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STUDIES

INVOLVING READERS  
IN THE LATTER-DAY SAINT  
ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

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ON THE GOSPEL OF JUDAS**

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### A Latter-day Saint Colloquium on the Gospel of Judas

On Saturday, April 15, 2006, the day before Easter, a panel of BYU professors spoke at BYU about the recently released Gnostic Gospel of Judas. This panel, organized and introduced by Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, consisted of S. Kent Brown, Thomas A. Wayment, Gaye Strathearn, and Frank F. Judd, Jr. *BYU Studies* is pleased to publish their presentations, along with an invited addition and summation by John W. Welch.

These texts are augmented by several photographs which Dr. Holzapfel obtained under special arrangement from Kenneth Garrett and the National Geographic Society. *BYU Studies* is deeply appreciative to all who have made possible the extraordinary publication of these images and the timely appearance of this roundtable.

Whenever a long-lost document resurfaces from the ancient world, previous theories get reexamined and new interpretation are assessed. In that process, many questions are raised. The following colloquium offers a wide array of informative answers and well-documented observations by Latter-day Saints concerning questions being raised among scholars and lay readers alike about the Gospel of Judas.

An audio recording of the April 15, 2006, panel discussion is available on compact disc as *The Truth about the Gospel of Judas* from Deseret Book.

# A Latter-day Saint Colloquium on the Gospel of Judas

## Media and Message

*Richard Neitzel Holzapfel*

An increasing number of strident voices are questioning the reliability of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in reconstructing the life of Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>1</sup> Some scholars argue that the New Testament Gospels are not faithful to the real Jesus of history.<sup>2</sup> These individuals also suggest that if other accounts, which the early church lost or suppressed,

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1. A number of significant studies have demonstrated the superiority of the four Gospel accounts and their reliability in comparison to other documents; see, for example, James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered: Christianity in the Making*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003). For a listing of the earliest New Testament manuscripts and an overview of the canonization process, see John W. Welch and John F. Hall, eds., *Charting the New Testament* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2002), charts 18-3 through 18-5. Additionally, other studies suggest that even if scholars have concerns about the time lag between the ministry of Jesus Christ and the recording of the four Gospels, the New Testament itself preserves texts written even earlier than the four Gospels. That fact of history substantiates the core stories preserved by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; see Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, “Early Accounts of the Story,” in *From the Last Supper through the Resurrection: The Savior’s Final Hours*, ed. Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and Thomas A. Wayment (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 401–21.

2. The Jesus Seminar has been the most successful forum in providing a radically different picture of Jesus. Its particular efforts have been adequately criticized by a number of competent New Testament scholars; see, for example, Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996). James D. G. Dunn, *A New Perspective on Jesus: What the Quest for the Historical Jesus Missed* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2005), 21–22, provides a context for the Jesus Seminar in a general overview of the modern effort to reconstruct the life of Jesus.

## The Gospel of Judas at a Glance

*What is the Gospel of Judas?*

An Early Christian text probably written by AD 150–200. It was considered a lost text until an ancient papyrus document containing the text was discovered in Egypt about 1978.

*Is the document that was found in Egypt a genuine ancient artifact?*

Most probably yes.

*Who wrote the text?*

Most likely a member of a group of early Christians known as Gnostics, whose views varied widely from those of mainstream Christianity.

*How old is this copy of the Gospel of Judas?*

The document that was found about 1978 dates to AD 300–400.

*What is the Codex Tchacos?*

Codex Tchacos is the official name of the document found in 1978. The Gospel of Judas fills 26 pages; the rest of the document contains three other writings, also apparently Gnostic. It is named after its current owner, Frieda Nussberger-Tchacos.

*What is the Nag Hammadi Library?*

A large group of ancient, mostly Gnostic documents discovered in Nag Hammadi, Egypt, in 1945. The Nag Hammadi documents and the Codex Tchacos appear to have some texts in common.

*What does the Gospel of Judas say?*

It says that Judas was privy to secret information and direction from Jesus. See the summary on pages 12–13 of this issue.

*Why is the Gospel of Judas suddenly in the news?*

It was restored (the document being very damaged) and transcribed only recently. The text was published in English in 2006 with much media attention.

*What are scholars saying about the Gospel of Judas?*

A few oft-quoted New Testament scholars with radical views claim that it overturns the record of Jesus as we know it from the traditional Bible. But for Latter-day Saints, the Gospel of Judas fails as a “Gospel” because it fails to recognize the Atonement of Jesus Christ as the way to salvation. Early Christian scholars rejected it as apostate in AD 150–200, and Latter-day Saint scholars agree.

were available and used by readers today, they would provide a radically different interpretation of Jesus' ministry from the one preserved in the New Testament.<sup>3</sup>

Some of those questioning the legitimacy of the New Testament canon have found alternative voices in ancient texts that they believe may help them reconstruct the story of Jesus.<sup>4</sup> Among these alternative gospels are a number of texts discovered in Egypt in 1945 known today as the Nag Hammadi Library.<sup>5</sup>

In a remarkable set of coincidences, these scholarly topics have become the subject of a very public and popular discussion. Intense media attention has been cast on Jesus Christ, the early history of Christianity, and ancient Christian texts. At the same time, Western society continues to become increasingly secularized, and there is evidence of increasing hostility toward organized religion.<sup>6</sup> In this often confusing discussion, lay people need context for the headlines and the reports of newfound documents that claim to overturn traditional Christianity.

Certainly one of the significant catalysts for the present state of affairs was the 2003 publication of Dan Brown's remarkably popular novel, *The Da Vinci Code*, which claims, "All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in this novel are accurate."<sup>7</sup> But scholars and students familiar with the history of early Christianity and the context of ancient texts used in *The Da Vinci Code*—primarily texts from the Nag Hammadi Library used in the novel to support radical and provocative interpretations of the past—realize that the book is deeply flawed because it misrepresents and misinterprets basic historical facts.<sup>8</sup> Catholic and Protestant scholars alike believe that the novel unfairly distorts early

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3. See, for example, Elaine Pagels, *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas* (New York: Random House, 2003), which reveals her own spiritual journey from a traditional Christian understanding of Jesus' ministry to one imbued with Gnostic ideas—what she identifies as "forgotten Christianity."

4. See, for example, Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover, and The Jesus Seminar, eds., *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993).

5. The standard English translation is James M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990).

6. Highlighting why the West is a "Jesus haunted" culture even in the face of intense secularization is N. T. Wright, *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), especially 12–15, 93–95.

7. Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 1.

8. See, for example, Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, Andrew C. Skinner, and Thomas A. Wayment, *What Da Vinci Didn't Know: An LDS Perspective* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2006).

Christian history—with the result that relatively few readers are able to sort out fact from fiction.

In this heightened atmosphere, another announcement caught the attention of the media and the public at large: an ancient “gospel” manuscript was found—the long-lost Gospel of Judas.<sup>9</sup> One writer has even suggested that “an unseen hand must have arranged for the Gospel of Judas to be published while the ‘Da Vinci Code craze’ still had life in it.”<sup>10</sup>

### **The Content of the Lost Gospel of Judas**

The Gospel of Judas purports to be a dialogue between Jesus and Judas Iscariot: “The secret account of the revelation that Jesus spoke in conversation with Judas Iscariot during a week three days before he celebrated Passover.”<sup>11</sup> The text is composed of three related scenes, but the climax is Jesus’ revelation to Judas about the secret of salvation and Jesus’ request that Judas hand Jesus over to his enemies, thus facilitating his escape from the physical, corrupt world: “For you will sacrifice the man that clothes me.”<sup>12</sup>

Instead of being Jesus’ nemesis and betrayer, Judas is portrayed as Jesus’ most loyal friend and dedicated disciple. Because of Judas’s faithfulness, he receives the promise that he will be exalted above all the other Apostles, despite the fact that for a while he will be despised and hated: “You will exceed all of them. . . . You will become the thirteenth, and you will be cursed by the other generations—and you will come to rule over them. In the last days they will curse your ascent to the holy [generation].”<sup>13</sup>

This “gospel” ends rather dramatically: “Their high priests murmured because [he (meaning Jesus)] had gone into the guest room for his prayer. But some scribes were there watching carefully in order to arrest him during the prayer, for they were afraid of the people, since he was regarded by all as a prophet. They approached Judas and said to him, ‘What are you doing here? You are Jesus’ disciple.’ Judas answered them as they wished. And he received some money and handed him over to them.”<sup>14</sup>

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9. Ironically, as many scholars have already pointed out, the Gospel of Judas is not a gospel in any meaningful sense—that is, it does not provide a story *about* Jesus because it highlights only one episode in his life.

10. David Gates with Jac Chebatoris, “Sealed with a Kiss,” *Newsweek*, April 17, 2006, 49.

11. Rodolphe Kasser, Marvin Meyer, and Gregor Wurst, eds., *The Gospel of Judas* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 2006), 19.

12. Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 43, Codex Tchacos 56.

13. Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 32–33, 43, brackets in original, Codex Tchacos 46, 56.

14. Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 44–45, brackets in original, parentheses added, Codex Tchacos 58.



The story preserved in the Gospel of Judas presents a radically different portrait than the one preserved in the New Testament. The text raises many questions, including why it does not contain a crucifixion narrative or a story about an empty tomb and why a group of Christians would choose Judas as the hero of the story.

### Publicity Surrounding the Gospel of Judas

Although New Testament scholars had known about this copy of the Gospel of Judas since July 2004,<sup>15</sup> the public and the media became aware of and interested in it only in the wake of the National Geographic Society's publicity campaign to highlight its television special on the subject (April 9, 2006) along with the release of its publication of the English translation of the document. New Testament scholar Bart Ehrman declared the Gospel of Judas to be "one of the greatest historical discoveries of the twentieth century. It rivals the finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls or the Gnostic Gospels of Nag Hammadi."<sup>16</sup> Others jumped on the bandwagon, declaring that the text would radically change our reconstruction of early Christianity and making provocative claims about the value of the text and what might happen in the wake of its publication.<sup>17</sup> These statements were followed by reports in various media outlets, including *Time* and *Newsweek*, just before Easter 2006.<sup>18</sup> *National Geographic* ran a special story on the Gospel of Judas in its May 2006 issue, reaching another wide audience.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, as it had announced earlier, the National Geographic Society published two books relating to the provenance and actual translation of the Gospel of Judas. The shorter but more important of the two, *The Gospel of Judas*, contains an English translation of the ancient text, with

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15. An official announcement was made by Rodolphe Kasser at the International Association for Coptic Studies, Eighth International Congress of Coptic Studies, in Paris July 1, 2004. There were rumors prior to the announcement but no public acknowledgement.

16. See the same promotional quotation by Bart D. Ehrman on the back cover of *The Gospel of Judas*.

17. National Geographic Society announced its teaser the day of the showing of the TV special: "Tonight, will a dramatic discovery rewrite Biblical history? . . . Now hidden for nearly 2000 years an ancient gospel emerges from the sands of Egypt. It tells a different story, one that could challenge our deepest beliefs." Video at [www.shop.nationalgeographic.com](http://www.shop.nationalgeographic.com).

18. David Van Bleva, "Judas: Foe or Friend?" *Time*, April 17, 2006, 22; Gates with Chebatoris, "Sealed with a Kiss," 48–49.

19. Andrew Cockburn, "The Judas Gospel," *National Geographic* 209, no. 5 (May 2006): 78–95.

annotated footnotes, along with a short account of the history behind the text, and is edited by Rodolphe Kasser, Marvin Meyer, and Gregor Wurst. The other is Herbert Krosney's *The Lost Gospel: The Quest for the Gospel of Judas Iscariot*.<sup>20</sup> This well-written account of the discovery, preservation, translation, and publication of the Gospel of Judas is a tale of mystery, intrigue, academic jealousy, double crosses, and illegal activities. The book recounts how scholars and interested parties began fighting over access to the text and rights associated with its publication almost immediately after stories began to circulate among antiquity dealers about its existence. James M. Robinson, who was the general editor of the Nag Hammadi Library, was unable to obtain the text himself and was not invited to be involved in its translation, so he released his own book full of criticism, sarcasm, and pettiness.<sup>21</sup> His book merely added to the media frenzy, further increasing the controversy that played well into the hands of the news media and financial promoters.

One of the most interesting and engaging aspects to the story is associated with the monumental task of restoring and preserving the text. The manuscript, discovered most likely sometime in 1978, was damaged by mishandling and consists of more than a thousand fragments. Over time, fiber by fiber, letter by letter, line by line, and section by section, eventually a story that was unread for over fifteen hundred years became readable. The cost in resources, including money and time, was astronomical in this Herculean effort.<sup>22</sup> Considering the poor condition of the text when it finally came into the hands of scholars, we should appreciate the remarkable outcome that resulted in the restoration of about 80 percent of the text.

## Conclusion

While the Gospel of Judas presents an alternative portrait of Jesus Christ that most Christians would not recognize, the discovery of any ancient document is remarkable. The discovery and restoration of this text brightens academics' hopes that other ancient texts may still find their way into the hands of scholars in the future.

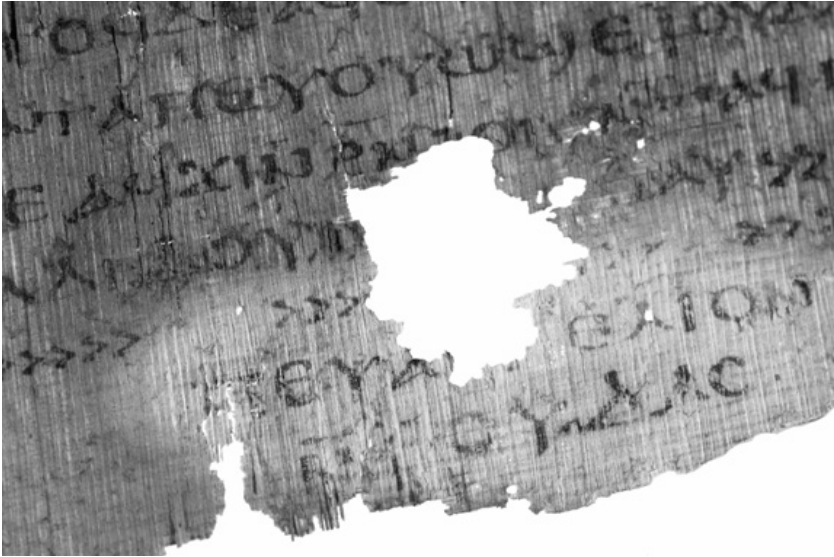
Eventually, media attention and popular interest in the Gospel of Judas will wane. Yet the door, which will hopefully never be closed again, has been opened in a very public way, allowing us to continue to talk about Jesus Christ, the rise of early Christianity, and the story of ancient texts.

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20. Herbert Krosney, *The Lost Gospel: The Quest for the Gospel of Judas Iscariot* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 2006).

21. James M. Robinson, *The Secrets of Judas: The Story of the Misunderstood Disciple and His Lost Gospel* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006).

22. See Krosney, *Lost Gospel*, 264–65.



Detail view of the final page of the Gospel of Judas. The title of the lost gospel, as was the custom in antiquity, is found at the end of the text and reads “The Gospel [euaggelion] of Judas.” © Kenneth Garrett

With more than a million copies in print, the translation of the Gospel of Judas has become a bestseller in several languages, ensuring a long life for this alternative account of the night Jesus was handed over to his enemies. And with the Coptic text available for study, scholars will begin to move beyond the hype created by popular media to determine the importance and meaning of this discovery.<sup>23</sup>

Because of the timely nature of the discussion and the timeless importance of the topic, several Brigham Young University faculty members have been invited to answer, in a roundtable discussion format, some of the many questions raised in the wake of publication of the Gospel of Judas, providing context to story. The result is this series of short articles.

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23. An initial attempt is Eduard Iricinschi, Lance Jenott, and Philippa Townsend, “The Betrayer’s Gospel,” in *The New York Review of Books* (June 8, 2006): 32–37.

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### Highlights of the Gospel of Judas

This summary is based on the English translation by Rodolphe Kasser, Marvin Meyer, and Gregor Wurst, *The Gospel of Judas* (Washington D.C.: National Geographic Society, 2006), the *editio princeps* of this text. These scholars worked from a preliminary Coptic transcription of the text, constituting about 80 percent of the original document. An ongoing effort to reconstruct the text in light of the discovery of additional fragments, continued efforts to refine the translation, and the revision of some conjectural emendations will form the basis of the critical edition of Codex Tchacos to be published at the end of 2006. The Coptic text contains many Greek loan words, highlighted in italics below, which are familiar to New Testament students.

**Introduction.** “The secret account [*logos*] of the revelation that Jesus spoke in conversation with Judas Iscariot during a week three days before he celebrated Passover” (*Gospel of Judas*, 19, Codex Tchacos 33).

**Jesus’ ministry summarized.** “When Jesus appeared on earth, he performed miracles and great wonders for the salvation of humanity. And since some [walked] in the way of righteousness while others walked in their transgressions, the twelve disciples were called. He began to speak with them about the mysteries” (*Gospel of Judas*, 20, Codex Tchacos 33).

**Jesus laughs at the disciples’ prayers and sacrifices; they become angry.** “When he [approached] his disciples, gathered together and seated and offering a prayer of thanksgiving over the bread [he] laughed. . . . ‘Master, why are you laughing at [our] prayer of thanksgiving?’ . . . ‘They said, ‘Master, you are [ . . . ] the son of our god.’ Jesus said to them, ‘How do you know me? Truly [I] say to you, no generation of the people that are among you will know me.’ When the disciples heard this, they started getting angry and infuriated and began blaspheming against him in their hearts” (*Gospel of Judas*, 20–22, Codex Tchacos 33–34).

**Jesus responds, challenging them to stand before Him.** “When Jesus observed their lack of [understanding, he said] to them, . . . ‘[Let] any one of you who is [strong enough] among human beings bring out the perfect human and stand before my face’” (*Gospel of Judas*, 22, Codex Tchacos 34–35).

**Judas is singled out as Jesus’ greatest disciple.** “But their spirits did not dare to stand before [him], except for Judas Iscariot. He was able to stand before him. . . . Judas [said] to him, ‘I know who you are and where you have come from. You are from the immortal realm of Barbelo. And I am not worthy to utter the name of the one who has sent you’” (*Gospel of Judas*, 22–23, Codex Tchacos 35).

**Jesus teaches Judas privately following his confession.** “Knowing that Judas was reflecting upon something that was exalted, Jesus said to him, ‘Step away from the others and I shall tell you the mysteries of the kingdom’” (*Gospel of Judas*, 23, Codex Tchacos 35).

**Jesus again speaks to the disciples; they continue to be confused.** “The next morning, after this happened, Jesus [appeared] to his disciples again. They said to him, ‘Master, where did you go and what did you do when you left us?’ Jesus said to them, ‘I went to another great and holy generation’” (*Gospel of Judas*, 24, Codex Tchacos 36).

**Judas and Jesus again converse privately; the climax of the gospel is revealed.** “Judas said, ‘Master, as you have listened to all of them, now also listen to me. For I have seen a great vision’” (*Gospel of Judas*, 31, Codex Tchacos 44).

**Jesus reveals Judas’s destiny.** “Jesus answered and said, ‘You will become the thirteenth, and you will be cursed by the other generations—and you will come to rule over them. In the last days they will curse your ascent to the holy [generation]’” (*Gospel of Judas*, 32–33, Codex Tchacos 46–47).

**Jesus teaches Judas about hidden things: the deepest mysteries about Adam, Creation, Angels, and the Cosmos.** “Jesus said, ‘[Come], that I may teach you about [secrets] no person [has] ever seen’” (*Gospel of Judas*, 33, Codex Tchacos 47).

**The Gospel of Judas’s most startling announcement: Judas will help Jesus sacrifice his body, allowing Jesus to complete his mission.** “Jesus said, ‘You will exceed all of them. For you will sacrifice the man that clothes me. . . . Look, you have been told everything. Lift up your eyes and look at the cloud and the light within it and the stars surrounding it. The star that leads the way is your star’” (*Gospel of Judas*, 42–44, Codex Tchacos 56–57).

**Conclusion.** “Their high priests murmured because [he] had gone into the guest room [*kataluma*] for his prayer. But some scribes were there watching carefully in order to arrest him during the prayer, for they were afraid of the people, since he was regarded by all as a prophet. They approached Judas and said to him, ‘What are you doing here? You are Jesus’ disciple.’ Judas answered them as they wished. And he received some money and handed him over to them” (*Gospel of Judas*, 44–45, Codex Tchacos 58).

**Titular subscript.** “The Gospel [*euangelion*] of Judas” (*Gospel of Judas*, 45, Codex Tchacos 58).

National Geographic has posted the full text of the Gospel of Judas at <http://www9.nationalgeographic.com/lostgospel/document.html>. The site may be available for only a limited time.



The Nag Hammadi Library, discovered in 1945 in Egypt, dates from about AD 350. The collection of thirteen documents, generally associated with the Gnostic movement, represents the largest single collection of noncanonical Christian texts. Among the individual works bound together with the Gospel of Judas in the Codex Tchacos is a variant version of one of the works found in 1945 in the Nag Hammadi Library. The relationship of the Gospel of Judas to the Nag Hammadi documents is uncertain. Photograph by Jean Doresse, Institute for Antiquity and Christianity at Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, California.

# The Manuscript of the Gospel of Judas

S. Kent Brown

Because of the fractured path that led to the recovery of the Gospel of Judas, some details of the discovery of this document and its three companion texts are already lost, though a story reporting many details has been published. Herbert Krosney's *The Lost Gospel*<sup>1</sup> recounts that these four documents, bound into one codex (the ancient form of a book), came to light in Middle Egypt some sixty kilometers north of the town of Al Minya. The report may or may not be true. Stories of this sort, originally told in straightforward language, tend to develop wobbles in the retelling, as one of the editors of the recently published Gospel of Judas has hinted.<sup>2</sup>

## Authenticity and Connection to Other Early Christian Texts

Soon after the publication of this gospel, questions arose about its authenticity and the possibility of forgery. For me and a colleague of mine, the issues centered on a few unusual idioms in the text, idioms that did not appear to come from Greek, which is most probably the original language of the document. But our questions have been satisfied by one who has been involved in translating this text.

We cannot rule out the possibility that the codex from which the Gospel of Judas came to us may have formed part of the Nag Hammadi

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1. The long story is rehearsed in Herbert Krosney, *The Lost Gospel: The Quest for the Gospel of Judas Iscariot* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 2006), 9–229, and is recapped in Rodolphe Kasser, Marvin Meyer, and Gregor Wurst, *The Gospel of Judas* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 2006), 11, 50–68.

2. Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 48–50.



Library, a fourth-century collection of early Christian texts discovered in Upper Egypt in 1945. The discoverer of the Nag Hammadi documents maintained firmly that the library had consisted of thirteen codices but claimed that his mother had burned some of the papyrus leaves to heat water for tea. Additionally, the eight leaves that make up Codex XIII in the Nag Hammadi collection were tucked into the cover of Codex VI and may not have been counted as one of the thirteen codices that the discoverer reported, opening the possibility that not all of the manuscripts from the Nag Hammadi discovery are accounted for.<sup>3</sup> But one must not rush to judgment about a possible connection between the Nag Hammadi documents and the Gospel of Judas because the codex that includes the Gospel of Judas exhibits an unusual pattern. Among its four treatises, the codex containing the Gospel of Judas includes two that duplicate texts known from the Nag Hammadi Library—the Letter of Peter to Philip and the First Revelation of James. This pattern differs notably from what is known about the Nag Hammadi Library, which, among its fifty-two documents, features only six duplicates.

### The Language of the Gospel of Judas

The language of the extant text of the Gospel of Judas and its three companions is Coptic, the last written form of ancient Egyptian, which was displaced in the seventh and eighth centuries AD by Arabic. The written script of Coptic employs the Greek alphabet, along with seven letters borrowed from the Egyptian Demotic script to reproduce sounds in spoken Egyptian that Greek did not possess. In the case of the Gospel of Judas, Rodolphe Kasser, an expert in Coptic dialects of late antiquity, judges that the language of the Gospel of Judas was spoken in Middle Egypt. Therefore the Gospel of Judas must have been translated in this region or was translated by a native speaker from this area. In fact, the original language of the Gospel of Judas was most likely Greek. It was in

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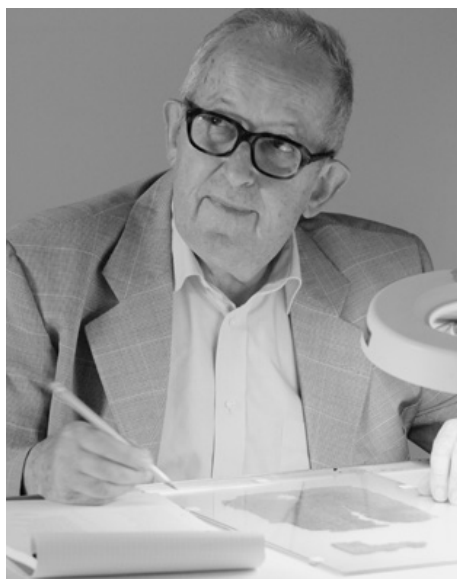
3. See Birger A. Pearson, “Nag Hammadi Codices,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman and others, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4:985; and James M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, 3d ed., rev. (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990), 1–26. The fact that a part of a page, or folio, of the Gospel of Judas had been separated and only later came to the notice of the editors, just before the book about the Gospel went to press, shows that there are possibly a number of other texts that have not yet come into the possession of people who can preserve them properly. See Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 14–15.



Greek that Irenaeus, the late-second-century Christian bishop of Lyons in southern France, knew the Gospel of Judas or a version of it.<sup>4</sup>

## The Condition of the Manuscript

Even though experts have poured superb efforts into conserving the four documents of the codex, now called the Codex Tchacos, the current state of its preservation is woeful. When Rodolphe Kasser first saw the manuscripts on July 24, 2001, he “let out a cry.”<sup>5</sup> His practiced eye told him immediately that the papyrus leaves had suffered much between their discovery and his first encounter with them. The leaves had been torn or bent so that the top part had detached from the bottom section. Pages were out of order, and fragments were everywhere in the box where the codex lay. Because of long exposure to humidity and then freezing temperatures, the ink had lifted off the surface of the papyrus sheets in some places, leaving the text illegible in those spots. Stabilizing the papyrus so that it did not crumble to the touch was an enormously delicate task that Kasser and Florence Darbre of the Atelier de Restauration in Nyon, Switzerland, set themselves to accomplish.<sup>6</sup> Now the whole has been stabilized and photographed with the bright



Rodolphe Kasser, the world-renowned Coptic scholar and professor emeritus at the University of Geneva, first saw the badly damaged manuscript on July 24, 2001. He organized the effort of the restoration and preparation of the final Coptic text transcription and assisted in the English translation of the Gospel of Judas. © Kenneth Garrett

4. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1.31.1, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 10 vols. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994): 1:358; see Gregor Wurst's discussion in Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 121–35.

5. Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 47.

6. Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 47–76.

expectation that a full publication of all four documents in the codex will appear soon, translated into several languages.<sup>7</sup>

### The Date of the Manuscript

The handwriting style of the four treatises points to the early fourth century as the era when these surviving documents were copied, although the Gospel of Judas text was composed perhaps as early as the middle of the second century AD.<sup>8</sup> As noted, Irenaeus knew of the Gospel of Judas text in the late second century.

Irenaeus wrote,

They declare that Judas the traitor was thoroughly acquainted with these things, and that he alone, knowing the truth as no others did, accomplished the mystery of the betrayal; by him all things, both earthly and heavenly, were thus thrown into confusion. They produce a fictitious history of this kind, which they style the Gospel of Judas.<sup>9</sup>

There is no reason to doubt that Irenaeus refers here to the same Gospel of Judas text that was later recorded in Coptic.<sup>10</sup>

### Dissident Early Christian Views

The fourth century was the age when certain Christians consolidated their influence because they had finally won the attention of the Roman Emperor Constantine. But not all Christians stood with those who had begun to consort with the powerful Roman elite. Some held differing beliefs, as is apparent from the contents of the four documents in Codex Tchacos. The evident fact that these documents were translated, circulated, and then hidden in Middle Egypt is an indicator that the long arm of the Romans, and their Christian confederates, did not control the outlying areas of their shared hegemony and thus could not smother incompatible views. On the other hand, the fact that someone hid the codex points to an

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7. See Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 13.

8. See Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 132–33.

9. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1.31.1.

10. Gregor Wurst argues that Irenaeus had the Gospel of Judas in mind, but that that he only knew it by hearsay. Irenaeus does not count the Gospel of Judas among the books in the main Gnostic library. Still, Wurst concludes, “We can be confident in saying that the Gospel of Judas mentioned by Irenaeus is identical with the newly discovered Coptic Gospel. . . . We have no reason to assume a complex history of editing” of the Gospel of Judas. Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 132, 135. Even though the extant manuscript dates much later than Irenaeus, there is no reason to assume it changed much from Irenaeus’s time to its translation into Coptic.

ever-strengthening influence of fourth-century orthodoxy in these remote areas of North Africa and to a silencing of certain Christian voices.

## Contents of the Codex Tchacos

As already noted, the Codex Tchacos consists of four separate works. All represent theological points of view that were not at home within the Christian orthodoxy of the fourth century AD. The first, which covers pages one through nine of the papyrus leaves, is a slightly variant form of the Letter of Peter to Philip known from Codex VIII of the Nag Hammadi Library. This letter focuses on the Apostles' concern for the suffering of believers. The second text consists of a short version of the First Revelation of James wherein Jesus entrusts certain heavenly secrets to James the Just, also known as "the brother of the Lord."<sup>11</sup> The third is the Gospel of Judas, a wholly fresh text. The last document, of which only the beginning remains (and even that is preserved only in fragmentary condition), bears the tentative title *Allogenes*, a Greek term that means "stranger," referring to the otherworldly nature of Jesus. Though the translators have assigned to this last text the same title as a treatise from Codex XI of the Nag Hammadi collection, from their description its contents appear to be completely different.<sup>12</sup>

## Other Documents Still Lost

As Kasser has noted, private individuals, seemingly driven by a desire for wealth rather than an interest in Christian heritage, still hold manuscripts that are on the market, so to speak.<sup>13</sup> Twenty-five years ago, another BYU faculty member and I became aware of the aggregate of documents described briefly by Kasser.<sup>14</sup> I was able to identify the James text in the Codex Tchacos from a very blurry Polaroid photograph, which showed the manuscript to be in better shape than it is now. I later traveled to New York City where, in the company of Mr. Bernard Rosenthal, a rare-books dealer from San Francisco, I examined briefly some other texts in a hotel room.<sup>15</sup> The papyrus manuscripts, which included a few damaged leaves

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11. Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 71; Robinson, *Nag Hammadi Library*, 260–61.

12. Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 14, 49–50.

13. Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 61.

14. Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 52–53.

15. Despite our recent combined efforts, Mr. Rosenthal and I have not been able to establish the exact date that we visited New York City to examine the documents that were for sale.

from a very early Greek copy of the book of Exodus, two letters of the Apostle Paul in Coptic translation, and a Greek mathematical treatise, were then in very bad shape, having been wrapped in an Arabic newspaper and placed into a small box. When the owner and his agent opened first the box and then the newspaper, Mr. Rosenthal and I gazed upon a mass of documents that were disintegrating before our eyes, with tiny fragments lining the bottom of the newspaper cradle. Before the day was over, Mr. Rosenthal estimated that a skilled conservator would require a full two years to bring stability and order to the tattered texts. Mr. Rosenthal's estimate of the value of these texts, only a small fraction of the announced selling price, minus the costs of hiring a conservator for two years, must have provided the moment that Kasser points to wherein the owner came to understand that "his asking price was too high."<sup>16</sup> Alas, the asking price for the documents was so high that only a very wealthy collector could enter a negotiation. To date, these texts have not come into the custody of someone who can conserve them for posterity.

### **Effect of the Gospel of Judas on Studies of Early Christianity**

Naturally, we ask ourselves, What long-term impact will the Gospel of Judas carry into Early Christian studies, especially into New Testament scholarship? In my estimation, after the initial flurry of interest, it will be low. Even though this gospel presents a very different view of Judas, both in his relationship to the Savior and in his actions that lead to Jesus' death, it does not mesh with earlier sources that appear in the New Testament. Hence, this text does not lead us closer to events chronicled in the canonical gospels, nor does it open a clearer window onto the ministry of the Savior. On the other hand, the Gospel of Judas does offer to students of Early Christianity a superb example of how some Early Christians came to portray Judas in a completely different light in their efforts to grasp the underlying relationship between Jesus and his closest followers, perhaps applying their conclusions about this relationship to their own devotion to the Savior.

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16. Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 60.

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# The “Unhistorical” Gospel of Judas

*Thomas A. Wayment*

Attributed to Jesus’ disciple Judas Iscariot, the Gospel of Judas (Codex Tchacos) purports to preserve a private conversation between the mortal Savior and the Apostle who would betray him. A major question arising from this recently rediscovered Gnostic gospel is whether it contains any credible historical information about Judas, Jesus, or any of Jesus’ other disciples. There are several features that can be used to assess the historical value of this document, namely the physical or external history of the document, internal literary clues or references, and comparative analysis based on the historical setting of the text.

## The Physical History of the Manuscript

The Gospel of Judas was discovered nearly three decades ago, and its text, restored from thousands of fragments, was made public only recently. The Gospel of Judas, however, was not unknown to early Christians. In about AD 180, Irenaeus, a bishop of Lyons in France, denounced a Cainite Gnostic text that claimed to preserve the mystery of Christ’s betrayal.<sup>1</sup> These Gnostic Christians, Irenaeus reported, believed in the exalted status of Cain and were likewise eager to promote Judas, who had also sought the destruction of the mortal body of Jesus.<sup>2</sup> Irenaeus, therefore, has likely preserved the earliest known surviving reference to the Gospel of Judas.

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1. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1.31.1, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 10 vols. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1995), 1:358.

2. “Others again declare that Cain derived his being from the Power above, and acknowledge that Esau, Korah, the Sodomites, and all such persons, are

Nearly two centuries later (about AD 310–403) the document came to the attention of Epiphanius of Cyprus, who likewise denounced the Gospel of Judas because it endorsed a belief that the work of Judas Iscariot helped further Christ’s mission on earth.<sup>3</sup>

Fortunately, whether Irenaeus attributed the document to the Cainites correctly or not, he does provide us with a *terminus ante quem*, a date before which the Gospel of Judas must have been written. In order to use Irenaeus’ reference to help date the Gospel of Judas, we must allow enough time for the document to be written, copied, and circulated to a fairly wide audience; therefore a date of composition in the mid-second century AD is the most appropriate. These early references show that the Gospel of Judas enjoyed fairly wide circulation. Authors writing as far away as Lyons and Cyprus had read it or at least knew about it.

The copy of the Gospel of Judas that has surfaced recently is most likely a translation in Coptic of an older Greek text. Ink analysis, as reported in *National Geographic*, was done with the intent of proving the antiquity of the manuscript, but it has very little value in determining when the manuscript was written. The variety and composition of ancient inks did not develop in a way that would permit us to distinguish between regional recipes and types.<sup>4</sup> However, Greek handwriting or paleography, and to a lesser extent Coptic, can be differentiated with extreme accuracy. Therefore, the paleography of the manuscript is quite important for dating the text.<sup>5</sup> Those scholars who have had the opportunity to physically examine

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related to themselves. On this account, they add, they have been assailed by the Creator, yet no one of them has suffered injury. . . . They declare that Judas the traitor was thoroughly acquainted with these things, and that he alone, knowing the truth as no others did, accomplished the mystery of the betrayal; by him all things, both earthly and heavenly, were thus thrown into confusion. *They produce a fictitious history of this kind, which they style the Gospel of Judas.*” Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1.31.1; italics added.

3. Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 38.2.

4. Discussions of ancient inks are limited. See, for example, Bruce M. Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 10–11. For a brief discussion of the ink analysis of the Gospel of Judas, see Rodolphe Kasser, Marvin Meyer, and Gregor Wurst, *The Gospel of Judas* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 2006), 183–85.

5. See Colin H. Roberts, *Greek Literary Hands, 350 BC–AD 400* (New York: Clarendon, 1956); Ruth Barbour, *Greek Literary Hands, AD 400–1600* (New York: Clarendon, 1981); Guglielmo Cavallo and H. Maehler, *Greek Bookhands of the Early Byzantine Period, AD 300–800* (London: University of London, Institute of Classical Studies, 1987); Maria von Cramer, *Koptische Paläographie* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz, 1964).

this manuscript have dated these pages, based on paleographical considerations, to the first half of the fourth century AD.<sup>6</sup> Since this copy of the Gospel of Judas is a fourth-century translation of a mid-second-century Greek original, it is likely too far removed from the first century to contain historically credible information about Jesus and his disciples.

### Internal Evidence

The Gospel of Judas is written as a revelation to Judas Iscariot using Gnostic terminology, such as the promise of secret teachings, the elevation of a single disciple, and the denigration of the physical body. From the surviving fragments, it is apparent that a conversation between Jesus and his disciples, particularly Judas, unifies the document. As if included as an afterthought, only a very brief narrative introduces the contents of the work by stating that Jesus came to earth and performed many miracles for the salvation of mankind. Furthermore, the gospel reports that some walked in paths of unrighteousness, and therefore Jesus called twelve disciples to administer his teachings.

The text of the Gospel of Judas implies some previous knowledge of the canonical Gospels and the interrelationships of the disciples. In this sense, the author was clearly not concerned with hiding his or her dependence upon the earlier gospel narratives. This dependence upon the canonical Gospels helps further date the text to the postcanonical period of the second century, and, therefore, underscores the fact that it is highly unlikely that the text could contain historically authentic material about Jesus or his disciples.

### The Historical Context of the Gospel of Judas

Following the brief narrative introduction, the text consists mainly of a dialogue between Jesus and the disciples. The text’s main purpose is to unfold that dialogue, and no evidence suggests that the author drew upon external sources in crafting this text. In other words, the text was clearly composed around a central theme—Jesus’ revelation to Judas—and does not in any way focus on preserving historical reminiscences from Jesus’ ministry, unless the author intended to imply that this single narrative has been preserved from an undocumented time in the Savior’s ministry, a claim that appears nowhere in the text. Therefore, the logical conclusion is that this text was produced for specific purposes beyond the historical

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6. Details about the dating of the manuscript are still rather sketchy, but some information can be found in Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 47–76.

preservation of Jesus' teachings and acts and should not be considered in any way a source of information about Christianity in the first century.

Ironically, some suggest that credible information about Jesus might be found in this account, yet the Gospel of Judas is a Gnostic treatise, and the historical Jesus was of little or no importance to the Gnostics.<sup>7</sup> In the surviving portions of the text, Jesus instructs Judas concerning the Self-Generated One (a circumlocution for God), the archons (heavenly rulers), and the aeons (luminaries or eternal beings) of the heavenly realm. This technical terminology, derived from Gnostic speculation about the hereafter, clearly places the Gospel of Judas in time and space among the Gnostics.

This pseudo-gospel, therefore, was almost certainly composed for private consumption among a semi-isolated Gnostic community who felt little need to hide their overt Gnostic biases. The text may have been used to promote certain beliefs or ideals among a discrete Gnostic community. Unlike the historical accounts of Judas's actions in the four canonical Gospels, in this Gnostic document Judas Iscariot is simply a literary device that facilitates speculation about the hereafter. By contrast, other Gnostic Christian texts—for instance, the Gospel of Thomas—show only moderate traces of their Gnostic origins and may have been used to promote the Gnostic agenda in the larger Christian community.

## Summary

Simply put, the Gospel of Judas offers no compelling claim that it might contain credible historical information. Its author(s) clearly had an agenda in writing, which was to express the hidden mystery of the heavenly realms from a Gnostic worldview. Its characters are contrived literary creations of the author, and the only implied historical information—the personal relationships of Jesus and his disciples—derives from the canonical New Testament texts.

The Gospel of Judas holds very little or no promise of revealing any new historical details about Jesus and his disciples; however, the text does reveal important clues about Gnostic Christianity in the second and third centuries. Answers to important questions such as who wrote the Gospel of Judas and who continued to use and copy it will add to our otherwise

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7. For an overview of Gnostic thought see Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, ed. P. W. Coxon and K. H. Kuhn, trans. ed. R. McL. Wilson (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), and Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity*, 2d ed., rev. (Boston: Beacon, 1963).



slim knowledge of Christianity’s later formative period. As the other fragments of the text are gathered, assembled, and translated, perhaps more information will surface to help us trace the origins of this text. Some brief clues remain, and as this text faces careful scrutiny, some answers may emerge to the unresolved questions about its provenance.

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Florence Darbre (conservator from the Martin Bodmer Foundation) and Gregor Wurst (Coptic expert and professor at the University of Augsburg) looking over two pages of the codex as they resembled the text, revealing the Gnostic context of the Gospel of Judas. © Kenneth Garrett

# The Gnostic Context of the Gospel of Judas

Gaye Strathearn

**T**he Gospel of Judas views Jesus and his ministry from a Gnostic perspective—a very different perspective from the one described in the canonical Gospels.

## What Is Gnosticism?

During the second century AD a number of Christian groups were vying with each other to legitimate their particular interpretation of Christianity. History records that the group that eventually won the battle became known as “orthodox” Christians, while those who lost became the “heterodox.” Latter-day Saints, however, recognize that by the second century the Apostasy was already in full swing and that the labels of orthodox/heterodox are largely artificial terms. In this context we find the flowering of Gnosticism. This is an umbrella term that scholars first used in the eighteenth century<sup>1</sup> to describe a number of Christian and other groups that flourished from the second to fourth centuries AD.<sup>2</sup> The word “Gnostic” comes from the Greek word *gnosis*, meaning knowledge. A number of Gnostic texts, including the Gospel of Judas, indicate that

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1. See Kurt Rudolph, “Gnosticism,” *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2:1033–40.

2. Some scholars have argued against using the term Gnosticism. See Michael Allen Williams, *Rethinking “Gnosticism”: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). While most scholars acknowledge the difficulties of applying the term so broadly, it continues to be the standard designation.

salvation comes, not from Jesus' Atonement and Resurrection, but from a secret knowledge that Jesus imparted to a select group of his followers.<sup>3</sup> Thus the heading of the Gospel of Judas reads, "The secret account of the revelation that Jesus spoke in conversation with Judas Iscariot."<sup>4</sup> Clement of Alexandria defines the type of knowledge for which Gnostics sought as knowledge of "who we were, and what we have become, where we were or where we were placed, to what place we hasten, from what we are redeemed, what birth is and what rebirth."<sup>5</sup> For Gnostics the acquisition of knowledge about their origins and their earthly environment was a source of spiritual empowerment and the central focus in their quest for salvation.

### The Nag Hammadi Library

Modern understanding of ancient Gnostic teachings was greatly enhanced with the discovery of the Nag Hammadi Library in 1945.<sup>6</sup> Prior to that discovery most of our understanding about Gnostic groups came from heresiologists who sought to expose and eradicate their opponents. In circa AD 180, Irenaeus of Lyons wrote a five-volume work entitled *Against Heresies*, the length of which suggests that he considered these groups to be a significant threat.<sup>7</sup> In his preface, Irenaeus acknowledged that "their language resembles ours" but insisted that "their sentiments are very different." He argued that they "falsify the oracles of God, and

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3. See Apocryphon of James, 1.1.8–14; Apocryphon of John, 2.1.1–5; Gospel of Thomas, incipit, 1–2; Thomas the Contender, 2.138.1–4, in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed. James M. Robinson, 3d rev. ed. (New York: HarperSan Francisco, 1990), 30, 105, 126, 201.

4. Rodolphe Kasser, Marvin Meyer, and Gregor Wurst, eds., *The Gospel of Judas* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2006), 19, Codex Tchacos 33.

5. Excerpts from Theodotus, 78.1, in *The Excerpta ex Theodoto of Clement of Alexandria*, trans. and ed. Robert Pierce Casey (London: Christophers, 1934), 89.

6. For a description of the discovery and contents of the Nag Hammadi Library, see James M. Robinson, "Introduction," in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, 1–26.

7. Irenaeus tells us that he received information about the Valentinians (the major Gnostic group that he attacks) by studying their own commentaries and through personal interaction with some of them. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1.preface.2, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 10 vols. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994): 1:315. In contrast to later heresiologists, for Irenaeus "the gnostic teachings and writings were not historical artifacts but living and dangerous realities." Terrance Tiessen, "Gnosticism as Heresy: The Response of Irenaeus," in *Hellenization Revisited: Shaping a Christian Response within the Greco-Roman World*, ed. Wendy E. Heleman (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1994), 339.

prove themselves evil interpreters of the good word of revelation. They also overthrow the faith of many, by drawing them away, under a pretence of [superior] knowledge, from Him who founded and adorned the universe; as if . . . they had something more excellent and sublime to reveal.”<sup>8</sup> He concludes his first book with an attack against a group who appealed to a text known as the Gospel of Judas, which indicates that Judas “accomplished the mystery of the betrayal.”<sup>9</sup> Irenaeus’ descriptions are laced with polemic, and it is sometimes difficult to distinguish that polemic from reality. The texts from Nag Hammadi allowed us, for the first time, to learn about Gnostic teachings from an insider’s perspective, without the polemical bias of the heresiologists.

In the Nag Hammadi Library we find gospels that were ascribed to New Testament Apostles, such as Thomas and Philip, but were not included in the New Testament canon. In addition, some of the texts interpret biblical figures very differently than the canonical text does. For example, in the story of the Garden of Eden, the serpent is the hero rather than the villain because he encourages Eve to gain knowledge (an important characteristic for Gnostics) by eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.<sup>10</sup>

It should not surprise us, therefore, to find a Gnostic gospel ascribed to Judas, portraying him as a hero *because* he betrays Jesus. In contrast, the rest of the Twelve Apostles are described in inferior ways. Jesus laughs at them when they gather together to partake of the Eucharist because they are partaking of the ritual without knowing him. Jesus’ explanation for his laughter causes them to become angry.<sup>11</sup> Despite their declarations to the contrary, none of the Twelve are strong enough to stand before Jesus, except Judas, who not only stands before him but declares, “I know who you are and where you have come from. You are from the immortal realm of Barbelo.”<sup>12</sup> Jesus, therefore, instructs Judas to “step away from the others” so that he can tell Judas “the mysteries of the kingdom.”<sup>13</sup> In addition, Jesus tells the Twelve that “each of you has his own star,”<sup>14</sup> but

8. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1.preface.1, 2; brackets in original.

9. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1.31.1.

10. Hypostasis of the Archons, 89.31–90.19, translated in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed. Robinson, 164–65.

11. Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 22, Codex Tchacos 34.

12. Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 22–23, Codex Tchacos 35.

13. Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 23, Codex Tchacos 35.

14. Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 29, Codex Tchacos 42.

he tells Judas that “the star that leads the way is your star.”<sup>15</sup> These passages reflect the author’s attempt to discredit his opponents’ version of the Christian tradition.

### Sethian Gnosticism

The Gospel of Judas, as has been argued by Marvin Meyer,<sup>16</sup> appears to belong to a specific form of Gnosticism known as Sethian Gnosticism, wherein descendants of Seth are an elect race who gain power to return to their origins as they learn this knowledge.<sup>17</sup>

Sethian Gnostics had a complicated creation myth that is assumed in the Gospel of Judas. It appears to be an amalgamation of Plato’s *Timaeus* and an interpretation of the biblical account of Genesis. The classic Sethian text that describes the Gnostic version of the creation myth is the Apocryphon of John. The supreme god is an unknowable being who is described as much by what he is not as by what he is.<sup>18</sup> This god creates a complex series of male and female divine beings, beginning with Barbelo and followed by Autogenes, who fill the Pleroma (the place where god dwells) with light.<sup>19</sup> One of the last of these beings is named Sophia. She falls from grace when she desires to create without her consort.<sup>20</sup> The resulting creature is a defective being often identified as either Yaldabaoth<sup>21</sup> (“child of chaos”) or Saklas<sup>22</sup> (“fool”).

This Yaldabaoth is the Jehovah of the Old Testament who, along with his angels, created the material world and entraps human souls in material bodies to prevent them from returning to the Pleroma. For the Gnostics, therefore, the world and physical bodies are negative entities, things that

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15. Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 44, Codex Tchacos 57.

16. Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 137–69.

17. See, for example, Gospel of Thomas, 3, 22; Authoritative Teaching, 22.23–34; 24.20–22; Hymn of the Pearl in Acts of Thomas, 108–12, in *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher, trans. R. McL. Wilson, 2 vols. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 2:380–84.

18. Apocryphon of John, 2.2.25–4.26; compare Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *The Gospel of Judas*, 33–35.

19. Apocryphon of John, 2.4.26–9.24; compare Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 34–35.

20. Apocryphon of John, 2.9.26–10.6. The Gospel of Judas does not specifically describe the fall of Sophia, but it may be assumed by her designation as “corruptible Sophia” (*tsophia enphthartē*). Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 30, Codex Tchacos 44.

21. Apocryphon of John, 2.9.25–10.19; see also Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1.2. This name is also spelled Yaltabaoth in some sources.

22. Apocryphon of John, 2.11.15–17.

those with special knowledge want to escape.<sup>23</sup> This is a very different view of the world when compared with that of the canonical text. In the Gospel of Judas it is Yaldabaoth (also known as Nebro, “rebel;”<sup>24</sup>), not Jesus, who is the god that the Twelve Apostles worship. Jesus often makes the distinction between himself and the “Twelve’s God.”<sup>25</sup> Jesus celebrates Judas’s betrayal because he “will sacrifice the man that clothes me,”<sup>26</sup> a common reference to the physical body. Thus the betrayal frees Jesus from the limitations of his physical body and allows him to return to the Pleroma.

### Judas Introduced as a Descendant of Seth

Sethian Gnosticism receives its name because of the pivotal role played by Seth. The elect are his descendants. They are not subject to the God of this world or his angels. In the Gospel of Judas, Seth is called Christ.<sup>27</sup> His descendants are “the great generation with no ruler over it.”<sup>28</sup> It is the generation “which is from the eternal realms.”<sup>29</sup> Jesus teaches Judas, “The souls of every human generation will die.” In contrast, “When these people [the descendants of Seth], however, have completed the time of the kingdom and the spirit leaves them, their bodies will die but their souls will be alive, and they will be taken up.”<sup>30</sup> Judas belongs to this generation. He was “set apart” from the seed that “is under the control of the rulers [meaning Yaldabaoth’s angels].” Jesus then tells him, “You will become the thirteenth, and you will be cursed by the other generations—and you will come to rule over them. In the last days they will curse your ascent to the holy [generation].”<sup>31</sup> The Gospel of Judas is at home within the context of Sethian Gnosticism.

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23. The classic Orphic phrase that permeates much of Gnostic thought is *soma sema*, “the body is a tomb.” Plato, *Gorgias* 493a; *Cratylus* 400c, in *Plato: The Collected Dialogues*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, trans. Lane Cooper and others (Bollingen Series 71; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 275, 437.

24. Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 37, Codex Tchacos 51.

25. Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 22–23, Codex Tchacos 35–36.

26. Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 43, Codex Tchacos 56.

27. Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 38, Codex Tchacos 52.

28. Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 40, Codex Tchacos 53.

29. Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 43, Codex Tchacos 57.

30. Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 30, Codex Tchacos 43, brackets added.

31. Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 32–33, Codex Tchacos 46–47.

## The Fate of Gnosticism

Eventually, in AD 381, Gnosticism was outlawed in the Roman Empire when Theodosius I declared the Catholic Church to be the state religion. As a result, the Nag Hammadi texts and the particular Christian interpretation found in the Gospel of Judas were marginalized. Epiphanius of Salamis, a heresiologist from the fourth century AD, described his personal contact with a Gnostic group. He said that he “lost no time reporting them to the bishops there [in Egypt], and finding out which ones were hidden in the church. <Thus> they were expelled from the city, about eighty persons, and the city was cleared of their tare-like, thorny growth.”<sup>32</sup> Under these conditions Gnosticism failed to thrive.<sup>33</sup> Their texts were hidden rather than copied, only to come forth in our day if they had been hidden in conditions that were conducive to their survival, as in the deserts of Egypt.

## LDS Perspectives on Gnosticism

For Latter-day Saints, a study of Gnosticism can be a valuable pursuit. For example, it is an important resource for understanding the complexity of the growth and development of the early Christian Church. In addition, it is possible that a text from the Nag Hammadi Library, the Gospel of Thomas, could contain some authentic sayings of Jesus that are not recorded in the canonical Gospels, although it would be difficult to identify them with any sense of certainty. For Latter-day Saints in particular, a study of Gnostic groups shows that they accepted some teachings that have certain parallels with Latter-day Saint doctrines: a belief that we had a premortal existence as spirits,<sup>34</sup> that a number of levels of salvation are

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32. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 17.4–9, in *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, ed. James M. Robinson and others, trans. Frank Williams, 2 vols., Nag Hammadi Studies 35 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987–1994), 1:97–8; angle brackets in original, square brackets added.

33. “Gnosticism was ultimately eradicated from Christendom, except for occasional underground movements, some affinities in medieval mysticism, and an occasional tamed echo that stays just within the limits of propriety. . . . Gnosticism of sorts was also able to continue beyond the frontiers of the Roman-Empire-become-Christendom. It is still extant in the war-torn area of Iraq and Iran in the form of a small sect called Mandeans, which is their word for ‘knowers,’ that is to say, ‘Gnostics.’” Robinson, “Introduction,” *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, 5–6.

34. Gospel of Philip 64.10–12; Gospel of Thomas 41.27–29, 47.26–29; Apocryphon of James 5.23–29. Elder Neal A. Maxwell referred to the Apocryphon of James in his general conference address “Premortality, a Glorious Reality,” *Ensign* 15 (November 1985): 15–17. See also Hugh W. Nibley, “The Expanding



possible,<sup>35</sup> that the restoration of lost knowledge is essential for salvation,<sup>36</sup> and that a type of marriage, associated with the Holy of Holies in the temple, is required to return to the highest level of salvation.<sup>37</sup> These types of teachings are not prominent in modern traditional Christian theology. Thus, the Gnostic texts indicate that, in antiquity, these were important issues for some Christians.

Latter-day Saints, however, must be cautious. They must guard against any endeavor to study Gnostic writings with the purpose of identifying proof-texts for their own doctrine. We have noted, for example, that the Gnostics had a very different understanding of the nature and purpose of

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Gospel,” *BYU Studies* 7, no. 1 (1965), 12–13; Hugh W. Nibley, “Treasures in the Heavens,” in *Old Testament and Related Studies*, ed. John W. Welch, Gary P. Gil- lum, and Don E. Norton, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 1 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1986), 175; Blake Ostler, “Clothed Upon: A Unique Aspect of Christian Antiquity,” *BYU Studies* 22, no. 1 (1982): 36–37.

35. Tripartite Tractate 118.14–138.27. Hugh W. Nibley, “On the Sacred and Symbolic,” in *Temples of the Ancient World: Rituals and Symbolism* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1994), 601; Hugh W. Nibley, “Apoc- ryphal Writings and Teachings of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Temple and Cosmos: Beyond This Ignorant Present*, ed. Don E. Norton, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 12 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1992), 292–93.

36. Apocalypse of Adam 85.19–31; Apocalypse of Peter 71.15–21; The Sophia of Jesus Christ 93.16–19; see also Stephen E. Robinson, “The Apocalypse of Adam,” *BYU Studies* 17, no. 2 (1977): 131–53.

37. Gospel of Philip 65.1–26; 67.27–30; 69.14–70.22; 72.17–23; 82.2–26; 86.1–5; Gospel of Thomas 75, 104; Tripartite Tractate 122.12–17; Dialogue of the Sav- ior 138.12–19. See also S. Kent Brown and C. Wilfred Griggs, “The Apocalypse of Peter: Introduction and Translation,” *BYU Studies* 15, no. 2 (1975): 131–45; Stephen E. Robinson, “The Apocalypse of Adam,” *BYU Studies* 17, no. 2 (1977): 131–53; S. Kent Brown, “The Nag Hammadi Library: A Mormon Perspective,” in *Apocryphal Writings and the Latter-day Saints*, ed. C. Wilfred Griggs (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1986), 255–83; Hugh W. Nibley, “Patriarchy and Matriarchy,” in *Old Testament and Related Studies*, 87–113; Hugh W. Nibley, “Three Degrees of Righteousness from the Old Testam- ent,” in *Approaching Zion*, ed. Don E. Norton, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 9 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1989), 308–40; Hugh W. Nibley, “Appendix 6: From the *Gospel of Philip*,” in *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, ed. John Gee and Michael D. Rhodes, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 16 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2005), 525–32; Ann N. Madsen, “Melchizedek at Qumran and Nag Hammadi,” in *Apocryphal Writ- ings and the Latter-day Saints*, 285–95; William J. Hamblin, “Aspects of an Early Christian Initiation Ritual,” in *By Study and Also By Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley on the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1990), 1: 202–21.

mortal existence and the identity of the God of the Old Testament. They believed that salvation was possible only for a select, predetermined group of people. In addition, their concept of “temple marriage” was a celibate union between individuals and either Christ or their own divine image.<sup>38</sup> Any Gnostic teachings found in these writings must be understood within their own Gnostic context.

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38. See Gaye Strathearn, “The Valentinian Bridal Chamber” (PhD diss., Claremont Graduate University, 2004).

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Florence Darbre and Gregor Wurst spent five years reconstituting the Codex Tchacos. The manuscript came to them in extremely poor condition with some one thousand brittle fragments. Their painstaking efforts resulted in the restoration of about 80 percent of the text. © Kenneth Garrett

# Judas in the New Testament, the Restoration, and the Gospel of Judas

*Frank F. Judd, Jr.*

A review of information about Judas found in the New Testament and in Latter-day Saint teachings gives us a basis from which to evaluate the Gospel of Judas. The comparison demonstrates that teachings contained in the Gospel of Judas are far removed from what Latter-day Saints understand about the gospel of Jesus Christ.

## **The New Testament and Judas**

Judas was not only a general disciple of Jesus, but also one of the Twelve Apostles (Matt. 10:4; Mark 3:19; Luke 6:16; Acts 1:16–17). Although most Apostles seem to have been from Galilee (Matt. 4:18–22; Mark 1:16–20; Luke 5:1–11), Judas may have been from Judea. The name Iscariot may refer to Kerieth, a small Judean town (Josh. 15:25). As an Apostle, Judas was a member of the Savior’s inner circle of trusted “friends” (John 15:15) and therefore received the sacred ordinance of the washing of feet.

According to the Gospel of John, the negative character traits of Judas, however, were revealed well before the betrayal. When Mary, sister of Martha, anointed Jesus’ feet with expensive ointment, Judas complained: “Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?” (John 12:5). This reaction was not the result of his charitable nature, but because Judas was “a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein” (John 12:6), meaning he was the treasurer and stole from “the bag” or purse of the Apostles.

Because each Gospel writer had a different perspective of the incident and wrote with a different audience in mind, the canonical Gospels differ concerning the motivation behind the betrayal. The Gospel of Mark is the



From inside of one of the many caves located near the right bank of the Nile River, north of Al Minyh, Egypt. The Codex Tchacos was reported discovered in the late 1970s in one of these caves. The text presents an alternative view of Judas than the one preserved in the canonical Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.  
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most objective and gives no explanation as Judas approaches the Jewish leaders with an offer to betray Jesus, upon which they promise to pay him (Mark 14:10–11). In the Gospel of Matthew, Judas *greedily* asks the Jewish leaders what they will give him in exchange for his betrayal of Jesus, and they promise to pay him thirty pieces of silver (Matt. 26:14–15)—which, under the law of Moses, was the amount of damages to be paid by the owner of an ox that killed or disabled either a male or a female servant (Ex. 21:32). In the Gospel of Luke, Satan explicitly influences Judas to approach the Jewish leaders concerning the betrayal, after which they offer him money (Luke 22:3–5). And finally, in the Gospel of John, Satan’s influence leads Judas to leave the Last Supper and betray the Savior (John 13:2, 27).

After his meeting with the Jewish leaders, Judas actively sought for the right moment to betray the Savior (Matt. 26:16; Mark 14:11; Luke 22:6). The Jewish leaders “feared the people”—meaning the Jewish crowds in Jerusalem for the Passover—because of Jesus’ popularity among them (John 12:10–11). If someone had attempted to arrest Jesus in broad daylight, these Jewish multitudes would likely have caused a riot (Matt. 26:4–5; Mark 14:1–2). Thus Judas “sought opportunity to betray him unto them *in the absence of the multitude*” (Luke 22:6; *italics added*).

Jesus certainly knew ahead of time that Judas would betray him. On one occasion Jesus admitted to the Apostles, “Have not I chosen you twelve,

and one of you is a devil?” (John 6:70). At the Last Supper, Jesus announced that one of those at dinner would betray him (Matt. 26:21; Mark 14:18; Luke 22:21; John 13:21). The Apostles were understandably upset at this news, but did not automatically suspect Judas and were uncertain who the betrayer might be (Matt. 26:22; Mark 14:19; Luke 22:23; John 13:22). Jesus eventually identified his betrayer (Matt. 26:23; Mark 14:20; Luke 22:21; John 13:26) by handing Judas the “sop” (John 13:26), a piece of bread dipped in liquid in order to soften it and give it flavor. Jesus then said to Judas: “That thou doest, do quickly” (John 13:27). Because of the shock and commotion resulting from Jesus’ announcement, however, the Apostles did not yet understand that Judas would be the betrayer (John 13:27–28). Jesus also condemned his betrayer (Matt. 26:24; Mark 14:21; Luke 22:22), saying that it would have been better if he had not been born (Matt. 26:24; Mark 14:21). After Jesus and the other Apostles retired to the Garden of Gethsemane, Judas brought an armed mob and identified the Savior by means of a kiss (Matt. 26:49; Mark 14:45). When Judas saw that Jesus was condemned by the Sanhedrin, he expressed deep remorse, tried to return the money, and declared, “I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood” (Matt. 27:3–4).

Both the Gospel of Matthew and the book of Acts agree that there was a place outside of Jerusalem called “the field of blood” which was associated with the death of Judas, but they differ on how Judas died and how that field received its name. In the Gospel of Matthew, when the Jewish leaders rejected Judas’s plea to return the money, Judas hung himself (Matt. 27:5). The Jewish leaders did not put the returned thirty pieces of silver in the temple treasury because, as they said, “it is the price of blood” (Matt. 27:6). So with that money they bought a field in which to bury strangers, and it was called “the field of blood” (Matt. 27:8) because it was purchased with money used to betray innocent blood. According to Luke in the book of Acts, after Judas betrayed the Savior, he purchased a field with the money he received from the Jewish leaders and while in the field he fell down and “burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out” (Acts 1:18). Because of this gory incident, the field was known as “the field of blood” (Acts 1:19).

## **The Restoration and Judas**

Sources provided by the Restoration supply additional information about Judas and the betrayal. First, according to the Joseph Smith Translation, when Jesus told Judas to do quickly what he had decided to do (John 13:27), the Savior clearly warned him: “But beware of innocent blood” (JST Mark 14:28). Because of this, Judas “turned away from him

[Jesus], and was offended because of his words” (JST Mark 14:10). Also, the JST incorporates the two accounts of Judas’s death, saying that Judas “hanged himself on a tree. And straightway he fell down, and his bowels gushed out, and he died” (JST Matt. 27:5).

The Prophet Joseph Smith, comparing Judas to apostates of his own day, echoed the teachings in the JST about the nature of and motive for the betrayal:

*Judas was rebuked and immediately betrayed his Lord into the hands of His enemies, because Satan entered into him. There is a superior intelligence bestowed upon such as obey the Gospel with full purpose of heart. . . . When once that light which was in them is taken from them, they become as much darkened as they were previously enlightened, and then, no marvel, if all their power should be enlisted against the truth, and they, Judas like, seek the destruction of those who were their greatest benefactors. What nearer friend on earth, or in heaven, had Judas than the Savior? And his first object was to destroy Him.*<sup>1</sup>

Judas was not foreordained or predestined as part of his mortal mission to betray Jesus. Joseph Fielding Smith taught: “No person was foreordained or appointed to sin or to perform a mission of evil. No person is ever predestined to salvation or damnation. . . . Judas had his agency and acted upon it; no pressure was brought to bear on him to cause him to betray the Lord, but he was led by Lucifer.”<sup>2</sup>

Concerning the seriousness of Judas’s sin, some Latter-day Saint leaders have thought that Judas became a son of perdition because he committed the unpardonable sin and that he is destined to spend eternity suffering in outer darkness.<sup>3</sup> Others, however, have interpreted the evidence differently.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 67; italics added.

2. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954), 1:61. See also James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1915), 650; and Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City, Deseret Book, 1981), 4:15.

3. See, for example, Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 649–50; Orson F. Whitney, “Dore’s Masterpiece,” *Contributor* 4, no. 5 (February 1883): 179; and Rulon S. Wells, in *Official Report of the Seventy-Third Semiannual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1903), 30.

4. See the discussion in Rodney Turner, “Sons of Perdition,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 3:1391–92; and Rodney Turner, “The Farewell of Jesus,” in *Studies in Scripture, Vol. 5: The Gospels*, ed. Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986), 410 and 426–27 n. 20.

Discussions concerning this issue often begin with a revelation to Joseph Smith, which states: “All those who know my power, and have been made partakers thereof, and suffered themselves through the power of the devil to be overcome, and to deny the truth and defy my power—They are they who are the sons of perdition” (D&C 76:31–32). The Prophet taught even more explicitly concerning what level of knowledge and defiance is required to commit the unpardonable sin and the nature of such individuals:

What must a man do to commit the unpardonable sin? He must receive the Holy Ghost, have the heavens opened unto him, and know God, and then sin against Him. After a man has sinned against the Holy Ghost, there is no repentance for him. . . .

You cannot save such persons; *you cannot bring them to repentance*; they make open war, like the devil, and awful is the consequence.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, in order to commit the unpardonable sin one must receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, have a perfect experiential knowledge of God, and then come out in open rebellion against the truth. Significantly, such individuals are doomed because “you cannot bring them to repentance.”

Although Judas sinned by betraying the Savior, he does not seem to have committed the unpardonable sin according to the specific criteria taught by Joseph Smith. First, the gift of the Holy Ghost was not available to the Jewish Apostles until after the Resurrection (John 7:39, 16:7; Acts 2:1–4). Second, although Judas personally knew Jesus and participated in sacred ordinances, none of the Apostles seem to have had a perfect understanding of the Savior during his mortal ministry (Matt. 26:31; Mark 14:27; John 20:9). Lastly, in light of his remorse, Judas does not fit Joseph Smith’s description of someone who is a permanent enemy of God and cannot be brought to repentance (Matt. 27:3–5).<sup>6</sup>

It is true that a few scriptures use the term “son of perdition” when referring to Judas Iscariot (John 17:12; 3 Ne. 27:32). It should be noted, however, that Perdition is another name for Satan himself (D&C 76:26). Thus, as Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained, “[Judas] was probably not a son of perdition in the sense of one who is damned forever, but in the sense that

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5. Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet*, 358; italics added.

6. Joseph F. Smith taught, “I am not sure but he [Judas] atoned for his sin before he passed into the other world. I do not know that he did not. I do not know that he did. At any rate, I believe that he lamented his sin, although he was a devil.” Joseph F. Smith, quoted in William A. Hyde, “The Son of Perdition,” *Improvement Era* 19 (March 1916), 392. On another occasion, Joseph F. Smith stated concerning Judas’ remorse: “This was not only confession of sin, but repentance of sin and atonement, too, so far as lay in his power.” Joseph F. Smith, “Editor’s Table,” *Improvement Era* 21 (June 1918), 735.



he was a son or follower of Satan in this life.”<sup>7</sup> President Joseph F. Smith made the following important assessment of the status of Judas:

To my mind it strongly appears that *not one of the disciples possessed sufficient light, knowledge, or wisdom, at the time of the crucifixion, for either exaltation or condemnation*; for it was afterwards that their minds were opened to understand the scriptures, and that they were endowed with power from on high; . . .

Did Judas possess this light, this witness, this Comforter, this baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, this endowment from on high? If he did, he received it before the betrayal, and therefore before the other eleven apostles. . . .

*Not knowing that Judas did commit the unpardonable sin; nor that he was a “son of perdition without hope” who will die the second death, nor what knowledge he possessed by which he was able to commit so great a sin, I prefer, until I know better, to take the merciful view that he may be numbered among those for whom the blessed Master prayed, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” [Luke 23:34].*<sup>8</sup>

## Significance

A study of the Gospel of Judas is important for Latter-day Saints for a number of reasons. First, such a study supports the Latter-day Saint understanding that the nature of the early Christian apostasy was primarily internal, rather than external. The Apostle Paul taught the Ephesian Saints, “After my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also *of your own selves shall men arise*, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29–30; italics added). Thus, apostasy is not persecution from outsiders or non-Christians, but rather it is rebellion by insiders or Christians themselves. The Prophet Joseph Smith confirmed this understanding of apostasy:

Paul said to the elders of the Church at Ephesus, after he had labored three years with them, that he knew that *some of their own number would turn away from the faith, and seek to lead away disciples after them*. . . . After his departure from the Church at Ephesus, many, *even of the elders turned away from the truth; and, what is almost always the case, sought to lead away disciples after them*.<sup>9</sup>

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7. Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1976), 1:765. See also McConkie, *Mortal Messiah*, 4:112–13.

8. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1939), 433–35; italics added. See also John A. Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1960), 212–14.

9. Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet*, 67; italics added.



The Gospel of Judas was written by Christians who were rebelling against the mainstream Christian Church (which of course had its own problems) and were seeking to gather their own disciples away from the mother Church.<sup>10</sup>

Second, a study of the Gospel of Judas is important for Latter-day Saints because it also supports the Latter-day Saint view that a primary aspect of the early Christian apostasy was doctrinal. The Book of Mormon teaches the following concerning early Christians and the New Testament: “Because of the many plain and precious things which have been taken out of the book, which were plain unto the understanding of the children of men, . . . an exceedingly great many do stumble, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them” (1 Ne. 13:29). A careful reading of the Gospel of Judas shows that early Christians were asking important questions, such as: Where did we come from? Why are we here? Where are we going after we die? How do we gain salvation? It also demonstrates that some doctrines were lost or distorted and that these Christians espoused ideas which diverge radically from traditional Christian views.<sup>11</sup>

The Gospel of Judas contains many doctrines that are contrary to Latter-day Saint beliefs. For example, the Gospel of Judas teaches that the god whom the Apostles prayed to and worshipped was not the true God, but a lesser evil deity;<sup>12</sup> that the material world, including a person’s physical

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10. In the Gospel of Judas, Judas, representing those who follow these Gnostic teachings, is consistently pitted against the rest of the Twelve, who represent the mainstream Church. Jesus instructs Judas to “step away from the others” (meaning the other Apostles) in order to receive the truth. Judas receives a vision in which he is persecuted severely by the other Apostles. Jesus says that although the other Apostles will replace Judas, who “will be cursed by the other generations” (non-Gnostic Christians), Judas will in fact “become the thirteenth [apostle]” and “will come to rule over them.” Rodolphe Kasser, Marvin Meyer, and Gregor Wurst, *The Gospel of Judas* (Washington D.C.: National Geographic, 2006), 23, 31–33; Codex Tchacos 35, 44, 46.

11. The Gospel of Judas teaches the basic Gnostic idea that humans came into existence through the instrumentality of lesser evil deities who fell from the divine realm; that those humans who have the spark of divinity will find salvation through the reception of the true knowledge about God and Jesus, which will allow them to escape from the prison of their physical bodies. For a good summary of this, see Bart D. Ehrman, “Christianity Turned on Its Head: The Alternative Vision of the Gospel of Judas,” in Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, especially 84–86.

12. In the Gospel of Judas, the Apostles think that Jesus is “the son of our god,” but Jesus informs them that they pray to their own god, that is, not the true God who is the Father of Jesus Christ. Jesus later explains that this material world, including humans, was not created by the Father of Jesus Christ, but rather by

body, is inherently evil and that we should seek permanent escape;<sup>13</sup> that salvation comes by obtaining secret knowledge, not through the Atonement of Jesus Christ;<sup>14</sup> and that the knowledge necessary for salvation is intentionally difficult to understand<sup>15</sup> and is available to only a few chosen individuals<sup>16</sup> and only apart from the priesthood leadership of the mainstream Church.<sup>17</sup>

Latter-day Saints, on the other hand, understand that the Apostles prayed to God the Father who is in heaven (Matt. 6:9; Col. 1:3); that the material world, especially a person's physical body, is good and is essential

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lesser evil deities—including El, Nebro (or Yaldabaoth), and Saklas. Those, like the Apostles, who are baptized in Jesus' name but do not have this knowledge about the true God, actually worship the lesser evil deities and "offer sacrifices to Saklas." Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 21, 36–39, 43, Codex Tchacos 34, 50–52, 56.

13. According to the Gospel of Judas, Jesus did not really possess a physical body during mortality, but only appeared to do so, and therefore could assume any form he desired. Thus the Gospel of Judas states that Jesus "did not appear to his disciples as himself, but he was found among them as a child." Jesus explains to Judas that his betrayal will be the ultimate act of service: "You will exceed all of them [the Apostles]. For you will sacrifice the man that clothes me." There is no reference to a bodily resurrection in the Gospel of Judas. Since the body is evil, according to this Gnostic theology, there is no need of a resurrected body in the hereafter, for Jesus or anyone who is saved. Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 20, 43 Codex Tchacos 33, 56.

14. The Gospel of Judas begins by claiming to contain "the secret account of the revelation that Jesus spoke in conversation with Judas Iscariot." Later, Jesus invites Judas apart to be taught things that "no person [has] ever seen." Judas will receive salvation, not because he repents of his sins through the Atonement, but because he received the secret knowledge of salvation, as Jesus said: "You have been told everything." Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 19, 33, 43; brackets in original; Codex Tchacos 33, 47, 57.

15. The secret revelation about Gnostic cosmology that Jesus explains to Judas in the Gospel of Judas would be considered extremely complex. For an excellent summary of Gnostic beliefs, see Marvin Meyer, "Judas and the Gnostic Connection," in Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 137–69.

16. The Gospel of Judas states that of the Twelve Apostles, Judas was the only one who was "able to stand before [Jesus]" in order to understand the truth about salvation—that Jesus is "from the immortal realm of Barbelo," meaning from the true God. After the disciples see a vision of the temple, representing the divine realm, Jesus explains to Judas the "mysteries of the kingdom" that "no person of mortal birth is worthy to enter the house you have seen, for that place is reserved for the holy" or those who receive this special knowledge. In the end, only Judas is worthy to enter in "the luminous cloud," which represents the exalted realm for those who receive the secret knowledge for salvation. Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 22–23, 31–32, 44; Codex Tchacos 35, 45, 57.

17. See footnote 10 above.

for salvation (1 Cor. 6:19–20; D&C 93:33–34); that salvation comes only through the atonement of Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:6–11; Hel. 5:9); and that the knowledge necessary for salvation is intentionally easy to understand and is intended for and available to all people (Matt. 28:29; 1 Tim. 2:3–4; 2 Ne. 9:21–22) and provided through the appointed leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ (Matt. 16:18–19; A of F 5; D&C 84:19–22).

Third, a close examination of the Gospel of Judas is important for Latter-day Saints because, although such a study can teach us much about early Christianity and the apostasy, it also cautions us to search for plain and precious truths in the standard works and the words of the living prophets, rather than in these kinds of non-canonical books. Latter-day Saint scholar Stephen E. Robinson concluded:

It needs to be pointed out forcefully that if “plain and precious truths” were removed from the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, as the Latter-day Saints believe, these “plain and precious truths” are *not* preserved in the apocryphal literature either. In fact, judging strictly from the extant books, I would say that the Jewish rabbis and the Christian fathers did a pretty good job of deciding what was inspired and what was not. I do not deny that “plain and precious” truths were removed from the scripture, or even that the rabbis and the fathers were probably responsible. However, I feel it is a mistake for Latter-day Saints to assume they will find what was removed secreted among the apocryphal books. It just isn’t there! Besides, I suspect that what most of the Latter-day Saints are looking for in the apocrypha is not really the “plain and precious,” but rather the “complex and mysterious.”<sup>18</sup>

A study of the Gospel of Judas emphasizes for Latter-day Saints that these plain and precious truths are readily available in the Gospel of Jesus Christ restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. The answers to the most important questions are found in modern scripture, especially the Book of Mormon, and in modern revelation, especially the teachings of living prophets.

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18. Stephen E. Robinson, “Lying for God: The Uses of the Apocrypha,” in *Apocryphal Writings and the Latter-day Saints*, ed. C. Wilfred Griggs, Religious Studies Monograph Series, no. 13 (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1986), 135; italics in original.

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The Jebel Qarara hills, containing the cave where the Gospel of Judas was reported to have been found by local farmers. The dry conditions of Egypt are ideally suited for the preservation of papyrus. Ironically, the document survived nearly 1,700 years buried here but was nearly lost during a thirty-year period in the hands of antiquities dealers. The document journeyed across three continents in a remarkable odyssey that eventually brought it into the hands of scholars and preservationists, allowing the study of another text from the growing collections that constitute the New Testament apocrypha.

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# The Apocryphal Judas Revisited

*John W. Welch*

Reading the Gospel of Judas and much that has been said about it makes one wonder, how could such a thing happen? How could anyone take the New Testament stories of Judas (of which the writer of the Gospel of Judas is clearly aware) and distort the story so diametrically? How could such a negative story be turned on its head, with evil being called good, and good being called evil?

One factor at work in the Gospel of Judas is the impelling Gnostic drive to discover new insights. Gnosticism took personal revelation to the extreme. Seeking to uncover mysterious insights or intertwined strands in the doctrines or experiences of religious figures was the daily bread of Gnostics. In this milieu, spinning gold out of Judas's straw would have been a consummate Gnostic coup.

Another factor might be the politics of exclusion. There can be no question that the author of the Gospel of Judas found himself on the outlying margins of Christianity. Indeed, there is so little in this text that is distinctively Christian, one wonders if it might have been influenced by Jewish Gnosticism (the name Judas looks a lot like the word "Jew"). In any event, the elevation of Judas at the expense of the other Apostles is clearly consistent with the general Gnostic rejection of the mainstream Christian power centers that based their authority on Peter, Paul, and other Apostles.

While we may never know precisely all the motives that led the author to cast Judas in an astonishingly favorable light, it is clear that the Gospel of Judas is not alone in fabricating a novel apocryphal story of a key New Testament figure.

## Apocryphal Cousins

Filling in the gaps in traditional biblical stories, elevating the interests of one early Christian community over the others, and uncovering new or old secrets with the aim of enlarging the canonical corpus are all hallmarks of the disparate body of literature long referred to as the New Testament Apocrypha, the word *apokryphos* meaning “hidden” or “kept secret.” With this in mind, the Gospel of Judas can be well explained by positioning it alongside its apocryphal cousins. All these works are related to the books of the New Testament, but they are faint reflections of the brightness and simple clarity of the canonical texts.<sup>1</sup>

Facing the onset of the Apostasy as early as the second century, writers of apocryphal works sought to breathe new life into old stories and to supply creative answers to questions that had arisen in some minds perhaps precisely because the New Testament gospel accounts are so brief and simple. Apocryphal accounts, like folklore in many cultural settings, tend to elaborate on the received traditions. These efforts are usually well intended, striving to edify or entertain (such as the medieval mystery plays that tell the audience what Jesus wrote in the sand or what Lazarus learned while he was dead<sup>2</sup>) or to embellish certain views or caricatures (such as in the Slavonic Josephus, where the thirty pieces of silver paid by the chief priests to Judas are transformed into thirty talents of gold or silver paid by the chief priests as a bribe to Pilate<sup>3</sup>). But despite any good intentions, the apocryphal writings are generally wrong-headed and unreliable nonetheless.

When Joseph Smith came to the Old Testament Apocrypha, thirteen ancient books bound into the Bible he was using as he produced the Joseph Smith Translation, he inquired of the Lord whether he should translate those apocryphal works. He was told that “it is not needful that the Apocrypha should be translated,” with the explanation that readers who are “enlightened by the Spirit shall obtain benefit therefrom,” but without the Spirit, readers “cannot be benefited” (D&C 91:3, 5–6). If this principle

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1. See generally, Stephen J. Patterson, “Apocrypha: New Testament Apocrypha,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:294–97.

2. Hans-Jürgen Diller, *The Middle English Mystery Play: A Study in Dramatic Speech and Form*, trans. Frances Wessels (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 102–4.

3. “The teachers of the Law were overcome with envy, and gave thirty talents to Pilate, in order that he should put him to death,” from the Slavonic Josephus, in H. St. J. Thackeray, trans., *Josephus: The Jewish War, Books 4–7* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1928), 650.

applies in the case of the Old Testament Apocrypha, a person will need the Spirit to an even greater degree in sifting the chaff from the few kernels of wheat in the even more disparate and exotic New Testament Apocrypha.

### Biblical Ambiguities about Judas

In many cases, the impetus behind the New Testament Apocrypha's impulse was lodged within the heart of the Christian tradition itself. With conflicts and uncertainties appearing within the sacred records, it seems almost inevitable that someone would step forward to supply the missing answers and desired resolutions. As if attempting to steady the scriptural ark, apocryphal writers often sought to pin down points more precisely where inspired scriptural writers had left those matters unexplained.

For instance, and perhaps most significantly with regard to Judas, the Greek word *paradidōmi* (and its Coptic equivalent), which is often but not always translated as "betray," can also mean simply "to turn over," "to commend," or "to allow." As is discussed in detail by William Klassen,<sup>4</sup> the normal Greek word for "betray" is *prodidōmi*, used consistently and often by Josephus. But *prodidōmi* is never used in the New Testament to describe what Judas does in precipitating the arrest of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane; the New Testament consistently used *paradidōmi*. Furthermore, when Jesus is handed over to Pilate to be judged (Matt. 27:2; Mark 15:1; John 18:30) or by Pilate to be crucified (Matt. 27:26; Mark 15:15; Luke 23:25; John 19:16), the text consistently uses the same word (*paredōken*) as is used to describe Judas's act in handing Jesus over. When Paul says to husbands, "Love your wives, even as Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25), the word again for "gave" is *paredōken*. So, this linguistic subtlety invites the question, Did Judas actually betray Jesus, or simply hand him over? Conflicts and uncertainties amidst the New Testament Gospels themselves provided fodder for grazing minds looking for lumps to chew on. In addition to the points mentioned by Frank Judd,<sup>5</sup> other questions can be asked about the Judas story in the four Gospels:

Did Judas go to the chief priests "so that" he might turn Jesus over (Mark 14:10), knowing what he wanted to do but not knowing how it could be done without attracting a lot of public attention (Luke 22:6), or did he seek an opportunity to turn Jesus over only after the chief priests had offered him thirty pieces of silver (Matt. 26:16)?

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4. William Klassen, *Judas: Betrayer or Friend of Jesus?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 47–57.

5. See Frank F. Judd, Jr., "Judas in the New Testament, the Restoration, and the Gospel of Judas," in this volume, 35–37.



Did Jesus give a sop of bread to Judas (John 13:26) or did Judas put his hand into the bowl with Jesus (Matt. 26:23), or was Judas the one whose hand was with Jesus “on the table” (Luke 22:21)?

Did Satan enter Judas before the Passover meal (Luke 22:3, 7) or only after Jesus gave Judas the sop (John 13:27)?

Did Judas actually kiss Jesus (Matt. 26:49; Mark 14:45), or only come up and was about to kiss him (Luke 22:47)? And why does John not mention the kiss at all?

With unanswerable questions such as these, it is easy to understand why an array of views has proliferated over the centuries about Judas. As Kim Paffenroth sensitively shows,<sup>6</sup> Judas has been seen over the years as an object of curiosity, horror, hatred, admiration, or hope, an array of views that commenced early in Christian history.

### Apocryphal Answers to Questions about Judas

With this background in mind, one rereads the Gospel of Judas and the New Testament apocryphal accounts about Judas with a new set of eyes. To the inevitable questions about Judas, the Apocrypha comes through with readily fabricated answers.

To the question of what was wrong with Judas, Irenaeus answered that Judas simply lacked faith. This view is found in an otherwise unknown apocryphal conversation between Jesus and Judas: “When Judas the traitor believed not, and asked: ‘How then shall these growths be accomplished by the Lord?’ The Lord said: ‘They shall see who shall come thereto.’”<sup>7</sup>

To the question of when Judas first was possessed by the Devil, an answer is found in the Arabic Gospel of the Infancy: He was possessed by the Devil at least from childhood. As a boy, so we are told, Judas hit Jesus and “the devil [left] him in the form of a dog.”<sup>8</sup>

Did Judas act with premeditation? A Coptic narrative says that when Judas received the thirty pieces of silver,

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6. See Kelsey D. Lambert, review of *Judas: Images of the Lost Disciple*, by Kim Paffenroth, in this issue, 159–62.

7. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.33.3, in Montague Rhodes James, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, corr. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), 37. This text is from Lyons, France, ca. AD 175–185.

8. Arabic Gospel of the Infancy, 35 (from Syria, ca. AD 400–500), in J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 103. A Coptic narrative from Egypt in ca. AD 300–400 states that as early as the feeding of the five thousand, “Judas was the last to receive the bread and ‘had no inheritance’ in it.” Elliott, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 161.



his wife was foster-mother to the child of Joseph of Arimathaea, which was seven months old. When the money was brought into the house, the child (fell ill or would not stop crying). Joseph was summoned: the child cried out, begging him to take it away "from this evil beast, for yesterday at the ninth hour they received the price (of blood)." Joseph took the child away. Judas went to the priests. They arrested Jesus and took him to Pilate.<sup>9</sup>

In other words, Judas had fair warning out of the mouth of babes and thus went to the chief priests with full consciousness and premeditation.

According to the Acts of Pilate, Judas was not entirely alone to blame. Both he and his unbelieving and unhelpful wife were given a divine sign that Jesus would rise from the dead, which reinforced Judas's decision to hang himself:

And departing to his house to make a halter of rope to hang himself, he found his wife sitting and roasting a cock on a fire of coals or in a pan before eating it: and saith to her: "Rise up, wife, and provide me a rope, for I would hang myself, as I deserve." But his wife said to him: "Why sayest thou such things?" And Judas saith to her: "Know of a truth that I have wickedly betrayed my master Jesus to the evil-doers for Pilate to put him to death: but he will rise again on the third day, and woe unto us!" And his wife said to him: "Say not nor think not so: for as well as this cock that is roasting on the fire of coals can crow, just so well shall Jesus rise again, as thou sayest." And immediately at her word, that cock spread his wings and crowed thrice. Then was Judas yet more convinced, and straightway made the halter of rope and hanged himself.<sup>10</sup>

According to yet another account, several other people were complicit in the scheme that led to the execution of Jesus. A late appendix to the apocryphal Acts of Pilate makes the novel claims that Judas was actually a nephew of the High Priest Caiaphas and that Jews had bribed Judas for over two years to be an inside informant. According to this story, Judas falsely blamed Jesus for stealing the law and defiling his cousin, who was a prophetess in the Temple. The tale begins by declaring that the Temple had been pillaged and defiled by Demas (one of two robbers sent to Pilate seven days before the arrest of Jesus). As a result,

Caiaphas and the multitude of the Jews had no passover but were in great grief because of the robbery of the sanctuary by the thief. And they sent for Judas Iscariot who was brother's son to Caiaphas, and had been persuaded by the Jews to become a disciple of Jesus, not to follow

9. P. Lacau, *Fragments d'apocryphes coptes* (Cairo, 1904), in Elliott, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 163. These fragments are from Egypt, ca. AD 300–400.

10. Acts of Pilate, in James, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 116. This text is from Jerusalem, ca. AD 400–500.

his teachings, but to betray him. They paid him a didrachm of gold daily; and as one of Jesus' disciples, called John, says, he had been two years with Jesus. On the third day before Jesus was taken, Judas said to the Jews: "Let us assemble a council and say that it was not the robber who took away the law, but Jesus." Nicodemus, who had the keys of the sanctuary, said "No:" for he was a truthful man. But Sarra, Caiaphas' daughter, cried out that Jesus said in public, "I can destroy the temple (etc.)." All the Jews said: "We believe you." For they held her as a prophetess. So Jesus was taken.<sup>11</sup>

And what about the eternal fate of Judas? Was there any room for his repentance or any hope for him in the eternities? Not according to the Coptic book of *The Resurrection of Christ*, in which Jesus met and rejected Judas in the underworld while his body lay in the tomb. There, Jesus bound demons and broke doors, but "then he turned to Judas Iscariot and uttered a long rebuke, and described the sufferings which he must endure. Thirty names of sins are given, which are the snakes which were sent to devour him."<sup>12</sup>

However, according to *The Acts of Andrew and Paul*, Jesus saved Judas so that the forces of hell could not claim to be stronger than Jesus. In this text, Paul visited Judas in the underworld and learned that Judas had repented, had given back the money to the chief priests, and had found Jesus and begged his forgiveness. Jesus sent him to the desert to repent. But the devil came and threatened to swallow Judas up; in response Judas "worshipped him. Then in despair he thought to go and ask Jesus again for pardon, but [by then Jesus] had been taken away to the praetorium. So [Judas] resolved to hang himself and meet Jesus in Amente [the underworld]. Jesus came and [liberated] all the souls but [Judas's]." When the powers of death claimed that they were stronger than Jesus because he had left a soul with them, "Jesus ordered Michael to take away Judas's soul [from Amente] also, that Satan's boast might be proved vain, and [Jesus] told Judas how [Judas] had destroyed his own hopes by worshipping Satan and killing himself. Judas was then sent back [to the underworld] till the

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11. *The Narrative of Joseph of Arimathaea*, 1 (a text from the Pilate Cycle), in Elliott, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 219. This text comes from Jerusalem, ca. AD 400–500.

12. *The Book of Resurrection of Jesus Christ by Bartholomew the Apostle*, in Elliott, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 669. This text is from Egypt, ca. AD 400–500. "This text contains an execration against Judas Iscariot said to have been pronounced by Jesus in 'Amente,' an Egyptian mythological term for hell." It "amount[s] to an excommunicative curse." Testament of Job, in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1985), 1:862 n. 43d.

day of judgment.”<sup>13</sup> Although Judas ultimately succumbed to the Devil, at least he had tried to repent and Jesus protected him to spite the forces of hell. This story reflects a glimmer of hope for Judas’s redemption through the grace and power of Christ.

Indeed, right within the New Testament are the seeds of a positive view of Judas’s fate. Even after the death of Judas, Peter affirmed that Judas “had obtained part of this ministry” (KJV) or that Judas “had received by lot the assignment (*klēros*) of this service (*diakonias*)” (Acts 1:17, author’s translation). The role of “becoming a guide (*hodēgou*) to the ones who took Jesus” was his calling, a fate that Peter says was prophesied concerning Judas.

### Discerning between Truth and Fabrication

From all of this, it is clear that many exotic things have been said about Judas, and not only in the Gospel of Judas. The Gospel of Judas offers just one more concocted story about Judas which is no more credible than any other apocryphal tale that has been spun out about his childhood, his wife’s dead rooster, or his being bribed for two years as an undercover agent. Thus, it deserves to have no greater impact on people’s views of Jesus, Judas, or the New Testament than any other apocryphal story.<sup>14</sup> The Gospel of Judas does not become any more persuasive simply because the text of this long-known heresy has now been unearthed.

More than ever before, as books are coming forth from antiquity, their truths and errors must be discerned through the Spirit, as Joseph Smith was instructed in Doctrine and Covenants 91:4–6. The rule that applied for the relatively tame Old Testament Apocrypha applies even more to the New Testament apocryphal accounts, including the Gospel of Judas. The spirit of discernment is of leading importance: “Wherefore, beware lest ye are deceived; and that ye may not be deceived seek ye earnestly the best gifts, always remembering for what they are given” (D&C 46:8).

Satan’s corruption of truth typically involves telling half-truths, imitating reality, hiding behind other people, and mingling the ideas of men with scripture. All of these strategies are readily apparent in the Gospel of

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13. The Acts of Andrew and Paul, in Elliott, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 301–2. This text is from ca. AD 200, location uncertain.

14. On the obvious fictional character of much of the New Testament Apocrypha, see further Richard Lloyd Anderson, “Imitation Gospels and Christ’s Book of Mormon Ministry,” in *Apocryphal Writings and the Latter-day Saints*, ed. C. Wilfred Griggs, Religious Studies Monograph Series, no. 13 (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1986), 54–56.

