initiation into secrets . . . not to be divulged to the uninitiated outsiders.” All this being the case, it makes good sense to understand Peter, James, Paul, and others as quoting from the sermon and not vice versa. This view, of course, cuts against many of the common assumptions about how the Gospels were written. For Latter-day Saints, however, Jesus’s own declaration that he had just given to the Nephites the very words delivered to his Apostles in Jerusalem before he ascended into heaven (3 Nephi 15:1) changes the assumptions and paradigms within which one can approach the sermon. For example, it is often assumed that Jesus said something once and only once, or that he always said it in the same way, but if Jesus used the sermon on several occasions, two or three somewhat different performances of this text could all be original sayings of Jesus. The article then concludes with the following seven findings based on the examples and evidences that were presented.

Findings

From all this one may draw several useful and interesting conclusions:

1. Distinctive wording from the Sermon on the Mount is subsequently quoted or reused by Jesus in the Book of Mormon and also in the New Testament Gospels.

2. The precedent for this subsequent pattern of quotation was established by Jesus himself, as is unmistakably reported in 3 Nephi 15–27 and as can also be seen operating in a similar fashion in Matthew 10–25.

3. Elements from the beginning to the ending of the sermon are quoted. Every major section of the sermon is represented in these early, subsequent uses.

4. Jesus reiterated certain teachings of the Sermon on the Mount in private or confidential circumstances; others he selectively repurposed for public use.

5. In quoting a series of passages from the Sermon on the Mount, original word orders are often inverted. This subtle point strengthens the conclusion that these were conscious quotations or utilizations.

6. If the Sermon on the Mount was, in fact, used as a very early part of preparing converts for baptism or other covenantal steps (see, for example 3 Nephi 19:8–9), this would explain why its various elements became so widespread and were quoted so often in many subsequent texts, as in Moroni 7 and many of the earliest Christian writings.

7. Early Christian authors, such as Peter, James, and Paul, writing in the mid-first century, as well as Mormon, assumed that their faithful readers already knew and were previously committed to obey these commandments and teachings. These derivative uses are consistent with early and authoritative functions and uses of this foundational text.

---

John W. Welch is the Robert K. Thomas University Professor of Law at the J. Reuben Clark Law School. Since 1984 he has served as the general editor of the Collected Works of Hugh Nibley and since 1991 as editor in chief of BYU Studies. Trained in history, classical languages, philosophy, and law, his latest book published by Ashgate is The Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple.
1. In this chapter, I assume that Jesus delivered the essence of the Sermon on the Mount on several occasions as he preached on many occasions throughout Galilee (Matthew 9:35; Mark 6:6; Luke 13:20, 22), perhaps even as he taught in the temple (Matthew 21:23; 26:55) and during his forty-day ministry, for he taught the people in the New World the same things that he taught to his disciples in the Old World before ascending to his Father (see 3 Nephi 15:1), and also perhaps on one other occasion when he again went up “into the mountain” (eis to oros, Matthew 15:29), which is the same phrase used in Matthew 5:1 at the commencement of the Sermon on the Mount. Thus any quest for “the original version” of the Sermon on the Mount may be ill conceived, for there may have been many deliveries of the sermon or parts of it that were similar, at least two of which were found in the sources used by Matthew and Luke and perhaps others.


3. I am grateful to members of my Provo Utah Edgemont Stake scripture study class and to Corbin Volluz for sharing their thoughts and interests along these lines.


5. The common Israelite background is discussed in Welch, Illuminating, 153–77, and temple-related texts drawn upon by the Sermon on the Mount are identified in Welch, Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple, summarized in table 1, pp. 184–87.

6. Krister Stendahl’s erroneous claim that the Greek word meaning “filled” (chortazo) cannot be used in the sense of being filled with the Spirit continues to be trumpeted by critics of the Book of Mormon, even though it has long been shown to be wrong (Welch, Illuminating, 152–53). Overlooked by Stendahl and others, Psalms 17:15 uses this word to describe being satisfied or satiated with righteousness upon beholding the face of the Lord. The word is used to describe the filling of the four thousand plus women and children in Matthew 15:33, 37, which may well refer to both spiritual and physical satiation.

7. Throughout this article, the Greek texts in Matthew are always compared with the Greek texts of the Septuagint (LXX) version of the Old Testament, unless otherwise indicated.


10. This may be an example of a “classic rhetorical device” known as merismus, by which “an entire topic or statement is represented by some of its parts” (Noel B. Reynolds, “The Gospel as Taught by Nephite Prophets,” in Reexploring the Book of Mormon, 258–59, citing Alexander M. Honeyman, “Merismus in Biblical Hebrew,” Journal of Biblical Hebrew 71 (1952), 15).

11. Mormon’s language is very close to that of 3 Nephi 14:2, closer than to the words of Alma about the “restoration” of righteous judgment for righteous judging in Alma 41:14.

12. This section summarizes the lengthy New Testament portion of the full 2010 article.


15. For a superb exposition of the various ways in which the sermon has been analyzed in past centuries, see Hans Dieter Betz, The Sermon on the Mount (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 10–44. Betz mentions several scholars who have seen the sermon variously as “the redactional product of the evangelist [Matthew]” (n. 179), as “a new creation” (n. 180), as built by or for Matthew from additions “borrowed from another memorandum” (n. 190), like other “ancient gnomologies of proverbs and maxims” (n. 214), as “three groupings of sayings” (n. 225), or merely as “sequences of sayings” (n. 280).
Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship

The Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship encourages and supports research on the Book of Mormon, the Book of Abraham, the Bible, other ancient scripture, and related subjects. The Maxwell Institute publishes and distributes titles in these areas for the benefit of scholars and interested Latter-day Saint readers.

Primary research interests at the Maxwell Institute include the history, language, literature, culture, geography, politics, and law relevant to ancient scripture. Although such subjects are of secondary importance when compared with the spiritual and eternal messages of scripture, solid research and academic perspectives can supply certain kinds of useful information, even if only tentatively, concerning many significant and interesting questions about scripture.

The Maxwell Institute makes reports about this research available widely, promptly, and economically. These publications are peer-reviewed to ensure that scholarly standards are met. The proceeds from the sale of these materials are used to support further research and publications.