Judas. This text presents several true ideas about the coming apostasy, the problem of anger, the wickedness of priests in the temple of Herod, souls rising after death, angelic visionary escorts, Judas handing Jesus over for money, and it quotes or paraphrases scripture (1 Cor. 2:9 and passages on the arrest of Jesus).<sup>15</sup> But this text also mingles these true ideas with claims that Christ is Seth; that no mortal can associate with the generation of heaven; that the Twelve were seen leading people astray and stoning Judas; that Judas would rule over all the other generations, angels, aeons, and luminaries above; and that this world below is called “perdition.”<sup>16</sup> Whereas true revelation sustains the divinity of Christ and is consistent with the truthfulness of the Bible and the Standard Works (Morm. 7:9), the Gospel of Judas seeks to divide that house even against itself.

In the spirit of the gospel of Jesus Christ, however, answers to most of the traditional questions about Judas can be given. Satan influenced Judas to betray Jesus; Judas knew well what he was doing and acted voluntarily; Jesus’ death was part of God’s plan for the salvation of his children; and Christ had control over his life and death notwithstanding Judas’s actions.<sup>17</sup> Judas apparently tried to repent (see Matt. 27:3), although the details of this “change of heart”<sup>18</sup> or “remorse of conscience”<sup>19</sup> remain unknown.

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15. Rodolphe Kasser, Marvin Meyer, and Gregor Wurst, *The Gospel of Judas* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2006), 21–22, 25–26, 29–30, 33–34, 45, Codex Tchacos 34–35, 38, 43, 47, 58.

16. Kasser, Meyer, and Wurst, *Gospel of Judas*, 38, 24–25, 27, 31, 32–37, Codex Tchacos 52, 37, 39, 44–50.

17. “Two Fates,” *Millennial Star* 64 (December 11, 1902): 798. Elder James E. Talmage has written that Judas was not “in the least degree deprived of freedom or agency in the course he followed to so execrable an end.” James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1915), 650 n. 8. See also C. Wilfred Griggs, “The Last Supper According to John,” in *From the Last Supper through the Resurrection: The Savior’s Final Hours*, ed. Richard Holzapfel and Thomas Waymont (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 136: “God’s knowledge was not a causative agent depriving Judas of the responsibility to choose freely.” See also Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 4:14, 15, 44, 129, 131; David Rolph Seely, “The Last Supper according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke,” in Holzapfel and Waymont, *From the Last Supper through the Resurrection*, 81, 113; S. Kent Brown, “The Arrest,” in *From the Last Supper through the Resurrection*, 175–76; Richard A. Holzapfel, *A Lively Hope: The Suffering, Death, Resurrection, and Exaltation of Jesus Christ* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1999), 31, 41; and John W. Welch, “Latter-day Saint Reflections on the Trial and Death of Jesus,” *Clark Memorandum* (Fall 2000): 13.

18. Andrew Skinner, *Golgotha* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2004), 65.

19. McConkie, *Mortal Messiah*, 4:197–98.

Summing up this colloquium, it is clear to all that the story of Judas will continue to attract attention, for many people are drawn to catastrophes as flies are drawn to corpses. But Judas's catastrophe should not be compounded by pouring theological salt in his wounds. Victims of disasters should not be taken advantage of. Yet, in writing the Gospel of Judas someone took advantage of Judas, using him to promote certain theological and sectarian views against his will. Judas is not a willing participant in *this* situation. So, as I wonder how such a writing could come to be, I also wonder how Judas must feel to be used this way. I doubt that he recognizes much of himself in this "gospel" that bears his name. Even Judas's name can be taken in vain.

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Detail of *constituto* for Marcus Herennius Polymita, plate 1 (side B) on the right, plate 2 (side C) on the left. Spots of corrosion or discoloration on these faces show that these two ancient plates remained bound tightly together for centuries. Photograph by Mark Pollei ©. Used by permission.

# Two Ancient Roman Plates

*John W. Welch and Kelsey D. Lambert*

The 1998 festschrift in honor of John L. Sorenson contains a lengthy chapter about the ancient practice of doubling, sealing, and witnessing important documents.<sup>1</sup> That article illustrated this legal practice in several ways, including photographs of a pair of Roman bronze plates from Mainz, Germany, dating to AD 103.<sup>2</sup> In September 2006, Brigham Young University will receive a similar pair of plates from the Roman province of Dacia, to be displayed near the entrance to the Harold B. Lee Library. Bronze plates such as these, known as military diplomas, were used for granting Roman citizenship and military honors to soldiers retiring after twenty-six years of service. The following article describes this particular pair of plates and explains why Latter-day Saints should be interested in this acquisition of one of the finest examples of ancient writing on metal plates,<sup>3</sup> which happen to be physically similar in certain ways to the plates from which Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon.<sup>4</sup> This article goes hand in hand with the exhibition of these Roman plates at BYU, supplying background information, research results, bibliographic references, and reflections on their significance. An extensive collection of further materials relevant to such plates can be found at [byustudies.byu.edu](http://byustudies.byu.edu).

## How Did These Plates Come to BYU?

These two plates were discovered in February 1986 near an area that was once part of the ancient Roman province of Dacia, now present-day Romania.<sup>5</sup> The plates came into the hands of an extraordinary private antiquities collector in Berlin named Axel Guttman, where they remained until his untimely death at age fifty-seven in 2001. Jerome



Eisenberg of Royal Athena Galleries in New York and London acquired much of Guttman's collection at an auction and began to market these helmets, spears, vases, and other exceptionally fine Greek, Etruscan, and Roman artifacts. In 2004 he sent a catalogue to David Swingler, his long-time Latter-day Saint friend and antiquities dealer in southern California. Swingler, who had been looking for a set of bronze Roman military diplomas for thirty years, immediately noticed and took interest in six military diplomas from Guttman's collection and began searching for donors who could purchase the plates. Swingler recalls, "Dr. Eisenberg commented that in his 45 years working in the ancient art market as a dealer, this was the first and only intact pair of such plates he had seen, anywhere, for sale. [I] explained [my] interest in them for donation to the BYU Library, and explained why Latter-day Saints valued such artifacts."<sup>6</sup> Swingler contacted John Welch at BYU and, after a fair amount of correspondence, sent the plates by Federal Express to Provo on inspection. Within a few days of the plates' arrival, Welch had brought together a group of five very willing donors and, with the generous participation of Eisenberg and Swingler, the acquisition was accomplished on September 13, 2005.

### **What Are the Physical Characteristics of the Plates?**

These two plates work together hand in glove. Both are the same size, and after almost two thousand years of being bound together, they conform to each other in shape and surface features. The full text of the imperial decree is cast in portrait format on the front of plate 1 (side A). The very same text is inscribed in landscape format onto the back of plate 1 (side B) and over onto the front of plate 2 (side C). On the back of plate 2 (side D) are cast the names of the seven witnesses or officials by whose authority this pair of plates was issued. When the two plates are stacked and bound together, sides A and D become the two exterior faces of the sealed pair, and sides B and C become the protected interior faces.

The plates are 4.8 inches (12.2 cm) by 6.4 inches (16.2 cm). Each plate is 1 to 1.1 millimeter thick, about the thickness of thin cardboard, and weighs about seventy grams, or two and a half ounces. The outer side of each plate (sides A and D) has a double-grooved border about one millimeter deep; the edges of the inner sides are plain. The plates were found together and obviously are a set: "The identical recipient of both the exterior and the interior inscriptions, the similar patina, traces of fire, resulting damage on one corner and certain identical deformations which must have originated when both *tabellae* were still strung together, make it absolutely certain that both plates belong together."<sup>7</sup>



A small hole is found in two of the corners of each plate. Metal rings inserted through these matched holes attached the two plates. They “acted as hinges to the tablets,”<sup>8</sup> so that the pair of plates could be opened and closed like a book. Similar holes are found on all plates up until the beginning of the reign of Hadrian (AD 117–38).

Overall, this pair of plates has been unusually well preserved. The metal is extremely brittle, but it has survived the long years with only a few fractures in the corners. Except for two extraneous holes, likely caused by some impurity in the casting, plate 1 is completely intact. A small portion of the upper right edge of plate 2 has broken off, along with an even smaller piece of the lower right-hand corner near the hole for the ring. Both of these pieces will be reattached for later display. Some other small areas are rougher or worn away where the two pieces may have rubbed together.

Side A of plate 1 has some slight burnt discoloration as well as a heavy green patina. On its inner surface, side B, plate 1 has been mostly preserved in its original matte brown color, except for a five to ten millimeter green band of rust around the outer edge. The band of rust is wider in one corner because the plate was bent up slightly in that area.<sup>9</sup>

The inner surface, side C, of plate 2 has also been cleaned, being rusted green only around its edges. While the larger broken-off corner on plate 2 corresponds with the burn marks on plate 1, the fire damage on plate 2 is minimal. On the back of plate 2, across the middle of side D, is a two-centimeter-wide stripe that has remained a shiny gold color because of a sealing box that was originally affixed there, while the outer borders of this center stripe are covered with two to three millimeters of dark green rust.

### **How and Why Were the Plates Sealed Together?**

On the back of plate 2, running down the middle of the witnesses’ names is a two- to three-centimeter vertical band that has unique patination and preservation. This area is where the seal fastened the two plates together (see fig. 1). Wire strands were strung through two holes punched along the center line of each tablet. The wire was then twisted together to fasten the plates tight to each other.<sup>10</sup> Over the knots of wire binding the plates together, wax was poured, “on which the witnesses impressed their seals. A half-cylindrical bronze seal was soldered over the wax for protection” (fig. 1).<sup>11</sup> These seals would be broken by a judge or official should a dispute arise over the reading of the open text on side A. In that case, the backup copy of the text found on the interior faces B and C could be

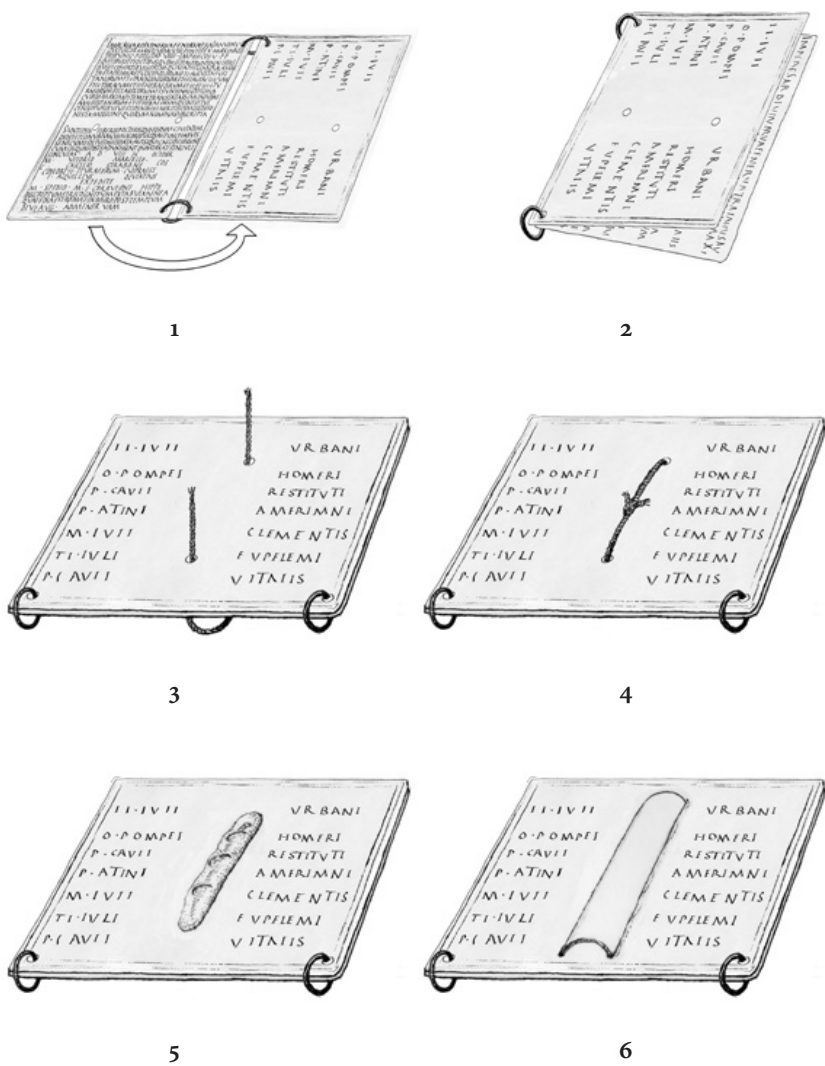


FIG. 1. Drawing of the method used to bind and seal the plates. (1) The two plates were attached with a ring in two of the corners. (2) The pair was then closed up. (3) A wire was strung through two holes in the middle of both plates. (4) The wire was twisted to fasten the plates snugly together. (5) Wax was poured over the wire and impressions of the witnesses' seals were attached. (6) A metal box was secured over the seals for their protection. Drawings by Michael P. Lyon.

read to verify and establish the correct reading of the terms of the grant or decree. Because the sealing wire and sealing covers were made of softer metal or materials, they corroded long ago and have left no further trace.

### **What Are the Plates Made Of?**

The plates are made of bronze, an alloy of copper and tin, as is discussed in detail by Michael Dorais and Garret Hart in the accompanying article.<sup>12</sup> In addition, much can be learned about the history of these plates by studying the corrosion or patina patterns on the metal.

In the case of sides A and D, the patina is characterized by “a thin fairly uniform green crust of copper basic carbonates with splashes of the related blue mineral azurite. . . . Whether we call it patina or corrosion, it is important because locked in it is some evidence of the environment in which the bronze has lain in the past.”<sup>13</sup> The outer sides, A and D, were exposed to “the multi-mineral soil, groundwater and soil atmosphere within the soil in which [they were] buried.”<sup>14</sup> Although side A has been cleaned, it still maintains evidence of considerable corrosion. Side D has also been corroded, but not nearly as heavily as side A. “It clearly retains vestiges of mineral bronze patination. Natural hard green malachite and bronchatite patinas, as well as spots of hard black tenorite, chalcocite or bornite are clearly noted. Some small spots of red-brown cuprite are also present.”<sup>15</sup>

The internal faces B and C of these plates were “sealed tightly to each other as companion plates for 19 centuries,” and, not surprisingly, they have unique patterns of corrosion where they touched each other. Upon excavation, the plates likely had to be pried apart due to “a profuse growth of purple-red cuprite blotches actually cement[ing] them together.”<sup>16</sup>

### **How Were the Plates Inscribed?**

Two different techniques were used to write on these plates. Sides A and D were cast; sides B and C were inscribed. As Eisenberg and Swingler describe, the wording on “the outside faces of both plates is correctly a cast copy of an original engraving on metal, cast through the lost-wax mould-and-casting process.” This process was typical for military diplomas, where the original “was engraved and sent to the archives in Rome.” The text on the interior faces of the plates was engraved, “correctly hammer-and-chisel cut.” This is the typical process for the inner text of Roman plates that were then sealed and bound to each other to prevent tampering.<sup>17</sup>

## What Do the Plates Say?

The text on both sides of each plate is neatly written and aligned. Because of this textual clarity, the text can be read problem-free, as long as one can understand its use of technical Latin abbreviations.<sup>18</sup> The text of side A, which is replicated almost exactly on sides B and C, reads as follows, translated by John F. Hall, BYU Professor of Classical Languages and Ancient History:

Imperator [Emperor] Caesar, Son of the Divine Nerva, Nerva Traianus Augustus Germanicus Dacicus, Pontifex Maximus, in the thirteenth year of his tribunician power, and acclaimed imperator [victorious general] six times, and Consul for the fifth time, father of his country.

To the horse soldiers and foot soldiers who have completed military service in three cavalry brigades and sixteen auxiliary cohorts which are identified as follows: the First (with distinction of Roman Citizenship awarded) and the Second Flavian Commagene Archers, and the Second Pannonian Veterans, and the First Bruttian Thousand Strength Ulpian (presented with the high award of Commemorative Chain and with distinction of Roman Citizenship awarded), and the First Brittanian Thousand Strength (with distinction of Roman Citizenship awarded), and the First Iturean, and the First Thracian (with distinction of Roman Citizenship awarded), and the First Augustan Iturean, and the First Vindelician (with distinction of Roman Citizenship awarded) and (the designation of Ever Faithful), and the First Veteran Pannonian, and the First Mountain, and the Second Gallic Pannonian, and the Second Spanish, and the Second Brittanian Thousand Strength (with distinction of Roman Citizenship awarded and the designation of Ever Faithful), and the Second Gallic Macedonian, and the Third Level Countryside (with distinction of Roman Citizenship awarded), and the Third Cyprian (with distinction of Roman Citizenship awarded), and the Fifth Gallic, and the Eighth Raetian, all of which are in Dacia under the command of D. Terentius Scaurianus and are dismissed in the twenty-fifth year of their service.

An honorable discharge having been granted by Julius Sabinus to those whose names are inscribed below, and to the children of them and to the descendants of them [Trajan] awards citizenship and the right of legal marriage with wives they possess at the time when citizenship was awarded to them, or, if they are unmarried, [the right of marriage] with those whom afterward perhaps they may lead into marriage.

[Done] name by name on the day before the Ides of October in the consulship of Gaius Julius Proculus and Gaius Aburnius Valens to a foot soldier of the First Mountain [Cohort], under the command of Cornelius Felicior, namely to Marcus Herennius Polymita Berens, son of Marcus, and to his son Januarius and to his son Marcellus and to his daughter Lucana.

Recorded and posted on a bronze tablet which is affixed in Rome to the wall on the back of the Temple of Minerva built by the Divine Augustus.

### What Rights Were Granted by These Plates?

The text on the plates grants military honors and citizenship rights to retiring soldiers who served in the Roman army in the campaign against Dacia. In particular, these plates went to an individual soldier named Marcus Herennius Polymita, son of Marcus. The name Polymita “was likely a Greek nick name.”<sup>19</sup> The diploma also extends these rights to his three children—two sons, Januarius and Marcellus, and one daughter, Lucana. Typical to most military diplomas, his wife’s name is not included, which is likely an indication that she was not a Roman citizen.<sup>20</sup>

One cannot say with certainty where the soldier is from. Berens is an otherwise localized agnomen. Mirković suggests that he may have originated from Beroe in Thrace.<sup>21</sup> According to Garbsch, however, he may have come from Beroia in Macedonia or from a Macedonian colony in Syria.<sup>22</sup>

It is possible that Herennius had taken this Roman name before his retirement, or he may have assumed all or part of this name with this grant of citizenship. He may have received citizenship as part of a collective bestowal on the First Mountain Cohort or by personal appointment from the emperor in reward for his bravery as a soldier. Herennius began his military service in AD 84 at the latest, at which time his troop would have been in Pannonia. The First Mountain Cohort was designated an auxiliary cohort between the years AD 98 and 100, approximately ten years before Herennius retired. This particular diploma is the fourth one that has been found for a soldier belonging to the First Mountain Cohort.<sup>23</sup>

**Citizenship rights.** In the first century AD, no civic status was more powerful than that of Roman citizenship, a privilege enjoyed by a small percent of the population in the Roman Empire at the time of Trajan. As a Roman citizen, Herrenius would have had the right to wear the toga, to be exempt from taxes, to receive government appointments, and to appeal any adverse legal judgements to the emperor in person.<sup>24</sup> Proof of citizenship was crucial, since the penalty for falsely claiming to be a citizen was death.<sup>25</sup> The widespread distribution of military diplomas across the Roman Empire shows that retiring soldiers returned to their native lands and valued these significant rights, probably having few remaining ties to Rome other than the diploma itself. In addition, “the grant of citizenship passed on in law to a man’s descendants,”<sup>26</sup> a point that is well illustrated

by the Apostle Paul, who was a Roman citizen by birth, his father having been previously granted citizenship (Acts 22:28–29).

**Marriage privileges.** The rights and privileges associated with marriage were variable depending on which branch of the military employed the soldier. Typically, the diploma allowed a soldier to marry upon retirement and extended the privilege of citizenship to all children born to him.<sup>27</sup> A retired soldier who had been granted citizenship for his family “was required to register the birth of his children within thirty days before a Roman official, and he received a wooden diptych [a two-leaved, hinged tablet] recording the declaration, which acted as a certificate of citizenship for the child for the rest of his life. Like the military *diplomata* this contained the names of seven witnesses, and provided a presumptive proof of citizen status.”<sup>28</sup> His wife, if foreign, would be recognized legally under Roman law, but she was rarely granted citizenship,<sup>29</sup> and the extension of citizenship to children was eventually discontinued around AD 140.<sup>30</sup>

### Who Witnessed This Decree?

At the end of the diploma, on side D, the names of the seven witnesses appear: Titus Julius Urbanus, Publius Cornelius Alexander, Lucius Pullius Verecundus, Publius Atinius Amerimnus, Gaius Julius Paratus, Gaius Tuticanus Saturninus, and Marcus Julius Clemens. Although little is known about the specific qualifications to become a witness according to ancient Roman law, witnesses represented an elite group of citizens because “witnessing was an ancient privilege of citizenship.”<sup>31</sup> These seven names have been found variously on different military diplomas from AD 79 to 129, but they have been found as a complete group of seven on only one other diploma from the same year.<sup>32</sup> Without these seven attestations, the diploma was not considered official. Roman registration “documents, like the military *diplomata*, were guaranteed by the signatures of the seven witnesses required by Roman law in the certification of all documents.”<sup>33</sup> Their official collective seal or individual seals would have been affixed to the wax covering the sealing wire that held the two plates together.

The number seven was particularly significant in ancient Israelite texts and to early Christians, and in this instance to Romans as well. Seven witnesses attested irrefutably the validity and correctness of these plates, which makes one wonder if John the Revelator had this imperial Roman convention in mind when he saw and spoke of a book with seven seals that would be opened by Jesus Christ at the time of judgment: “And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. . . . And one of the elders saith unto

me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof” (Rev. 5:1, 5). Since the Book of Revelation is generally thought to have been written toward the end of the first century, during the reign of Trajan, a connection between Revelation 5:1–5 and the Roman practice evidenced by these plates issued by Trajan is possible.

### Who Was Trajan?

The text inscribed on the plates dates their issuance to the day before the Ides of October in the thirteenth tribunal year of the emperor Trajan,<sup>34</sup> which equates to AD 109 on our calendar. In early imperial Rome, dates were calculated based on the tribunal year of the emperor. Because Trajan renewed his tribunician power on September 18 each year, these plates inscribed on October 14 were issued during the first month of that tribunal year.<sup>35</sup> By that time in his reign, Trajan had been acclaimed “victorious general” on six occasions, a title reserved for emperors who were successful in battle.

As a historical figure, Trajan is known mostly for his impressive military career, during which he conquered Dacia and extended the Roman Empire to its largest-ever geographic size. Trajan’s conquering spirit coupled with his diplomacy caused him to issue a high number of military diplomas in order to reward his large and diverse army.

He is also remembered for his correspondence with Pliny the Younger, which resulted in peaceable treatment of the Christians in the province of Bithynia-Pontus, on the south shores of the Black Sea.<sup>36</sup> In this famous correspondence between the two, Pliny questioned the torture and killing of Christians from a legal standpoint, and he wrote to Trajan that they “bound themselves by a solemn oath, not to do any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up.” Trajan replied, “It is not possible to lay down any general rule which can be applied as the fixed standard in all cases of this nature. No search should be made for these people.”<sup>37</sup>

### When Did the Romans Begin Issuing Such Plates?

Throughout Roman civilization, government officials and private individuals made widespread use of *tabulae*:

In Roman legal affairs and other ceremonial acts with public implications, writing on wooden, wax, or bronze tables was special and preferred. . . . These tablets are associated with acts that order the state and

the household; . . . they are not temporary jottings, but authoritative and final embodiments of the new reality they help to create. . . . Roman-law documents written on *tabulae* were traditional creations far older than the imperial dates of the surviving examples would suggest.<sup>38</sup>

The use of bronze indicated permanency—"bronze tablets were believed eternal,"<sup>39</sup> and thus the use of bronze was "a favorite physical medium for the fulfillment of a vow . . . signal[ing] expense undertaken and lasting gratitude."<sup>40</sup>

The practice of documenting citizenship on a bronze tablet first appeared in 89 BC with Spanish cavalrymen. The Roman practice of recording military service and family information for soldiers on bronze plates was apparently adopted from these Spaniards and is generally believed to have begun in the reign of the emperor Claudius (AD 41–54), for it was during his reign that the grant of citizenship began to be heavily regulated and a "standardized document appear[ed]." Claudius was intent on spreading the reaches of Roman influence by extending citizenship to active and retiring soldiers in order to "form the basis for a large-scale extension of the citizenship."<sup>41</sup> This widespread grant of citizenship to noncitizen soldiers of provincial origin would have increased the number of new Roman citizens by an average of several thousand per year, not including the wives and children of the soldiers.<sup>42</sup>

### **When and How Were These Plates Issued?**

Although scholars do not know all of the purposes of Roman military diplomas, it is clear that they were highly valued by their recipients. The basic archival copy of such a plate, called the *constituto*, was an official imperial decree granting citizenship to an entire legion or cohort, and it was placed publicly on a temple wall in Rome. According to the last line of the plate given to Marcus Herennius, a copy of its decree was affixed in Rome on a wall in the temple of Minerva built by Augustus.

In addition, a pair of plates with a copy of the *constituto* as well as features specific to one soldier and his family was given to the retiring soldier. That pair of plates would remain with the retiree after his release from military service.<sup>43</sup> These diplomas become "of particular significance for both military and civil history since they are (when intact) precisely dated both by imperial titles and consuls . . . and give both day and month."<sup>44</sup> With such accurate record keeping, Roman historians can trace the existence of various Roman legions at the time of each plate's issuance.

Although it is possible that most if not all Roman soldiers received such a diploma either during their period of service or upon their discharge





**PLATE 1 (Side A):** *Constituto* for M. Herennius Polymitas, front external text. The decree on this bronze plate, issued by the Roman emperor Trajan in the year AD 109, awards citizenship and other honors to retiring soldiers who had served in the conquest of Dacia (modern day Romania). A similar plate was posted in the temple of Minerva in Rome to give public notice of this imperial edict. Actual size. Photograph by Mark Pollei ©. Used by permission.





**PLATE 1 (Side B):** Copy of first half of *constituto*, interior text. The text on sides B and C is a duplicate copy of the exterior text on side A. If a dispute should arise over the reading of the main text on the front of plate 1, a judge could resolve that uncertainty by breaking open the seal impressions and untying the sealing wire to consult this sealed portion of the record. Photograph by Mark Pollei ©. Used by permission.









**PLATE 2 (Side D):** Seven witnesses, back external text. On the back side of plate 2, the names of seven witnesses or officials are given. They authenticate this decree and give it legal force and effect. Through the two corner holes, small rings bound the plates together. A wire, laced through the two center holes, was twisted to hold the plates snugly together. Marks can be seen where the box was attached to protect the witnesses' seals. Photograph by Mark Pollei ©. Used by permission.

from military duty, scholars believe that military diplomas were also given, under particular circumstances, as a reward for extraordinary service. Maxfield argues that the awarding of citizenship evolved as the Roman army gradually changed from being a “part-time, non-professional Republican army” to “a full-time professional army,” meaning that the majority of the soldiers were foreigners employed by the Roman Empire. Roman officials needed some form of award for these soldiers, and the grant of citizenship would seem “most appropriate . . . for a man who had spent a quarter-century or more protecting Rome’s empire and absorbing her mores.”<sup>45</sup> Collingwood notes, however, that diplomas were sometimes issued to soldiers still in active duty, which meant it was not necessarily a discharge certificate. Beginning in the early second century, however, these plates were issued “almost wholly to veterans, on completion of a fixed term of service.”<sup>46</sup> Geza Alföldy charts a gradual shift over the years AD 50–178 from diplomas issued to active soldiers to those issued almost exclusively to retired soldiers.<sup>47</sup> That trend buttresses the argument that these diplomas were not necessarily given as a reward for special military heroics or bravery in combat but essentially were issued in recognition of the completion of an honorable career of service.

Awards for military merit were typically given as block awards to entire units, not to individual soldiers.<sup>48</sup> In the case of the plates given to Marcus Herennius, the *constituto* granted citizenship to certain members of the nineteen units listed on the plates—three cavalry brigades and sixteen cohorts.

In the case of diplomas given upon retirement, which for auxiliary soldiers occurred after twenty-six years of service,<sup>49</sup> the diploma became a treasured reward. It also provided a standardized system of rewards. “One of the fundamental characteristics of the systems of reward is that they were equitable; that is not to say that equal treatment was given to all—it most certainly was not—but that equal treatment was given to equal people within like groups.”<sup>50</sup> Provincial governors were required to regularly send lists to Rome of soldiers with special privileges. These names and information were presumably gathered and centralized in a specialized military archive.<sup>51</sup>

### The Ancient Pattern of Backing Up Documents

Several legal systems in the ancient world used doubled or duplicated documents to back up and to preserve important texts. Doubled, sealed, witnessed documents are found written in Akkadian, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, on clay, papyrus, parchment, and metal plates.<sup>52</sup>

The Babylonians, as early as 2000 BC, used such a system in writing legal contracts, deeds, and business transactions. Scribes recorded the transactions in cuneiform on clay tablets, many of which are still legible “thanks to the protection of desert gravel and sand.”<sup>53</sup> Witnesses would “seal” the document by rolling a “personal seal, usually in the form of a small stone cylinder uniquely engraved with religious scenes and/or the person’s name,” across the wet clay of a document before it dried. The tablet was then wrapped in a “thin sheet of clay, thus forming a ‘case’ or ‘envelope.’ The text of the contract was repeated verbatim on the outside of this envelope.”<sup>54</sup> Finally, the witnesses impressed their seals on the outer portion as well. This way if the outer portion were ever destroyed or tampered with, “a judge could remove the outer envelope and reveal the original tablet.”<sup>55</sup> This practice made forgery or alteration virtually impossible, because multiple witnesses were involved and because both tablets had to dry together to prevent the outer envelope from cracking.<sup>56</sup>

Similarly, the Israelites recorded legal documents on papyrus scrolls that were then rolled tightly and sealed, with the text being repeated on an open portion of the scroll.<sup>57</sup> In the case of a dispute over the contents of the contract, a judge could break the seals and unroll the original document. Evidence of this practice is found in Jeremiah 32:6–16, a text that was not clearly understood until examples of such Hebrew texts were discovered at Elephantine.<sup>58</sup> In purchasing a plot of land from his cousin around 590 BC, Jeremiah reported:

And I subscribed the evidence, and sealed *it*, and took witnesses, and . . . I took the evidence of the purchase, both that which was sealed according to the law and custom, and that which was open: And I gave the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch . . . in the presence of the witnesses that subscribed the book of the purchase, before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison (Jer. 32:10–12).<sup>59</sup>

During the excavation of the fourth century BC city Dura-Europos, located in today’s Syria, Greek parchments were found that evidence the same practice of doubled legal documents.<sup>60</sup> Archaeologists found there “the remains of a registry roll of copies made from the originals kept by the principles.”<sup>61</sup> Later Jewish texts prescribe in detail the way in which doubled, sealed, witnessed documents should be configured in order to qualify as valid legal records. Talmudic law required three witnesses to make the document indisputable.<sup>62</sup>

Many of these same features are present in the case of the Roman military diplomas. Being inscribed on metal plates, these Roman decrees were durable and tampering was unlikely. Merchants and soldiers were given metal documents instead of wooden diptychs because they moved around

more than the general population and needed documentation that would last.<sup>63</sup> In addition, the text was duplicated and backed up by the sealed interior copy of the text, and seven witnesses sealed each set of plates. The Romans added the additional safeguard of posting a copy of the decree in a public place in Rome. If a soldier were to lose his plates or if they were stolen, he always had his proof of citizenship documented in Rome.

### **How Common Are Such Plates?**

It is difficult to say exactly how many plates like these have survived, but there is a vast amount of scholarship available. In a growing bibliography available on the BYU Studies web site, there are over 150 entries of scholarly books and articles on Roman military diplomas that document more than 1,000 discoveries of plates or fragments.<sup>64</sup> The complete pair of plates acquired for donation to BYU is rare, however, considering that most of the published diplomas are only small fragments of one plate and are not well preserved.

### **Are These Plates Authentic?**

All evidence strongly supports the authenticity of these plates. Eisenberg and Swingler examined them over several months and determined them to be an authentic Roman military diploma from AD 109. Determining factors included dimensions, thickness, textual engravings, casting technique, chisel engraving technique, style of text copy, natural metallic patination and oxidation patterns, varying corrosions on external and internal plate faces, and general design and configuration. Their authenticity report concludes: “It is our professional opinions that these two bronze Roman Military Diploma Plates dated by their inscription to October 14, AD 109, are ancient, and undeniably genuine.”<sup>65</sup> The results of the metallurgical testing by Dorais and Hart and the historical details encountered in the epigraphic study and translation of the Latin text by John Hall fully corroborate that conclusion.

### **What Particular Significance Do the Plates Have for Latter-day Saints?**

Beyond the fact that these plates offer one of the finest examples found anywhere of ancient writing on metal plates, several specific similarities evoke comparisons between these Roman bronze plates and the gold plates from which Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon.

The Roman plates are a little less than five inches by seven inches. Based on statements by various witnesses who saw or handled the gold



plates, the individual leaves were estimated to be six to six and a half inches wide and eight inches long, close to the same size.<sup>66</sup>

The Roman plates are about one sixteenth of an inch thick, slightly thicker than the Book of Mormon plates, which Joseph Smith described as “not quite so thick as common tin,” and Emma Smith called “pliable like thick paper.”<sup>67</sup>

Roman bronzes were alloyed to make them rust resistant and durable. Likewise, the gold plates were not likely pure gold but may have been made of tumbaga, an alloy of copper and gold, perhaps gilded with a higher percentage gold that would give them their gold luster but would increase the legibility of the characters when engraved through to the higher percentage copper layer beneath.<sup>68</sup>

Pairs of Roman military diplomas were typically put together with two rings, one in each of the two corners on the right-hand side of the first plate. The plates of Mormon consisted of a large stack of plates and thus were bound together through the back with three large rings.<sup>69</sup>

In both cases, one part of the text was open and the other sealed, although in different ways. The Roman plates were sealed to each other by a wire running through holes punched down the middle of the plates. The lower section of the Book of Mormon plates was sealed securely together and appeared to some to be as closed as a block of wood.<sup>70</sup>

In each case, witnesses authenticated the records. The Romans used seven witnesses, whose names appear at the end of the document. Nephi envisioned that three witnesses would “testify to the truth” of the Nephite record (2 Ne. 27:12), consonant with biblical and Jewish law (Deut. 19:15).

In addition, the legal typology shared by these records anticipates that these texts would be used in judicial settings. Doubled, sealed, witnessed documents were created against the eventuality that a backup copy of the text might be needed some day in a judicial or official proceeding. Likewise, the angel told King Benjamin that the words that he revealed “shall stand as a bright testimony against this people, at the judgment day” (Mosiah 3:24). Moroni’s final declaration asserts, “The time speedily cometh that ye shall know that I lie not, for ye shall see me at the bar of God” (Moro. 10:27), and his written words shall be authenticated through God’s declaration and perhaps even through documentary attestation.

More than any single factor, the totality of this specific and multifaceted pattern makes these second-century AD Roman plates relevant to the fourth-century AD Book of Mormon plates, especially given the fact that this pattern surfaces in several civilizations and is implemented in various media.



## What Was Known of Such Plates in the 1820s?

Of the vast number of plates or fragments of plates discovered in the last two hundred years, very few were found before 1829.<sup>71</sup> Because the majority of known plates have been discovered in the last one hundred years, most serious scholarship on Roman bronze military diplomas could not have begun until the twentieth century—making these artifacts virtually unknown in Joseph Smith’s day. While Jahn’s 1823 *Biblical Archaeology* mentions writing on tables of lead (Job 19:24) and tables of brass (1 Macc. 8:22; 14:20–27) and states that “the Hebrews went so far as to write their sacred books in gold” (citing Josephus and Pliny),<sup>72</sup> nothing in that reference work hints at the manner in which any such records might have been configured, witnessed, or sealed.

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34. Garbsch, "Das älteste Militärdiplom," 143.
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44. Collingwood and Wright, *Roman Inscriptions of Britain*, 1.
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70. Cook, *David Whitmer Interviews*, 20–21; Henrichsen, "Physical Appearance of the 'Golden Plates.'"
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# A Metallurgical Provenance Study of the Marcus Herennius Military Diploma

*Michael J. Dorais and Garret L. Hart*

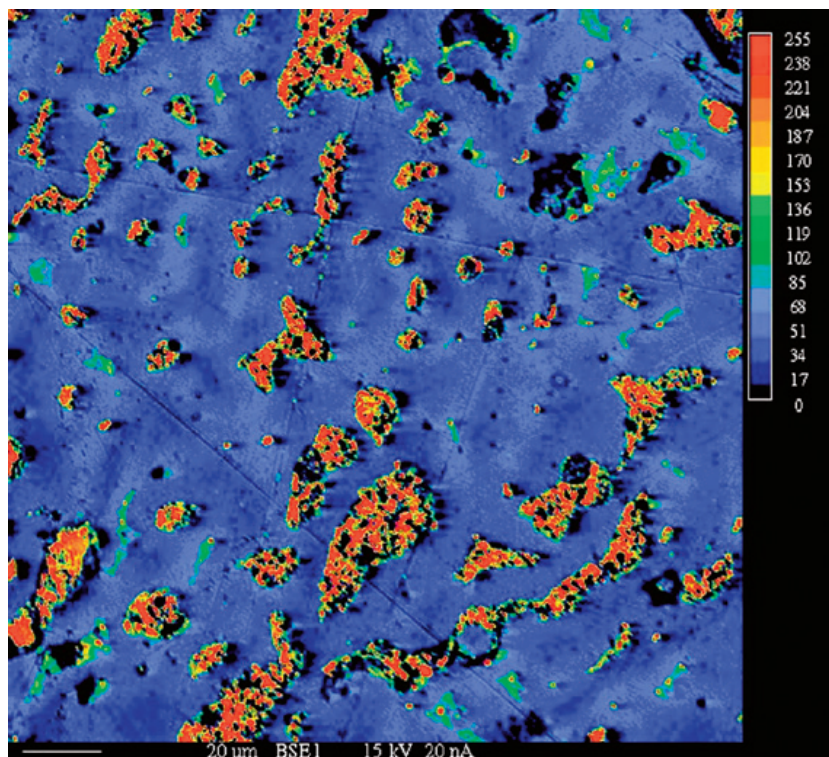
The bronze used to make the military diploma for the Roman soldier Marcus Herennius in AD 109 is heterogeneous in texture and composition. In contrast to modern bronze, lead (Pb) inclusions are common, and the bronze shows a considerable range in copper (Cu) (73 to 92.7 weight percent) and tin (Sn) (6.1 to 26.5 weight percent). Lead isotopic compositions are identical to those of copper coins produced during the Imperial Era of Augustus and Tiberius and may indicate mixtures of ores from southeastern Spain and Sardinia. The combination of these analytical results provides permissive evidence that the plates are authentic artifacts manufactured at the turn of the second century AD.

## Determining Authenticity

Two Roman bronze plates known as a military diploma were awarded to Marcus Herennius on October 14, AD 109. Military diplomas are thought to be legal documents for retired soldiers containing inscriptions of service and citizenship. A common objective of archaeological and geoarchaeological endeavors is to determine the authenticity of such artifacts and, if possible, the provenance of the materials used in their construction.

Over the past several decades, geologists and geoarchaeologists have determined the lead isotopic values of various ore deposits throughout the Mediterranean and compared the lead isotopic compositions of Bronze Age and Classical artifacts to determine provenance. In this contribution, we show that the lead isotopic compositions of the Herennius military diploma compare favorably with the compositions of ore sources used





**FIG. 1.** Backscatter electron image of bronze with false color added to emphasize compositional contrasts. Orange patches are lead inclusions. The bronze host shows a range in compositions; green domains contain up to 26% tin, bright blue domains up to 12%, and the dark blue domains as little as 6%. Black domains in upper right portion of the image are essentially pure copper. Twenty micron scale for reference.

during Roman times and of early Imperial Age coins. We also show that the plates are texturally and compositionally heterogeneous, consistent with bronze made from known Roman smelting practices.

### Instrumental Methods

Several small flakes of bronze were scraped from each of the plates. A few grains were mounted in epoxy, polished, and carbon coated for electron microprobe analysis. Microprobe analyses were conducted with a Cameca SX50 in the Department of Geological Sciences at Brigham Young University. The electron microprobe focuses an electron beam on the polished sample, generating X-rays that are measured and compared

to standards to obtain a chemical analysis. The beam can also be rastered across a sample to provide backscattered electron images. In these images, the brightness of domains in the sample is a function of the average atomic number of the compound under the beam; domains with high average atomic numbers are bright. Beam conditions for the analyses of this study were 25 KV, 20 nA with a 1–2 micron beam diameter; imaging was conducted with a 15 KV, 20 nA beam.

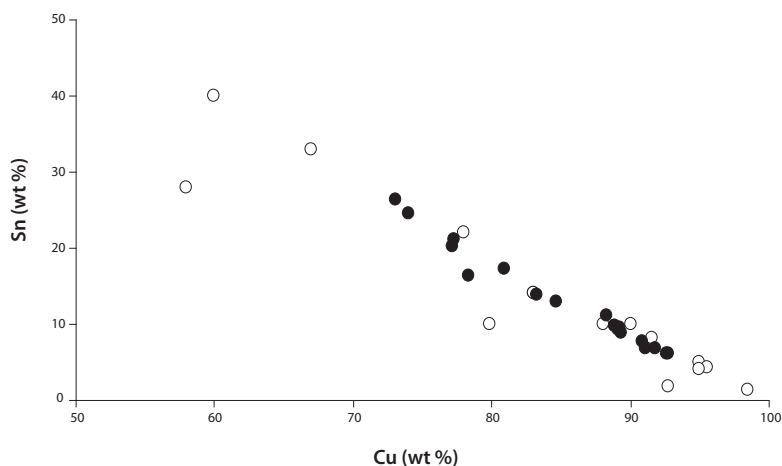
A second split of the bronze samples was sent to the Department of Geology, Washington State University, for isotopic analyses. The samples were dissolved in HF and HNO<sub>3</sub>, and lead was separated using ion-exchange chromatography. Dilute solutions (100 ppb) of lead were prepared for mass spectrometry. Thallium (Tl) (30 ppb) was added to the lead solutions for In-In mass fractionation corrections using 2.3880 for <sup>205</sup>Tl/<sup>203</sup>Tl. The samples were run on a multicollector ICP-MS (Thermo-Finnigan Neptune). Ion signals were measured in 7 Faraday cups in low resolution with 3 blocks of 25 ratios preceded by a 50-second baseline. Mercury (<sup>202</sup>Hg) was monitored as a possible isobaric interference. Accuracy was monitored using NIST 981, and the 2σ external errors (n=10) are 0.007% for <sup>206</sup>Pb/<sup>204</sup>Pb and <sup>207</sup>Pb/<sup>206</sup>Pb, and 0.002% for <sup>208</sup>Pb/<sup>204</sup>Pb.

### Electron Microprobe Analyses

Figure 1 is a backscatter electron image of one of the bronze flakes. Scattered throughout the sample are orange-colored, irregular-shaped, lead-rich inclusions that range up to 40 microns in length. The bronze that hosts the lead inclusions is heterogeneous in composition as shown by the color variations; the green, bright blue and dark blue domains contain different amounts of tin. The black domains in the upper right portion of the image are essentially pure copper.

Table 1 (see appendix) gives electron microprobe analyses of the bronze, which are plotted in figure 2. The copper contents range between 73.1 and 92.7 wt %. Tin varies antithetically to copper from a low value of 6.1 to a high of 26.5 wt %. The richest tin regions are the green domains of figure 1. Bright blue and dark blue domains in figure 1 contain up to 12% and 6% tin respectively. Plotted in figure 2 are analyses of modern bronzes that also show wide range in copper and tin content but, in contrast to the heterogeneous nature of the plates, are very homogeneous. Each open circle represents a different type of modern bronze that shows no variation of copper and tin content.

Other elements analyzed in the Roman plates are given in table 1. Iron (Fe), nickel (Ni), and zinc (Zn) have concentrations of less than 0.1 wt %.



**FIG. 2.** Copper versus tin (weight percent) diagram. Various domains of bronze in the military diplomas (filled circles) range from 73 to 93 wt % copper with tin varying antithetically. Modern bronzes (open circles) contain a wide range of copper to tin concentrations but are homogeneous. Each open circle shows the composition of specific types of modern bronze. (Oliver Seely, “Composition and Physical Properties of Alloys,” [www.csudh.edu/oliver/chemdata/alloys.htm](http://www.csudh.edu/oliver/chemdata/alloys.htm) [accessed June 23, 2006])

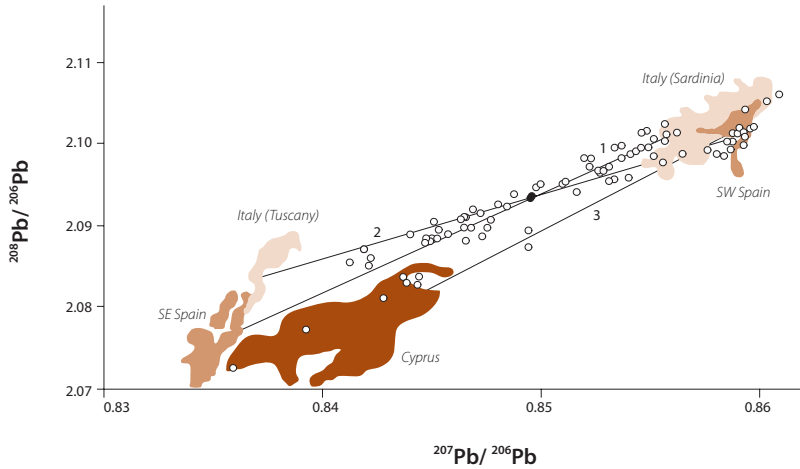
Arsenic (As) and lead are more abundant, averaging 0.34 and 0.85 wt % respectively, but with highs of 1.5 and 3.6 wt % respectively.

### Lead Isotopes

Lead isotopic compositions of the Roman plates are given in table 2 (see appendix). Three analyses of each sample were taken with the average of each sample plotted in the  $^{207}\text{Pb}/^{206}\text{Pb}$  versus  $^{208}\text{Pb}/^{206}\text{Pb}$  diagram (filled circles in figure 3). Reference fields for copper ores across the Mediterranean used during early Imperial Roman times are also plotted.<sup>1</sup> In this diagram, the  $^{207}\text{Pb}/^{206}\text{Pb}$  ratio varies as a function of the age of the ore deposit. High  $^{207}\text{Pb}/^{206}\text{Pb}$  values characterize Mediterranean ores from the

1. Fields from compilation of S. Klein, Y. Lahaye, G. P. Brey, and H. M. von Kachel, “The Early Roman Imperial AES Coinage II: Tracing the Copper Sources by Analysis of Lead and Copper Isotopes—Copper Coins of Augustus and Tiberius,” *Archaeometry* 46 (August 2004): 469–80.





**FIG. 3.**  $^{207}\text{Pb}/^{206}\text{Pb}$  versus  $^{208}\text{Pb}/^{206}\text{Pb}$  diagram. Dark fields represent the compositions of ore deposits in Cyprus, medium from deposits in Spain, and light from deposits in Italy. Open circles are coin analyses from Klein (Klein and others, “Early Roman Imperial AES Coinage II,” 469–80). Filled circles are averages of three analyses of each plate of the military diploma. Lines 1, 2, and 3 represent mixing lines between Sardinia and southeastern Spain, Tuscany and either Sardinia or southwestern Spain, and Cyprus and either Sardinia or southwestern Spain respectively. See text for discussion.

Cambrian period (about 543 to 520 million years ago), whereas younger Tertiary (65 to 1.8 million years ago) ores have low  $^{207}\text{Pb}/^{206}\text{Pb}$  values. Older ores from Sardinia and southwestern Spain define fields at  $^{207}\text{Pb}/^{206}\text{Pb}$  values between 0.855 and 0.86; younger Tuscany, southeastern Spain, and Cyprus ores plot below 0.845. The  $^{208}\text{Pb}/^{206}\text{Pb}$  ratios are indicative of the uranium (U)/thorium (Th) ratios of the fluids that formed the ores. Again, there is a distinction between the younger Tuscany, southeastern Spain, and Cyprus ores and those of Sardinia and southwestern Spain. An important feature of the  $^{207}\text{Pb}/^{206}\text{Pb}$  versus  $^{208}\text{Pb}/^{206}\text{Pb}$  diagram is the absence of ore deposits in the Mediterranean with  $^{207}\text{Pb}/^{206}\text{Pb}$  values between 0.845 and 0.855.

For comparison with our samples, we have also plotted Augustan and Tiberian Imperial Age coin analyses from Klein’s study.<sup>2</sup> Some of the coins plot at high  $^{207}\text{Pb}/^{206}\text{Pb}$  values in the southwestern Spain field, others

2. Klein and others, “Early Roman Imperial AES Coinage II,” 469–80.

in the Sardinia field. A few coins plot in the Cyprus field. The majority of the coins, however, plot in gap between known Mediterranean ore deposits and probably represent mixtures of ores from multiple sources.<sup>3</sup> The averages of the two Roman plates of this study also plot in the gap, at  $^{207}\text{Pb}/^{206}\text{Pb}$  values of approximately 0.85.

### Major and Minor Element Composition

Several factors indicate that the plates were manufactured by relatively primitive smelting techniques and suggest that they are authentic bronze plates from the Roman era. Compared to modern bronze, the proportions of copper to tin in the plates is not unusual—it is the heterogeneity that markedly differs. Modern bronzes have a range in tin content, some up to 40 wt %, but bulk samples are homogeneous as shown by the individual open circles in figure 2. The bronze in these plates varies between 92.7 and 73.1 wt % copper and between 6.1 and 26.5 wt % tin over a scale of a few microns as shown by the color changes from dark blue to green in the bronze of figure 1. These compositions are similar to those of Classical bronze statues analyzed by Lie and Mattusch that range between 70 and 90 wt % copper and from 5 to 10 wt % tin.<sup>4</sup> Unlike modern bronze, the arsenic, iron, nickel, and zinc contents are also variable. The heterogeneous bronze composition of the military diplomas indicates rather poor efficiency in smelting the ores, producing an impure, poorly mixed product.

High lead contents are common in ancient bronze artifacts, many of which have bulk-sample concentrations of several wt % lead (2 to 28 wt %).<sup>5</sup> Most of the microprobe analyses of the diploma have less than 1.0 wt % lead, considerably lower than the several wt % of other ancient bronze artifacts. This is because the microprobe analyses were of small, 1–2 micron domains and not of the bulk sample; the presence of many lead inclusions would yield a bulk-sample analysis of several wt % lead in common with other ancient bronze artifacts.

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3. Klein and others, “Early Roman Imperial AES Coinage II,” 469–80.

4. Henry Lie and Carol C. Mattusch, “Introduction to the Catalogue Entries and Technical Observations,” in *Fire of Hephaistos: Large Classical Bronzes from North American Collections* by Carol C. Mattusch (Cambridge: Harvard University Art Museums, 1996), 162–78.

5. S. Siano, L. Bartoli, J. R. Santisteban, W. Kockelmann, M. R. Daymond, M. Miccio, and G. De Marinis, “Non-destructive Investigation of Bronze Artefacts from the Marches National Museum of Archaeology Using Neutron Diffraction,” *Archaeometry* 48 (February 2006): 86–87.

The presence of abundant lead inclusions in the plates is consistent with the manufacturing techniques described by Gaius Plinius Secundus, commonly known as Pliny the Elder, who wrote in the first century AD:

Among the remaining kinds of copper the palm goes to the bronze of Campania, which is most esteemed for utensils. There are several ways of preparing it. At Capua it is smelted in a fire of wood, not of charcoal, and then poured into cold water and cleaned in a sieve made of oak, and this process of smelting is repeated several times, at the last stage Spanish silver lead being added to it in the proportion of ten pounds to one hundred pounds of copper: this treatment renders it pliable and gives it an agreeable colour of a kind imparted to other sorts of copper and bronze by means of oil and salt. Bronze resembling the Campanian is produced in many parts of Italy and the provinces, but there they add only eight pounds of lead, and do additional smelting with charcoal because of their shortage of wood. . . .

The proper blend for making statues is as follows, and the same for tablets: at the outset the ore is melted, and then there is added to the melted metal a third part of scrap copper, that is copper or bronze that has been bought up after use. This contains a peculiar seasoned quality of brilliance that has been subdued by friction and so to speak tamed by habitual use. Silver-lead is also mixed with it in the proportion of twelve and a half pounds to every hundred pounds of the fused metal. There is also in addition what is called the mould-blend of bronze of a very delicate consistency, because a tenth part of black lead is added and a twentieth of silver-lead; and this is the best way to give it the colour called Græcanic “after the Greek.” The last kind is that called pot-bronze, taking its name from the vessels made of it; it is a blend of three or four pounds of silver-lead with every hundred pounds of copper. The addition of lead to Cyprus copper produces the purple colour seen in the bordered robes of statues.<sup>6</sup>

The abundance of lead inclusions in the plates is consistent with Pliny’s description of lead deliberately added to obtain either the desired color or pliability for sheets of metal, such as those used for the military diplomas, and with analyses of other Roman bronze artifacts.<sup>7</sup>

Both the textural features shown in figure 1 and the compositional heterogeneity of the bronze suggest the plates were not manufactured by

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6. Pliny, *Natural History*, trans. H. Rackham, 10 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938–63), vol. 9, bk. 34, ch. 20, pp. 197, 199, 201. Footnotes (198, 199a) to the term “silver-lead” indicates that it is actually not a true mixture of silver and lead, but instead is tin and lead in equal proportions.

7. Lie and Mattusch, “Introduction to the Catalogue Entries,” 162–78; Siano and others, “Non-destructive Investigation of Bronze Artefacts,” 77–96.

modern techniques but by techniques consistent with what one would expect for bronze from the Roman era.

### Lead Isotopic Compositions

Three mixing lines are drawn in figure 3 to explain the mixed sources of some Imperial Age coins.<sup>8</sup> Line 1 is a mixing array between ores from Sardinia and southeastern Spain. Line 2 shows a mixing of a component from Tuscany with either a Sardinian or a southeastern Spanish component. Line 3 is a mixing line between a component from Cyprus and either a Sardinian or southeastern Spanish component.

The majority of the early Imperial Era coins analyzed by Klein were interpreted as having been made by smelting ores from Sardinian and southeastern Spanish sources.<sup>9</sup> The trend of coin analyses plotting along line 1 suggests use of ores from those two sources in varying proportions, generating the spread of  $^{207}\text{Pb}/^{206}\text{Pb}$  values from approximately 0.84 to 0.855. The coins that plot adjacent to the Sardinia field indicate that they are mainly composed of Sardinian ore with only a minor component of southeastern Spanish ore. The proportion of southeastern Spanish ore increases with lower  $^{207}\text{Pb}/^{206}\text{Pb}$  values; coins plotting at the low  $^{207}\text{Pb}/^{206}\text{Pb}$  values of approximately 0.842 were made from roughly 66% southeast Spain ore and 33% Sardinian ore.

As our samples plot along the dominant coin trend defined by line 1 between Sardinia and southeastern Spain, the plates probably represent mixtures of these two sources. The plates have a  $^{207}\text{Pb}/^{206}\text{Pb}$  value of approximately 0.849, indicting a mixture of roughly 70% Sardinian and 30% southeastern Spanish ores. But because our two samples are nearly isotopically identical, we lack the spread in  $^{207}\text{Pb}/^{206}\text{Pb}$  values to define a trend that would clearly identify the endmembers of mixing. It is equally plausible that the plates were made from mixtures of either Sardinian or southwestern Spanish ore with ore from Tuscany (mixing line 2). With respect to provenance, it is interesting to note that Pliny wrote that the tin-lead mixture that was added to copper was obtained from Spain.<sup>10</sup>

Another possible explanation for the lead mixtures found in the plates is that they could have been made from recycled bronze. In 1992, a scuba diver discovered a Roman shipwreck off the Italian port city of Brindisi. Archaeologists found that the ship contained bronze artifacts that range

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8. Such lines were used by Klein and others, "Early Roman Imperial AES Coinage II," 469–80.

9. Klein and others, "Early Roman Imperial AES Coinage II," 477–79.

10. Pliny, *Natural History*, bk. 34, ch. 20, pp. 198–199.

in age from the fourth century BC to the third century AD. It appears that the materials found in the Brindisi shipwreck were to be used for recycling purposes,<sup>11</sup> providing verification of the use of scrap bronze mentioned by Pliny the Elder in the above quotation. Rather than representing mixtures of multiple ore sources, the mixed lead isotopic signature of the military diploma shown in figure 3 can also be interpreted in the context of Pliny's description of Roman bronze recycling practices. The plates could just as well represent recycled bronze from multiple sources.

## Conclusions

The available textural, major, minor, and isotopic evidence strongly supports the authenticity of the Marcus Herennius military diploma. The bronze has both textural and compositional characteristics indicative of relatively primitive smelting techniques, features that are not characteristic of modern processes but are consistent with the techniques described by Pliny. Additionally, the lead isotopic composition of the bronze is identical to known early Imperial Age coins. The isotopic composition indicates that the bronze was probably smelted from two ore sources, most likely the same dominant southeastern Spanish and Sardinian ores that characterizes the majority of coins. A mixture from Tuscany and Sardinia or from Tuscany and southwestern Spain, however, cannot be disregarded.

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11. O. Louis Mazzatenta, "The Brindisi Bronzes: Classical Castoffs Reclaimed from the Sea," *National Geographic* 187, no. 4 (April 1995): 90.

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# Appendix

Table 1. Representative Electron Microprobe Analyses of the M. Herennius Military Diploma

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
S	0.000	0.011	0.007	0.006	0.007	0.003	0.000	0.007	0.000	0.009	0.193	0.025	0.000	0.002	0.000	0.004	0.000	0.001
Mn	0.000	0.005	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000
Fe	0.073	0.075	0.091	0.052	0.086	0.069	0.094	0.080	0.073	0.064	0.066	0.026	0.032	0.044	0.013	0.020	0.026	0.055
Ni	0.046	0.024	0.037	0.004	0.054	0.018	0.023	0.034	0.045	0.018	0.068	0.049	0.068	0.036	0.042	0.041	0.027	0.015
Cu	88.838	88.233	90.837	89.361	91.859	89.245	92.735	92.662	88.838	89.125	73.077	74.017	77.248	80.873	77.134	78.305	83.293	84.697
Zn	0.042	0.029	0.029	0.067	0.082	0.071	0.076	0.069	0.042	0.036	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.016	0.024	0.053	0.045	0.044
As	0.245	0.139	0.182	0.183	0.215	0.177	0.238	0.211	0.245	0.224	0.462	0.330	0.283	0.279	0.539	1.512	0.402	0.268
Sn	9.780	11.030	7.662	8.879	6.814	9.432	6.098	6.202	9.780	9.429	26.454	24.471	21.222	17.300	20.263	16.424	13.853	12.841
Pb	0.434	0.508	0.573	0.654	0.521	0.590	0.675	0.668	0.434	0.517		0.604	0.657	0.730	1.481	3.631	0.782	0.747
Total	99.458	100.054	99.418	99.206	99.638	99.605	99.940	99.933	99.457	99.422	100.320	99.522	99.510	99.281	99.497	99.990	98.428	98.668

Table 2. Pb Isotopic Analyses of the M. Herennius Military Diploma

Sample Number	<sup>206</sup> Pb/ <sup>204</sup> Pb	Error (2σ)	<sup>207</sup> Pb/ <sup>204</sup> Pb	Error (2σ)	<sup>208</sup> Pb/ <sup>204</sup> Pb	Error (2σ)	<sup>207</sup> Pb/ <sup>206</sup> Pb	Error (2σ)	<sup>208</sup> Pb/ <sup>206</sup> Pb	Error (2σ)
A.1	18.425	±2	15.654	±3	38.574	±8	0.8496	±1	2.0936	±2
A.2	18.423	±2	15.651	±3	38.564	±8	0.8495	±1	2.0933	±2
A.3	18.423	±2	15.651	±3	38.565	±8	0.8495	±1	2.0933	±2
B.1	18.423	±2	15.652	±3	38.568	±8	0.8496	±1	2.0935	±2
B.2	18.424	±2	15.653	±3	38.570	±8	0.8496	±1	2.0935	±2
B.3	18.423	±2	15.653	±3	38.571	±8	0.8496	±1	2.0935	±2

Sample Number	<sup>206</sup> Pb/ <sup>204</sup> Pb	Within Run Error (2σ)	<sup>207</sup> Pb/ <sup>204</sup> Pb	Within Run Error (2σ)	<sup>208</sup> Pb/ <sup>204</sup> Pb	Within Run Error (2σ)	<sup>207</sup> Pb/ <sup>206</sup> Pb	Within Run Error (2σ)	<sup>208</sup> Pb/ <sup>206</sup> Pb	Within Run Error (2σ)
A.1	18.4252	±5	15.6540	±5	38.5745	±15	0.849595	±6	2.093583	±38
A.2	18.4226	±5	15.6508	±5	38.5644	±15	0.849548	±6	2.093334	±32
A.3	18.4230	±6	15.6512	±5	38.5650	±16	0.849548	±6	2.093337	±32
B.1	18.4228	±5	15.6518	±5	38.5680	±16	0.849588	±7	2.093506	±33
B.2	18.4243	±5	15.6530	±4	38.5702	±15	0.849589	±7	2.093490	±29
B.3	18.4234	±6	15.6533	±6	38.5708	±23	0.849621	±9	2.093527	±58

Average A	18.424	15.652	38.568				0.84956	2.0934
Abs err. (2SD)	0.003	0.003	0.011				0.00005	0.0003
Per Mil (2SD)	0.16	0.22	0.29				0.06	0.14

Average B	18.423	15.653	38.570				0.84960	2.09351
Abs err. (2SD)	0.002	0.002	0.003				0.00004	0.00004
Per Mil (2SD)	0.08	0.10	0.08				0.04	0.02

Overall Avg.	18.424	15.652	38.569				0.8496	2.0935
Abs err. (2SD)	0.002	0.003	0.008				0.0001	0.0002
Per Mil (2SD)	0.11	0.16	0.20				0.07	0.10

New York  
Nov 11<sup>th</sup> 1844

Respected Belation

I willingly comply with your request to write to you to tell you all that I can on one sheet of paper, in the first place then I will proceed to acknowledge the receipt of one box of goods by the hands of the Misses Munroe from the city of Utica who arrived at the place near this Nov it contained a number of Articles as follows till we come to the second part white flannel 10 yds. Domestic 20 yds I believe red flannel 1 yd of damask for pants vest pattern 1 yd cross pattern 1 yd 5 yds. Chiquered 3000 cash for carbox which precisely filled his bag 2 Pair socks yarn paper spools and skeins of thread and also to Sister one from this source & also on the Authors name was not attached to the other consequently I cannot tell who wrote it. I should write there are the articles mentioned in the paper which we need for our own use, we can but acknowledge our grateful thanks to Father for them Sister Lois has not as yet got hers she lives near twelve miles from this place we heard from her not long since she sent word she is coming to spend some time with us this winter she will we would address a letter to some one of our friends where she has been & it now remains for me to give you a limited view of the news as it stand at the present time you have no doubt heard various and contradictory rumors for three or four months past concerning the Mormons some to truth some falsehood be this as it may the story runs thus Annanias & Apollonius feeling very anxious to make disturbance in this city got up a printing establishment for the express purpose of vilifying and slandering and if possible to destroy the whole Society of Latter Day Saints. The first paper contained the prospectus it was certainly one of the most foul filthy & seditious things ever heard of, where upon the City Council proceeded to take measures to destroy it they proceeded according to the strict letter of the Law & I very believe to demolish the press or remit it as a nuisance

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Letter from Albert Brown to Albert Underwood, November 11, 1844. This four-page letter by Albert Brown, written less than four months after the martyrdom, recounts at length the widely discussed details of that event. Courtesy Albert Brown Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.



# “Will the Murderers Be Hung?”

## Albert Brown’s 1844 Letter and the Martyrdom of Joseph Smith

*Timothy Merrill*

Albert Brown’s November 11, 1844, letter from Nauvoo to his New York relatives adds significantly to the historical record of Joseph Smith’s martyrdom. Brown wrote from the perspective of one loyal to Joseph Smith. When studied in connection with antagonistic accounts published earlier in *BYU Studies*, readers of the letter can sense the views, loyalties, and hostilities of the bitterly divided factions that swirled around Joseph Smith as they once did around Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Written less than four months after the murders of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, the letter captures the Saints’ efforts to make sense of the brutal act. Albert Brown’s account of the martyrdom draws from a July 4, 1844, affidavit written by William M. Daniels and published by Lyman O. Littlefield in 1845. Littlefield’s sensational account portrayed a lynch mob intent on mutilating Joseph’s body “when a light, so sudden and powerful, burst from the heavens upon the bloody scene. . . . The arm of the ruffian, that held the knife, fell powerless; the muskets of the four, who fired, fell to the ground, and they all stood like marble statues.”<sup>2</sup> Chroniclers initially included this information in the Manuscript History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but B. H. Roberts considered the details

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1. David W. Kilbourne to Reverend Thomas Dent, June 29, 1844, Kilbourne Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines; Warren A. Jennings, “The Lynching of an American Prophet,” *BYU Studies* 40, no. 1 (2001): 207–11.

2. Lyman O. Littlefield, *A Correct Account of the Murders of Generals Joseph and Hyrum Smith at Carthage on the 27th Day of June, 1844 by William M. Daniels, an Eye Witness* (Nauvoo, Ill.: John Taylor, 1845), 13–14, quoted in Dean C. Jessee, “Return to Carthage: Writing the History of Joseph Smith’s Martyrdom,” *Journal of Mormon History* 8 (1981): 16.

“questionable” and edited them out of the published *History of the Church*.<sup>3</sup> Brown’s letter evidences how this story spread quickly and widely after the murders. Whether factual or not, Saints used this story as part of an effort to cope with their shocking loss.

Except for the unverifiable story, Brown’s letter is an efficient and accurate recounting of the events that led to Joseph’s martyrdom and the trial of the accused assassins. Brown wrote it weeks after nine men were indicted for the murders. “The question arises,” he wrote, “will the Murder[er]s be hung?” His expectation that they would not be punished is both historical and prescient. Joseph’s accused assassins, some of whom were “leading citizens in Hancock County,” were acquitted. Their guilt was tacitly acknowledged, but their actions represented the popular will.<sup>4</sup>

Albert Brown was born in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1807 and joined the LDS Church in 1832.<sup>5</sup> A carpenter by trade, Brown served in Zion’s Camp, the Nauvoo Legion, and the Mormon Battalion.<sup>6</sup> He supported Joseph Smith and the Restoration at every turn, including serving as a doorkeeper in the House of the Lord during the dedication of the Nauvoo Temple.<sup>7</sup> In Utah, Albert Brown served as a patriarch until he died in 1902

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3. Jessee, “Return to Carthage,” 16–17. Robert S. Wicks and Fred R. Foister, *Junius and Joseph: Presidential Politics and the Assassination of the First Mormon Prophet* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2005), 276–79. For further discussion of the historiographical issues surrounding the Daniels account, see Glen M. Leonard, *Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, a People of Promise* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 395.

4. Dallin H. Oaks and Marvin S. Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy: The Trial of the Accused Assassins of Joseph Smith* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975), 6, 214. An editorial in the *Times and Seasons* asked, “If one of these murderers, their abettors or accessories before or after the fact, are suffered to cumber the earth, without being *dealt with according to law*, what is life worth, and what is the benefit of laws? and more than all, what is the use of institutions which savages would honor, where *civilized beings* murder without cause or provocation?” “The Murder,” *Times and Seasons* 5 (July 15, 1844): 585; emphasis in original.

5. Thomas Hull, “Events of the Month,” *Improvement Era* 5 (March 1902): 398; Dean C. Jessee, ed. and comp., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002), 662.

6. Milton V. Backman Jr., *The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio, 1830–1838* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 377; Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 662.

7. Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 128; Joseph Smith Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 1:342 (hereafter cited as *History of the Church*); Susan Easton Black, comp., *Membership of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830–1848*, 50 vols. (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1989), 7:12–15.

in Mill Creek at age ninety-four.<sup>8</sup> In 1980 *BYU Studies* published another historically important letter by Albert Brown dealing with the Book of Abraham, and this 1844 letter was displayed in the gallery at the Library of Congress during the Joseph Smith bicentennial conference.<sup>9</sup> Both that letter and the one published here for the first time are housed in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. Brown's spelling, punctuation, capitalization, superscripts, and grammar have been maintained. His strikeouts are interlined ~~like this~~; his inserts are in angle brackets <like these>. Editorial inserts are in brackets [like these].

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8. Stanley B. Kimball, "Sources on the History of the Mormons in Ohio: 1830–38 (Located East of the Mississippi)," *BYU Studies* 11, no. 4 (1971): 527–28; Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 662.

9. Christopher C. Lund, "A Letter Regarding the Acquisition of the Book of Abraham," *BYU Studies* 20, no. 4 (1980): 402–3; "The Worlds of Joseph Smith Gallery Display," *BYU Studies* 44, no. 4 (2005): 127.

## Albert Brown's 1844 Letter

Amos L. Underwood  
Utica On[e]ida CO NY

Nauvoo

Nov 11 the 1844

Respected Relatives

I willingly comply with your request to write to you to tel you all that I can on one sheet of paper, in the first place then I will proced to Acknowl-  
edeg the Receipt of one Box of Drygoods by the hand of the Misses Mun-  
rose from the city of Utica<sup>10</sup> who Arived at this place near the 1 <first> Nov  
it contained a number of Articals as follows til we come to the second part  
white flannel 10 yds Domestic 30 yds I believe red flannel 5 yds Casimear  
for pants or vest patter dress pattern Also 5 yds chquered goods cap for  
Carlos<sup>11</sup> which precisely fited his h<e>ad 2 Pair socks yarn paper spools  
and skeins of thread and also to letters one from Miss Louisa<sup>12</sup> & Bro wn  
the Authors name was not attached to the other consequently I cannot tell  
who wrote it. If I r<sup>e</sup>colect write these are the Articals we received [docu-  
ment damage obscures at least one word] which we need for our own use,  
we can but acknowledge our grateful thanks to Father for these [?] Sister  
Ives<sup>13</sup> has not as yet go hirs She lives near twelve miles from this place  
we heard from her not Long sinse she sent word she is coming to spend

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10. Probably refers to Mrs. R. Monroe of Utica, New York. Sister Monroe was an active member of the Utica Branch, which numbered sixty-one saints in 1842. James Blakeslee, "Conference Minutes," *Times and Seasons* 3 (July 15, 1842): 861; John P. Green and E. P. Maginn, "General Conference Minutes," *Times and Seasons* 4 (August 15, 1843): 127, 300.

11. Don Carlos Brown was Albert's son. He was born April 6, 1843, in Nauvoo. At the time of this letter, Carlos would have been eighteen months old. Black, *Membership*, 7:13.

12. Miss Louisa possibly refers to Louisa A. Brown, Albert's niece. See Black, *Membership*, 7:146.

13. Mary Ives was a widow whose husband died of dysentery after the Saints' expulsion from Missouri. Mary took in boarders to support herself and her children. Apparently, Mary anticipated receiving supplies similar to those Albert listed. Several years before this letter she wrote to her parents, "I can work for provisions but it is verry hard to get clothing more particular Flannel unless one has the money." Mary Ives to Parents and Friends, ca. 1840, photocopy, Amos L. Underwood Correspondence, 1831–1853, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as Church Archives), quoted in Carol Cornwall Madsen, *In Their Own Words: Women and the Story of Nauvoo* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 9, 93.

Some time with us this winter she will no [illegible word] address a letter to som one of our friends when she has Leisure it now remains for me to give you a limited view of the knews as it stands at the presant time you have no Doubt heard various and Contradictory rumors for three or four Mo<n>ths past concerning the Mormons som th<sup>e</sup> truth som Fals-hood be this as it may the story runs thus A number of Apostates feeling very anxious to make Disturbance in this city got up a Printing Establishment<sup>14</sup> for the Expres Purpose of vilifying and slandering and if Possible to Destroy the whole sosity of Latter Day Saints the first paper contained their prospe<c>tus it was Certainly one of the most fowl filthy Libilous ever heard of,<sup>15</sup> where upon the City Counsel proceded to take Measurs to Destroy it they proceded acording to the strict letter of the Law as I very believe to Demolish the press or remit it as a neusance<sup>16</sup> after evry Counselor had Expressed his views and wishes in relation to it it finally passed to a vote the ["the" blotted out, but not clear if intentional] Result was only one Desenting <voice> voice<sup>17</sup> som ten or twelve persons then ~~proceded to~~ Repaired to the office opend the door took the press and threw it into the street smashed it to peeces consumed the furnitur destroyed the fixturs,<sup>18</sup>

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14. On May 7, 1844, a group of apostates formed a printing establishment a block from the Nauvoo Temple site. The *Nauvoo Expositor* published its only issue (1,000 copies) a month later on June 7, 1844. Leonard, *Nauvoo*, 362. The *Expositor* was "established by William and Wilson Law, Charles and Robert D. Foster, Francis M. and Chauncey L. Higbee, and managed by Sylvester Emmans." Franklin William Scott, *Newspapers and Periodicals of Illinois, 1814–1879*, 6 vols. (Springfield, Ill.: Illinois State Historical Library, 1910), 6:261.

15. The *Nauvoo Expositor's* stated purpose was to "explode the vicious principles of Joseph Smith, and those who practice the same abominations and whoredoms." The primary arguments of the paper were that Joseph Smith "had too much power, that polygamy was whoredom in disguise, and that the Nauvoo charter should be unconditionally repealed." John Henry Evans, *Joseph Smith: An American Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1966), 197.

16. For a detailed account of the legal issues surrounding the council's decision to destroy the press, see Dallin H. Oaks, "The Suppression of the Nauvoo Expositor," *Utah Law Review* 9 (Winter 1965): 862–905.

17. Councilman Benjamin Warrington cast the dissenting vote. He did not belong to the Church and believed that a fine of \$3,000 should be levied against those who libeled. *History of the Church*, 6:445–46.

18. The Council passed the ordinance to destroy the press around 6:30 PM on June 10, 1844. Joseph then instructed John P. Greene, the City Marshal, to

destroy the printing press from whence issues the *Nauvoo Expositor*, and pi [scatter] the type of said printing establishment in the street, and burn all the *Expositors* and libelous handbills found in said establishment; and if resistance be offered to your execution of this order by the owners

thus one of the Meanest vulgares printing Establishments that Ever disgrast anny place or People from the Beginning of time up to the presant Date was remitted according to Constituton and the Laws of Illinoi this as a matter of course Greatly Incensed the Mob party of handcok [Hancock] county<sup>19</sup> who thirsted for the Blood of Joseph and hiram Smith and others also however those alone have been killed after the Destruction of the Above press the owners of it Left the city for the Cuntry<sup>20</sup> got [document damage obscures several words] they could and those together with others who have for some time saught the Lives of our valuable citizen<n>s considered this a good oppertunity to Execut their hellish plots convened at Carthage <sup>held</sup> their Mob Meeting<sup>21</sup> finally got out a [w]rit and sent an officer to Nauvoo for Joseph and hiram with Ma<sup>n</sup>y other of for no other purpos thant to Mass[a]cre them they refused to give themselves up until the Governor Interfered who by the by the Mob party had Deputed

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or others, demolish the house; and if anyone threatens you or the Mayor or the officers of the city, arrest those who threaten you, and fail not to execute this order without delay, and make due return hereon. (*History of the Church*, 6:448.)

Greene fulfilled the order with the assistance of the city police. The Nauvoo Legion under Jonathan Dunham was ready to assist. By 8:00 PM it was finished.

19. One of the most vocal antagonists was Thomas Sharp, editor of the *Warsaw Signal* and organizer of the Anti-Mormon Party. Sharp was outraged after the destruction of the *Expositor's* press and wrote, "CITIZENS ARISE, ONE AND ALL!!!—Can you *stand* by, and suffer such INFERNAL DEVILS! to ROB men of their property and RIGHTS, without avenging them. We have no time for comment, every man will make his own. LET IT BE MADE with POWDER AND BALL!!!" "Unparalleled Outrage at Nauvoo," *Warsaw Signal*, June 12, 1844; Richard Lyman Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Knopf, 2005), 540–43; emphasis in the original.

20. The Mormon paper *Nauvoo Neighbor* insisted the dissenters left Nauvoo "as a matter of their choice." The apostates claimed the dissenters left under duress. See Leonard, *Nauvoo*, 370. A month later, Church leaders claimed that the dissenters had set fire to their own homes, perhaps hoping to blame it on Church members. The police extinguished the fire before it spread. In Carthage, the dissenters persuaded Justice Morrison to issue a writ for Joseph's arrest. Willard Richards and John Taylor to Reuben Hedlock, July 9, 1844, published in *Millennial Star* 24 (November 22, 1862): 743.

21. Arguably the most important "mob" meeting occurred in Carthage on the eve of the Martyrdom. Anti-Mormons gathered together as the Carthage Central Committee, or Committee of Safety, to determine what should be done with Joseph and Hyrum. Governor Thomas Ford was notably present, along with important business and political leaders from around the country. It was decided that after the governor left Carthage the following day, a dozen handpicked men would shoot the Smiths. Wicks and Foister, *Junius and Joseph*, 164–65.

Messengers to hold an intervue with ~~him~~ the Governor soon repaired to carthag where he was soon

[unclear line of writing along fold]

of Mobocrcy his mind became poisoned with falshood and finally maid a Deman for the Men a bove Mentioned who Did not give them selves up until the Governor had pldge his word and the faith of the State of Illinois that they should be protected<sup>22</sup> after som three or ~~or~~ four Days consultation thy concluded to repair to Carthage to Meet the Governor<sup>23</sup> Joseph well knowing howevr before he left home that he never should return ~~here~~ a live for said he I am Going Like a Lamb to Slaughter but I have a conscienc void of offence toards God and all men I shall dye

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22. Governor Ford repeatedly pledged to Joseph his protection and guaranteed him "a trial safe from vigilantes." Leonard, *Nauvoo*, 375. For a contemporary discussion of the governor's involvement in the murders, see "Was Governor Ford Responsible for the Murder of the Prophet and Patriarch of the New Dispensation?" *History of the Church*, 7:113–16.

23. On the night of June 22, Joseph, Hyrum, Orrin Porter Rockwell, and Willard Richards had crossed over the river into Iowa intending to go into hiding. The next day Joseph wrote Emma, "I do not know where I shall go, or what I shall do, but shall if possible endeavor to get to the city of washington." Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 616. Other accounts record the Prophet's intention to head west towards the Rocky Mountains. "The way is open. It is clear to my mind what to do. . . . We will cross the river tonight, and go away to the West." *History of the Church*, 6:545–46. Joseph F. Smith, who was nearly six years old at the time, remembered,

The last time I saw [Joseph] was when he crossed the river, he and my father, from Iowa back to Nauvoo, after they had started for the Rocky Mountains; for let me tell you that the Prophet Joseph contemplated journeying to these mountains for the purpose of looking out a gathering place for the people of God. Being constantly persecuted by his enemies, he laid his plans to slip out of their grasp and way, and come out to these mountains to explore them with a view to seeking out a place where the people of God could be gathered and worship God in peace and according to the dictates of their own consciences. But some of these false brethren, of whom I have been speaking, raised the hue and cry that only a false shepherd flew from the flock when the wolves approached. He was upbraided by some of those false brethren of being a false shepherd. When that word came to him he was wounded in his feelings, and so hurt that he turned round and said: "If this is all my friends care for my life, why should I care for it?" And he returned home and went, as he said, "like a lamb to the slaughter." (Joseph F. Smith, *Collected Discourses*, comp. and ed. Brian H. Stuy, 5 vols. [Burbank, Calif.: B. H. S. Publishing, 1987–92], 5:28.)

inncent<sup>24</sup> he finally arrived at Carthage where were gathered several hundred men or demons waiting impatiently to seek their vengeance on an innocent Man<sup>25</sup> they immediately gave Bail for their appearance to Court after which they were arrested for treason on purpose to Detain them<sup>26</sup> knowing they could not sustain any charge against them after they had been there two or three days the g[?] governor finally concluded to disband his men all but two or three companions who had sworn that Joseph and Hiram Smith should never leave Carthage a live out of these a guard was selected

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24. Albert Brown perhaps learned of this statement of the Prophet from the *Times and Seasons* July 15, 1844, article, which recorded Joseph as saying, “I am going like a lamb to the slaughter: but I am calm as a summer’s morning: I have a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward all men: I shall die innocent.” “The Murder,” *Times and Seasons* 5 (July 15, 1844): 585 (emphasis in original). The Prophet’s final entry in his *History* was, “I told Stephen Markham that if I and Hyrum were ever taken again we should be massacred, or I was not a prophet of God. I want Hyrum to live to avenge my blood, but he is determined not to leave me.” *History of the Church*, 6:546 (emphasis in original). In response to those who pled with him not to go to Carthage, Joseph replied,

If I do not go there, the result will be the destruction of this city and its inhabitants; and I cannot think of my dear brothers and sisters and their children suffering the scenes of Missouri again in Nauvoo; no, it is better for your brother, Joseph, to die for his brothers and sisters, for I am willing to die for them. My work is finished; the Lord has heard my prayers and has promised that we shall have rest. (Dan Jones, “The Martyrdom of Joseph Smith and His Brother, Hyrum,” trans., Ronald D. Dennis, *BYU Studies* 24, no. 1 [1984]: 85.)

25. When Joseph and Hyrum arrived in Carthage, the soldiers “shouted obscenities and threatened ‘to shoot the damned Mormons.’” Leonard, *Nauvoo*, 378. Colonel Thomas Geddes inquired of Governor Ford if he would interfere with the assassination of the Smiths. “No, I will not, . . . until you are through!” the governor replied. Wicks and Foister, *Junius and Joseph*, 163.

26. Joseph had been arrested on a writ for rioting. Having lured him to Carthage, his adversaries then proceeded to charge him with treason—a capital crime that was punishable by hanging. Oaks and Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy*, 18. This explains the interchange between the Prophet and Dr. Willard Richards,

“If we go into the cell, will you go in with us?” The doctor answered, “Brother Joseph you did not ask me to cross the river with you—you did not ask me to come to Carthage—you did not ask me to come to jail with you—and do you think I would forsake you now? But I will tell you what I will do; if you are condemned to be hung for treason, I will be hung in your stead, and you shall go free.” Joseph said “You cannot.” The doctor replied, “I will.” (*History of the Church*, 6:16.)



to guard the Jail in which these mene were unlawfully Detained<sup>27</sup> on the Morning of the Day on which Joseph and hiram was killed the governor had maid [damage obscures words] to March to Nauvoo to make [damage, presumably "a"] Speech to citizns<sup>28</sup> this being a favourable oppertu[nity] [damages] Murders to the a mount of betwene 1 and two hundrd prepared themselves<sup>29</sup> som painted yellow som black som red<sup>30</sup> and in the after part of the Day<sup>31</sup> Repaired to the Jail Broke opne the door Discharged their Muskit killed Joseph<sup>32</sup> and hiram Smith<sup>33</sup> Dead on the spo[t] [final letter cut off] and wounded John tailor very seriously<sup>34</sup> he has since recovered

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27. Major Franklin Worrell, who was supposed to protect the Prophet as an officer of the guard at the jail, warned Dan Jones, "We have had too much trouble to bring Old Joe here to let him ever escape alive, and unless you want to die with him you had better leave before sundown; and you are not a damned bit better than him for taking his part, and you'll see that I can prophesy better than Old Joe, for neither he nor his brother, nor anyone who will remain with them will see the sun set today." *History of the Church*, 6:602.

28. Governor Ford acted as a "Judas," leaving Carthage knowing of the plot against the Prophet. Ford had given his word to Joseph that "if I go [to Nauvoo], I will certainly take you along." Wicks and Foister, *Junius and Joseph*, 162–63. Breaking his promise, the Governor traveled to Nauvoo where he spoke to 5,000 Saints gathered to hear news of their beloved leader. Many Church members, including Porter Rockwell and Stephen Markham, believed the Governor's trip was planned as a pretext to give the mob an opportunity to kill the Prophet while providing an alibi for the Governor. See Wicks and Foister, *Junius and Joseph*, 191–92.

29. For a list of men who were possibly involved, see *History of the Church*, 7:142–43. Recent scholarship implicates John C. Elliot as the man "who shot the fatal bullet into the breast of the Prophet Joseph." Wicks and Foister, *Junius and Joseph*, 176–78, 239–42.

30. This account is one of three contemporary accounts that describes the mob as having painted faces rather than merely "blackened" ones. See Leonard, *Nauvoo*, 724 n. 37.

31. Shortly after 5:00 PM.

32. Accounts do not agree on whether Joseph was shot after he hit the ground. Leonard argues that he was not. Leonard, *Nauvoo*, 397, 725 n. 50. The authors of *Junius and Joseph* argue that Joseph was indeed shot while leaning against the well on the ground. Wicks and Foister, *Junius and Joseph*, 178–80 n. 76.

33. Hyrum was also hit by four balls. Willard Richards, an eyewitness, recorded that the first shot entered "the side of his nose" causing Hyrum to fall backwards onto the floor. After exclaiming, "I am a dead man," another musket ball grazed his chest, passed through his throat, and entered his head. "Two Minutes in Jail," *History of the Church*, 6:619–20.

34. At nearly the same moment, one ball hit John Taylor in the left leg just below the knee (giving him a limp for the rest of his life) and another struck his pocket watch, stopping it at 5:16 PM. He was also shot in the left wrist and left hip,

doctor Richards was in the same room but escaped unhurt,<sup>35</sup> there was one occurrence which I must relate after they had shot these Brethren one [damaged words] to take off his head at this Moment there was a sharp flash of light flashed around them and the four men <sup>that</sup> don the horrid deed were disarmed of their strength their guns fell to the ground and had to be carried or helped off a way from the spot, after all this Mobocrats and Murders air not satisfied with Blood Matters have continued with more or less Excitement up until the present time however it has now mostly died away I would say that Eight or ten of those Murderers have been Indicted be for the Court,<sup>36</sup> the question arises will the Murders be hung it is very unlikely no Murderer has ever been Punished I believe since the world began for Murdering a Prophet of the Lord<sup>37</sup>

I have now written what I wish to at this on this subject our papers contain an impartial account of the whole affair, but to conclude I wish you prosperity and happiness

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“cutting away a piece of flesh . . . as large as a man’s hand.” “Two Minutes in Jail,” in *History of the Church* 6:620.

35. Brigham Young later recounted,

I recollect a promise Joseph gave to Willard [Richards] at a certain time when he clothed him with a priestly garment. Said he, “Willard, never go without this garment on your body, for you will stand where the balls will fly around you like hail and men will fall dead by your side, and if you will never part with this garment there never shall a ball injure you.” I heard him say this (voice in the stand: “So did I.”) It is true. When the mob shot Joseph, Willard was there and Br. Taylor was in the room. I have nothing to say about the rest. You know about it. Willard obeyed the words of the Prophet. He said, “I will die before I part with this garment.” The balls flew around him, riddled his clothes, and shaved a passage through one of his whiskers. (Brigham Young, *Brigham Young Addresses, 1860–1864: A Chronological Compilation of Known Addresses of the Prophet Brigham Young*, comp. and ed. Elden J. Watson, 6 vols. [Salt Lake City: Elden J. Watson, 1980] 4:1, July 14, 1861. Original in Church Archives)

36. Those indicted were John Wills, William Voras, William N. Grover, Jacob C. Davis, Mark Aldrich, Thomas C. Sharp, Levi Williams, Gallaher, and Allen. Only five men were brought to trial: Sharp, Williams, Aldrich, Davis, and Grover. Oaks and Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy*, 51–52.

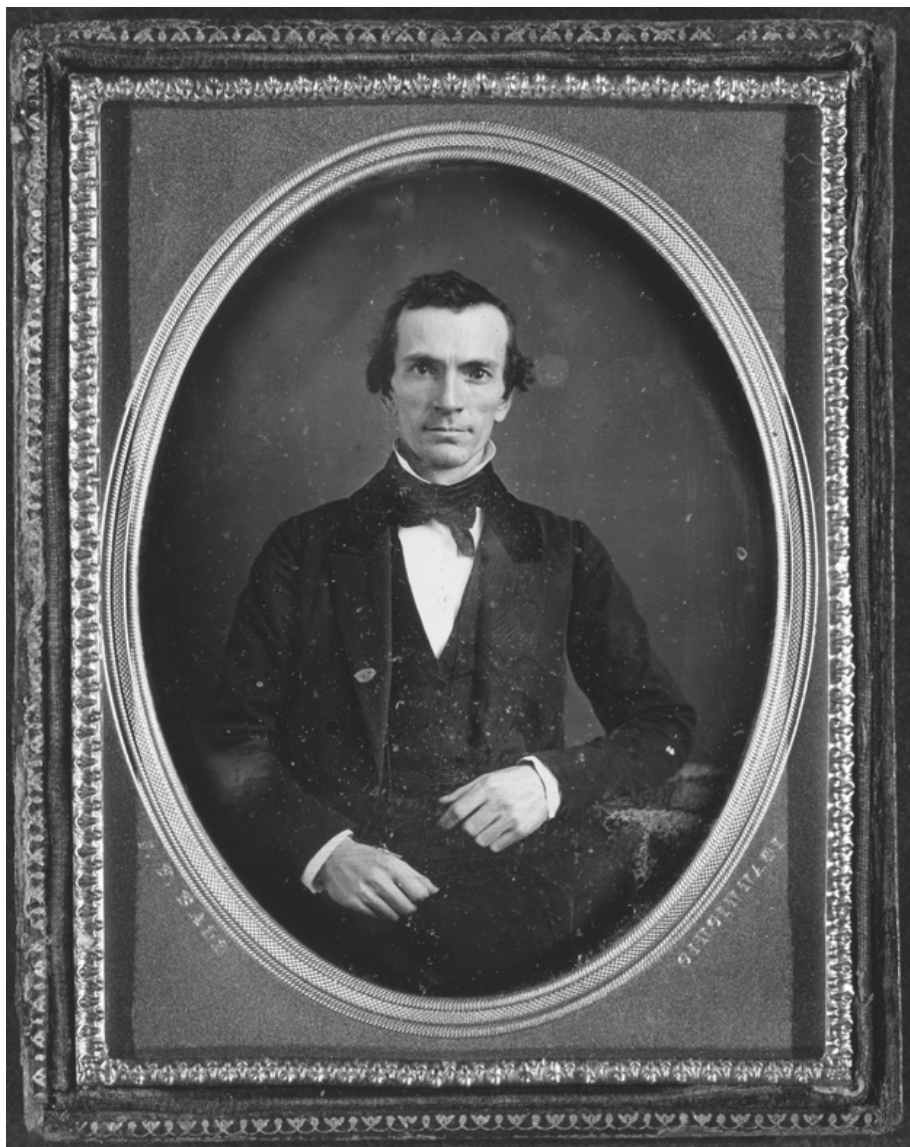
37. No one was convicted for the murders of Joseph and Hyrum. “Those who were charged with the deaths of Joseph and Hyrum Smith and judged by their peers not guilty of murder resumed their lives. . . . Then, despite legends to the contrary, they lived out their lives as respected citizens with successful careers in their communities.” Leonard, *Nauvoo*, 416.

I wish further more that you could see and understand the fullness of the gospel as it is revealed in the Last Days firmly believing that it would constitute your happiness in this world and in the world to come you would be prepared to understand the sines of the times also, I must come to a close I must say to Louisa I thank hir for the goodness and genirosity she has manifested in hir Litter to me and may the Bessings of Almigh'ty God be with hir is the Preyr of hir unworthy Uncle and all the re[s]t

Albert Brown

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Courtesy Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

**FIG. 1.** Patrick A. Bishop discovered this daguerreotype while perusing the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. Preliminary comparisons to other known images of Oliver Cowdery suggests that this is an original daguerreotype of Cowdery.

# An Original Daguerreotype of Oliver Cowdery Identified

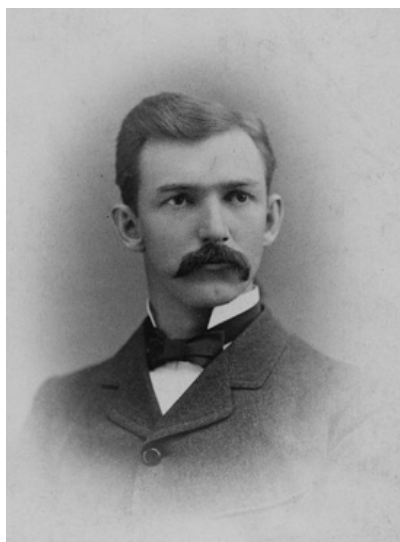
*Patrick A. Bishop*

During my graduate studies I took on the project of obtaining photographic images of each apostle of this dispensation. The task proved difficult, but I found photographic likenesses for all but seven members of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. My interest in collecting daguerreotypes has continued since that day, and it has led me to the discovery of what I believe is an original daguerreotype of Oliver Cowdery.

One criterion for authenticating an image is to see if the clothing fashions worn in the photo correspond to the person's age in that time period. Many websites have viewable copies of daguerreotypes. One of the best sites to find photographs of early clothing styles is the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. On the evening of February 6, 2006, I was studying images thought to contain 1840s clothing styles, when daguerreotype 1363 (fig. 1) came up. This original daguerreotype, located at the Library of Congress Archives in Washington, D.C., was entitled "Unidentified man, half-length portrait, with arm resting on table with tablecloth." There were also more facts about the daguerreotype on the information page.<sup>1</sup> I surmised that the portrait may contain the image of Oliver Cowdery. As I gave more consideration to this newly discovered image over the next few days, I decided to do a preliminary comparison between the image and other likenesses of Oliver Cowdery.

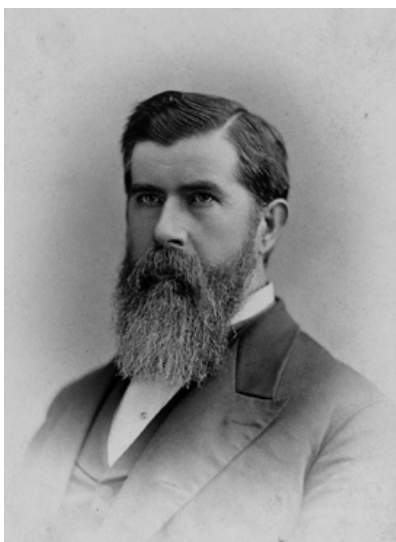
## **Known Likenesses of Oliver Cowdery**

In 1883, Junius F. Wells (fig. 2) decided to make an engraving of the Three Witnesses for publication in the October issue of the *Contributor*.<sup>2</sup>



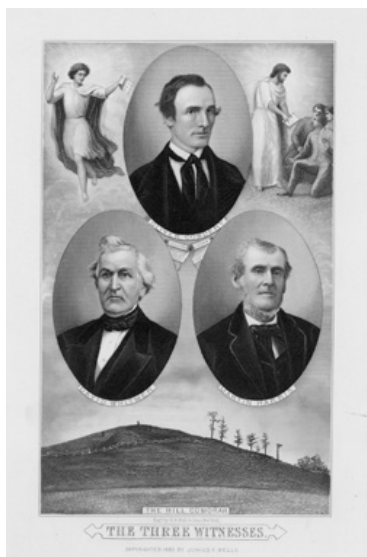
Courtesy LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

FIG. 2. Junius F. Wells.



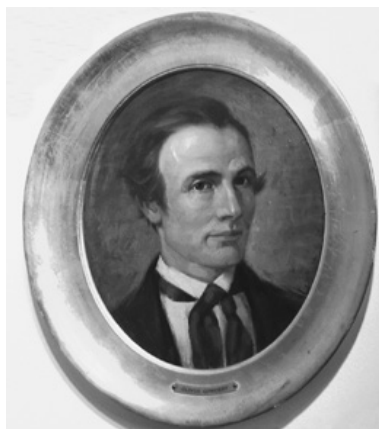
Courtesy LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

FIG. 3. James H. Hart.



Courtesy LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

FIG. 4. Engraving of the Three Witnesses printed for the October 1883 issue of the *Contributor*. This engraving of Cowdery was taken from an original daguerreotype that was destroyed in a fire.



Courtesy Joseph Smith Birth Home, Sharon, Vermont

FIG. 5. Painting of Cowdery by John Willard Clawson.

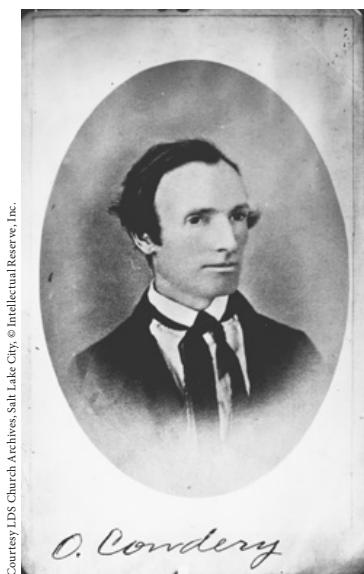


Images of Martin Harris and David Whitmer were obtained quite easily. Obtaining Oliver Cowdery's image, however, proved to be much more difficult. After much research, Wells discovered that Cowdery's daughter, Mrs. Charles Johnson, had both a portrait painting and a daguerreotype of her father. Elder James H. Hart (fig. 3) was sent by Junius F. Wells to obtain the daguerreotype.

After obtaining the image, Elder Hart gave the daguerreotype to H. B. Hall and Sons Engravers in New York to make a copy and the subsequent engraving that was published in the October 1883 *Contributor* (fig. 4). Elder Hart then returned the daguerreotype to the Johnsons' home. Not long after, the Johnsons' home was destroyed by fire, and both the original portrait and the daguerreotype of Cowdery were destroyed. Hence, the only portraits available are based on the engraving in the *Contributor*.<sup>3</sup>

Probably the best of these portraits is the one painted by John Willard Clawson that hangs in Joseph Smith's birth home in Sharon, Vermont (fig. 5). This portrait image was used for the program cover for the 1911 dedication of the Oliver Cowdery memorial monument in Richmond, Missouri.

One of the most popular images of Oliver Cowdery is the Charles W. Carter image (fig. 6). Some have assumed that this image is an actual photograph of Cowdery. The image appears to stem from the original that was destroyed by fire. The features are not as sharp and defined as the portrait by John Willard Clawson or the engraving by Hall and Sons. Ronald E. Romig, head archivist of the Community of Christ Library-Archives, indicated that the Carter image given me was a copy of the glass plate negative of Cowdery (also by Carter) that is held in the LDS Church Archives. I then contacted William W. Slaughter, photo archivist of the LDS Church, and he confirmed that there is not a record of what image Carter used for his photograph. It is obviously not an original picture of Oliver while living, as Oliver had died a decade before



**FIG. 6.** It is believed that Charles W. Carter took this photograph of an original daguerreotype of Oliver Cowdery, which was owned by Mrs. Charles Johnson. The original daguerreotype was subsequently destroyed in a house fire.



Carter started taking photographs. There is no known record of Carter ever coming into contact with the Johnsons to copy the daguerreotype.

Carter's photograph is most likely taken from a copy of the original daguerreotype. It was a common practice in those days to photograph paintings or other photos and make copies to be distributed. For example, Carter took a photograph of an oil painting of Joseph Smith that is now owned by the Community of Christ (fig. 7). That photograph is sometimes mistaken for an original daguerreotype of Joseph taken while he was living (figs. 7a, 7b).<sup>4</sup>

Regardless of the origin of the Carter photo of Oliver, it is another witness to the reliability of the other renderings of the original Oliver Cowdery daguerreotype. Because each image is so similar, examiners have a very good knowledge of what he looked like. All these likenesses provided the means necessary to identify the newly discovered daguerreotype.

### Provenance

The most disappointing part of the discovery is the lack of provenance for the image. As seen on the notes from the Library of Congress, the image was sold to them in 1999 by Anthony Barboza, a photograph collector who currently resides in New York City. Because the image did not become available to public view until 1999, it is likely no attempt was made to identify it until now. I contacted Anthony Barboza to ask him where he had obtained the image. He indicated that he bought most of the images in the 1970s and sold them to the Library of Congress. He kept



Courtesy Community of Christ Library-Archives, Independence, Missouri

Figs. 7a & 7b Courtesy LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City. © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

**FIG. 7.** Oil painting owned by the Community of Christ. **FIGS. 7a, 7b.** These two images are often mistaken for original daguerreotypes of Joseph Smith while living.

no records from where or from whom he had purchased them. Since he bought the images thirty years ago, Barboza could not remember where he had obtained this particular daguerreotype.

I decided to contact the Library of Congress again and ask if I might schedule a trip to Washington, D.C., to view and study the image. I had high hopes that the image contained some other clue to positively match the image to Cowdery. My desires were met with much resistance; I was told that because the original was so fragile, the only image they allowed anyone to view was a surrogate copy.

I called again later, hoping to finally prevail, but the request was again denied. This time, however, I persuaded the head curator to study the original image. The only additional information was given via email on February 27, 2006. It included the measurements and type of case the image is contained in.<sup>5</sup> All other information about the image is given on the information page of the website.<sup>6</sup> Thus the quest to positively trace the image from the Library of Congress back to Oliver Cowdery ended rather quickly.

### **Proximity of Oliver Cowdery and J. P. Ball**

Engraved on the brass plate just below the image of Cowdery is both the name of the daguerreotypist, James Presley Ball (fig. 8), and the city of Cincinnati where he was employed. “A black daguerreian,” J. P. Ball

reportedly first learned the process in 1845. . . .

In the same year Ball opened a studio in Cincinnati, Ohio. In the spring of the following year, penniless, he closed his gallery and moved to Pittsburgh, Pa., and then to Richmond, Virginia, taking a job as a hotel waiter. When he accumulated a little money, he opened daguerreian rooms there.

In 1846–1847, he traveled as a daguerreian in Virginia and Ohio, and in 1847 opened *Ball’s Daguerreian Gallery of the West* in Cincinnati, Ohio.<sup>7</sup>

From 1847 to 1850 Ball operated his studio alone. In 1851 his brother-in-law Alexander Thomas became his partner, and in 1858 the studio was renamed “Ball and Brothers” or “Ball and Thomas.”<sup>8</sup> During the 1850s, it is likely that all the daguerreotypes the studio produced etched the names of Ball and Thomas into the case, as seen in many of the daguerreotypes housed in Library of Congress. As the identified photo has only Ball’s name engraved on the case, it is strong evidence that Ball took the daguerreotype sometime between 1845 and 1850 in Cincinnati or while he traveled in Ohio in 1846.



Courtesy Ezer Hall Mumford, *Seattle's Black Victorians*

**FIG. 8.** James Presley Ball, a daguerreian that may have had contact with Oliver Cowdery.

After Oliver Cowdery was excommunicated from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1838, he moved back to Kirtland, Ohio, to study and practice law. In 1840 Cowdery moved to Tiffin, Ohio, where he practiced law and became a prominent civic leader and ardent Democrat.<sup>9</sup> Richard Lloyd Anderson writes of these years:

Several remarkable estimates of Cowdery as a person stem from his political activities in two states while out of the Church. In Tiffin, Ohio, he was regularly before the public as an active party worker, public speaker, and occasional candidate for civil office. In 1842, 1844, and 1845, he was elected by the party township meeting as delegate to the Democratic county convention. In all these years he was named

on the resolutions committee at the county convention because of his characteristic role as an articulate party spokesman. He was regularly sent to political rallies as a persuasive stump speaker. In 1845 he was elected as one of three township trustees, defeating his nearest opponent by a twenty-six percent vote margin. In his last year of political activity in Tiffin, 1846, Cowdery was promoted for the office of state senator at a tri-county convention by a dozen delegates who were loyal to him through two ballots.<sup>10</sup>

If the daguerreotype is of Oliver Cowdery, it was undoubtedly taken during the years from 1845 to 1847. No hard evidence has been found yet placing J. P. Ball and Oliver Cowdery in the same place on the same day; this research is ongoing. However, the following information is worthy of note: First, J. P. Ball's studio was in operation in 1845 while Cowdery was being "regularly sent to political rallies" around the state. It is not unlikely that Cowdery would have gone to Cincinnati for one of these rallies. Second, J. P. Ball was traveling the state of Ohio taking photographs in 1846. Oliver Cowdery would have been a prime photographic candidate as a prominent civic leader and a respected lawyer in Ohio. Finally, while Junius F. Wells was trying to ascertain whether a photo existed or not, some friends of Oliver Cowdery indicated that a daguerreotype had been taken four years before his death.<sup>11</sup> This information would date the daguerreotype to 1846. After Hart received the now-lost daguerreotype from Mr. Johnson to make the engraving for the *Contributor*, the Johnsons and the Whitmers stated that that image of Cowdery was taken when he was about age forty-two, dating that image to 1848.<sup>12</sup> Could it be that the newly identified daguerreotype is the one Cowdery's friends reported being taken in 1846?

Some may argue that in this new image Cowdery appears older than in the 1848 image obtained from the Johnsons. It should be noted that the extant image from the Johnsons is a copy; engravers and a portrait artists often leave out the aging features of the face such as wrinkles and scars.

Cowdery had traveled to Cincinnati, Ohio, in response to a revelation stating, "And again, verily I say unto you, my servants, Sidney Rigdon, Joseph Smith, Jun., and Oliver Cowdery, shall not open their mouths in the congregations of the wicked until they arrive at Cincinnati" (D&C 61:30).

Two revelations are all that directly connect Cowdery to Cincinnati. They are both given in August 1831, fifteen years before the daguerreotype would have been taken. It is common, however, for one to go back to places of importance to visit or reflect on significant events in the past. Perhaps Cowdery was drawn to visit Cincinnati because of past events or associations made in that city.

### Dating the Clothing and Photograph

As stated above, one criterion for authenticating an image of a person is to match the clothing fashions worn in the time period to the age of the person in the photo. It follows that the man in the image should have mid-1840s clothing on:

1840's men's fashion was marked by tightly tailored coats and trousers. . . . The coats were noticeable for their fitted sleeves and often featured oversized buttons. Frocks and cutaway coats were the most common style.



FIG. 9.

Vests were still *de rigueur* and are seen in both notch and shawl collar variants as well as single and double breasted styles. Shirts featured a high straight collar, though some did appear with a slight turn-down over the cravat.

At the outset of the decade cravats were relatively thin and often worn in the familiar bow tie style. But by the end of the decade, gentlemen wore very wide cravats, some of which featured frames to hold the fabric in place throughout the day. . . .

In contrast to the 1840's, the 1850's reflected a marked preference for bolder styling particularly seen in frock coats with wider lapels and

looser cuts. Waistcoats became fancier with bold patterns and metal buttons. In the early part of the decade, gentlemen wore extravagant, heavily starched, assymmetrically tied cravats, which subsided later in the decade to reflect softer styling. At the beginning of the decade many gentlemen wore their hair parted on the side styled with an extreme frontal wave on top, but once again this subsided toward the end of the decade.<sup>13</sup>

The daguerreotype concurs with this criteria for the clothing Cowdery would have worn in the mid-1840s. The man in the image (fig. 9) has a tightly fitted coat especially in the arms, a high collar, and a thinner cravat tied in a simple bow tie style. In 1846, Cowdery would have been forty years of age, matching the approximate age of the man in the image.

### Facial Identification

In the mid-1990s Ephraim Hatch published a book entitled *Joseph Smith Portraits: A Search for the Prophet's Likeness*. In his book, Ephraim used a gridline system to verify whether or not facial features from portraits of Joseph Smith were a match to his death mask. This system is a good starting place. In doing a gridline comparison, the engraving from the original daguerreotype of Cowdery was used, as it provides the most accurate comparison. As seen in fig. 10, the newly found image and the engraving match with exactness.

As the above method only takes into account the spatial orientation of the facial features, each individual feature should be examined closely.

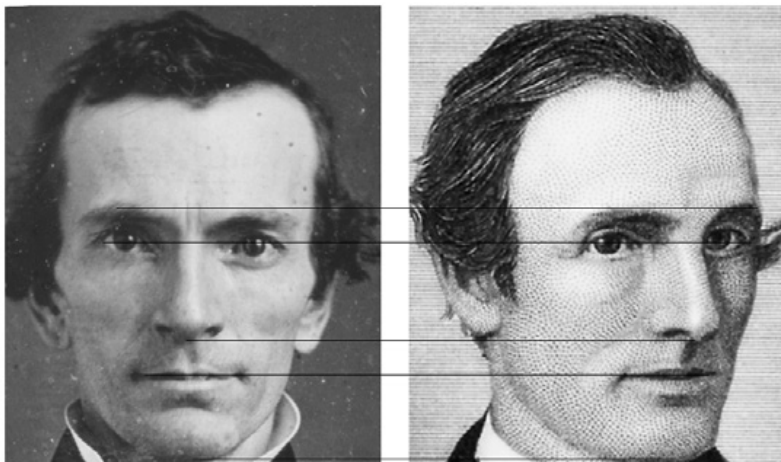


FIG. 10. This gridline comparison of facial features matches with exactness.

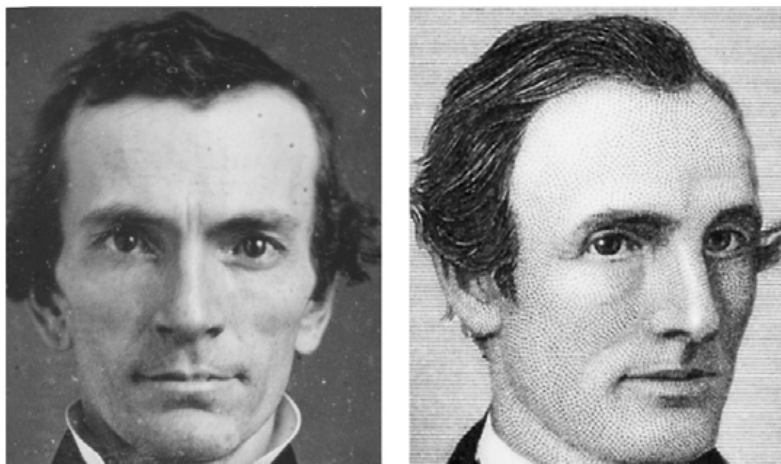


FIG. 11. Without the gridlines, each individual feature can be examined.

Again using the two above images with the gridlines removed (fig. 11) each feature will be examined.

Starting with the hair and moving down it can be seen very clearly that the hair line in both images match with a slight widow's peak. The hairstyle is also an exact match in both images, with the part on the same side, the slight wave on the comb-over in the front, and the sides combed forward with a distinctive "winged" look. The shape and size of the eyes and eyebrows are also excellent matches. Both noses are long and wide at the base, having the same shape from top to bottom. The lips on each are wide but thin, having a "clenched mouth" with slight creases in each corner of the mouth. Finally, the chin in both images is broad and gently pointed.

William Lang, an associate partner of law with Cowdery, wrote of his impressions of Cowdery while writing a history of Seneca County, Ohio. In that work, Lang produced the following description:

Mr. Cowdery . . . had an open countenance, high forehead, dark brown eye, Roman nose, clenched lips and prominent lower jaw. He shaved smooth and was neat and cleanly in his person. He was of light stature, about five feet, five inches high, and had a loose, easy walk. With all his kind and friendly disposition, there was a certain degree of sadness that seemed to pervade his whole being.<sup>14</sup>

As one reads this description by William Lang it seems to be describing this newly found daguerreotype in every way.



## Research Is Ongoing

While the observations in this article are not absolute, they do provide convincing evidence that this is indeed a heretofore unknown image of Oliver Cowdery. Hopefully this preliminary study will be used as a platform to bolster further research and prove conclusively that the image is that of Oliver Cowdery. To establish a better provenance, further evidence might be collected by searching newspaper clippings, advertisements of the day, or other public records to see if Oliver Cowdery and J. P. Ball can be connected more substantially. Searching the journal entries of friends and family from both parties may also prove helpful. A facial recognition expert could also further authenticate the image. These are beyond the realms of my capabilities at present.

This year, 2006, will mark the two-hundredth anniversary of Oliver Cowdery's birth. I hope that this newly identified image will be accepted and used as widely as possible to celebrate the accomplishments of this great man and his witness to all the key events of the Restoration of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

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Patrick A. Bishop (bishoppa@ldsces.org) is Church Educational System Coordinator for the Casper, Wyoming, Seminary and Institute. He received his master's degree in human development from Utah State University in 2004. Bishop gives thanks to Ronald E. Romig of the Community of Christ Library-Archives, William Slaughter of the LDS Church Archives, and to his wife for her patience during his long hours of study.

1. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Online Catalogue, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/pp/dagquery.html> (accessed February 6, 2006).

TITLE: [Unidentified man, half-length portrait, with arm resting on table with tablecloth]

CALL NUMBER: DAG no. 1363

MEDIUM: 1 photograph : quarter-plate daguerreotype.

CREATED/PUBLISHED: [between 1847 and 1860]

CREATOR: Ball, James Presely, 1825–1905

NOTES: Case: back only - Rinhart 108.

Barboza number: 6019.028.

Stamped on brass mat: J. P. Ball, Cincinnati.

Purchase; Anthony Barboza; 1999; (DLC/PP-1999:022).

Forms part of: Daguerreotype collection (Library of Congress).

REPOSITORY: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA

CARD #: 2004664581

2. For a full account of this story see Junius F. Wells, "The Three Witnesses," *Contributor* 5 (October 1883): 34–36.



3. Junius F. Wells, "The Engraving of the Three Witnesses," *Improvement Era* 30 (January 1927): 1024.

4. Ronald E. Romig and Lachlan Mackay, "What Did Joseph Smith Look Like?" *Saints Herald* 141, no. 12 (December 1994): 9.

5. Personal email from Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division to Patrick A. Bishop, February 26, 2006, copy in author's possession, as follows:

The daguerreotype #1363 has the following measurements:

Length (top to bottom) 12 CM or 4  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches

Width (side to side) 9.5 CM or 3  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches

Height (thickness) 1 CM or  $\frac{3}{8}$  inches

The front cover of the case is missing. The back cover has an embossed design of flowers. All other marks and other unique information have been included in the online bibliographic record. There are no other marks etched, embossed, engraved or otherwise written on the back case. Since the front cover is missing, I am unable to tell you of anything that may have been included in the interior of the case.

6. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/pp/dagquery.html>.

7. Craig's Daguerreian Registry: The Acknowledged Resource on American Photographers 1839-1860, [www.daguerreotype.com](http://www.daguerreotype.com) (accessed February 18, 2006). See also Deborah Willis, *Reflections in Black* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000), 4-5; and Deborah Willis, *J. P. Ball, Daguerrean and Studio Photographer* (New York: Garland, 1993), xiv-xv.

8. Willis, *J. P. Ball, Daguerrean and Studio Photographer*, 303.

9. Richard Lloyd Anderson, "Cowdery, Oliver," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:338.

10. Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 42-43.

11. Wells, "The Three Witnesses," 34.

12. Wells, "The Three Witnesses," 35.

13. Gentleman's Emporium, "Gentleman's Portrait Gallery 1840's," <http://www.gentlemansemporium.com/1840-victorian-photo-gallery.php> (accessed February 5, 2006).

14. William Lang, *History of Seneca County* (Springfield, Ohio: Transcript Printing, 1880), 365.

copy 76.11  
Friday, March, 19th, 1897.

Presidents Woodruff and Cannon at the office.

President Woodruff again spoke into the graphophone or talking machine, repeating what he said on the 12th inst., as recorded in this Journal. The object of the repetition was to obtain, if possible, better results than ~~was~~ obtained on the previous occasion. In order to procure President Woodruff's signature to the testimony he bears, it is herewith repeated and signed by himself:

"I bear my testimony that the Prophet Joseph Smith said, before a large assemblage in Illinois, that if he were the emperor of the world and had control over the whole human family he would sustain every man, woman and child in the enjoyment of their religion. Those are my sentiments today.

I bear my testimony that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God, ordained of God to lay the foundation of his church and kingdom in the last dispensation of the fulness of times.

I bear my testimony that in the early spring of 1844, in Nauvoo, the Prophet Joseph Smith called the Twelve Apostles together and he delivered unto them the ordinances of the Church and kingdom of God; and all the keys and powers that God had bestowed upon him, he sealed upon our heads, and he told us that we must round up our shoulders and bear off this kingdom, or we would be damned. I am the only man now living in the flesh who heard that testimony from his mouth, and I know that it was true by the power of God manifest to him. At that meeting he stood on his feet for about three hours and taught us the things of the kingdom. His face was as clear as amber, and he was covered with a power that I had never seen in any man in the flesh before.

I bear testimony that Joseph Smith was the author of the endowments as received by the latter-day Saints. I received my own endowments under his hands and direction, and I know they are true principles. I not only received my own endowments under his hands, but I bear my testimony that Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Willard Richards, George A. Smith, John Taylor and other brethren received their endowments under the hands and direction of the Prophet Joseph; and also my wife Pheobe, Bathsheba Smith, Leonora Taylor, Mary Smith and others whose names I cannot recall now.

The Prophet Joseph laid down his life for the word of God and testimony of Jesus Christ, and he will be crowned as a martyr in the presence of God and the Lamb.

In all his testimonies to us the power of God was visibly manifest with the Prophet Joseph.

This is my testimony, spoken by myself into a talking machine on this the 19th day of March, 1897, in the 91st year of my age."

WILFORD WOODRUFF.

Transcript of the words Wilford Woodruff spoke into "Edison's talking machine."  
Courtesy LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

To listen to Wilford Woodruff's audio recording, go to [byustudies.byu.edu](http://byustudies.byu.edu).

# “This Is My Testimony, Spoken by Myself into a Talking Machine”

Wilford Woodruff’s 1897 Statement in Stereo

*Richard Neitzel Holzappel and Steven C. Harper*

**I**n March 1844, just weeks before his martyrdom, Joseph Smith “called the Twelve Apostles together and he delivered unto them the ordinances of the Church and kingdom of God.” Wilford Woodruff noted the events of the day in a terse journal entry. March “26th A rainy day. I met in council with the brethren.”<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the sacredness and magnitude of the meeting called for the brief, cryptic note. Or perhaps it would take hindsight for Wilford to recognize the momentousness of the day’s events. In either case, fifty-three years later at age ninety, President Woodruff recorded his spoken testimony of the historic meeting.

Two decades earlier, in late 1877, while working to improve the efficiency of a telegraph transmitter, Thomas Edison noticed that the tape of the machine gave off a noise resembling spoken words when played at high speed. Wondering if he could record a telephone message, Edison experimented with the diaphragm of a receiver by attaching a needle to it. He reasoned that the needle could prick paper tape to record a message. Experiments led him to try a stylus on a tinfoil cylinder, which, to his great delight, played back the short message he recorded, “Mary had a little lamb.” Phonograph was the trade name for Edison’s device, which played cylinders rather than discs. Sound vibrations generated by speaking into the mouthpiece were indented into the cylinder by a recording needle. This cylinder phonograph was the first machine that could record and reproduce sound.

Joseph J. Daynes, husband of President Woodruff’s daughter Winifred and president of Daynes Music, brought a phonograph to his father-in-law’s office on March 12, 1897, “for the purpose of showing its workings, and to get Pres. Woodruff to talk into it.” President Woodruff

In his early years, Wilford Woodruff paced his mill, often late into the night, praying “for light and truth and for His Spirit to guide me in the way of salvation.”<sup>1</sup> He looked forward to the day when he would meet someone who could say like Isaiah or Peter or Paul, “I know the Lord Jesus Christ.”

In due time, he met such a man. More than that, he became one. He became, in the fullest sense of the word, a modern Apostle, a special witness. He was associated intimately with Joseph Smith, not on the outskirts but at the very center of the movement.

Wilford Woodruff’s calling as historian and recorder came to full flower in a journal with a daily entry for sixty-three years. He promptly recorded the singular early events of the restored Church. His minutes of crucial meetings and the spoken word are as close to verbatim as his shorthand could make them.

When President Woodruff was in his nineties, he addressed a youth group about the “last charge” meeting. President Joseph F. Smith arose. He urged those present to write careful notes, “that hereafter in the generations to come they could testify that they had heard him bear witness of these truths.”<sup>2</sup>

Notes are often misplaced and forgotten. But this recording preserves indelible firsthand experience. With transparent clarity, he blends Joseph’s words with his own. This, Joseph’s last testimony to the Twelve, became his own.

We hear the record of Christ’s redemptive power, his keys of authority, his organization, his pure and transforming doctrines, his spiritual gifts, and, above all, the empowering promises of his holy temple.

Here is a capsule of eternity, a prophetic vision of the manifest destiny of the kingdom of God on earth and in heaven.

—Truman G. Madsen

1. Matthias F. Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff: History of His Life and Labors* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1964), 18.

2. “Our Work: The General Annual Conference of Young Men’s and Young Ladies’ Mutual Improvement Associations,” *Improvement Era* 1 (August 1898): 781–82.



These wax cylinders contain the audio recordings of Wilford Woodruff's testimony made in Salt Lake City in 1897. Engraved by a stylus on the outside surface, the hollow phonograph cylinder was the most popular medium for recording sound during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Courtesy LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

agreed on the condition that he retain possession of the cylinder to prevent it from being used for advertising. He "spoke into the phonograph, which afterwards repeated back quite audibly and satisfactorily [to] all of the First Presidency."<sup>2</sup>

One week later on March 19,

Pres. Wilford Woodruff spoke again into the graphophone, or phonograph, the same words which he uttered into the instrument on March 12th. They were repeated in order to obtain better results than were secured on that date. After reading his testimony as recorded on the 12th inst., he signed it with his own hand, that it might go on record.<sup>3</sup>

Wilford Woodruff painstakingly prepared the words he wanted to ring in the ears of his posterity—his enduring witness of the prophetic calling of Joseph Smith, who conferred priesthood keys upon the Twelve

and commissioned them three months before his death. Arthur Winter, Church reporter, noted in his journal on March 19:

Several days ago President Woodruff dictated to me his testimony on several points connected with the work of God, his intention being to get his testimony written down just as he wanted it and then he could speak it into the phonograph. Today he repeated it into the talking machine, so that in years to come, long after he shall have passed away, one may hear reproduced by the phonograph, the words he spoke and the very tone of his voice.<sup>4</sup>

We are awed by that voice. It flows from a man whose ears heard Joseph teach the fulness of the gospel, whose eyes saw him “covered with a power I had never seen in any man in the flesh before,” who “received my own endowments under his hands and direction,” and who lived to record a witness that resonates in our ears.

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1. Wilford Woodruff, Journal, March 26, 1844, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as Church Archives).

2. Journal History of the Church, March 12, 1897, Church Archives, microfilm copy also available in Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

3. Journal History of the Church, March 19, 1897.

4. Arthur Winter, Journal, March 19, 1897, Church Archives.

*To listen to Wilford Woodruff's audio recording, go to  
***byustudies.byu.edu***.*

# Francis Webster

## The Unique Story of One Handcart Pioneer's Faith and Sacrifice

*Chad M. Orton*

One of the best-known and best-loved stories of the Mormon pioneers is the testimony of Francis Webster, a member of the Martin Handcart Company. Although his name has increasingly become associated with his statement, he is still better known as the unnamed old man in the corner of a Sunday School class who arose to silence criticism directed toward those who allowed that company to come west:

I ask you to stop this criticism. You are discussing a matter you know nothing about. Cold historic facts mean nothing here for they give no proper interpretation of the questions involved. Mistake to send the Hand Cart Company out so late in the season? Yes. But I was in that Company and my wife was in it. . . . I have looked back many times to see who was pushing my cart but my eyes saw no one. I knew then that the Angels of God were there.

Was I sorry that I chose to come by hand cart? No. Neither then nor any minute of my life since. The price we paid to become acquainted with God was a privilege to pay and I am thankful that I was privileged to come in the Martin Hand Cart Company.<sup>1</sup>

When William R. Palmer initially recounted this testimony, he reported that one class member after hearing Webster speak arose and voiced the sentiments of all in that Cedar City, Utah, Sunday School class,

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1. William R. Palmer, "Francis Webster," typescript of a radio address broadcast by KSUB (Cedar City, Utah), April 25, 1943, 1–2, William R. Palmer Collection, Church Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as Church Archives); William R. Palmer, "Francis Webster," *Instructor* 79 (May 1944): 217–18; David O. McKay, "Pioneer Women," *Relief Society Magazine* 35 (January 1948): 8.



### Chad M. Orton

The real story is often better than the popularly told tale. Such is the case with Francis Webster, the famous old man in the corner of a Sunday School class who arose to silence criticism directed towards the Willie and Martin handcart companies. While his statement is a moving tribute to the faith and sacrifice of handcart pioneers, it becomes an even more inspiring testimony, and takes on an added significance, when understood in light of the rest of the story.



His obedience and sacrifice extended beyond the handcart companies' well-documented struggles, to his personal commitment to follow counsel and to reach out to his fellow men. While Latter-day Saints today may never encounter circumstances similar to what the handcart pioneers endured, all face situations where they have to make choices similar to those that Francis Webster encountered both before and during the journey.

The Bible recounts that Jesus told a rich young man, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me" (Matt. 19:21). Although we do not know what became of that young man who went away sorrowful, we do know what became of Francis Webster when faced with a similar decision. Webster's story is a reminder that testimonies grow largely through personal actions and choices, and not simply because an individual is part of a journey, even if that journey is notable because of tragedy and suffering.

"I would gladly pay the same price for the same assurance of the eternal verities that Brother Webster has."<sup>2</sup> More than a century later, Church members continue to be moved by this powerful testimony and likewise desire a similar assurance.

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2. Palmer, "Francis Webster," radio address, 2; Palmer, "Francis Webster," *Instructor*, 218.

Although Webster's statement is well known, the real story behind the words he spoke that Sunday long ago is generally unknown. His declaration has largely been interpreted to be the virtual voice for every member of the Willie and Martin handcart companies stranded by an early winter storm, but his statement should be considered a personal testimony. While there were those in both companies who echoed in deed and word Webster's sentiments that these pioneers were blessed for what they endured as a group when tragedy overtook them in October 1856, his moving testimony is also an acknowledgment that he and his wife were further blessed because of individual choices they made to follow counsel and to sacrifice for their fellow Saints during the journey.

By attempting to make his testimony the universal sentiment of each member of these companies, a valuable and inspiring lesson has been lost. In its place has arisen a common perception that the price he paid to gain his powerful testimony simply involved pulling a handcart and enduring the hardships of an early winter.<sup>3</sup> The lesson at the heart of his statement, however, goes beyond having to endure the cold and snow that all in the company experienced. This lesson involves his willingness to travel a harder path than simply pulling a handcart. It speaks to the fact that at several points along the journey that took him from England to Utah he made choices that led him onto the road less traveled. His testimony is evidence that, in the final analysis, these choices indeed made a great difference in his life.

If Francis and Ann Elizabeth Webster (better known as Betsy) did not pay a greater price to emigrate to Zion than most in the Willie and Martin

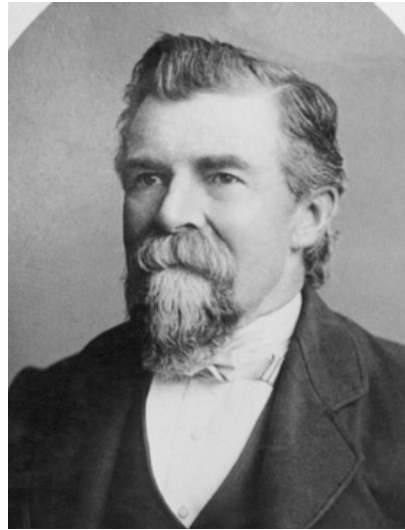
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3. In 1906, Albert Jones, a member of the Martin Company, described what continues today to be a popular perception of handcart pioneers: "I have heard that a lady well known among the saints, once said, while the surest way of getting to Heaven was under discussion, 'When I approach the Golden Gate, Peter will at once grant me admission when I cry, "Hand Carts!"'" Although not ready to accept this position as a guarantee of exaltation, Jones concluded, "If pulling a hand cart a thousand miles shall help in opening the Golden Gate, I shall urge my claim." Albert Jones, "Utah Heroes Who Pulled Their All Across the Plains," *Deseret Evening News*, September 1, 1906, 20.

The general perception that the handcart pioneers were more faithful than other pioneers has grown over time and is fueled largely by the tragedy encountered by the Willie and Martin handcart companies. The one generalization that can be drawn about handcart pioneers is that they largely were poor individuals reliant upon the resources provided by the Perpetual Emigrating Fund, which in 1856 meant the added labor of pulling handcarts. The first three companies that traveled by handcarts in 1856 experienced few problems and reached Salt Lake quicker than if they had traveled by wagons.



Ann Elizabeth (Betsy) Webster, though expecting a baby, chose with her husband to sell their wagon and travel by handcart, taking the proceeds to buy handcarts for destitute pioneers. Courtesy Special Collections, Sherratt Library, Southern Utah University.



Francis Webster is best known for the time when he arose to silence criticism of those who allowed the Martin and Willie handcart companies to come west. The rest of his story gives compelling insights into what was involved. Courtesy Special Collections, Sherratt Library, Southern Utah University.

companies, they at least paid a different one. Before the journey began, they had to make a choice that few others in the company had to face. Specifically, while most in the company were unable to fund their own way to Zion and thus were reliant upon the means provided by the Perpetual Emigrating Fund (PEF), which in 1856 meant that they had to travel by handcart, Francis and Betsy Webster had the option to travel by wagon. During the early portion of the journey, they also evidenced a different attitude than some in the company when things did not go according to plan. While they may have had as much or more reason to feel sorry for themselves as any other member of the company, they instead looked for ways to better the situation rather than dwelling upon the negative. Through it all, they were a prime example of President Spencer W. Kimball's observation that "God does notice us, and he watches over us. But it is usually through another mortal that he meets our needs."<sup>4</sup>

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4. Spencer W. Kimball, *Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), 252.

Francis and Betsy likely would have preferred that their journey to Utah be as easy as possible, but they afterwards came to cherish the lessons they learned under adverse circumstances.<sup>5</sup> Francis's testimony is even more extraordinary when understood in light of the events that led him to become a member of the Martin Company and the decisions he made during the first portion of the journey—decisions that led him into the refiner's fire.

Four statements in Webster's testimony need to be placed in context to fully understand his comments. The four statements will be addressed in the order in which they appear in the account as told by William R. Palmer, which account is included at the end of this article: "He said in substance"; "Not one of that company ever apostatized or left the Church"; "I have gone on to that sand and when I reached it, the cart began pushing me"; and "Was I sorry that I chose to come by handcart?"

### Recounting the Story

While Webster's statement has been presented as his actual words, Palmer did not make that claim. Rather, he included a caveat: *He said in substance*.

It is not known exactly when Francis Webster made his comments. It is also not known when Palmer put those comments on paper, although it is likely he did not take them down word for word when Webster uttered them.

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5. There were those who went through similar trials as Francis Webster who did not have, or did not recognize, the same experience that he did. In 1879, Martin Handcart veteran John Jaques used the following example in an attempt to gain sympathy for the idea that mercy should be shown to members of the company who still had not repaid their PEF loan: "If we must walk through this vale of tears with peas in our shoes, whether all or part of our allotted time, we need not have the peas raw and hard. We need not parch them and make them harder. We may just as well take the liberty to boil our peas and keep them as soft as we comfortably can, so as to make our walking as easy as possible." J. J. [John Jaques], "Some Reminiscences," *Salt Lake Daily Herald*, January 19, 1879, 3.

While Webster likely would have agreed with this sentiment, his testimony given in that Sunday School class suggests that he also understood the benefit of having to deal with the hard peas that occasionally find their way into shoes. Thus if the response of company members to their experiences is considered, simply being on the journey and enduring its hardships was not what brought about Webster's testimony. Some individuals, for whatever reason, simply endured the journey. The refining fires failed to burn away some of the dross in their own lives in part because they had not been tried to the same degree.

From available evidence, it appears that Webster made his comments in 1904, two years prior to his death at the age of seventy-six. Although no Cedar City Sunday School records from that time are extant, Palmer mentioned two other individuals by name—Nathan T. Porter, whom Palmer identified as the teacher of the class, and Charles R. Mabey, who later served as the governor of the state of Utah. Porter served as principal of the Normal School (teacher training program of the Branch Agricultural College) from 1901 to 1904, while Mabey was an instructor at the same school from 1904 to 1906. Mabey later recalled that either he or Howard R. Driggs, not Porter, was the teacher of that Sunday School. The question of the teacher does little to change the time frame. Driggs was the assistant principal of the Normal School in 1904.

Nearly forty years later, Palmer recounted what had transpired in that Sunday School class in a radio address over station KSUB in Cedar City, Utah. Between March and July 1943, he delivered a series of weekly radio addresses focusing on pioneers of southern Utah entitled “Men You Should Know.” He recounted the life of Francis Webster on April 25, 1943, the eighth of twenty-one addresses. Edited versions of some of these radio addresses were subsequently published in the *Instructor*, with the story of Francis Webster appearing in the May 1944 issue.

The famous quote was not the entire story told that day but served as Palmer’s introduction to Webster’s life. Although the major portion of the address focused on Webster’s handcart experience, Palmer also briefly looked at some of Webster’s experiences while living in Cedar City before concluding his remarks this way:

The life of Francis Webster was so full of useful and unselfish effort, and the scope of his endeavors was so wide and diversified that it is difficult to boil his life story down to the allotted time of this program. Man of superlative faith, man of action, man of sterling dependability his place is secure among the honored pioneers of Southern Utah.<sup>6</sup>

The most frequently cited version of Francis’s testimony is the one given three years later by President David O. McKay, while a counselor in the First Presidency, at the annual Relief Society General Conference held on October 2, 1947, and which was subsequently published under the title “Pioneer Women” in the January 1948 *Relief Society Magazine*. McKay included only a portion of Palmer’s introduction and did not mention Webster by name. Nor did he mention any of the other pioneers he talked about by name since names were not critical to the point he was trying to

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6. Palmer, “Francis Webster,” radio address, 7.

make. Nevertheless, it is evident that McKay knew of whom he quoted, as he reported in his address that he had met with Webster's daughter.<sup>7</sup> Since that time, Francis Webster has largely been identified simply as the "old man in the corner of the Sunday School class."

Around the time that President McKay retold Webster's story, Palmer sent a copy of his radio address to Charles Mabey. On October 13, 1947, Utah's former governor wrote to Palmer about it: "Thanks for letting me read the manuscript regarding Brother Francis Webster. I wish to congratulate you on the manner in which it is written, the clearness and sincerity of the presentation." In the letter Mabey reminisced about the Branch Agricultural College Normal School before returning to the manuscript:

Getting down to the point at issue, i.e., the testimony spoken of in your article. Either Howard R. Driggs, or I must have been the teacher at the time. I recall that I did teach a class in Sunday School during both school years I was in Cedar City. I know that Dr. Driggs did also. My memory is that my tour of duty as a teacher began shortly after my arrival there and that I had an adult class.

One's memory becomes rather dull after forty years. But I do recall Brother Webster's testimony.<sup>8</sup>

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7. That President McKay knew of whom he spoke in recounting Webster's testimony is evident by his introduction to the quote:

In the month of September, at the close of the day's march, a bride of twelve [nine] months gave birth to a baby girl. . . . The young mother would have to trudge along carrying in her arms, or placing it on the handcart, her newborn babe. What a picture for an artist! What an appeal to the skeptical, indifferent world today! What an illustration of heroism and faith!

Illustrative of this last thought, I am going to tell you what that father said about it, years afterward, for the father, mother, and baby came to Utah, and it was my privilege to sit at the table of that little baby girl when she was grown, and hear the story from her own lips. She was living in a comfortable home with nine lovely children around her. (McKay, "Pioneer Women," 7–8)

The same month that President McKay addressed the Relief Society conference, the *Improvement Era* published an article by McKay that noted that "I think it was about 1907 that I sat at the table as a guest of that little baby girl born on the plains, and around her, crowning her with glory, were nine children. . . . She was Mrs. Leigh of Cedar City." David O. McKay, "The Ideals of True Womanhood," *Improvement Era* 50 (October 1947): 640.

8. Charles R. Mabey to William R. Palmer, October 13, 1947, William R. Palmer Collection, Special Collections, Gerald R. Sherratt Library, Southern Utah University, Cedar City, Utah.

## Faithfulness of the Martin Company Members

Palmer reported that Webster made the following claim: “Not one of that company ever apostatized or left the Church.” It is not clear if Webster really made this comment or if this is simply how Palmer remembered or interpreted Webster’s words, but the statement does not stand up to historical scrutiny. Nevertheless, this statement has frequently been repeated and has contributed greatly to the aura and veneration directed towards the Martin Company and the other handcart company trapped by an early winter storm, the Willie Company.<sup>9</sup>

Although the Martin Company truly exemplified the motto “Faith in Every Footstep,” its members were not unlike any other disparate group of Latter-day Saints, such as those who made a similar journey at a different time or those found in a modern ward. There was a majority of the company, including Francis and Betsy Webster, whose faith seemed to grow with every step they took. There were also those who trudged along the trail, their faith little changed by what they experienced. Finally, there were those whose faith seemed to weaken along the way. Why was that the case? As a general rule, what is true now was true then. People tend to get out of an experience what they put into it. For instance, those who focused primarily upon their own challenges came away from the journey with something different than those who turned to the Lord for solace or reached out to fellow emigrants in need.<sup>10</sup>

The Martin Company was comprised of more than 600 individuals brought together from different locations for the journey to Zion. Realistically, Webster probably did not know all of the company during the journey and likely did not have much contact with them afterwards, since the company was scattered throughout Utah within days of reaching the Salt Lake Valley. He likely was speaking about the small number of handcart

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9. One common belief surrounding the handcart pioneers is that the truth of the restored gospel can be seen by the fact that Latter-day Saints were willing to leave their homes in England. While it took great faith to answer the call to gather to Zion, it should not be overlooked that there were many more thousands of non-LDS people who made a similar journey in 1856. For many individuals, both LDS and non-LDS, the decision to emigrate to America, even if by handcart, was less a sacrifice than an opportunity. A little more than a decade removed from the Dickensian England of *Tiny Tim* and *Oliver Twist*, many emigrants welcomed the chance to escape the poverty that likely would have been their life-long lot in England for the promise of a better life and land ownership.

10. The Book of Mormon recounts that both Nephi and Laman undertook the same journey and hardships. The journey produced different outcomes for these two individuals based largely upon their attitudes.



pioneers that ended up in Cedar City, those with whom both he and the members of the class were acquainted, not the entire company, and his words were misinterpreted. “Did you ever hear a survivor of that company utter a word of criticism?” he is reported to have asked.<sup>11</sup> In a day and age before radio and television and easy travel between distant locations, the number of handcart pioneers personally known to his audience would have been fairly small. These individuals included the faithful Saints Nellie Unthank, who is mentioned by name in the account and who had lost portions of her legs to frostbite as a result of the journey, and William and Amy Middleton, also well-known Cedar City residents.

Webster’s reference to Unthank was no doubt particularly humbling to his audience. Despite having the lower portion of both legs amputated when ten years old because of frostbite, she later bore and reared six children. Moving about on stumps that never fully healed, she served her family, neighbors, and Church without complaint even though she was in almost constant pain.<sup>12</sup>

If Webster in fact referred to the entire company rather than to specific individuals, he misspoke. The evidence is clear that not everyone came through the experience with the same certainty that he did. While it is not known that anyone in the company apostatized directly as a result of the trials they endured in the cold and snow, there were Martin Company members who subsequently left the Church. Henry Augustus Squires and members of his family returned to England in 1867, where Henry again became a Baptist minister, a position he held until his death in 1914.<sup>13</sup> Both Henry Kemp and Deborah Jane Chapman joined the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in the 1860s, eventually ending up in Iowa, where Kemp served a number of years as a local leader of that church.<sup>14</sup> During this same time period, Elizabeth Whittear Sermon Camm withdrew from the LDS Church as a result of plural marriage, but

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11. Palmer, “Francis Webster,” radio address, 1; Palmer, “Francis Webster,” *Instructor*, 217; McKay, “Pioneer Women,” 8.

12. Palmer, “Nellie Pucel Unthank,” typescript of a radio address broadcast by KSUB (Cedar City, Utah) April 18, 1943; Palmer, “Ellen Pucell Unthank,” *Instructor* (April 1944): 152–55; Palmer, “She Stood Tall On Her Knees,” *Instructor* (July 1956): 196–97.

13. Lynne Watkins Jorgensen, “The Martin Handcart Disaster: The London Participants,” *Journal of Mormon History* 21 (1995): 196–97.

14. Susan Easton Black, comp., *Early Members of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1830–1848*, 6 vols. (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1993), 2:134, 3:841.

did not join another church.<sup>15</sup> There were others, but no concerted effort has been made to identify what became of all members of the company.<sup>16</sup>

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15. E. C. [Elizabeth Whittear Sermon Camm] to “My Dear Children,” March 16, 1892, typescript, 1–8, Church Archives. Camm’s four children, ages two to eight at the time of the journey, asked her to share her recollections of the trip. She began her letter, “As I approach the end of my earthly career—and according to your request, I will try and write a few lines of my journey across the plains; although this brings back to my mind many painful remembrances and caused me many tears.” She then explained how she and her husband had paid to emigrate by mule team, but were forced to abandon their plans at Iowa City—and join the Martin Company instead. A subsequent quarrel with Captain Edward Martin concerning the increased load of flour that was placed on the handcarts outside of Florence, Nebraska, led Elizabeth to note in her letter, “I was wounded and a severe wound it was.” She proceeded to report that “many trials came to me after this,” including additional disagreements with company leaders and members, and the problems associated with food shortages and cold weather that contributed to the death of her husband. Once in Utah she married Robert Camm, a middle-aged bachelor whom she described as a “soldier of fortune” to avoid polygamy. “The rest of my life, you all know,” she wrote, “and it was not a bed of roses, I assure you.”

A note included with her letter written by a grandson reported that a disagreement Robert and Elizabeth had with local Church leaders over plural marriage caused Robert to write out “both their resignations from the Church.” According to her grandson, Robert eventually worked his way west from Utah to San Francisco and “in due time” Elizabeth joined him there, where she died in 1893.

16. The various rosters that have been produced of Martin Company members not only differ from each other, but they also do not match the different numbers frequently reported as the total membership of the company. The problem of identifying members and what became of them is exemplified by the 1877 list of individuals who owed money to the Perpetual Emigrating Fund sent by officers of the PEF to the bishops in the Church. These local leaders were asked to review the nearly nineteen thousand names of individuals living in their area and then to try and square the debt with them. The list contained around 350 members of the Martin Company, including many individuals who had died during the journey. In several instances, a family member is listed as having incurred a PEF debt along with other family members yet that one individual does not appear in any of the company rosters even though the rest of the family does. See *Names of Persons and Sureties Indebted to the Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company from 1850 to 1877 Inclusive* (Salt Lake City: Star Book and Job Printing Office, 1877), Perpetual Emigrating Fund Company, Financial Accounts, 1849–85, Church Archives.

In 1906, the jubilee year of the first five handcart companies, the first attempt was made to bring together surviving handcart company members. The reunion was held in October 1906, nearly five months after Francis Webster’s death. Handcart Veterans Association Scrapbook, Church Archives.

## Divine Intervention

Webster's testimony has long been associated with the latter part of the journey, specifically the snows the handcart company encountered on the high plains of Wyoming.<sup>17</sup> Palmer, however, mentioned sand, which the company encountered during the first part of the journey through Iowa and Nebraska: "I have gone on to that sand and when I reached it, the cart began pushing me." Given the tragic circumstances in which the company found themselves near the end of the journey, one might suppose that the mention of sand is another instance where Palmer got it wrong. Surely Webster mentioned snow rather than sand. While a misquote is possible, it is more than likely that Palmer got it right.

Those who kept daily diaries of the Martin Company's journey described the trail across Iowa and Nebraska in terms of heavy, sandy roads.<sup>18</sup> John Jaques later wrote of the difficult circumstances the pioneers faced during the first portion of the journey because of the sand:

In starting from Iowa city with the handcarts and dragging them over the sandy roads, it seemed like pulling the very pluck out of one, the pluck physical and corporal. . . .

For a man to draw his handcart and his own baggage is bad enough, but for him to draw the effects of five or six others, and perhaps draw one of his family, also, is a killing business.<sup>19</sup>

Not only did the sand make pulling a handcart harder, it also intensified the heat of the sun, greatly adding to the discomfort.

When the company left Florence, Nebraska, things became harder for the emigrants as they had to deal with an additional challenge. In addition to the sand, they had to pull extra weight on their carts:

The loads on the handcarts were greater than ever before, most carts having 100 pounds of flour on, besides ordinary baggage. The tents also were carried on the carts. The company was provisioned for sixty days, a

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17. A popular painting based upon Webster's comments shows angels helping beleaguered pioneers push both covered and uncovered handcarts through nearly waist-deep snow.

18. James G. Bleak, Journal, August 22, September 23 and 27, 1856, Church Archives; William S. Binder, Biography and Journal, photocopy of typescript, August 30–31 and September 8, 18, 20, 23–27, Church Archives.

19. J. J. [John Jaques], "Some Reminiscences," *Salt Lake Daily Herald*, December 8, 1878, 1. While the early portion of the journey was hard on emigrants unused to such an experience, Jaques noted that the later portion was hard on the handcart: "In the Black Hills [of Wyoming] the roads were harder, more rocky and more hilly and this told upon the handcarts, causing them to fail more rapidly, become rickety, and need more frequent repairing."

daily ration of one pound of flour per head, with about half a pound for children, being the principal item.<sup>20</sup>

Patience Loader Rosa Archer later recalled that, shortly after leaving Florence, the company “had a very hard Journey as we had to travel through the sandy bluffs it was very hard pulling so much up hill and deep sand.”<sup>21</sup>

Given the circumstances, Webster needed assurance and assistance as much, if not more, during the early part of the journey in the sand and heat as he did in the snow and cold. In fact, there were few days where he needed more divine help than on September 15, when his actions took on the realm of heroic. During one of the sandiest portions of the journey, when the load on his handcart was near its heaviest, he took upon himself the added burden of pulling one of his fellow pioneers on his handcart for the majority of the day’s travel.

It is clear that Webster’s testimony was indeed about the difficulty experienced at the beginning of the journey, for no other members of the Martin Company make specific mention of angelic assistance during the later storm and cold. If there was mention of angelic intervention, it was when the first three rescuers from the Salt Lake Valley reached the snow-bound company two weeks after winter set in, after more than one hundred in the company had already died. Some of the pioneers referred to them as “angels from heaven.” One of the relief party, Daniel W. Jones, later recounted what transpired:

When we rode in, there was a general rush to shake hands. . . . Many declared we were angels from heaven. I told them I thought we were better than angels for *this* occasion, as we were good strong men come to help them into the valley, and that our company, and wagons loaded with provisions, were not far away. I thought this the best consolation under the circumstances.<sup>22</sup>

### Francis Webster’s Choice

The key phrase to understanding Francis Webster’s testimony is likely the one relating to choice: “Was I sorry that I chose to come by handcart?” While each member of the company chose to come by handcart, Francis

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20. J. J. [John Jaques], “Some Reminiscences,” *Salt Lake Daily Herald*, December 8, 1878, 1.

21. Patience Loader Rosa Archer, Diary [ca. 1890], typescript, 150–51, Church Archives.

22. Daniel W. Jones, *Forty Years among the Indians. A True Yet Thrilling Narrative of the Author’s Experiences among the Natives* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1890), 66.

and Betsy Webster faced additional choices that extended beyond simply whether or not to remain in England. These additional choices played an important role in the development of his strong testimony.

Francis Webster was born February 8, 1830, in Wymondham, Norfolkshire, England. By his own account he was a sickly child, and his parents held little hope that he would live to adulthood. When eighteen years old, Francis was baptized a member of the Church on April 17, 1848. The following month, “knowing but little about my duties as a Saint of God,” he left England to seek his fortune.<sup>23</sup> Initially setting out for Australia, he eventually ended up in the California gold fields.<sup>24</sup>

Returning to England in the spring of 1852, he again came in contact with the LDS Church while in London. It was at this time that he met his future wife, Ann Elizabeth (Betsy) Parsons, a recent convert to the Church. He remained in England until the latter part of 1853, when he again went to California, this time with the hope of making enough money so that he and Betsy might rise above their working-class background. “She promised to wait for him until she was 21 and he had made a fortune,” their daughter recalled.<sup>25</sup> With Betsy’s encouragement, he took with him several of the works of the Church, including the Book of Mormon.

Francis returned to England during the summer of 1855. His time in California had been both financially profitable and spiritually beneficial. He reportedly had accumulated over \$2000 in gold dust. When not working in the mines he had also developed an unshakeable testimony through his study. Shortly after he returned to England, Francis and Betsy married on December 5, 1855.<sup>26</sup>

Like thousands of other Latter-day Saints in England and continental Europe during this time, Francis and Betsy determined to answer the call to gather to Utah and build up Zion. With the money Francis had made in the gold fields, the young couple could afford to travel in relative comfort, purchase long-desired household items, and still have means left to begin their life in Utah. Consequently, Francis arranged for a good wagon with two yoke of oxen and full camp equipment for their journey across

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23. Francis Webster, Journal [ca. 1881], holograph, 3, Church Archives.

24. Webster, Journal, 4; Palmer, “Francis Webster,” radio address, 3; Palmer, “Francis Webster,” *Instructor*, 218.

25. Amy Elizabeth Parson Webster Leigh to Dr. George W. Middleton, n.d., cited in Amy L. Van Cott and Allen W. Leigh, *Generations of Websters* (Cedar City, Utah: Thomas Webster Family Organization, 1960): 53.

26. Webster, Journal, 5, 9; Palmer, “Francis Webster,” radio address, 3; Palmer, “Francis Webster,” *Instructor*, 218.

the plains in 1856.<sup>27</sup> The desire for a mode of comfortable travel weighed heavily on the young husband. Betsy was pregnant and would give birth in September, around the time the couple would reach Utah.

While Francis and Betsy could afford to pay their way to Utah, the majority of Saints in England could not. To help these less-affluent Saints emigrate, Church leaders had established the Perpetual Emigrating Fund in 1849. Under the provisions of this fund, emigrants would have their way to Utah paid in advance, then they in turn would repay their debt so that others might have the same opportunity to come to Zion. By 1855, however, the PEF was in financial trouble. The number of individuals answering the call to gather to Zion was greater than the funds available to finance the traditional means of emigrating by wagon and ox team.

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27. Palmer, "Francis Webster," radio address, 3; Palmer, "Francis Webster," *Instructor*, 218.

On December 27, 1856, the *Millennial Star*, an LDS periodical published in England, ran the following notice concerning those who intended to travel by wagon:

To all Saints, proposing to go through to Utah on their own means, we say that teams can be ordered through us, and will be supplied at the point of outfit for the Plains by our agent. We think £55 will cover the cost of one wagon—with bows, yokes, and chains, four oxen, and one cow—perhaps two. All who wish us to order for them, must inform us immediately, and send the needful [money] that we may transmit the same by our agent. . . .

For those planning to pay their own way and travel by handcart instead of wagon, the paper noted:

It will . . . be indispensably necessary, if you intend crossing the Plains, to have hand-carts, teams, provision wagons, cows, beef cattle, provisions, tents, &c., in readiness at Iowa City, so as not to be detained a day, for anything. To accomplish this, you can order all these things through us, and they will be supplied at the point of outfit for the Plains, by our agent. We do not know exactly the cost of all these articles; but we think £3 per head for all over one year old, will supply the out-fit from where you leave the railroad, at Iowa City. . . .

All, therefore, who intend going in this manner, should send to our Office £1 per head, as the usual deposit to secure a passage over the ocean; and £3 per head additional, to be forwarded to our agent to secure your out-fit, on or near the frontiers.

It is intended to have this season's emigration leave the frontiers in May and arrive in Utah in July. This will give the Saints several months after their arrival to make preparations for winter. ("Emigration," *Millennial Star* 18 [December 27, 1856]: 822)

Initially, a call went out for those with means to donate to the PEF.<sup>28</sup> As the shortfall continued, Church leaders, looking for a cheaper way to keep the gathering in operation, determined to implement a plan they had considered for a number of years. Beginning in 1856, those traveling by means of the PEF would journey by handcart.<sup>29</sup> Thus, while Francis

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28. In late November 1855, Elder Franklin D. Richards, at the encouragement of Brigham Young, addressed the problems faced by the PEF in an editorial in the *Millennial Star*:

[God] has thus opened the way for the wealthy to use their means for the benefit of the poor without detriment to themselves, and the responsibility of their not doing so now rests upon them.

The Saints who have property are also required to tithe their substance, that it may be used for gathering of the poor. . . . It simply amounts to this—it determines which a man loves best, his wealth and its enjoyments, or the kingdom of God and its blessings; the good things of this life, or of that which is to come. . . .

We hope that this feeling will find a warm response in the hearts of all Latter-day Saints throughout the length and breadth of this county who have surplus means at their disposal. (Franklin D. Richards, “Emigration,” *Millennial Star* 17 [November 24, 1855]: 746–47)

For more on the PEF, see Leonard J. Arrington, *Great Basin Kingdom: Economic History of the Latter-day Saints, 1830–1900* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1958), 91–106.

29. In September 1855, Franklin D. Richards of the Council of the Twelve and editor of the *Millennial Star* wrote of the decision to use handcarts:

The Lord never yet gave a commandment to His people, but what, if they would go to with full purpose of heart and try to obey it, they could do so. . . . If the Saints would lay hold of the subject with the faith that is their privilege to exercise, the very elements would be moved upon to accomplish their deliverance. . . . Make it your business to see how many of those who are desirous to emigrate can do so. . . . It is the business of a Saint to keep the commandments of the Lord, and leave the consequences with Him. (Franklin D. Richards, “Emigration,” *Millennial Star* 17 [September 22, 1855]: 601–2)

In March 1856, Richards again addressed the issue of handcart travel:

Just as fast as [the Saints] learn to trust implicitly on His power, and confide in Him as the only hope of their deliverance, will He open the way before them. . . .

The Lord can rain manna on the plains of America just as easily as He did on the deserts of Arabia. . . .

The Saints in these days . . . have barely begun to live by faith, or draw forth such manifestations of the power of God for their deliverance, as did ancient Israel. . . .



and Betsy made preparations to go by wagon, most of the Saints in their London branch who planned to emigrate that year were gearing up for a handcart journey.

Church leaders also undertook an additional step to address the PEF's financial shortfall. They encouraged those planning to travel by wagon to emigrate by means of handcart instead and donate the difference to the PEF. Trusting in their Heavenly Father, Francis and Betsy determined to obey this counsel. They cancelled their plans for a wagon and elected instead to join with other British Saints who would travel by handcart.<sup>30</sup>

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Before the Lord can do these mighty works, the Saints have to exercise a faith in Him which will lead them to undertake greater things than crossing the plains on foot. . . . It is full reliance in God and His servants, that the Saints must attain to, before they can be proper instruments for the accomplishment of His mighty purposes. . . .

No matter what the results may appear to be to the natural man, it is the first great business of the Saints to keep the commandments of the Lord, and leave the consequences with Him. (Franklin D. Richards, "The Gathering," *Millennial Star* 18 [March 1, 1856]: 138–40)

30. In addition to Francis and Ann, other members of the London Branch also forsook traveling by wagon in favor of handcarts, including James G. Bleak, who was president of the branch and later wrote of his decision:

In 1856, after five years active labor in the ministry, the writer was honorably released from the presidency of the then largest branch of the London Conference, that he might gather to Zion.

He forwarded to the office of the British Mission in Liverpool, funds, with instruction to purchase an ox-team outfit to convey himself and wife and their four children from the outfitting point, Iowa City, to Great Salt Lake City.

About this time the subject of making the journey across the plains by handcarts was submitted to the Saints in the European missions; accompanied by the suggestion that those able to emigrate that season by ox or horse teams would be blest if they had faith to go by handcarts, costing so much less than teams and wagons and would use the means thus saved to emigrate other faithful Saints who did not have means to gather to Utah that year.

The writer confesses, that, in view of his wife being unused to travel, and that the four children were of tender years, ranging from six years, the oldest, to eleven months, the youngest, he hesitated, indeed made up his mind not to adopt the suggestion requiring a journey of thirteen hundred miles on foot, from Iowa City to Salt Lake, by hand-cart.

As the time for beginning the season's emigration approached, others were preparing to emigrate who had been co-laborers with, and under the presidency of this branch-president. They declared they were going in the same company, and in the same way that he was going.

They chose this course knowing that they would not be able to bring with them many of the goods they had worked so hard to obtain and that Betsy would be well along in her pregnancy during the journey.

Concerning their sacrifice, Webster later simply noted that he paid “the fare for 9 persons besides myself and wife to Salt Lake City.”<sup>31</sup> Given the cost differential between traveling by handcart versus by wagon, paying the fare for eleven individuals meant that Francis and Betsy not only donated the difference to the fund, they also contributed an additional amount, bringing their total donation to nearly twice what they would have paid to travel by wagon. Not only would these nine individuals not face a debt at the end of the journey, but the money they would have used from the PEF account was now available for others who wished to emigrate.

On May 23, 1856, Francis and Betsy left England on the ship *Horizon* in a company of Saints under the direction of Edward Martin. When this company reached Iowa City, Iowa, on July 9, they discovered that their promised handcarts were not ready. After nearly a three-week wait, there were still not sufficient handcarts for each family to have its own. Inasmuch as the company could delay no longer if it hoped to reach the Salt Lake Valley that year, members were asked to share handcarts. Francis and Betsy chose to share a cart with William and Amy Middleton, Betsy’s mother and stepfather, and William’s fifteen-year-old son John.

Not only had Francis and Betsy gone from a wagon of their own to sharing a handcart, but also the promised wagons in which they could ship additional baggage failed to materialize. As a result, they had to further reduce the items they could take with them. Like others in the company, what they couldn’t sell they were forced to abandon. “They had japan[n]ed tin Boxes made to carry their cloths in, but the Boxes were left standing on the prairie,” their daughter Amy later reported.<sup>32</sup>

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Finding this condition of affairs, and realizing that he had always striven to set a example in temporal and spiritual matters to the brethren and sisters entrusted to his care, he hesitated no longer, but at once wrote to President Franklin D. Richards, asking to be numbered on the hand-cart list. . . .

After receiving the approval of President Richards, this change was announced in public meeting; and, to the credit of those who emigrated from that branch that season, all adopted the same method of gathering. (Scribo, “An Item of Hand Cart Experience,” *Juvenile Instructor* 37 [June 15, 1902]: 365–66)

31. Webster, Journal, 9. The identity of these nine individuals is not known for certain.

32. Leigh to Middleton, *Generations of Websters*, 53. An editorial in the February 23, 1856, *Millennial Star* promised

In a further effort to help the company, Francis allowed William and John to assist with the provision wagons and livestock that accompanied the company. Consequently, the lion's share of the pulling of the handcart fell upon Francis. Nevertheless, he was no doubt thankful for this arrangement as it allowed Betsy to have her mother close by to assist her.

On July 26, the Martin Company finally left Iowa City. Francis wrote little about the trip itself. His few notations—and what we can glean from the writings of others—indicate that the journey was not an easy one for him and Betsy. Like many in the company, he suffered from dysentery. At one point during the early portion of the journey between Iowa City and Florence, he was so sick that he “sat down on the road,” unable to continue. Only after he received a priesthood blessing was he able to continue the trek. “[I] got up and pulled my hand cart with renewed vigor,” he wrote.<sup>33</sup> His purpose in telling the story seemed more to praise God than to complain about his illness.

In late August, the Martin Company finally reached Florence, formerly known as Winter Quarters, Nebraska. While there were those at this time who suggested the company postpone their journey until the following year, the desire of company members to join with the Saints that year was strong. Upon leaving Florence, the loads on the handcarts were greater than before.

By the first week of September, the challenges of the journey were taking their toll upon some company members. Following a hard day's

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those who *prepay* their passage, or those whose passage has been *prepaid* in Utah, who may have more luggage than will be allowed . . . will be able, if they have the means, to take the excess across the States at about ten shillings per 100 lbs., and can doubtless arrange at the point of outfit for the conveyance across the Plains by ox-teams of that which they are unable to haul in their handcarts.

The reality of the situation the pioneers encountered at Iowa City turned out differently, as noted by John Jaques:

As only a very limited amount of baggage could be taken with the handcarts, during the long stay on the Iowa city camping ground there was a general lightening of such things as could best be done without. Many things were sold cheaply to residents of that vicinity, and many more things were left on the camping ground for anybody to take or leave at his pleasure. It was grievous to see the heaps of books and other articles thus left in the sun and rain and dust, representing a respectable amount of money spent therefor in England, but thenceforth a waste and a dead loss to the proper owners. (J. J. [John Jaques], “Some Reminiscences,” *Salt Lake Daily Herald*, December 1, 1878, 1)

33. Webster, Journal, 9.

travel with limited water, there was “considerable murmuring in camp” during the evening of September 8th. The following morning before the company started, “President Martin and Elder Tyler gave the murmurers a good chastising.”<sup>34</sup>

A week after the murmuring incident, Francis and others evidenced a different spirit from the complainers. On September 14, James Bleak, who had served as president of the branch Francis attended in London, became seriously ill. The next day, September 15, the company made its longest one-day march since leaving Florence—twenty-two miles. Bleak started pulling his handcart but could not continue. He reported what transpired:

I began to draw the Handcart this morning but was obliged to leave it. Br. Francis Webster very kindly persuaded me to get on his handcart and drew me 17 miles. Elder Hunter and the two sisters Brown very kindly drew me about 4 miles. For which kindness I feel grateful, and pray God to bless them with health and strength.<sup>35</sup>

Although this act of kindness added a tremendous burden to the regular load of Francis and the others who came to Bleak’s assistance, this service meant that Bleak’s wife and four young children did not have the added responsibility of caring for their father. With a day’s rest, Bleak recovered enough to resume pulling his handcart the following day, although he was “still very ill.”<sup>36</sup>

Two weeks later, on September 27, while the company camped on Wolf Creek, Betsy gave birth to a daughter, who was given the name Amy Elizabeth.<sup>37</sup> Bleak reported that the delivery followed a hard day’s journey of only seven miles because the “sand [was] very soft and deep.”<sup>38</sup> Unable to wait for Betsy to regain strength because of the approaching winter season, the company pushed on the following morning, traveling sixteen miles that day.

If Betsy and her newborn daughter rode in the provision wagon driven by her father-in-law, it appears to have only been for a brief period of

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34. Bleak, *Journal*, September 8–9, 1856.

35. Bleak, *Journal*, September 15, 1856. The Brown sisters mentioned are thirty-five-year-old Elizabeth Brown and twenty-five-year-old Jane. There are three individuals in the company who could be the Elder Hunter: twenty-three-year-old James Hunter, or brothers George and John Hunter, ages nineteen and eighteen respectively.

36. Bleak, *Journal*, September 16, 1856.

37. Webster, *Journal*, 10. David O. McKay visited this child when she was a grown woman and heard her first hand account of her family’s journey across the plains. McKay, “Ideals of True Womanhood,” 640; McKay, “Pioneer Women,” 8.

38. Bleak, *Journal*, September 27, 1856.

time. Josiah Rogerson fondly remembered that during the journey across Nebraska, William and John Middleton “would pick up the children that were walking with their mothers and take others from the arms of their parents and put them in their wagon.”<sup>39</sup> Amy later wrote that her grandmother Middleton “walked to keep mother company, and to help carry me, the latter part of the journey, I have no doubt.”<sup>40</sup>

A little more than a month after the Amy’s birth, the Martin Company had to endure the trials associated with that year’s early winter. While the company was able to buy additional supplies at Fort Laramie on October 9, they were unable to obtain enough to last them to Salt Lake City. Consequently, on October 16, rations of flour were reduced from one pound to twelve ounces per day for an adult. Company members were also ordered to lighten their loads to help hasten their march. After traveling ten miles on October 19, the progress of the company came to a near stop as a result of a heavy snowstorm. Winter came with a vengeance of “cold wind, sleet and snow,” Bleak wrote. During the day the company crossed the Platte, a crossing which was “very trying in consequence of its width and the cold weather.”<sup>41</sup> Between the twentieth and twenty-eighth of October, the company traveled only five miles as a result of the storm. With the company snowbound, rations were further reduced in an effort to make them last. What little rations Francis received, he shared with his wife and mother-in-law to supplement their meager allotment.<sup>42</sup>

In early October, Church leaders in Salt Lake City learned that there were still companies of emigrants on the trail. They quickly arranged for Latter-day Saints from the valley to assist their brothers and sisters. Within days, relief wagons full of clothing and food were dispatched to assist the Saints still on the trail.

On October 28, the first rescuers reached the company. “When they first made their appearance I do not think there was one in Camp but shed tears of joy,” Bleak noted.<sup>43</sup> Three days later on October 31, the first of the relief wagons reached the company. One of the rescuers, George D. Grant, reported to Brigham Young that by the time his relief party met the company the snow was “from 6 to 10 inches deep” and the weather

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39. Josiah Rogerson, “Tells Story of Trials of the Handcart Pioneers,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 30, 1913, 11.

40. Leigh to Middleton, *Generations of Websters*, 53.

41. Bleak, Journal, October 19, 1856.

42. Leigh to Middleton, *Generations of Websters*, 53.

43. Bleak, Journal, October 28, 1856.

very cold. . . . You can imagine <between> five and six hundred Men, Women, & Children, worn down by drawing their hand carts through snow and mud; fainting by the way side; falling, chilled by the cold; children crying, ~~from the~~ cold their limbs stiffened by cold, their feet bleeding, and some of them bear to snow and frost. The sight is almost too much for the stoutest of us.<sup>44</sup>

By November 4, the uncovered handcarts had been abandoned. On November 9, almost all the covered handcarts were left behind. During this time many in the company still had to walk because of a shortage of wagons, which were used primarily to carry those who could no longer walk. "I have suffered very much to day with my feet, which are frost-bitten. I walked the 5 miles not wishing to burden the teams," Bleak wrote of his experiences of November 9.<sup>45</sup> Eventually, all members of the company finished the journey riding in wagons sent from the Salt Lake Valley.

Francis's assurance that his Heavenly Father was mindful of him and his situation, a knowledge he gained while willingly giving of himself during the first part of the journey, no doubt helped him through the ordeals associated with that harsh winter that the company endured. In spite of his sacrifice, Francis Webster was not spared the effects of the winter snow and cold. "My own feet where [*sic*] badly frozen on the journey," he afterwards noted.<sup>46</sup>

Later in life neither Francis nor Betsy dwelt on the trials they endured as a result of their decision to forsake traveling by wagon and emigrate by handcart. They felt that what they had given up paled in comparison to what they had received in return. The fact that their handcart was the only one to finish the journey with more family members than when it began was evidence enough that the Lord had blessed them for their faith and sacrifice. William Palmer noted, "Francis Webster and Elizabeth felt that the Lord had rewarded them and blessed them for the help they had given so unselfishly to others."<sup>47</sup>

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44. George D. Grant to Brigham Young, November 2, 1856, Brigham Young Collection, Church Archives.

45. Bleak, Journal, November 9, 1856. Bleak's selfless attitude continued after the journey. Four months after reaching the Salt Lake Valley, he attended the April 1857 general conference at which a "collection was made to raise \$125 for President B. Young." Concerning this request, Bleak noted that "as I had no cash, I gave my [wedding] ring." When Brigham Young had raised the needed money he blessed Bleak in the name of the Lord and gave the ring back. Bleak, Journal, April 8–9, 1857.

46. Webster, Journal, 10.

47. Palmer, "Francis Webster," radio address, 5; Palmer, "Francis Webster," *Instructor*, 219.

On November 30, the Martin Company reached Salt Lake City. Two days later, Francis, Betsy, and Amy Webster left for Cedar City, where they lived the remainder of their days. Francis continued his life of service, serving as a ward teacher, a counselor in two bishoprics, a member of the high council, and a councilor in the stake presidency. He was also active in community affairs, served as the mayor of Cedar City, and took an active role in establishing the Branch Agricultural College in Cedar City (now Southern Utah University).<sup>48</sup>

There were those members of the Martin Company that later left the Church. There were those that murmured. One company member later proclaimed that the price most of the company had paid in coming across the plains was enough, and therefore they should be forgiven their PEF debts.<sup>49</sup> There were those in the company whose faith deepened as a result

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48. Concerning some of Webster's church and civic service, Palmer reported:

Francis Webster was prominent in church work all his life in Utah. . . . His consistent yet unassuming course inspired faith and confidence among all classes. He was faithful to every trust and diligent in discharging every duty. He acted on many building committees and in fund raising campaigns and when he went after a man for donations of either money or labor there is no case on record where that man ever talked him out of it. The word "no" never registered in his ears. He was just as generous in his own giving as he expected others to be.

He was equally prominent in business, agricultural and livestock affairs. . . .

When the Branch Normal School was awarded to Cedar City and the people had to provide land and a building for it, this man was put on the most important committee—the building committee. A very large measure of the success of that herculean assignment was due to his dauntless courage and dogged persistence. Early and later, day after day, he went from house to house asking for the use of a team, a man to go on the mountain in the dead of winter for lumber, some meat or hay or other provisions—any of the innumerable things and services that were needed on the building. To every excuse or refusal he said simple "Tut tut," and just sat there talking until the man said yes. (Palmer, "Francis Webster," radio address, 6–7)

49. While Webster is quoted as saying that "the price we paid to become acquainted with God was a privilege to pay," there were other pioneers who paid a significantly less price than did Francis and Betsy Webster, and who seemingly did not find the reward they received from being a member of the Martin Company to be greater than the cost.

More than twenty years after the Martin company reached Salt Lake, a large percentage of the company who incurred a PEF debt still owed money to the fund. When John Jaques published the first history of the Martin Company in a series of 1878–79 newspaper articles, he did so in part to gain support for the idea that



of what they experienced. Likewise, the choices Francis and Betsy made had a tremendous influence on their own lives and were a blessing to others in the Martin Company. As a result they, as much as any member of the company, are proof of President James E. Faust's observation: "Here then is a great truth. In the pain, the agony, and the heroic endeavors of life, we pass through a refiner's fire, and the insignificant and the unimportant in our lives can melt away like dross and make our faith bright, intact, and strong."<sup>50</sup>

Knowing that Francis and Betsy Webster could have come by wagon but chose to follow counsel and go by handcart instead, knowing that they sacrificed their substance to help others emigrate, and knowing that they uncomplainingly accepted what came their way and focused their attention upon serving their fellow men, gives new meaning to the famous quote that William R. Palmer used to introduce to his radio audience the remarkable life of Francis Webster:

I heard a testimony once that made me tingle to the roots of my hair. It was in an adult Sunday School class of over fifty men and women. Nathan T. Porter, then Principal of the Branch Normal School, was the teacher and the subject under discussion was the ill fated hand cart company that suffered so terribly in the snow in 1856.

Some sharp criticism of the church and its leaders was being indulged in for permitting any company of converts to venture across

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he and fellow members of the Martin Company should be forgiven their debts. Jaques concluded his series with these words:

For if anybody ever worked his passage, to the uttermost farthing, these poor emigrants did. They paid not only the principal, but the interest also, with the latter rigorously compounded. They paid it in the hardest and most precious and most costly coin—by enduring daily hard labor, wasting fatigue, and pinching privations, by passing through untold hardships, by suffering cold and hunger, wretchedness and starvation, nakedness and famine, by frozen limbs and injured health and broken constitutions, and many by giving their earthly all. . . . In this most painful and most rigorous manner did these poor creatures pay dearly for the privilege of being brought over land and sea. Methinks that even stern Justice herself, inflexibly rigid and relentlessly exacting as she is, if she were to speak, would say, with no uncertain voice, that they had paid enough, and much more than enough. (J. J. [John Jaques], "Some Reminiscences," *Salt Lake Daily Herald*, January 19, 1879)

The following year as part of the Church's jubilee celebration, President John Taylor forgave all outstanding PEF debts, whether the individual had traveled by handcart, wagon, or train. In 1877 the principal of these debts was greater than \$1,000,000 plus interest. See *Names of Persons and Sureties Indebted*.

50. James E. Faust, "The Refiner's Fire," *Ensign* 9 (May 1979): 53.

the Plains with no more supplies or protection than a handcart caravan afforded.

One old man in the corner sat silent and listened as long as he could stand it then he arose and said things that no person who heard him will ever forget. His face was white with emotion, yet he spoke calmly, deliberately, but with great earnestness and sincerity.

He said in substance, "I ask you to stop this criticism. You are discussing a matter you know nothing about. Cold historic facts mean nothing here for they give no proper interpretation of the questions involved. Mistake to send the Hand Cart Company out so late in the season? Yes. But I was in that Company and my wife was in it and Sister Nellie Unthank whom you have sited was there too. We suffered beyond anything you can imagine and many died of exposure and starvation, but did you ever hear a survivor of that company utter a word of criticism? Not one of that company ever apostatized or left the church because everyone of us came through with the absolute knowledge that God lives for we became acquainted with him in our extremities.

"I have pulled my hand cart when I was so weak and weary from illness and lack of food that I could hardly put one foot ahead of the other. I have looked ahead and seen a patch of sand or a hill slope and I have said I can go only that far and there I must give up for I cannot pull the load through it. I have gone on to that sand and when I reached it the cart began pushing me. I have looked back many times to see who was pushing my cart but my eyes saw no one. I knew then that the Angels of God were there.

"Was I sorry that I chose to come by hand cart? No. Neither then nor any minute of my life since. The price we paid to become acquainted with God was a privilege to pay and I am thankful that I was privileged to come in the Martin Hand Cart Company."

The speaker was Francis Webster and when he sat down there was not a dry eye in the room. We were a subdued and chastened lot. Charles R. Mabey who later became Governor of Utah, arose and voiced the sentiment of all when he said, "I would gladly pay the same price for the same assurance of the eternal verities that Brother Webster has." Francis Webster, perhaps, more than any other man had reason to thank the Almighty for his protecting care.<sup>51</sup>

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51. Palmer, "Francis Webster," radio address, 1–2; Palmer, "Francis Webster," *Instructor*, 217–18; McKay, "Pioneer Women," 8; emphasis added.

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# Jesus Christ as Elder Brother

*Corbin Volluz*

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints often refer to Jesus Christ as their elder brother. This expression of endearment appears in sermons, lessons, and publications. In current usage, the term elder brother reflects an understanding that Jesus was the firstborn of the Father's spirit children and, since we humans are all spirit children of the Father, Jesus is our elder spirit brother. But that meaning was slow in coming to be articulated by Church leaders. The title is used enough that some might think that elder brother is one of the many titles attributed to Christ in the scriptures, but nowhere do the scriptures use this expression in reference to Jesus.<sup>1</sup> Nor can the idea that Jesus is our elder brother be ascribed with certitude to the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, although nothing he taught would seem to contradict the idea. The use of the title elder brother seems to make its first appearance the year of the Prophet's death (1844) in the writings of other Church leaders and soon thereafter greatly increased in usage and popularity. It is possible that Joseph Smith himself spoke this phrase toward the end of his life, for some reminiscences support that position.<sup>2</sup>

This paper will examine the usage in LDS discourse of the idea that Jesus Christ is the elder spirit brother of humankind, from its first documented occurrences. Then we will review the logical and scriptural arguments that have been used to support the concept of Jesus as elder brother over the years, along with other possible interpretations of the truths upon which it is based.

### Contemporaneously Recorded Statements (1844–1846)

Beginning in 1844 we find the first instances in which Church leaders use the phrase brother or elder brother to refer to Christ. These six instances were all recorded contemporaneously.

**June 22, 1844, Orson Pratt.** The first written account containing the concept of Jesus Christ being a brother (though not necessarily the elder

#### Corbin Volluz

Researchers who set out to write a paper with a certain thesis often find many surprises along the way. These twists and turns can challenge or strengthen the original thesis. This is the adventure of research. As Corbin Volluz studied the history of the phrase elder brother to describe Christ, he encountered a few such surprises. “The most surprising thing I learned was that there appears to be no affirmative teaching of the elder brother subject in either the standard works or in the preserved teachings of Joseph Smith.” Readers may draw their own conclusions about the implications of this absence; one of the interesting things about Volluz’s article is that the subject raises questions about the term’s appropriate use. For example, are other Christians confused when Latter-day Saints use the term elder brother? Is the phrase too familiar to be used so often as a title for deity? “Many members of the Church seem to feel a personal attachment to the phrase elder brother,” explains Volluz. “On the few occasions I have discussed the contents of the paper with acquaintances who are members of the Church, the first question I commonly get is, ‘Are you saying that Jesus is *not* our elder brother?’ To which I respond, ‘No, I’m not saying that. All I am doing is tracing the historical development of the doctrinal idea.’” Volluz’s work assesses how it has been historically approached: “Any difference I would hope this article might make would be for us all to be thoughtful in the choice of titles we apply to the Savior.”



spirit brother) of man occurs in 1844, the year of Joseph Smith's death, and comes from Orson Pratt. Orson printed supplementary material at the bottom of his *Prophetic Almanac for 1845*, including these statements:

What is man? The offspring of God. What is God? The father of man. Who is Jesus Christ? He is our Brother. . . . How many states of existence has man? He has three. What is the first? It is spiritual. What is the second? It is temporal. What is the third? It is immortal and eternal. How did he begin to exist in the first? He was begotten and born of God.<sup>3</sup>

Charles R. Harrell has noted, "Pratt's almanac went on sale 3 August 1844, though it was advertised in the *Prophet* as being at the printer's as early as 22 June 1844."<sup>4</sup> This appears to be the earliest date that can be pinpointed with confidence on which an LDS publication refers to Jesus Christ as man's brother.

**July 9, 1844, Willard Richards and John Taylor.** In their *Letter of Instruction to the President of the British Mission*, Willard Richards and John Taylor, writing from Nauvoo, Illinois, stated that the Saints suffer persecution so that they "might obtain their inheritance in that kingdom of their heavenly Father, which Jesus, their elder brother, had gone to prepare for them."<sup>5</sup>

**October 6, 1844, Brigham Young.** At the October 1844 conference of the Church in Nauvoo, Brigham Young gave a discourse in which he was recorded as referring to Jesus Christ as the elder brother: "He [Brigham Young] next showed how the saints are delivered up in their progress from those who give them up to the high council, and from the high council to the prophet, and from the prophet to the son, the elder brother, and from the son to his father."<sup>6</sup>

**January 1, 1845, William W. Phelps.** Phelps published a letter in the *Times and Seasons* about how Lucifer fights against "Jesus Christ, our eldest brother."<sup>7</sup>

**June 1, 1845, probably William W. Phelps.** In an article in the *Times and Seasons*, an anonymous writer (most likely William W. Phelps<sup>8</sup>) who signed himself as "Joseph's Speckled Bird" wrote that "even the elder brother could do nothing but what he had seen his Father do in eternities before." This is the first known use of the elder brother title in which the writer did not feel it necessary to make it explicit that the reference was to Jesus Christ. Within a year of the title's first documented usage, then, the author of this *Times and Seasons* article apparently felt comfortable that his audience would understand that the elder brother title applied to Jesus Christ without further explication.<sup>9</sup>

**September 5, 1846, John Taylor.** John Taylor wrote this passage in poetic verse to a Miss Abby Jane Hart of New York City:

Tread in the  
Footsteps of thine elder brother, Jesus—  
The “Prince of Peace,” for whom a body was  
Prepared.<sup>10</sup>

### Statements and Reminiscences Recorded Noncontemporaneously

In addition to the accounts discussed above, several accounts that refer to Jesus as elder brother were not recorded contemporaneously with the event, or were based exclusively on memory. As a result, one is not able to be as confident in the accuracy of these statements as with those that were recorded at the time, or shortly after, the utterance was made.

**Personal Reminiscences, Zebedee Coltrin, 1870.** Zebedee Coltrin attended the School of the Prophets in Kirtland, Ohio. Years later, on February 5, 1870, in Spanish Fork, Utah, Coltrin recollected: “At another time after fasting and prayer, Joseph told us that we should see the glory of God, and I saw a personage passing through the room as plainly as I see you now. Joseph asked us if we knew who it was, and answered himself, ‘That is Jesus, our elder brother, the Son of God.’”<sup>11</sup>

Coltrin related this same event on October 3, 1883:

At one of these meetings after the organization of the school, (the school being organized on the 23rd of January, 1833), when we were all together, Joseph having given instructions, and while engaged in silent prayer, kneeling, with our hands uplifted each one praying in silence, no one whispered above his breath, a personage walked through the room from east to west, and Joseph asked if we saw him. I saw him and suppose the others did and Joseph answered that is Jesus, the Son of God, our elder brother.<sup>12</sup>

If these recollections are accurate, they would constitute the earliest known application of the elder brother title to Jesus Christ, attributing this specific usage to the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1833. But it must be noted that Coltrin’s first account was recorded thirty-seven years after the fact, and by that time the phrase elder brother had become commonplace in Mormon usage.<sup>13</sup>

**The Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt.** In his autobiography, written many years after Joseph Smith’s death, Parley P. Pratt recorded that in 1839 Joseph Smith “taught me many great and glorious principles concerning God and the heavenly order of eternity.” Parley continues, “I felt that God was my heavenly Father indeed; that Jesus was my brother, and that the wife of my bosom was an immortal, eternal companion.”<sup>14</sup> Pratt is careful throughout his record to distinguish between what Joseph Smith actually taught, and his own personal feelings and interpretations of what Joseph Smith taught. It is clear that Parley does not attribute the statement “Jesus

[is] my brother” to the Prophet, but Parley is comfortable using the phrase in discussing what he learned from Joseph.<sup>15</sup>

**Journal of George Laub.** As a member of the Church living in Nauvoo, George Laub recorded that Joseph Smith gave this discourse on April 6, 1843:

The[y] saw till time should be no more and the[y] spake concerning the Redemption of this world and . . . Jesus Christ being the greater light or of more Inteligence for he loved rituousness and hated in[i]quity. He being the elder Brother Presented himself for to come and redeem this world as it was his right by inheritance.<sup>16</sup>

Laub’s account suggests that Joseph Smith was teaching openly the concept that Jesus is our elder brother a year before his death in 1844. In his study of George Laub’s Nauvoo journal, Eugene England notes that, unfortunately, “Laub did not transcribe his original notes of this discourse in his journal until nearly a year after the death of Joseph Smith.”<sup>17</sup> George Laub began his journal on January 1, 1845, while still in Nauvoo and transcribed his notes of sermons delivered by Church leaders years earlier.<sup>18</sup>

### Use of the Phrase in the Pioneer West

After its initial appearance in print in 1844, the title elder brother came to be associated closely in LDS discourse with Jesus Christ and was with increasing frequency applied in the years 1851–53.<sup>19</sup> The title elder brother is applied to Jesus Christ by Church leaders no less than thirteen times during these years (see chart), thus firmly establishing the concept in the rhetoric of Church discourse and in the minds of Latter-day Saints. Brigham Young took the lead in the number of recorded uses of the term.

Thereafter, the phrase continued to figure frequently in the sermons of the leaders of the Church, being recorded in the *Journal of Discourses* twenty times from 1854 to 1860.<sup>20</sup>

### Early Scriptural and Logical Explanations for the Title Elder Brother

Specific supporting revelation or scriptural reference was not given in the early years on the use of the title elder brother, and the expression did not appear to require revelation or scripture by those who first propounded it. Perhaps the concept grew organically out of the newly revealed doctrine that all humans are literally the spirit children of God the Father, having been born to him in the premortal existence.<sup>21</sup> When coupled with the doctrine that Jesus is the firstborn of the Father, the conclusion may have irresistibly followed that Jesus is our elder brother.



**References to Elder Brother, 1851–53**

Dec. 1, 1851	<b>Lorenzo Snow</b> p. 119*	“We are here that we may be educated in a school of suffering and of fiery trials, which school was necessary for Jesus, our Elder Brother.”
Apr. 7, 1852	<b>Brigham Young</b> 6:319	“[Refrain] from speaking lightly of our great Father in heaven, of our elder brother Jesus Christ.”
Apr. 9, 1852	<b>Brigham Young</b> 1:51	“Jesus, our elder brother, was begotten in the flesh.”
Jun. 13, 1852	<b>Brigham Young</b> 1:92	“[We have] an opportunity of proving ourselves before God, before Jesus Christ our elder brother.”
Jul. 11, 1852	<b>Brigham Young</b> 1:40	“Can you imagine to yourselves anything that pertains to this earth that does not belong to its Redeemer? He is my master, my elder brother.”
Aug. 8, 1852	<b>Brigham Young</b> 3:93	“Jesus is the elder brother, and all the brethren shall come in for a share with him.”
Aug. 29, 1852	<b>Orson Pratt</b> 1:56	“[We] have come here and taken tabernacles, after the pattern of our elder brother; and in our humiliation, . . . just like our elder brother, our judgment is taken away.”
Feb. 27, 1853	<b>Brigham Young</b> 1:117	“Suppose that our Father in heaven, our elder brother, the risen Redeemer, the Saviour of the world, or any of the Gods of eternity should act upon this principle.”
Apr. 6, 1853	<b>Brigham Young</b> 2:33	“[We are laying] the foundation of a Temple to the Most High God, so that when His Son, our Elder Brother, shall again appear, he may have a place where he can lay his head.”
Apr. 6, 1853	<b>Heber C. Kimball</b> 2:34	“For thou art our Father, and Jesus Christ is our Elder Brother.”
Jun. 12, 1853	<b>John Taylor</b> 1:149	“[Jesus] can bear with them as a father an elder brother.”
Aug. 14, 1853	<b>Brigham Young</b> 1:271	“...the friendship of God, and our Elder Brother Jesus Christ...”
Oct. 6, 1853	<b>Orson Hyde</b> 1:125	“The servants of God may then be permitted to see their Father, and elder brother.”

\*Clyde J. Williams, ed., *Teachings of Lorenzo Snow* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1984), 119. All other references are from the *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855–86).

As has been argued by Charles R. Harrell, the doctrine that human-kind existed as premortal spirit children of God was just beginning to take form in the consciousness of Church leaders at the time that Joseph Smith was martyred. Many of the distinctive doctrines of the Church, including the belief that Jesus Christ is our elder brother, began to be elucidated by Church leaders at this same time. Accordingly, though it is “difficult to determine precisely how prevalent particular beliefs were and when they began to take root or change form, it is clear that the basic idea of preexistence began to emerge shortly after the organization of the Church but was not fully expounded in Church publications until after Joseph Smith’s death.”<sup>22</sup>

Similarly, the concept that Jesus is our elder brother appears to have grown out of the understanding that mankind is literally the spirit offspring of God the Father, and both doctrines more fully entered into Church discourse at approximately the same time, shortly after the death of the Prophet Joseph. When Orson Pratt first referred to Jesus as “our brother” in 1844, he set forth the basic logic behind the title: “What is Man? The offspring of God. What is God? The father of man. Who is Jesus Christ? He is our Brother.”<sup>23</sup> Here we see the rudimentary logical progression for referring to Jesus as man’s brother. In essence, the argument posits that since we are all the children of a common Father, and since Jesus is the Son of God, Jesus must be our brother.<sup>24</sup>

Subsequent references to Jesus as elder brother did not delve into the logical underpinnings of the title until this statement by Brigham Young in 1862:

We have been hearing that Jesus Christ is our elder Brother. Yes, he is one of us, flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone, and became a partaker with us of all that is earthly. He also inherited a greater portion of the divine nature than we can possess in this life. He was the Son of our heavenly Father, as we are the sons of our earthly fathers. God is the Father of our spirits, which are clothed upon by fleshly bodies, begotten for us by our earthly fathers. Jesus is our elder Brother spirit clothed upon with an earthly body begotten by the Father of our spirits.<sup>25</sup>

The concept that Christ is the elder brother because of his status as the firstborn of all the spirit children of God the Father does not appear to have been actually articulated and recorded until 1871 by Orson Pratt:

Now, who is Jesus? He is only our brother, but happens to be the firstborn. What, the firstborn in the flesh? O no, there were millions and millions born in the flesh before he was. Then how is he the firstborn? Because he is the eldest—the first one born of the whole family of spirits and therefore he is our elder brother.<sup>26</sup>

In 1872, Orson Pratt sought to give this concept a scriptural rationale, though he did not cite his scriptural references and it is uncertain what scripture he might have meant, since there is no scripture that directly speaks of Jesus being the elder brother:

What then is the meaning of that Scripture which speaks of Jesus being the elder brother? It certainly could not have reference to him being the eldest so far as his natural birth on this earth was concerned, for he certainly was not the eldest, for generation after generation had preceded him during the four thousand years which had passed away, from the time of creation until he was born; but yet he is called the “elder brother.” In another Scripture it is said of him that he was “the first-born of every creature.” This would imply, then, that Jesus, so far as the great family of man is concerned, was the first born of the whole of them. How and when was he born? He was born in the eternal world, not his flesh and bones, but that intelligent spirit which dwelt within his tabernacle was born before this world was made, and he seems to have been the first spirit that was born, and for this reason he became the elder brother; and we are told in many Scriptures in the New Testament, that we are his brethren, and that he is not ashamed to call us his brethren. I look upon him as having the same origin as we had, only he was the eldest; and if he was born in the eternal world thousands of years ago, why not all the rest of his brethren, so far as their spirits are concerned?<sup>27</sup>

It is apparently Orson Pratt, then, who should be credited with the first attempt to support by scripture the use of the title elder brother as applied to Jesus. It was Orson Pratt who first recorded the concept that Jesus is “our Brother” shortly before the death of Joseph Smith, and Orson Pratt who first articulated that Jesus is all of humankind’s elder brother in the spirit, basing his argument on Jesus’ scriptural title of firstborn.

### **Important Twentieth Century Commentary on the Phrase**

In the early twentieth century, the First Presidency made two statements that used the phrase elder brother. This is important to consider, as these were the first instances the phrase was used in official Church pronouncements.

**The Origin of Man, First Presidency Statement (1909).** In 1909, the First Presidency issued an official statement entitled “The Origin of Man,” which addressed the subject of biological evolution. In the middle of a discussion on the literal truth that man was created in the image of God, the following declaration appears:

The Father of Jesus is our Father also. Jesus Himself taught this truth, when He instructed His disciples how to pray: “Our Father which art in heaven,” etc. Jesus, however, is the first-born among all the sons of

God—the first begotten in the spirit, and the only begotten in the flesh. He is our elder brother, and we, like Him, are in the image of God. All men and women are in the similitude of the universal Father and Mother, and are literally the sons and daughters of Deity.<sup>28</sup>

Without further elaboration, “The Origin of Man” indicates the logical progression that Jesus is our elder brother because God is our Father, Jesus is the “firstborn among all the sons of God,” Jesus is the “first begotten in the spirit,” and Jesus is the “only begotten in the flesh.”<sup>29</sup>

**“The Father and the Son: A Doctrinal Exposition of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve,” June 30, 1916.** This exposition describes the roles of the Father and the Son and gives four distinct meanings for the term “Father” as used to define or describe deity: Father as literal parent, Father as creator, Jesus Christ the Father of those who abide in his gospel, and Jesus Christ the Father by divine investiture of authority. The last section reads:

A fourth reason for applying the title “Father” to Jesus Christ is found in the fact that in all His dealings with the human family Jesus the Son has represented and yet represents Elohim His Father in power and authority. . . .

. . . Among the spirit children of Elohim the firstborn was and is Jehovah or Jesus Christ to whom all others are juniors. . . . From this scripture [Col. 1:15–19] we learn that Jesus Christ was “the firstborn of every creature” and it is evident that the seniority here expressed must be with respect to antemortal existence, for Christ was not the senior of all mortals in the flesh. He is further designated as “the firstborn from the dead” this having reference to Him as the first to be resurrected from the dead, or as elsewhere written “the first fruits of them that slept” (1 Corinthians 15:20, see also verse 23); and “the first begotten of the dead” (Revelation 1:5; compare Acts 26:23). The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews affirms the status of Jesus Christ as the firstborn of the spirit children of His Father, and extols the preeminence of the Christ when tabernacled in flesh: “And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him” (Hebrews 1:6; read the preceding verses). That the spirits who were juniors to Christ were predestined to be born in the image of their Elder Brother is thus attested by Paul: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Romans 8:28, 29). John the Revelator was commanded to write to the head of the Laodicean church, as the words of the Lord Jesus Christ: “These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God” (Revelation 3:14). In the course of a revelation given through Joseph Smith in May, 1833, the Lord Jesus Christ said as before cited: “And now, verily I say unto you,

I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the firstborn” (Doc. & Cov. 93:21). A later verse makes plain the fact that human beings generally were similarly existent in spirit state prior to their embodiment in the flesh: “Ye were also in the beginning with the Father; that which is Spirit, even the Spirit of truth” (verse 23).

There is no impropriety, therefore, in speaking of Jesus Christ as the Elder Brother of the rest of human kind. That He is by spiritual birth Brother to the rest of us is indicated in Hebrews: “Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people” (Hebrews 2:17). Let it not be forgotten, however, that He is essentially greater than any and all others, by reason (1) of His seniority as the oldest or firstborn; (2) of His unique status in the flesh as the offspring of a mortal mother and of an immortal, or resurrected and glorified, Father; (3) of His selection and foreordination as the one and only Redeemer and Savior of the race; and (4) of His transcendent sinlessness.

Jesus Christ is not the Father of the spirits who have taken or yet shall take bodies upon this earth, for He is one of them. He is The Son, as they are sons or daughters of Elohim. So far as the stages of eternal progression and attainment have been made known through divine revelation, we are to understand that only resurrected and glorified beings can become parents of spirit offspring. Only such exalted souls have reached maturity in the appointed course of eternal life; and the spirits born to them in the eternal worlds will pass in due sequence through the several stages or estates by which the glorified parents have attained exaltation.<sup>30</sup>

While the document uses the term elder brother to demonstrate Christ’s relationship to humankind (“There is no impropriety, therefore, in speaking of Jesus Christ as the Elder Brother of the rest of human kind”), it also clearly reminds the Saints of their proper place in relation to Christ: “Let it not be forgotten, however, that He is essentially greater than any and all others.”<sup>31</sup>

### **Beyond the 1916 Exposition**

The 1909 and 1916 statements became the basis for numerous usages of the elder brother terminology by Church leaders throughout the twentieth century. Two such instances include one from Joseph Fielding Smith, “We accept Jesus Christ as God—the Only Begotten Son of the Father in the flesh, and the first begotten in the Spirit. Therefore he is our eldest brother,”<sup>32</sup> and another from Bruce R. McConkie: “Christ is literally our Elder Brother. Since all men are the personal spirit children of the Father, and since Christ was the Firstborn spirit offspring, it follows that he is the Elder Brother of all men.”<sup>33</sup> More recent examples are found in the writ-

ings of Robert L. Millet, Stephen E. Robinson, and Jerry C. Giles.<sup>34</sup> Considering the cautious language found in the 1916 Doctrinal Exposition, it is curious that the concept of Jesus as elder brother retained its position in the pantheon of widely emphasized Mormon teachings.

### **Other Interpretations of Brother, Father, and Firstborn**

The two scriptural predicates, that (1) Jesus is the firstborn of the Father, and (2) all human beings are the literal spirit children of God the Father, may at first blush suggest that Jesus is the elder spirit brother of all God's children. There are other interpretations that may be drawn from these two scriptural predicates.

A passage from the Book of Mormon illustrates an alternate meaning when using familial titles: "Wherefore, after my father [Lehi] had made an end of speaking concerning the prophecies of Joseph, he called the children of Laman, his sons, and his daughters, and said unto them: Behold, my sons and my daughters, who are the sons and the daughters of my first-born, I would that ye should give ear unto my words" (2 Ne. 4:3). In this passage, we see that Laman is the firstborn of Lehi, and that Laman's children are referred to as the sons and daughters of Lehi. From this, one would not be justified in concluding that Laman is the elder brother of his own sons and daughters.

Similarly, the fact that Jesus is the firstborn of the Father, and the fact that men and women are the literal sons and daughters of the Father, does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that Jesus is the elder brother of humankind. Brigham Young may have held a similar view in this regard, as it is apparent that he did not care to distinguish between exalted beings found along the eternal continuum; all are of the same family, and it is not necessary to distinguish between the differing status of each member of the Godhead.<sup>35</sup>

Popular biographer and Latter-day Saint John Henry Evans, though he ascribed the title of elder brother to the Savior, appears to have considered the title to be susceptible to a broader spectrum of interpretation: In his 1933 biography of Joseph Smith, Evans explains, "God is our Father by spiritual generation. He 'begot' our spirit. The idea involves a divine Mother, as well as a divine Father—and Joseph Smith taught that." Thus Jesus "becomes literally, and not figuratively, our elder Brother." According to Evans, it does not follow, however, "that Christ and man were begotten by the same identical Being in heaven, any more than Adam and Eve, who are our common parents, begot our fleshly bodies."<sup>36</sup> B. H. Roberts also points out that the titles firstborn and elder brother do not apply when

considering the co-eternal nature of intelligences—the spirit or intelligence from which man was created is just as eternal in duration as is the intelligence of Christ:

The reference to Jesus as the “first-born”—and hence the justification for our calling him our “Elder Brother”—cannot refer to any relationship that he established in his earth life, since as to the flesh he is not our “Elder Brother,” any more than he is the “first-born” in the flesh. There were many born as to the flesh before he was, and older brothers to us in the flesh than he. The relationship of “Elder Brother” cannot have reference to that estate where all were self-existent, uncreated and unbegotten, eternal intelligences, for that estate admits of no such relation as “elder” or “younger.” For as to the succession in time—the fact on which “younger” or “elder” depends—the intelligences are equal, that is, equal as to their eternity. Therefore, since the relationship of “Elder Brother” was not established by any possible fact in that estate where all were self-existing intelligences, it must have been established in the spirit life where Jesus, with reference to the hosts of intelligences designed to our earth, was the “first-born spirit,” and by that fact became our “Elder Brother,” the “first-born of every creature,” “the beginning of the creations of God,” as pertaining to our order of existence.<sup>37</sup>

The statement that Jesus is the firstborn, when found in the scriptures, usually has reference to his being the first to be resurrected from the dead, not to his being the firstborn in the premortal existence. Colossians 1:18 speaks of the Savior as “the firstborn from the dead,” which clearly has reference to Jesus being the first to be resurrected, and firmly established that, in the language of Paul, to be resurrected was synonymous with a type of birth. Three verses prior to this usage (Col. 1:15), Paul refers to Jesus as the “firstborn of every creature” in a context that could denote a birth prior to the creation, but just as Christ is “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8), he could also be the “firstborn from the dead” from before the creation.

In Doctrine and Covenants 93:20–22, we read:

For if you keep my commandments you shall receive of his fulness, and be glorified in me as I am in the Father; therefore, I say unto you, you shall receive grace for grace. And now, verily I say unto you, I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn; And all those who are begotten through me are partakers of the glory of the same, and are the church of the Firstborn.

In this passage, Christ refers to those who are partakers of the same glory that Christ himself received from his father as “those who are *begotten* through me.” Christ has already received the fulness of the glory of the Father; hence, in receiving the fulness of glory, Christ was “begotten” by



the Father. Christ's reference to himself as the firstborn can mean that Christ was the first to receive the fulness of glory from the Father.

Section 93, an 1833 revelation to Joseph Smith, allows implicitly the idea of brotherhood with Jesus: since human spirits are eternal, these spirits were with God in the beginning just as Jesus was. Though not expressly stated, the elder brother concept may have been germinating in the Kirtland-era revelations. Even if the phrase had not yet emerged, the idea is not far beneath the surface. It seems that there was a sudden confluence of statements by Church leaders in 1844 using the elder brother terminology, with or without the leaders having heard the doctrine stated expressly by Joseph Smith.

As these examples show, the meaning of Jesus' status as firstborn is not entirely transparent to us. Moreover, it remains unknown how he excelled so far beyond the Father's other spirit children in power, knowledge, and premortal glory.

## **Two Modern Declarations**

**"The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles"** (2000). On January 1, 2000, the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles issued a unanimously signed declaration concerning their testimony of the Savior.<sup>38</sup> Nowhere in this document do they state that Jesus is the elder spirit brother of mankind. Is this omission significant, or is this to be explained because of editorial reasons, such as not wanting to state a doctrinally intricate concept in a declaration meant for public consumption? It is understandable that there would be times when the use of the title is not preferable. Although we do not know the exact reasons behind this, the omission of such a traditionally accepted concept relating to Jesus Christ is noteworthy.

**"Special Witnesses of Christ"** (2000). A special video presentation was released to the world in the year 2000 of the testimonies of members of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.<sup>39</sup> The presentation is structured around the premortal, mortal, and postmortal ministries of the Savior. This video runs almost a full hour in length, and yet there is no mention made of Jesus as the elder brother. It is easy to imagine that some viewers, not having a sufficient background in Latter-day Saint belief, might find the elder brother expression a stumbling block to understanding Christ's status.

## **Conclusion**

The concept that Jesus is the elder brother of the human family is not expressly set forth in the standard works. Neither can it be traced with

absolute confidence to any utterance of the Prophet Joseph Smith. The phrase appears to have surfaced first in the writings of Orson Pratt shortly prior to Joseph Smith's death and was soon thereafter used frequently by other Church leaders. This sudden confluence of expressions of the elder brother concept in 1844 may have derived from Joseph Smith, in spite of the absence of any contemporaneous documentation of his teaching this concept. Or it may have been the result of the dawning realization occurring during that time period that all humans are literally the spirit children of our Father in Heaven, together with the appealing corollary that Jesus is our elder brother. Once this concept emerged, it became firmly entwined in LDS theology through frequent repetition in sermons and personal expressions by Church leaders and members throughout the rest of the nineteenth century.

The 1909 First Presidency statement "The Origin of Man" used the elder brother term and introduced two new phrases to describe the Savior: (1) "that he is the Firstborn in the spirit," and (2) "that he is the Only Begotten in the flesh." These two phrases, the highlighted portions of which seem to appear for the first time with the 1909 statement, have since gained common currency in the LDS vernacular. The logical progression found in the 1909 Origin of Man statement is consistent with the earlier reasoning of Orson Pratt.

It was not until 1916 that the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles offered an in-depth examination of the scriptural underpinnings of the term. The 1916 Doctrinal Exposition concluded that "there is no impropriety, therefore, in referring to Jesus Christ as the elder brother of all human kind," and reminded the Saints of their proper relationship to Christ: "Let it not be forgotten, however, that He is essentially greater than any and all others."

To those not familiar with the plan of salvation, hearing Jesus Christ called an elder brother might be misunderstood as a diminution of Christ's high status. Latter-day Saints may wish to be guided in their public pronouncements on this subject by the examples of scripture, Joseph Smith, and modern-day prophets and apostles of the Lord. Robert J. Matthews once made this insightful comment that acts as a fitting summation to the subject at hand: "In the Book of Mormon, Christ is God. He is not simply a mortal, a great teacher, a Friend of Mankind. He is God. I have been surprised that the Book of Mormon never defines Jesus as the firstborn spirit, man's Elder Brother. In the Book of Mormon, he isn't so much man's brother, he is man's God."<sup>40</sup>

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Corbin Volluz would like to thank Professor Richard Bennett for his warm reception of the paper and his kind, constructive comments; Professor John Welch for thoughtful suggestions and for shepherding the paper along to publication; and his wife, Dee, for her unflagging encouragement and support.

1. Rodney Turner refers to "Elder Brother" as a "nonscriptural title" for Jesus Christ. Rodney Turner, "The Doctrine of the Firstborn and Only Begotten," in *The Pearl of Great Price: Revelations from God*, ed. H. Donl Peterson and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, 1989), 94.

2. See reminiscences of Zebedee Coltrin and George Laub, in this article.

3. Orson Pratt, *Prophetic Almanac for 1845* (New York: Prophet's Office, n.d.), 7–8.

4. Charles R. Harrell, "The Development of the Doctrine of Preexistence, 1830–1844," *BYU Studies* 28, no. 2 (1988): 88. I am indebted to Harrell's article for bringing to my attention this important early statement from Orson Pratt. It is significant that this publication was in New York, far removed from Nauvoo, Illinois, where Joseph Smith was at the time. Orson Pratt does not attribute this teaching to Joseph Smith.

5. Joseph Smith Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 7:172 (hereafter cited as *History of the Church*).

6. *History of the Church*, 7:286–87. Unfortunately, at the point of this reference, the recorder of the sermon switched from recording Brigham Young's own words to simply writing a synopsis of what was said. Immediately following this passage, the recorder resumed transcribing Brigham Young's own words. It is possible that at this juncture the recorder got behind in his minutes, and then had to catch up as Brigham Young continued to speak. It is unclear whether the phrase elder brother in this setting was Brigham Young's own choice of words, though one would presume if Brigham Young had disagreed with this characterization of his sermon, he would have corrected it at some point, which he apparently did not do.

7. W. W. Phelps, "The Answer," *Times and Seasons* 5 (January 1, 1845): 758.

8. Joseph's Speckled Bird, "Communications: The Paracletes Continued," *Times and Seasons* 6 (June 1, 1845): 917. The article is signed using a *nom de plume*, "Joseph's Speckled Bird." The idea of the "speckled bird" comes from Jeremiah 12:8 and refers to something that stands out from its surroundings due to its unusual nature. The phrase was used infrequently in Church history to refer to oneself; see for example Matthias F. Cowley, *Wilford Woodruff: His Life and Labors* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1916), 24, and Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 13:236.

Most likely "Joseph's Speckled Bird" was William W. Phelps. In a January 1, 1845, letter to William Smith, published in the *Times and Seasons*, Phelps likened

himself to Jeremiah's speckled bird. William W. Phelps, "The Answer," *Times and Seasons* 5 (January 1, 1844): 757.

9. It would be hard to miss, however, the scriptural reference to John 5:19, where it is Jesus who says he can do nothing but what he hath seen the Father do.

10. "Lines: Written in the Album of Miss Abby Jane Hart, of New York City," in *Gospel Kingdom: Selections from the Writings and Discourses of John Taylor*, ed. G. Homer Durham (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1943), 388.

11. Zebedee Coltrin, Address, Spanish Fork High Priest Quorum, February 5, 1870, as quoted in *LDS Collector's Library*, CD-ROM, Deseret Book, 1997.

12. Zebedee Coltrin, Minutes, Salt Lake City School of the Prophets, October 3, 1883, as quoted in *LDS Collector's Library*.

13. Coltrin's memory is called somewhat into question by the fact that in a subsequent statement given before the Salt Lake City School of the Prophets, he could not recollect the performance of the ordinance of washing of feet at the Kirtland School of the Prophets, even though it is generally accepted from the accounts of other witnesses that such an ordinance was, in fact, performed there. "He did not remember the washing of feet at the opening of the school [of the prophets], but could not say it was not so." (President George Q. Cannon said in the *History of Joseph Smith* they were washed on the 23rd of January, 1833.) Zebedee Coltrin, Remarks, Salt Lake City School of Prophets, October 11, 1883, as quoted in *LDS Collector's Library*.

14. Parley P. Pratt Jr., ed., *The Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, 4th ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 259–60.

15. It is worthy of note that Parley P. Pratt's 1837 seminal work, *A Voice of Warning*, nowhere mentions the concept that Jesus is the brother of mankind. Nor does his 1855 work, *Science of Theology, A Key to the Scriptures*.

16. Eugene England, "George Laub's Nauvoo Journal," *BYU Studies* 18, no. 2 (1978): 172.

17. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, 1980), 405 n. 50. Though this particular comment is made regarding a sermon recorded by Laub for May 12, 1844, the comment is equally true for the words Laub attributed to Joseph Smith as quoted above and given the date of April 6, 1843.

18. England, "George Laub's Nauvoo Journal," 151. England casts some doubt on the accuracy of Laub's account of this sermon. England observes that Willard Richards took minutes of various remarks delivered on April 6, 1843, but these remarks do not have the same subject matter as what Laub recorded. Additionally, Laub recorded his first arrival in Nauvoo as being on May 1, 1843, nearly a month after he was supposed to have recorded Joseph's sermon. Laub himself admits that the notes in his journal were from "various scraps of 1843 & 4" and from "memery by George Laub." England, "George Laub's Nauvoo Journal," 171 n. 23. Additionally, as noted by England, Laub reports other sermons that he attributes to Joseph Smith (for April 13 and April 20, 1843) which do not appear in the *History of the Church*. Also, England observes other instances where Laub attributes sermons to the wrong man. England, "George Laub's Nauvoo Journal," 173 n. 24, 176 n. 26, 177 n. 28.

19. A dearth of such references in the years 1847–1850 may be due to the disruption of the Saints in moving from Nauvoo to the Great Salt Lake Valley.

20. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 3:193, January 27, 1856; Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 3:355, June 15, 1856; Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 3:370, June 22, 1856; Franklin D. Richards, in *Journal of Discourses*, 4:163, January 11, 1857; Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 4:220, February 8, 1857; Heber C. Kimball, in *Journal of Discourses*, 4:226, February 8, 1857; Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 4:281, March 15, 1857; Heber C. Kimball, in *Journal of Discourses*, 4:362, April 19, 1857; Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 5:296, October 6, 1857; Lorenzo D. Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 6:222, October 25, 1857; Lorenzo D. Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 6:223, December 25, 1857; Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 6:332, June 19, 1859; Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:203, July 31, 1859; Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:275, October 6, 1859; Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:284, October 9, 1859; Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 8:43, April 8, 1860; Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 8:137, July 29, 1860; and Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 8:195, October 7, 1860.

21. Indeed, the elder brother doctrine may have been germinating just below the surface of the revelations received through the Prophet Joseph Smith as early as 1833.

22. Harrell, “Development of the Doctrine of Preexistence,” 91.

23. Pratt, *Prophetic Almanac for 1845*, 7–8.

24. The logical argument used in this paper is based upon inferences drawn from scripture. This particular reasoning process is being termed a logical argument or logical progression so as to distinguish it from a more direct attempt to support the elder brother doctrine by means of scripture.

25. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 10:2, September 28, 1862. See also Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 11:42, January 8, 1865 and 13:235, February 20, 1870.

26. Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses*, 14:241, August 20, 1871.

27. Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses*, 15:245–46, December 15, 1872. A similar argument was made by Orson Pratt in 1876 in *Journal of Discourses*, 18:290, November 12, 1876.

28. “The Origin of Man,” in *Messages of the First Presidency*, comp. James R. Clark, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965), 4:203.

29. Like the 1909 First Presidency statement, James E. Talmage uses the elder brother phrase in conjunction with a commentary on the Lord’s Prayer, which establishes that Jesus is the son of the Father:

“Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.” In this we acknowledge the relation we bear to our Heavenly Father, and while reverencing His great and holy Name, we avail ourselves of the inestimable privilege of approaching Him, less with the thought of His infinite glory as the Creator of all that is, the Supreme Being above all creation, than with the loving realization that He is Father, and that we are His children. This is the earliest Biblical scripture giving instruction, permission, or warrant, for addressing God directly as ‘Our Father.’ Therein is expressed the reconciliation which the human family, estranged through sin, may attain by the means provided through the well beloved Son. This instruction is equally definite in demonstrating the brotherhood between Christ and humanity. As he prayed so pray

we to the same Father, we as brethren and Christ as our Elder Brother. (James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1915], 238–39)

30. The First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles, “The Father and the Son: A Doctrinal Exposition by the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve,” in Clark, *Messages of the First Presidency*, 5:31–34.

31. The First Presidency, “The Father and the Son,” 5:34.

32. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 5 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, c1958), 2:127.

33. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1966), 214.

34. See Jerry C. Giles, “Jesus Christ: Firstborn in the Spirit,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 2:728; Robert L. Millet, “Jesus Christ: Overview—Premortal Jesus,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 2:724; Millet, “Jesus Christ, Fatherhood and Sonship of,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 2:739; and Stephen E. Robinson, “Jesus Christ, Names and Titles of—Father,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 2:741.

35. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 4:217, February 8, 1857.

36. John Henry Evans, *Joseph Smith: An American Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1933), 282. Reprinted by Deseret Book in 1989.

37. B. H. Roberts, *The Truth, the Way, the Life: An Elementary Treatise on Theology*, ed. John W. Welch, 2d ed. (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 1996), 250.

38. “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” *Ensign* 30 (April 2000): 2–3.

39. “Special Witnesses of Christ,” satellite broadcast, April 1, 2000; DVD available from Distribution Center, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; printed in *Ensign* 31 (April 2001): 2–21.

40. Robert J. Matthews, “Some Thoughts on the Atonement” (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1989), 17. This is a transcript from a faculty lecture delivered by Robert J. Matthews on February 17, 1989.

Kim Paffenroth. *Judas: Images of the Lost Disciple*.

Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2001

Reviewed by Kelsey D. Lambert

People are often content to label Judas Iscariot with one word—traitor, betrayer, thief, or zealot. But his motives, ambitions, and true character have been a subject for continued scholarship, commentary, imagination, and literature. This book analyzes the historical evolution of various Judas stories and interpretations to show the complexities of Judas’s character and history. Published in 2001, just before the identification of the lost Gospel of Judas, this book shows the variety of views about Judas even before the Gospel of Judas came on the scene.

Paffenroth divides his book into five different views: Judas as an object of curiosity, horror, hatred, admiration, and hope. In choosing these five characteristics, Paffenroth does not offer new depictions of the apostle Judas, but instead focuses on how Judas has been portrayed by others. This approach draws the reader into each new character portrayal and leaves conclusions largely in the hands of the reader. Paffenroth has a scholarly approach, but this study is appealing to any educated person because of references to Judas in Shakespeare, Oedipus, and other classic literature.

Seeing Judas as an obscure object of curiosity, Paffenroth shows how Judas is often left out or pushed aside in the earliest available Christian texts. Due to “silence” and “ambiguity” the earliest portrayals lack “the details and embellishments of later versions” (1). In support of this theory, Paffenroth cites Paul, Mark, and early Christian artwork. In his discourses and letters on Christ’s final sacrifice, Paul never mentions Judas’s name or even acknowledges that there was a betrayal. Of all the Gospel writers, Mark leaves Judas’s role the most ambiguous. In early Christian art, “images of Judas are not essential parts of the passion cycle until the sixth



century” (3). Paffenroth concludes that this vagueness was the catalyst for the elaborations of coming centuries.

Judas is more often seen as the arch-sinner and object of horror. These depictions of Judas arose as Christian writers tried to satisfy “moral and aesthetic sensibilities as well as [to provide] a much more powerful and memorable lesson on the results of sin” (23). Judas’s role in moralistic parables on evil had its height in antiquity and the Middle Ages, although this image of him was present in the first century and has continued into modern interpretations as well. The earliest depiction of Judas in this light comes from the Gospel of Luke. Paffenroth believes that Luke villainizes Judas to such a large extent because of his audience. He has to reassure his readers and answer the theological dilemma that one of Christ’s authorized disciples would have failed (18–19). Medieval passion plays, as well as Dante’s *Inferno*, demonize him to the degree that Judas becomes the “worst example of the worst sin possible, betrayal” (28). Judas’s name thus becomes prevalent in medieval heathen charms, curses, and popular celebrations.

Paffenroth next reviews how Judas has been seen as an object of hatred and derision. Support for this depiction is drawn from the Gospel of John. John emphasizes that Judas did not turn against the Savior, but was evil from the start. He sets him up as a villain-type, one who consistently and predictably embodies evil. This depiction soon made way for a theological form of anti-Semitism. “For Chrysostom and many Christians after him, the Jews as a people epitomize the avarice and treachery of Judas as an individual, and God has ordained and approved the punishments meted out to both” (39). The passion play at Oberammergau, Germany, evolved from having devils tearing apart Judas in medieval grotesque depictions, to blaming the death and crucifixion directly on Judas and the Jews themselves, thus “elaborating and accentuating Jewish evil as completely human but utterly and irredeemable evil” (42). As an interesting side note in this section, Paffenroth dismisses the idea that depictions of Judas with red hair denote him as Jewish and thus promote anti-Semitism. Rather, writers and artists alike began portraying Judas as a redhead to distinguish him from the other apostles and possibly to continue an “ancient and worldwide aversion to red hair” (51).

Alternatively, Judas has been seen as a tragic hero and the object of admiration and sympathy. Paffenroth speaks of historical depictions of Judas as “flawed in various ways and ending in a horrible death, but still a hero with whom we identify and whose fate fills us with sympathy, admiration, and awe at our own vulnerability before the powerful forces of fate

and God" (59). In Gnosticism, Judas is "revered as the only enlightened follower of Jesus," and in unconventional modern interpretations, he is seen as the "only obedient apostle," an Oedipus-type "doomed to commit unspeakable acts but who paradoxically always freely chose those horrible acts;" "a nationalistic revolutionary" who became "increasingly disillusioned and hostile to Jesus" when he realized that Jesus was not going to help overthrow Roman oppression; and as a "great lover" who struggled between attachments to women and loyalty to Jesus (59–60). Paffenroth shows how Shakespeare portrays Judas as a tragic hero through references to Othello, Richard II's killer, and the king's murderer in *King John*, whose "bowels suddenly burst out" (80–81). On the one hand, Thomas DeQuincey explores the idea of Judas as a revolutionary in *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, claiming that Judas was mistaken, as were many of the other disciples, about Jesus' true identity (86–88), but on the other hand, some Jewish literature makes an anti-revolutionary claim for Judas, saying instead that Jesus was the revolutionary, and they "sometimes elevate Judas as a loyal Jew who seeks to discredit and disarm the dangerous and destructive Nazarene" (92).

Finally, Judas has been portrayed as a penitent, making him an object of hope and emulation. These images of Judas see him from a divine rather than human perspective; they are the most hopeful and conclude that Judas is ultimately saved. Paffenroth's basis for this argument is the Gospel of Matthew, which replicates Mark's terse mention of Judas but adds little details that give hope for Judas's ultimate repentance. In the late second century, Origen makes a clear case for the possibility that Judas could repent and concludes optimistically that "the apostasy of Judas was not a complete apostasy" (119). His writings, coupled with Matthew's treatment, have paved the way for a tradition that believes "if Judas cannot be saved, then it is not a sign of his failure but a much more problematic sign of the failure of divine love and forgiveness" (119). These traditions often emphasize Judas's guilt and subsequent suicide in order to evoke sympathy for his situation. Dostoyevsky takes this theme in *The Brothers Karamazov* and in *Notes from Underground*. Others within this tradition focus on the "necessity of his actions" and thus elevate him to an "agent of salvation" (135).

It may be difficult for Latter-day Saints to understand how Judas could be characterized in any way as an object of hope or admiration, considering his self-condemning betrayal. Latter-day Saints usually think of Judas as an arch-sinner or perhaps as a pathetic tragic figure, yet much about him certainly remains obscure and pathetic, if not sympathetic, and thus one hesitates to make a final judgment about his ultimate doom.

In this mix, the recently discovered and translated Gospel of Judas gives us much more information about how some early Christians saw Judas as a sympathetic, positive figure. In response to this document, many readers will want to understand how various people in the past have come to view Judas's actions. To this end, Paffenroth's book offers an enlightening and helpful look at one of world's most disturbing and perplexing characters.

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Armand L. Mauss. *All Abraham's Children:  
Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage.*

Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003

Reviewed by Cardell K. Jacobson

Like many members today, early members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints considered themselves to be of the House of Israel. According to Armand L. Mauss, an emeritus professor of sociology from Washington State University, this identity affected the relationship that members of the Church had with other groups, primarily Native Americans, Jews, and those of African descent. These changing and expanding relationships are the topic of his most recent book, *All Abraham's Children*.

Perhaps the best chronicler of minority relationships in the LDS Church, Mauss examines the extensive historical record through a sociological lens. His documentation is likely the best of any researcher examining these issues today. Most readers will find the history of these views to be much more complicated, contradictory, and even conflicted than they might have imagined. Mauss's recounting of the history is both insightful and unsettling.

Mauss employs several themes throughout the book. The preeminent one is how members of the Church formulated their own identity and how that identity changed as a result of missionary efforts of the Church and in response to historical conditions. Mauss argues that early Church members adopted the racist thinking prevalent in nineteenth-century America and incorporated it into Mormon folklore to explain the ancestry of various groups. The thinking was spawned by three elements: British Israelism (the notion among the British that they were part of the House of Israel), Anglo-Saxon triumphalism, and LDS understanding of premortal life. For Mormons, the "chosen peoples" became those who accepted the gospel, those who possessed the "believing blood" of Israel (2–3, 22–23).

Church leaders' views have not remained static, however. Mauss argues, and I think rightfully so, that leaders initially perceived the Church's mission as gathering the children of Israel. Only later did leaders

shift to the more universalistic view that the mission of the Church is to bring the gospel to all peoples of the world, to all who hear the Shepherd's voice. Further, Mauss argues, the change was a "consequence of and concomitant with the spread of the Mormon missionaries and membership to increasingly 'exotic' parts of the world" (32).

Mauss provides an excellent summary of the contorted and erratic federal policies toward Native Americans. As with the federal policies, proselyting efforts by the Church and education of Indians at Brigham Young University were sporadic and uneven. Much of LDS effort in the middle of the twentieth century coincided with President Spencer W. Kimball's interest in the welfare of Native Americans. He emphasized the Indian Seminary Program, the Indian Placement Program, and Native American enrollment at BYU. While the education of Indians at BYU was considered a great success by the U.S. Department of Education, graduation rates were still below those of other students at BYU. As LDS missionaries experienced increased success in Mesoamerica and South America, Mauss explains, the Church's efforts to help the descendants of the Book of Mormon peoples shifted away from American Indians to these other populations. Mauss's history of Native American education, both federal and within the purview of the Church, alone makes the book a worthy read for those who are not familiar with this history.

Using the emphasis on identity, Mauss explores how Mormon converts from minority communities within the United States make sense of their world and the bonds that often draw them back to their native communities. Being a good Church member and being Navajo or African American poses dilemmas and conflicts that few Anglo converts experience. Further, Mauss notes that identity conflicts for LDS converts in other countries (such as Mexico, Peru, or Brazil) are less salient. Converts in those countries can still be Guatemalan or Mexican or hold other national identities at the same time they are Mormon. Being Mormon and a minority in the United States, however, presents numerous conflicts since these individuals already have strong identities as members of a minority group. Many members of the Church fail to understand how strong the bonds to native communities are.

Another group that Mormons have always had an unusual relationship with is the Jews, the second minority group that Mauss discusses. In one chapter Mauss presents the history of the relationship between the LDS Church and the Jews, and in another he presents strong evidence, some from his own research dating back to the 1960s, that anti-Semitism has always been lower in the LDS Church than in the general population. As Mauss notes, "A special Mormon sympathy for the Jews developed

as part of the emerging understanding among Anglo-Mormons . . . that they were themselves actually descendants of Ephraim and thus shared Israelite ancestry with the Jews” (164).

Mauss also devotes two chapters to the issue of blacks and the priesthood. The first chapter is on the early history. Some may be surprised to learn that a few African Americans were given the priesthood during Joseph Smith’s time. The second chapter details the changes that led to the priesthood revelation in June 1978. Here Mauss is particularly good at summarizing from extant writings and personal interviews how African-American members deal with conflicted identities and the anguish that some experience when offended by others within the Church. Mauss points to another source of conflict for black members: some in the Church still hold to archaic racial teachings as explanations for the priesthood denial. The fact that these views remain in extant Church-related literature is a primary concern to Mauss, and he writes in several places throughout the book about the issue.

Mauss acknowledges that Elder Bruce R. McConkie modified his views and writings about race and priesthood after the 1978 revelation. I find that McConkie’s revision is most evident in a talk he gave shortly after the announcement:

There are statements in our literature by the early brethren that we have interpreted to mean that the Negroes would not receive the priesthood in mortality. I have said the same thing. . . . It is time disbelieving people repented and got in line and believed. . . . Forget everything that I have said, or what President Brigham Young or President George Q. Cannon or whosoever has said in days past that is contrary to the present revelation. We spoke with a limited understanding and without the light and knowledge that has now come into the world.<sup>1</sup>

Further, in 1979 Elder Howard W. Hunter specifically addressed the notion of a favored-blood lineage in the Church. He declared that race, color, or nationality make no difference, for “‘we are all of one blood’ and children of the same God” (36).<sup>2</sup> Yet faulty explanations for the priesthood ban continue to circulate among Church members and in some publications. Mormons who proffer these explanations simply fail to understand how hurtful they are to black members of the Church.

In the end, I think Mauss is optimistic about the future of race relations in the Church. He genuinely applauds President Gordon B. Hinckley’s outreach to minorities and public statements decrying racism. President Hinckley spoke about this issue in the priesthood session of the April 2006 general conference, but he made similar statements before the NAACP chapter meeting in Salt Lake City in the late 1990s.<sup>3</sup>

Some in the Church want minorities to disregard their groups of origin. This they cannot do. But eventually white members will accept a more diverse membership and allow minorities to be both black and Mormon, or both Native American and Mormon. Despite the previous priesthood ban, members of the LDS Church appear to be no more prejudiced toward minority groups than American society generally. Data from the General Social Survey, a nationally representative survey begun in 1972 and continuing through the present,<sup>4</sup> and Mauss's own early research<sup>5</sup> show this. I suspect that the comments of President Hinckley and others will make a difference. Church members do listen to the prophet. And where the LDS population is diverse, members meet, worship, and serve together. For these two reasons I believe we will eventually realize that we really are all Abraham's children and that we really are all God's children.

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1. Bruce R. McConkie, "All Are Alike unto God," Book of Mormon symposium, August 1978, Provo, Utah, reprinted as "The New Revelation on Priesthood," in *Priesthood* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 131–32. For a thorough treatment of the 1978 revelation, see Edward L. Kimball, *Lengthen Your Stride: The Presidency of Spencer W. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 195–245.

2. Howard W. Hunter, "All Are Alike unto God," *Ensign* 9 (June 1979): 72–74.

3. Gordon B. Hinckley, "The Need for Greater Kindness," *Ensign* 36 (May 2006): 58–61; Gordon B. Hinckley, address given to regional conference of NAACP April 24, 1998, cited in Lois M. Collins, "Bridge Racial Barriers, Pres. Hinckley Says," *Deseret News*, April 25, 1998, A1.

4. James A. Davis and Tom W. Smith, *General Social Surveys, 1972–2000* (Chicago: National Opinion Research Corp., 2000).

5. Armand L. Mauss, "Mauss Surveys of Mormons, Salt Lake City and San Francisco, 1967–69," electronic data files and documentation, American Religion Data Archives, University Park, Pennsylvania State University.



Christian Smith, with Melinda Lundquist Denton.  
*Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives  
of American Teenagers.*

New York: Oxford University Press, 2005

Reviewed by Bruce A. Chadwick and Richard J. McClendon

*Soul Searching* is a very significant contribution to the sociology of religion. The book is of particular interest to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as it is the first national study that highlights LDS youth. Christian Smith and his colleagues at the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) have produced a benchmark study valuable to not only social scientists, but clergy, civic leaders, and family advocates as well. The project, which was funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. and conducted at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, is a six-year longitudinal study of the religiosity of American youth. Wave I, a telephone survey of 3,290 randomly selected youth across the nation, was collected in the summer of 2002. In addition, in-depth interviews with 267 youth from the original sample were completed during the summer of 2003. Wave II, which will be conducted during the next three years, will reinterview the youth from the original sample by way of telephone as well as conduct in-depth interviews of 150 of them. *Soul Searching* is the published results of Wave I and relieves the dearth of sociological research on the religious beliefs and behaviors of American youth.

Although Smith's idiosyncratic prose is sometimes difficult to follow, *Soul Searching* is packed, and we mean packed, with valuable information about the religious lives of American youth. From the introduction to the postscript, Smith does a remarkable job of "unpacking" a massive amount of data and theorizing about its meaning. He combines both quantitative and qualitative research methods to guide the reader through the breadth of generalizable facts as well as through personal expressions of youth about their religious lives.

Smith tells the life stories of two Baptist girls and three Catholic youths to paint a human face on the research. These stories illustrate the central themes that he and his colleagues found during their interviews: (1) there is “immense variety” in religious experiences and beliefs among teens across America; (2) a large number of teens are inarticulate about their religious beliefs; (3) religion competes against many other activities in the lives of kids and can easily be put on the back burner; and (4) parents are a powerful influence on the religious lives of their children—for better or worse (26–29).

The raw data from the survey is a treasure trove of information about the religious beliefs, values, and practices of American youth. Smith divides the 3,290 youth into seven groups based on their religious affiliation: “Conservative Protestant, Mainline Protestant, Black Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Mormon/Latter-day Saint, and Nonreligious [other religion, not religious, or indeterminate]” (35). Interestingly, the LDS youth are the most religious group on nearly every indicator. The conservative Protestants are not far behind, but then there is a wide gap between these two groups and the other five. A higher percentage of the LDS youth attend church services, pray, participate in youth groups, feel that religion is important in their lives, participate in family religious activities, have had spiritual experiences, and feel close to members of their congregation (37–60). For example, 71 percent of the LDS youth attend religious services at least once a week. Conservative Protestants follow with 55 percent, while 41 to 44 percent of the youth in the other four Christian groups attended that often (37). Over and over again Smith singles out the LDS as being the most religious youth. These findings had the Internet buzzing with “Mormon envy” in the months following the book’s release.

There is one interesting exception. When asked if they believe in God, 84 percent of the LDS youth replied yes. This compares to 97 percent of the black Protestants, 94 percent of the conservative Protestants, 86 percent of the mainline Protestants, and 85 percent of the Catholics (41). All of these are relatively high percentages, yet it seems strange that LDS youth are lower in their belief about God, especially considering that their other religious beliefs and practices are consistently higher. We believe this anomaly is not necessarily that Latter-day Saint youth don’t believe; rather, other denominations tend to emphasize “belief” as the sole fundamental component of salvation, whereas LDS doctrine tends to combine both belief and practice as salient to salvation. In this view, we are not surprised by this outcome.

One very important caution must be mentioned in celebrating the exceptional religiosity of LDS youth. Only 2.5 percent of the 3,290 American

youth surveyed were LDS, which means we are generalizing about their religiosity from about only eighty respondents. Given the uniqueness of the LDS youth, we are confident that Smith and his associates wish they would have over-sampled this interesting group.

LDS readers may be tempted to immerse themselves in the LDS data and neglect the religious landscape of American youth in general. To do so would be a mistake because the trends describing the religiosity of American youths are insightful. These trends are (1) that U.S. teenagers follow their parents' religious traditions; (2) that teens regularly express their religious faith by attending services, praying, and engaging in other practices; (3) that over half of the youth reported strong religious experiences; (4) that most teens are involved in religious youth groups and activities; (5) that congregations are important sites for youth to make contact with adults other than their parents; and (6) that the majority of U.S. teenagers express their religious feelings within their family life. At face value these are pretty encouraging findings. One troubling observation is that religion seems to be somewhat remote from the youths' interaction with their friends and from their school activities (30–71).

Relatively few of the nonreligious teens, 16 percent, are either atheists or agnostics (86). Most nonreligious youth, 75 percent, identified themselves as “just not religious” or they “don’t know” what kind of a nonreligious person they are (86). Interestingly, over half of the nonreligious youth believe in God and about a fourth pray by themselves at least a few times a week. Three percent of all currently nonreligious youth were raised LDS, which is close to their percentage in the total sample (87). Of the entire sample, those youth who do not attend religious services have not been neglected by the believers as they receive frequent invitations from friends to join them in church. Over 40 percent of those who do not attend don’t know why. Only 6 percent avoid church because of a bad experience or dislike of religion. The nonreligious teens “appear to be religiously disconnected for what seem to be rather vague or unremarkable reasons” (116).

Smith’s methodical exploration of the 267 in-depth interviews collected by the author and his colleagues teases out forces that impact the religious beliefs and behaviors of American teens. First of all, Smith debunks the popular notion that there is a religious generation gap between teens and their parents. He found that the vast majority of teenagers accept and follow their parents’ religious views and practices. They attend the same religious congregations as their parents and at the same frequency (120–24). Secondly, Smith found that teens, whether religious or not, believe religion is generally a good thing for society as a whole. Some view it as an anchor for social morality or that it provides motivation and

teaches ways to help people. Others believe it creates a sense of community, and that it connects people to the Divine (124–27). Thirdly, Smith found no evidence that teenagers are “spiritual seekers.” What their parents have taught them is “good enough” and thus, very few are driven to seek out other religious traditions (127–28).

In our opinion, the most fascinating insight in the book is Smith’s observation of an emerging “de facto dominant religion” among U.S. teens, labeled “moralistic therapeutic deism” (162). He explains that regardless of what religious community teenagers belong to and the differences in their creeds, most teenagers share a latent, yet commonly held view that religion is about general morality, therapeutic benefits, and a God who is “up there” somewhere. In other words, good and kind people go to heaven when they die regardless of their religion. Life’s goal is about feeling happy and attaining a “subjective well-being” (164). God is always ready to help when He is needed, yet keeps a safe distance and is not necessarily involved in people’s minute-by-minute lives. This is the creed of the “whatever” generation. As Smith puts it, most American teenagers see God as a combination of a “Divine Butler and Cosmic Therapist” (165). He is the go-to guy when things get tough, but they prefer not to have Him too involved in their personal affairs, especially when it comes to dictating how they should live.

According to Smith, America’s culture of “individualism” has socialized most teens to see religion in the same way they see other social institutions in society—for their personal benefit. This is in direct contrast to the traditional model of religion in early America, which emphasized communitarian, penitent, and self-sacrificing tenets. As Smith puts it, “The very idea of religious truth is attenuated, shifted from older realist and universalist notions of convictions about objective Truth [which our forebearers believed] to more personalized and relative versions of ‘truth about me’ and ‘truth about you’” (144).

We found Smith’s introduction of moralistic therapeutic deism to be quite visionary. The few sentences here can’t begin to describe his insights into those forces in American society that have produced moralistic therapeutic deism. Self-fulfillment and self-actualization emerged as an important cultural value in the turbulent 1960s. The consequence is that among youth today, self-fulfillment is the purpose of life, and they look to the self as the source of moral knowledge. According to Smith, parents, pastors, priests, and lawmakers have been replaced by popular psychologists, social workers, talk show hosts, and other advice givers (173).

Smith argues that American youth have developed this moralistic therapeutic deism because of the cultural and institutional forces he has

described. He concludes that youth are struggling with the same problems as their parents since they actually share much more in common with adults than they do not (191).

Smith and his associates found that for every measure of risk behavior, quality of family and adult relationships, moral reasoning and behavior, community participation, media consumption, sexual activity, and emotional well-being, the more religious teens had more desirable scores than the less religious. He noted that even though the influence of religion was substantial, the youth were probably unaware of its impact. These findings are consistent with the many studies we have conducted with LDS teenagers and young adults. Active LDS high school students engage in less delinquency, do better in school and have stronger self-esteem than less-active students. In addition, active LDS young adults have stronger marriages, more education, higher occupational status, and stronger emotional health than those less active.<sup>1</sup> The possibility of reverse causation is discussed as Smith is aware that good kids may be attracted to religion, in contrast to religion producing good kids. After extensive analysis, he concluded that while the causation flows in both directions, religion has a major influence on life outcomes (233–40).

The book concludes by summarizing and interpreting findings. But most interesting is a “concluding unscientific postscript” that identifies several implications of the study along with practical suggestions for church leaders, parents, and youth advisors. Smith strongly encourages religious communities to stop generalizing and spreading “alarmist” myths about the moral and religious lives of teens (266). Most of the findings from this study did not corroborate these common assumptions. He called on parents and clergy to challenge teens to “make faith a more active and important part of their lives” (266). Smith sees teenagers as inherently willing participants in religious learning if they can only rub shoulders with highly committed parents, unafraid clergy, and sound religious doctrine. Given our own research on LDS youth, we highly concur.

We have a couple of concluding comments about the book. First, whether Smith consciously intended it to be, *Soul Searching* is not just about religion. It is a commentary on what is right and what is wrong with American society. Statistics are used to educate the reader on the harmful effects of modern and postmodern forces on religion among both youth and adults. Even though he tries to couch this commentary in an objective form by using the term “for better or worse” when explaining social effects (174), one gets the feeling that he believes the trend is mostly for worse. It is hard to argue against the idea that “mass consumer capitalism” and “the digital communications revolution” have been detrimental to American

religiosity (176, 179). They have transformed traditional, old-time religious values to the new moralistic therapeutic deism.

The second concluding comment pertains to secularization. Historically, sociologists have concluded that modernism and science have replaced religion. However, many social scientists have recently refuted this assumption and have identified evidence of a strong revival of religious belief and practice. Yet, after reading Smith's book, we began to rethink the secularization argument, not only in light of modernism, but through a postmodernist lens. Perhaps postmodernism is as much a culprit in the disarming of religious beliefs and practice in America as modernism. "Therapeutic individualism," although partly an outcome of modernism's "mass consumer capitalism," is also built on subjectivity. It is a hybrid of sorts, combining modernity's objectivity with postmodernity's subjectivity, which has produced a new theology that has not necessarily destroyed religious commitment, but rather neutralized it. A religious culture populated by youth who claim to be religious and participate in religious practices but who can no longer articulate their specific religious beliefs, who see religion as a psychological feel-good, get-it-when-I-need-it medicine, and who have abandoned their forefathers' traditional religious structures and ideology is a potent form of secularization. Moralistic therapeutic deism is cause for alarm.

In conclusion, we strongly recommend this book to those interested in the religiosity of American teenagers. Social scientists, religious leaders, youth leaders, and parents will find this an enlightening read.

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Margaret Barker. *Temple Theology: An Introduction*.

London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004

Reviewed by Dean W. Collinwood and James W. McConkie

In the past two decades, Margaret Barker has managed a miracle: in a prodigious output of a dozen scholarly books and book chapters, as well as numerous articles and conference addresses, Barker, a Cambridge-educated independent scholar, Methodist lay preacher, and former president of the Society for Old Testament Study, has successfully shaken the very foundations of Old Testament and early Christian scholarship. Is it not obvious that the Christianity of Jesus' day and shortly thereafter was heavily influenced by Greek culture? Is it not clear that Jesus' teachings were a product of the Jewish culture, especially the synagogue culture, of his day? "No," says Barker to these claims; it is neither obvious nor clear that Christianity had its origin in these influences. A careful reading of noncanonical sources such as the Enoch literature and the Dead Sea Scrolls suggests that Jesus was influenced by something much more ancient than Hellenistic or synagogue culture. He seemed to have in mind the theology and ordinances of the first Jewish temple, the temple as it had existed before the accretions of paganism and the "reforms" of King Josiah in the seventh century BCE. Indeed, if Barker's thesis holds up to scholarly scrutiny, everyone will be forced to redefine Jesus as a restorer of a religion that had been lost rather than as an inventor of something new.

Such a reworking of centuries of scholarship will not be easy. Think of the scores of German Protestant scholars whose work constituted the academic foundation of intertestamental scholarship throughout the twentieth century and whose labors are now being called into question. Think of the millions of Christians of all stripes who have been taught to believe in a strict trinitarian monotheism—a belief Barker claims is inconsistent with both ancient Jewish religion and the religion Jesus restored. Despite



these formidable obstacles, the Germans are diligently reading Barker and are finding much of value, as are the Catholics, the Russian Orthodox, and many others. At least sixty reviews of Barker's works have already been published (including the lead review in the *Times Literary Supplement* of 2003), and Barker has been asked to speak at conferences and symposia in Europe, Turkey, and the United States, including at a Brigham Young University devotional in 2003<sup>1</sup> and at the Joseph Smith Conference in Washington, D.C., in 2005.<sup>2</sup>

Latter-day Saint readers will find in Barker's work a confirmation of many of their most vital doctrines. They will say of Barker's main thesis, "Joseph Smith taught that, or something very close to that, 175 years ago." But Barker is not LDS; she is a lay Methodist preacher, and so her work seems all the more intriguing to Latter-day Saints, who will wonder why other scholars have missed what Barker has discovered. Unfortunately, some of Barker's books are not easy reading: *The Great High Priest* at over 400 pages and heavily footnoted, and her magnum opus, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, could discourage the lay reader.<sup>3</sup>

That is where *Temple Theology: An Introduction* comes in. Short (just 104 pages), plainly written, and light on footnotes, *Temple Theology* serves as an excellent introduction to, and summary of, the Barker corpus. Originally delivered as a series of lectures at the University of London in 2003, the four chapters of *Temple Theology* were published in book form by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge in 2004.

In succinct sections on the Creation, the everlasting covenant, the Atonement, and the mysterious feminine wisdom figure of the Bible, Barker discusses the faith of the Jews before the Babylonian exile. She describes the pivotal, creative role of the Holy of Holies room in the ancient temple, the central place of the mysterious high priest Melchizedek, and the use of anointing oil in early temple worship. She explains why it was easy for the Christians of Jesus' day to think of Jesus as the god of the Old Testament. Upon finishing *Temple Theology*, readers will likely find themselves scouring bookstores for more of Barker's works.

If there is a flaw in Barker's approach, it is that she too often resorts to the speculative phrase "must have been" in order to connect the dots, as in "this must have been how [Ezekiel] imagined the holy of holies" (87), or "[the brightly clothed] woman in the holy of holies . . . must have prompted the early Church to tell the story of Mary" (82). Barker's defense of her conjectures is actually part of her main thesis, namely, that early redactors of the Bible intentionally removed some of the most important descriptions of the ancient religion, forcing everyone today to tease out the old theology from extrabiblical sources if they want to accurately grasp what was going

on in 950 BCE when the first temple was built. Alas, noncanonical sources are often fragmentary and less well understood, thus giving scholars no choice but to read between the lines. One is reminded here of the “plain and precious things” which the Book of Mormon asserts were removed from the Bible (1 Ne. 13:40).

Many of Barker’s intriguing interpretations will feel familiar, making *Temple Theology: An Introduction* a fascinating and informative read for Mormons in general and a rich gold mine for Latter-day Saint scholars. Take, for example, Barker’s analysis of the gods of the Old Testament. “In the more ancient names for the deities . . . we glimpse the Father (God Most High), the Son (Yahweh, the One who appeared in human form), and the Mother (El Shaddai, whose name means the God with breasts)” (7). “God the Father and God the Son were distinguished before the advent of Christianity and . . . the Second Person, the Son, had been the God of Israel, the Great Angel” (56). Notions such as these about multiple gods, male and female, are not offensive to Mormons, nor is Barker’s description of the resurrection as more than just a “post mortem experience.” Barker reads the ancient documents as saying that resurrection was “a theosis, the transformation of a human being into a divine being” (23).

Descriptions of the process of deification are also familiar to Mormons. The concept was specifically taught by the Prophet Joseph Smith in his King Follet sermon and reiterated in his formal revelations over and over again. In fact, Smith’s vision of the three degrees of glory tied the process of deification directly to resurrection, just as Barker asserts. In reference to those who become “gods, even the sons of God” (D&C 76:58), the revelation says, “These are they who shall have part in the first resurrection” (D&C 76:64), and “These are they whose bodies are celestial” (D&C 76:70).

Most fascinating to Latter-day Saints will be Barker’s argument that “the earliest Christian writings assume a world view and a setting which can only have come from a temple—and not the actual temple of their own time” (2). This idea of Jesus as a restorer of ancient truths from the first temple of the tenth century BCE, the restorer of “the remembered and hoped for Eden—the true—temple,” as well as a restorer of the ancient “priesthood,” is so close to the fundamental assumptions of Mormonism that it comes as a breath of fresh air to those who have, for so long, been asked to accept the claim of the higher critics that Jesus just embellished, rather than restored, the ancient religion (2). Barker declares that restoration is why “Jesus was described and remembered as a great high priest (Heb. 4:14).” He was “the Melchizedek” because “*Melchizedek represented*

*the older faith*" (4). She supports this proposition, as she often does, by turning to the Melchizedek text among the Dead Sea Scrolls (11Q13): "Jesus as Melchizedek can now be seen as the key to the New Testament, and the implication of this is that Melchizedek's temple was the world of the first Christians" (4–5).

Barker's interpretation of Jesus' communities as temple-centered relies upon her view of the book of Revelation as "the key to understanding early Christianity" because it is "steeped in temple imagery" (1). Every informed Mormon is entirely comfortable with the temple imagery in John's apocalypse where sacred clothing (Rev. 3:3–5; 7:13–14; 16:14–15; 19:7–8; 19:14), washings and anointings (Rev. 3:18), and new names (Rev. 2:17; 3:12) are mentioned. Indeed, Hugh Nibley would applaud Barker's acknowledgement that temple concepts are abundant in uncanonized early Christian literature. Not only would Nibley have been interested in what Barker has to say on this subject, but Barker would find informative what Nibley uncovered in *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment*.<sup>4</sup>

Take, for example, Nibley's inclusion of Cyril of Jerusalem's Lectures on the Ordinances, an early Christian document circa 347 CE. The document meshes nicely with the book of Revelation and also describes early Christians as participating in a ritual where they were washed, anointed, and clothed with special garments. The document also speaks about prayer circles and a ritual that starts with a description of the creation of man and the Garden of Eden, and then moves to a world full of temptation. The Lectures concludes with the admonition, "Keep these traditions inviolate, and see that you do not stumble."<sup>5</sup> Barker, who relies heavily on noncanonical sources herself, would find little amiss with Nibley's analysis of Cyril's Lectures as yet another proof of early Christians' ancient temple connections.

As one would expect, academe is not wholly sold on Barker. Some find her views suspect because they curiously seem to explain too much; others assert, that, while fascinating, Barker's work leaves too many questions unanswered. Such is academe. But even her detractors admit that Barker is breaking new ground, filling in blank spots in Old Testament scholarship, and shifting the proverbial paradigm. In the context of traditional Biblical scholarship, her work is audacious, yet no one dares dismiss it because Barker's scholarship is too excellent, her case too convincing, and her contribution too valuable. With books like *Temple Theology*, the world's understanding of the origins of Christianity will never be the same.

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1. Margaret Barker, "What Did Josiah Reform? The Earlier Religion of Israel," address given at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, May 6, 2003.

2. Margaret Barker, "Joseph Smith and the Preexilic Israelite Religion," in *The Worlds of Joseph Smith: A Bicentennial Conference at the Library of Congress*, ed. John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 2006), 69–82.

3. Margaret Barker's major works include *The Older Testament: The Survival of Themes from the Ancient Royal Cult in Sectarian Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge [SPCK], 1987); *The Lost Prophet: The Book of Enoch and Its Influence on Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1988); *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem* (London: SPCK, 1991); *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God* (London: SPCK, 1992); *On Earth as It Is in Heaven: Temple Symbolism in the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1995); *The Risen Lord: The Jesus of History as the Christ of Faith* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1996); *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, Which God Gave to Him to Show to His Servants What Must Soon Take Place (Revelation 1.1)* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 2000); and *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 2003). For comment on her work, we recommend Terrance L. Szink, "Jerusalem in Lehi's Day," *FARMS Review* 16, no. 2 (2004), 149–59; and Kevin Christensen, "The Deuteronomist De-Christianizing of the Old Testament," *FARMS Review* 16, no. 2 (2004), 59–90.

4. Hugh Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment*, 2d ed., *The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley* 16 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2005).

5. Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 522.

Carol Holindrake Nielson. *The Salt Lake City 14th Ward Album Quilt, 1857: Stories of the Relief Society and Their Quilt.*

Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2004

Reviewed by Jill Terry Rudy

The premise of *The Salt Lake City 14th Ward Album Quilt, 1857* is both intriguing and straightforward: to recover the history of a nineteenth-century Relief Society quilt and the life stories of the women who stitched it together. The intrigue began when Carol Holindrake Nielson learned that her family would someday inherit “The Quilt,” an object her husband believed could be a picnic quilt made by his grandmother. Twenty-five years later, the quilt arrived in Nielson’s home after her mother-in-law presented it to Nielson’s husband. When the plain white backing was unfolded, the Nielsons discovered *half* of a carefully crafted quilt with individual squares decorated with birds, flowers, fruits, and geometric patterns, each square signed by its maker. Nielson learned from her mother-in-law that her husband’s great-great-grandfather, Richard Stephen Horne, won the quilt in a raffle when he was twelve years old. Oral tradition and written life stories confirm that Richard cut the quilt in half after the death of his first wife and gave half to each of his two oldest daughters. The pieces then passed from mother to daughter. Because the author’s mother-in-law had no daughters, she gave the quilt to her son (7–9).

Believing “only a man” could cut such a beautiful quilt in half, but grateful that her family, who descended from the second-oldest daughter, received any part of the quilt at all, the author set out to find the other half of the quilt (9–10). Nielson gathered information about Horne’s descendants and made phone calls asking about any knowledge of the quilt. Within days she learned that the other half of the quilt was near where she lived in the Salt Lake Valley with a distant cousin descended from Horne’s oldest daughter. Nielson describes the reunion of the quilt halves and the cousins as a “photo frenzy,” with everyone holding the two halves of the

quilt together (11). While the family history intrigue surrounding the quilt was resolved rather easily, Nielson still felt a strong desire to learn more about the quilt itself and the lives of the women who created and donated it for the raffle. Nielson explains, “The posterity of the women who sewed the quilt must see the needlework of their ancestral mothers. . . . A sense of urgency overwhelmed me. I felt compelled to learn the stories of the pioneer women, the artists, of the Fourteenth Ward Relief Society” (11). This book is the fruit of Nielson’s desire to share a knowledge of the quilt with other descendants of the women who stitched it and with anyone else who will learn from and appreciate the quilt, its history, and its makers.

The organization and layout match the straightforward purpose of the book. Starting with a brief introduction to familiarize readers with the terminology and values associated with the Relief Society sisters who made the quilt, Nielson tells the story of obtaining the quilt and starting her quest to learn about it. Chapter 2 relates the history of the Salt Lake Fourteenth Ward and of the early Relief Society. Referring to historical documents such as ward boundary maps, newspaper reports, and the *Women’s Exponent*, Nielson introduces readers to the significance of the ward, its members, and the Relief Society in the first decade of pioneer settlement. According to Nielson, the Fourteenth Ward occupied “nine ten-acre city blocks directly south and west of Temple Square” (15). Many prominent Church leaders lived in the ward’s boundaries, and Phebe Woodruff, first wife of Wilford Woodruff, became the president of the ward Relief Society when it was organized on September 17, 1856. The Female Relief Society succeeded an Indian Relief Society that had originally been formed in the Fourteenth Ward to provide aid to Native Americans in the valley (19–21). The group founded in 1856 met weekly in Woodruff’s home to sew and raise funds to clothe the poor and assist with contributions to the Perpetual Emigrating Fund (26). The author could not determine when her husband’s ancestor won the quilt in the raffle, but dates given with some signatures on the quilt indicate at least some of the squares were completed in August 1857 (28–29). By that time, the Saints knew that the federal government was sending troops to the valley; the need for clothing and other forms of aid to assist in the move south would have been apparent to the sisters who were completing the quilt. They may have made the quilt to raise money to buy clothing and provide other aid.

Chapter 3 consists mainly of life sketches of the Relief Society women and photos of many of the quilt blocks and their makers. The chapter begins with a helpful discussion of the album quilt genre and discusses other needlework techniques that the women used to create the quilt.

Nielson explains that album quilts were popular in the United States in the mid-nineteenth century and that the Relief Society women included several elements of the genre on their quilt, such as individually designed and stitched squares, signatures on each square, and appliqué and embroidery of recurring motifs (31–32). Although a very necessary element of the book, this section shows some limitations of writing about a process like needlework and quilting. The author valiantly tries to describe the process of *broderie perse*, a form of appliqué and embroidery used by several of the quilters, but the description leaves some confusion about what the women actually did to create the images and motifs on the quilt blocks (32). A more detailed description of the general elements of appliqué may have helped increase understanding of how the women combined piecing fabric, quilting, and embroidery.

Throughout the book, the design and high production values of the University of Utah Press validate Nielson's project to document the quilt and the quilters. Although Nielson states that pictures cannot convey the intricacies and durability of the cutting, piecing, and sewing techniques (33), the abundant high-quality color photographs add immeasurably to the readers' understanding and appreciation of the quilt. Because the format of the book is so straightforward, with life story following upon life story, the photographs take on added significance by reminding readers of the intricate sewing skills and the individual creativity and artistry of each woman.

Using her training and experience gained by teaching high-school English and history, the author documents her work with unpublished life stories in possession of family members, sketches in memoirs of the Daughters of Utah Pioneers, journals, newspaper and magazine accounts, biographies, and biographical information about husbands and other family members of the women. The author begins her discussion with members of the Woodruff family and then presents information about other contributors by making family connections. The organizing principle of the life sketches is not clearly stated; however, it appears that the women are not discussed in relation to how their quilt blocks are arranged on the quilt but more in their relationships with each other.

The book contains a brief story of sixty-three of the contributors to the album quilt. This organizing pattern allows the book to be enjoyed over a period of time because the stories blend together if read in one sitting. As the author pieces together as much information as possible about some of the women, she admits, "Unfairly for many of the women, their preserved quilt blocks stand singularly representative of all else they might have accomplished" (205). Nielson acknowledges that the needlework is



both a fine memorial to the abilities of the quilters and a mere glimpse into the complicated richness of the women's lives. In the epilogue, the author mentions specifically her commitment to challenge the view of some of her respondents that the details of these women's lives were not of great significance (203–4). The life stories and beautiful photography of the quilt blocks inform or remind readers that these Relief Society women had moved repeatedly because of persecutions of the Church, had faced the difficulties of establishing homes in adverse settlement conditions, and had learned to live with the challenges of plural marriage and the other demands and blessings of being Latter-day Saints. The book acknowledges that their having the time and the ability to create intricate needlework in the midst of such eventful lives is a notable, significant accomplishment and legacy.

With its simple focus on a material artifact and its creators, Nielson's book makes a welcome addition to research on nineteenth-century Mormon women. For example, *The Salt Lake City 14<sup>th</sup> Ward Album Quilt, 1857* is an interesting companion piece to Margaret Brady's *Mormon Healer and Folk Poet: Mary Susannah Fowler's Life of "Unselfish Usefulness"* or to other books in the series *Western Women in History*, published by Utah State University Press. The book ably demonstrates that the design of the quilt itself, with the individually signed blocks bound together, is an invitation to recognize the unique experiences of each quilter and the strong bonds of family relationships, friendship, and faith that united the women in the sisterhood of their Relief Society.

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Ronald O. Barney. *The Mormon Vanguard  
Brigade of 1847: Norton Jacob's Record.*

Logan: Utah State University Press, 2005

Reviewed by William G. Hartley

In *The Mormon Vanguard Brigade of 1847*, Ronald Barney and Utah State University Press have published the valuable Norton Jacob diary account of the historic 1847 trek. Because of excellent transcriptions and extensive annotations, this might well be the best published version of any of the 1847 pioneer diaries. The manuscript diary, donated to the LDS Church Archives by family members in 1949, is part of the book *The Record of Norton Jacob*, privately published (and not widely circulated) in 1949.<sup>1</sup>

Among key historic events of the American West, the 1847 Mormon vanguard trek is one of the best documented. At least 24 of the nearly 150 pioneers kept diaries, or almost 1 in 6. Most have been published. Arguably the best two diaries were those kept by company clerks Thomas Bullock and William Clayton. Will Bagley recently edited and published Bullock's diary in *The Pioneer Camp of the Saints: The 1846 and 1847 Mormon Trail Journals of Thomas Bullock*.<sup>2</sup> Well transcribed and moderately annotated, it earned a best book award from the Mormon History Association. George D. Smith edited and published Clayton's diary in *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton*.<sup>3</sup> Smith, not an expert in western history, provided little annotation. As a manuscript, Norton Jacob's diary perhaps ranks behind the Bullock and Clayton diaries in importance and coverage, but I believe that Barney's masterful annotation pushes this volume to the top of the list.

Barney, a historian and archivist at the LDS Church Archives, has served on the Mormon History Association council. Prior to this book, he authored an award-winning biography, *One Side by Himself*, about his ancestor Lewis Barney (likewise a diarist in the 1847 vanguard group).

Structurally, *Mormon Vanguard Brigade* flows smoothly. It begins with a brief life summary of the diarist. Norton Jacob was born in Sheffield, Massachusetts, in 1804; joined the LDS Church in Illinois in 1841 at age thirty-six; and died in Glenwood, Utah, in 1879. Next, the book

provides Jacob's reminiscence up to 1844 and contains diary entries from 1844 to 1846. Then comes the heart of the book, the diary of the great trek. Barney presents the trip entries by month, each month forming a separate installment (chapter). He begins each installment with an introductory summation of what occurred that month in the diary entries. After the trek coverage, the book provides diary accounts detailing Jacob's return trip from the Great Salt Lake Valley to Winter Quarters. Finally, diary entries and writings for 1848 through 1852 conclude the book. A useful appendix contains the Jacob genealogy, a list of the 1847 vanguard company members, biographical sketches for each person mentioned in Jacob's writings, and a thorough bibliography and index.

This publication makes several contributions to the literature on the 1847 vanguard company. First, the information in this diary is priceless. Regarding Jacob's 1847 diary, trail bibliographer Merrill J. Mattes, in his *Platte River Road Narratives*, says that "though less publicized than Clayton's and Egan's, [Jacob's diary] is exceptional in the keenness of observations and richness of detail."<sup>4</sup> One example is Jacob's May 6, 1847, entry in which he mentions in passing the wildlife he encountered: buffalo, elk, a horse, dogs, a white wolf, and a calf (128–29). Best of all, Barney provides a meticulous transcription of the handwritten original. His introduction details the editing standards he carefully followed.

Second, Barney's annotations alone are worth the price of the book. His extensive notes at times are mini-histories and in-depth explanations of practices, events, places, and people. As one example, Jacob's entry for July 28 summarizes comments Brigham Young made about spirits entering their mortal bodies during pregnancy, to which Barney, in a note, cites another pioneer's summary (John Brown's) that indicates Young said the spirit enters the infant tabernacle inside the mother at the time she first feels life (230 n. 161).

Third, Barney's commentary in notes leads readers to the best and most recent scholarship on matters discussed in the diary. Mastery of the secondary literature, as well as primary sources, is evident throughout. He utilizes, for example, recent studies regarding mountain fever, odometers, rebaptism, and trail sites and locations. Other published 1847 trail diaries' references to secondary studies pale in comparison. Barney's notes provide a comprehensive guide for further reading and research.

Fourth, Barney's notes contain his own observations and interpretations as a historian. He challenges, for example, trail expert Stan Kimball's assertion that the 1847 vanguard company followed existing routes and blazed "less than one mile" of trail. Barney notes that in several trail sections the vanguard "plotted new courses on the old roads," and when

tracks or traces of routes in some places “proved negligible or were not conducive to travel by a large body,” at “numerous times” the vanguard “had to innovate” (137 n. 88).

About half of the 1847 pioneers, including Brigham Young, left the Great Salt Lake Valley and returned to Winter Quarters that same year. Jacob’s account of his group’s return, along with Bullock’s, are the best we have of that part of the story. Also, Jacob’s entries for 1848 through 1852, though less frequent and detailed, are useful documentary sources relating to events during those years.

In the book’s introduction, Barney states that Jacob’s diary provides a “blue collar” view of the trek by one who was not part of the leadership circle. Hence, we expect to be shown differences that Jacob’s point of view provides. Without the other 1847 diaries side by side for comparison, readers cannot sense what Jacob records that is different from or contributes more than the other diaries, and it is something Barney should have mentioned. We need more examples like one he put in note 151 on page 227, where he observes that, while Clayton, Bullock, Egan, and Jackman recorded some of Brigham Young’s extensive comments on July 27, “Jacob’s and Wilford Woodruff’s accounts of Young’s speech are the most extensive that are extant.”

Barney’s annotations are not intended to provide a detailed site and route guide. For such information he advises readers (98 n. 16 and 17) to consult published trail guides and to examine detail maps on file with the National Park Services trails office in Salt Lake City, which maps Stan Kimball and other trail historians helped chart.

USU Press dressed this book well. It has a handsome cover, pleasant layout and typeface, good formatting, and, thankfully, footnotes at the bottom of the pages, not endnotes. The book features cleanly drawn maps by Tom Child. (However, a map showing the vanguard company’s first locations in Salt Lake City relative to today’s streets would have been helpful.)

Substantive histories, as opposed to diaries, of the epic 1847 pioneers’ venture are rare. Preston Nibley’s narrated centennial history for Mormons, *Exodus to Greatness*, provides but a chronicle of the 1847 venture.<sup>5</sup> E. Cecil McGavin’s *The Mormon Pioneers* gives a basic narrative for the popular Latter-day Saint audience.<sup>6</sup> Wallace Stegner’s *The Gathering of Zion* is a well-written story and insightful assessment for a national audience but is drawn from limited sources and is more journalistic than honed history.<sup>7</sup> For the trek’s sesquicentennial, Richard E. Bennett published *We’ll Find the Place: The Mormon Exodus, 1846–1848*, which devotes four thoughtful, analytical, superbly documented chapters to the vanguard story.<sup>8</sup> His is

the most historically solid narration yet produced. A popular, vignette-filled, day-by-day account and trail guide is Hal Knight and Stan Kimball's *111 Days to Zion*.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, in *Saints Find the Place*, compiler David R. Crockett created a day-by-day account that marshals diary excerpts for each day mixed with his own short commentaries.<sup>10</sup> Several Mormon Trail books with text and photographs also have been published.

Within this lineup of published diaries, chronicles, histories, and popular renderings, *The Mormon Vanguard Brigade* offers not only a premier 1847 trek diary that is well edited, but when Barney's rich annotations are read along with the diary, readers also become absorbed in an in-depth history of the vanguard experience.

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1. C. Edward Jacob and Ruth S. Jacob, eds., *The Record of Norton Jacob* (Salt Lake City: Norton Jacob Family Association, 1949).

2. Will Bagley, *The Pioneer Camp of the Saints: The 1846 and 1847 Mormon Trail Journals of Thomas Bullock* (Spokane, Wash.: Arthur H. Clark, 1997), 111–234.

3. George D. Smith, ed., *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995).

4. Merrill J. Mattes, *Platte River Road Narratives: A Descriptive Bibliography of Travel over the Great Central Overland Route to Oregon, California, Utah, Colorado, Montana, and Other Western States and Territories, 1812–1866* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 101.

5. Preston Nibley, *Exodus to Greatness: The Story of the Mormon Migration* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1947).

6. E. Cecil McGavin, *The Mormon Pioneers* (Salt Lake City: Stevens and Wallis, 1947).

7. Wallace Stegner, *The Gathering of Zion: The Story of the Mormon Trail* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

8. Richard E. Bennett, *We'll Find the Place: The Mormon Exodus, 1846–1848* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997).

9. Hal Knight and Stanley B. Kimball, *111 Days to Zion* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1978).

10. David R. Crockett, *Saints Find the Place: A Day-by-Day-Pioneer Experience* (Tucson, Ariz.: LDS Gems Press, 1997).

William Dever. *Did God Have a Wife?*  
*Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel.*

Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005

Reviewed by Paul Hoskisson

While *Did God Have a Wife?* is a catchy title (no doubt employed to pique interest and increase sales), William Dever's latest foray into Israelite religion has more to do with its subtitle, *Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel*, than with God's marital status. Nevertheless, Latter-day Saints may be more interested in the answer to the question of whether the God of Israel had a wife than in a tour de force through what archaeology can tell us about the religion of biblical Israel—even if that grand tour was produced by arguably the foremost living American archaeologist of all things associated with the Old Testament.

Dever answers the question posed in his title with an unqualified "Yes!" In his view, the God of the Old Testament ("Yahweh" in scholarly cliques and "Jehovah" in conservative circles) certainly did have a consort, and her name was Asherah. The evidence is laid out in great detail throughout the book, but specifically in chapters 6 and 7. The data he presents consist of (1) textual evidences, such as the "asherah" and "asheroth" (plural of "asherah") mentioned in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament but not always recognizable in the King James English translation, (2) ancient graffiti found in Israelite territory mentioning "Yahweh and his Asherah," and (3) evidence from numerous archaeological excavations conducted in and around the lands traditionally associated with the Israelites of the Old Testament (211–47).

The idea that Father in Heaven might have a wife is not unknown to Latter-day Saints. We are reminded of the concept every time we sing the famous lines, "In the heav'ns are parents single? No, the thought makes reason stare!"<sup>1</sup> And because we believe that nearly all primary and many secondary religions are derivatives (and in some cases perversions) of gospel-based dispensations, we are not surprised when scholars point out some "newly discovered" aspect of an ancient religion to which Latter-day Saints can say, "We already knew that." Nevertheless, taking a clue from

latter-day prophets, seers, and revelators, most Latter-day Saints see no point (except perhaps in meetings devoted to discussing doctrines found nowhere in the scriptures<sup>2</sup>) in squandering time on issues for which we have almost no answers, including our Mother in Heaven—even if many of us nurse a reverent curiosity.

The question of God's marital status aside, the bulk of the book reviews the information archaeology can add to and correct about our notions of ancient Israelite religion. Dever's thesis throughout the book is that there is not one monolithic Israelite religion during the Old Testament period, but rather variations of "book religion" (the theology contained in the Old Testament) and "folk religion" (what the people were actually doing). As the chapter headings reveal, his intent is to walk the reader through the process of discovering these religions: (1) "Defining and Contextualizing Religion," (2) "The History of the History: In Search of Ancient Israel's Religions," (3) "Sources and Methods for the Study of Ancient Israel's Religions," (4) "The Hebrew Bible: Religious Reality or Theological Ideal?" (5) "Archaeological Evidence for Folk Religions in Ancient Israel," (6) "The Goddess Asherah and Her Cult," (7) "Asherah, Women's Cults, and 'Official Yahwism,'" (8) "From Polytheism to Monotheism," (9) "What Does the Goddess Do to Help?" and (10) "Afterword (and Foreword Again)." Leaving aside the question of the role of Asherah, Dever's premise is that the current biblical text was produced by a male, priestly elite, and therefore it "is not an adequate source *in itself* for reconstructing a reliable portrait of Israelite religions as they actually were" (32, italics in original). Dever then convincingly demonstrates that the findings of archaeology confirm the widespread nature and popularity of many practices that the authors of the Bible anathematize.

Readers who are familiar with the assumptions common to secular biblical scholarship will immediately recognize that Dever has accepted many of these assumptions as the starting points for his arguments. Latter-day Saints will find themselves agreeing and disagreeing, and rightly so, with some of his presuppositions. For example, we would reject the "intellectual reservations" of contemporary people, "critical scholars or not," to "the ancients' assumption of direct, divine revelation (now known as the doctrine of 'verbal inspiration') such as "the call of Abraham" or God "speaking in person to Moses" (91). This review, however, is neither the time nor the place to examine all of Dever's suppositions. Nevertheless, I would like to mention another of his suppositions wherein I think he might be mistaken. I believe there is sufficient evidence to cast doubt on his assumption that less than 5 percent of the ancient Israelites were literate (28).<sup>3</sup> In fact the assumption that most people in the ancient world



were illiterate is an example of modern cultural hubris. To his credit Dever himself seeks to avoid cultural hubris when talking about the religion of ancient Israel and castigates the “not-so-veiled implication of superiority” evident among many modern commentators vis-à-vis the ancients (127). Yet he fails to recognize that his assumption of widespread illiteracy is just that, an assumption.

Dever debunks several commonly held ideas that neither biblical text nor archaeology support. For example, as for “fertility cults,” he states that “there never was much actual evidence for the more titillating aspects of such cults” (34). In fact, a little later in the book he becomes even more emphatic, “There is neither etymological, cultural, nor historical evidence to support these notions” of “sacred marriage” and “cultic prostitution” (216). He also concludes that the reconstruction of “an annual ‘enthronement festival’ in which Yahweh was enthroned in his Temple, and the king as his divine representative was once again legitimated . . . is very speculative” (109).

In addition to the two questions Dever poses—“Did God have a wife” and “What was the nature of Israelite religion”—readers will find a third not-so-covert (and to some Latter-days Saints even more fascinating) theme running through his book. Dever manages to weave occasional asides that reveal snippets of his transition from his evangelical, born-again roots, through his academic training and concomitant jettisoning of his inherited faith, to his present stand as a convert to Judaism, albeit a rather “humanistic” Judaism. Latter-day Saints will resonate with, without being shaken by, many of Dever’s criticisms of traditional Christian and Jewish readings of the Bible. However, as Latter-day Saints, we cannot go to some of the places Dever has gone. “Theology” has not become for us, as it did for him, “a dead end.” Neither can we “become more a student of religion than a practitioner” (xi). Yet Dever’s journey from old faith to new belief delightfully adds spice to the entire book.

It is also ironic that in this volume Dever has in some ways come back to his roots, since he defends through archaeological evidence some aspects of biblical history. Early in his career (between his roots and his conversion to Judaism) he almost single-handedly obliterated the concept of “biblical archaeology” from academic discussions. Yet now at the latter end of his career, he has come almost full circle with statements such as, “If the Hebrew Bible is all a pious hoax, I do not see how it can be morally edifying” (59). He means, of course, that at this stage of his career he has been attempting to demonstrate that the Bible is not a pious hoax.

In summary, Latter-day Saints will find much to enjoy, much to agree with, much to reject, and much to contemplate in *Did God Have a Wife?*

However, a certain familiarity with the issues and presuppositions of biblical scholarship is assumed. The discourse of necessity includes discussions of technical terms, which Dever admirably attempts to define and make clear. The wealth of information Dever provides is reward enough for serious students of the Old Testament. It is a great read for those who are willing to winnow.

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1. "O My Father," in *Hymns of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), no. 292.

2. See, for example, Orson Scott Card, *Saintspeak: The Mormon Dictionary* (Salt Lake City: Orion Books, 1981), under several entries.

3. For example, when Jeremiah spoke to the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem in chapter twenty-five, he used an *atbash* in verse twenty-six. An *atbash* works only if the target audience is generally literate since it is constructed by writing the first half of the alphabet on one line and then lining up the second half of the alphabet in the reverse order on the second line. In verse twenty-six, "Sheshach" is an *atbash* for "Babylon." If Jeremiah's audience were generally illiterate, his use of an *atbash* would be gratuitous. Another piece of evidence that people were expected to be literate comes from Job and other books, including Genesis, where the presence of Janus parallelisms demonstrates that these passages were written to be read silently. As soon as the Janus parallelism is read aloud, let alone performed on a stage, the parallelism is destroyed.

*The Oatman Massacre: A Tale of Desert Captivity and Survival*, by Brian McGinty (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004)

Renderings of the massacre that took the lives of six members of the Roys Oatman family on February 18, 1851, near the confluence of the Gila and Colorado Rivers (in present-day Arizona) derive, at least in part, from Royal B. Stratton's *Captivity of the Oatman Girls*. Stratton's 1857 narrative accompanied Olive and Lorenzo Oatman—the two survivors—on their speaking tours, but as independent scholar and writer Brian McGinty aptly reveals, the book and even the Oatmans' circuit tours inaccurately and falsely represented the massacre and the events that followed. McGinty combines Stratton's account with new and underused source material, and circumstantial evidence, to construct a carefully wrought portrait of this fascinating western saga.

One could compile a laundry list of McGinty's innovative contributions to the historical record, from the route the immigrant parties followed to the number of attackers to the amount of time the Oatman girls spent in captivity (Lorenzo survived the massacre after being left for dead, but 13-year-old Olive and 8-year-old Mary Ann became captives, the latter dying probably in 1855). McGinty is more hesitant to blame the massacre on the Apaches than the Tolkapayas, since clubs were employed in the attack and because the Tolkapayas lived much closer to the vicinity than the Apaches. He locates the probable location of Olive and Mary Ann's captivity in Wilitaika (present-day McMullen Valley), and he suggests that while among the natives, Olive likely married or at least engaged in some level of sexual intimacy. McGinty also pays special attention to the postcaptivity years of Olive and Lorenzo.

Students of Mormon history will find special interest in McGinty's close attention to the religious context of the Oatmans' ill-fated odyssey—their ties to Mormonism and their loyalty to Colin Brewster, the "Boy Prophet" who attracted a small following of Mormon dissenters after the death of Joseph Smith, and his prophecies of a fertile "Land of Bashan." After all, as McGinty rightly points out, without this connection to Mormonism the massacre probably would never have happened.

—Jedediah S. Rogers

*Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts*, edited by Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, Robert J. Matthews (Religious Studies Center, BYU, 2004)

This volume is a massive, thorough, and thoroughly engrossing look into the mind of Joseph Smith and the evolution of his translation of the Bible.

Joseph Smith's "corrections" to the canonical text were not a matter of retranslating ancient manuscripts. Instead, they arose from Joseph's claims to a place in the prophetic line of authority. However readers appreciate the origin, nature, and value of the Joseph Smith Translation, this current study adds a new dimension to the understanding of both the revision and the reviser.

The bulk of this work constitutes a page-by-page reproduction of the work done by Joseph Smith and his scribes. We are also given glimpses into Joseph's own copy of the Bible, showing the notation system he used in preparation for the revision. It shows the work of an ordered and determined individual, one who took his task very seriously.

Several introductory chapters enhance the study and provide necessary, helpful information: "Joseph Smith's

New Translation of the Bible” provides a bird’s-eye view of the work. A brief history of the translation, along with a discussion of the types of changes made by the Prophet, helps in understanding the larger work. Also included is a brief note on how the translation has been used in the LDS Church. “The New Translation and Latter-day Saint Doctrine” discusses the impact of the work on the development of doctrine in the LDS Church. “The New Translation Materials Since 1844,” written by a scholar from the RLDS (Community of Christ) tradition, is a fascinating look at the ownership, publication, and use of the materials outside the LDS tradition, and the eventual permission given to the Utah church to utilize the work. The “Scribes” chapter identifies the men and women responsible for the transcription of the Joseph Smith translation. “Transcription Methods” discusses the awesome responsibility that confronted the editors of the present volume in transcribing the manuscripts. “The Sequence of the New Translation” presents, in table form, a chronological view of the translation. It reconstructs, as carefully as the record permits, the date, scripture reference, name of the scribe and where the translation was done. Scholars of the LDS scriptural tradition will find a gold mine of information and insight in this book.

—Jeffrey Needle

*The Book of Mormon: A Reader’s Edition*, ed. Grant Hardy (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003)

Grant Hardy, chair of the history department at the University of North Carolina at Asheville and specialist in Chinese history, has produced for the University of Illinois Press a useful edition of the Book of Mormon. Over the years various editions of the

Book of Mormon have been produced outside The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, most recently the 2004 Doubleday edition, which was advertised as the first trade edition. Depending upon how one defines “trade edition,” it would appear that the University of Illinois anticipated Doubleday by a year, to say nothing of a number of other editions produced in the last decade (see an appendix in the Illinois edition). The original text of the Book of Mormon has been in the public domain for over a century and, given its importance, it is not surprising that various types of editions should be published. What is perhaps surprising, given the University of Illinois Press’s long tradition of publishing scholarship on various aspects of Mormonism, an Illinois edition has not come out before now.

Hardy used the text of the 1920 edition of the Book of Mormon that is found in the public domain (the Doubleday edition uses, with permission, the 1981 text of the official Church edition). Hardy has typeset the text beautifully, dividing the chapters into paragraphs and setting poetic passages as poetry. He added quotation marks and two levels of headings in larger type, which guide the reader and ease the finding of particular sections, but otherwise the text has not been changed. Typography does make a difference to the reading experience, and this edition is well set, as befits a “reader’s edition.” Hardy’s typesetting also appropriately places this edition squarely in the tradition of modern Bible typography.

In addition to the text of the Book of Mormon, Hardy includes an introduction and appendices containing the testimonies of various witnesses to the Book of Mormon, a chronology of its translation, a discussion of the poetic

forms found in the text (including chiasmus and other forms of parallelism), a listing of the significant variations of the different manuscripts and editions, genealogical tables, chronologies, maps, a glossary of names, and an up-to-date bibliography.

Hardy says, “This edition is intended to help non-Mormons understand what it is that Mormons see in this sometimes obscure text” (vii–viii). The book will also be useful to Church members seeking greater understanding of one of the foundational documents of their religion, or simply seeking to enjoy the scripture in a more readable setting.

—Robert L. Maxwell