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## From the Editor



**I**n a revelation that has served as an educational handbook for the Church, Joseph Smith aimed for all learners to “be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient,” so that as they face the “perplexities of the nations,” they might “be prepared in all things” (D&C 88:78–80). In finalizing this issue of *BYU Studies Quarterly*, I am gratified to see how its helpful array of contents meets these aspirations of the Prophet.

In helping to keep readers up to date on important historical discoveries pertaining to the kingdom of God, this issue continues a long-standing role of *BYU Studies*. Here not only is a review by James Allen of three volumes in the Joseph Smith Papers series, but also an excerpt from the soon-to-be-released minutes of the influential Council of Fifty in Nauvoo. We are privileged to have lead-editor Ronald Esplin explain the significance of the Council of Fifty and of its minute book. The excerpt is from a Council of Fifty meeting held on April 11, 1844. On that day, ten weeks before he was killed, Joseph Smith began by offering very helpful advice: admonishing all to guard themselves against every spirit of bigotry and intolerance toward the religious sentiments of others, and calling upon government leaders to administer justice without any deprivations on account of a person’s religious opinions.

Next, examining numerous accounts of people who had heard, either first- or secondhand, Joseph Smith’s ideas about his Egyptian papyri, Kerry Muhlestein considers three models for dealing with Joseph’s impressive and yet puzzling explanations. In processing new



and conflicting evidence, Muhlestein helps people steer a middle path between two ends of a spectrum: on the one hand, the idea that Joseph Smith was not inspired at all; and on the other hand, the idea that he was completely inspired in everything. Muhlestein's middle path helps in carefully explaining much about the book of Abraham as well as about other topics of current interest to Latter-day Saints.

Larry Howell's "Anatomy of Invention" helps readers appreciate three important principles of invention: inspiration, collaboration, and exploitation. In this Distinguished Faculty Lecture, Howell tells how his academic career has flourished by unexpectedly noticing new ways to apply old knowledge, by working together with colleagues from various disciplines, and by finding ways to make the most of opportunities to solve problems and improve people's lives.

In the next article, David Paulsen, Roger Cook, and Brock Mason ask the question, Why did baptism for the dead fall out of use around the fifth century? As these three coauthors argue, the theological cause was the loss of three crucial doctrines: the necessity of baptism for the exaltation of all individuals; the efficacy of performing ordinances on behalf of others; and the belief that the gospel continues to be preached to the spirits of those who have died. Without these three theological legs, support for vicarious baptisms for the dead collapsed.

Then, John Hilton documents with personal interviews and contemporary correspondence the events that led up to breakthrough opportunity for the BYU Young Ambassadors to perform in mainland China in 1979, only six months after diplomatic relations were established between the United States and communist China. Personal sacrifices, faith-filled leadership, and loving performances made this trip unforgettable, opening doors for twenty-seven other tours to China by BYU performing groups.

Not to be missed is the moving speech by George Handley. It helps readers appreciate better how the trio of critical thinking, compassion, and charity can come together to produce both intellectual and spiritual growth. And the essay by Bentley Snow helps readers understand the good in other religions and in their faithful believers.

We all need help, and with the guidance of the Lord, ideas in this issue can help all readers to rejoice in goodness and righteousness. As Joseph prayed: "Help thy servants to say, with thy grace assisting them: Thy will be done, O Lord, and not ours" (D&C 109:43-44).

# Record of the Council of Fifty or Kingdom of God— 1844—

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1  
 This Council was organized  
 on the strength of the contents of  
 two letters from the brethren in  
 the Pine Country which President  
 Joseph Smith received by the hands  
 of George Miller and Alexander Badlam  
 on Sunday the 10<sup>th</sup> day of March  
 A.D. 1844. The letters read as  
 follows - "Black River Falls.

February 15<sup>th</sup> 1844

To the First Presidency and the quorum of  
 the Twelve of the Church of Jesus Christ of  
 Latter Day Saints. Dear Brethren, Through  
 the goodness and mercy of God the Eternal  
 Father, and grace of our Lord and Saviour  
 Jesus Christ, we are permitted to write  
 and send by a special messenger, a concise

First pages of William Clayton's first record book of the Council of Fifty, "Record of the Council of Fifty or Kingdom of God—1844." The record begins, "This Council was organized on the strength of the contents of two letters from the brethren in the Pine Country which President Joseph Smith received by the hand of George Miller and Alexander Badlam on Sunday the 10<sup>th</sup> day of March A.D. 1844." An index was later added to the title page. The books are preserved in the Church History Library. Photograph by Welden C. Andersen. Courtesy Church History Library. © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

# Understanding the Council of Fifty and Its Minutes

Ronald K. Esplin

Students of early Mormon history have long known about the once-secretive Council of Fifty in Nauvoo and learned much about it.<sup>1</sup> However, the records of the council were never available for research until now. The closest I came to the records of the Council of Fifty before the First Presidency made them available for the Joseph Smith Papers was in about 1977. Elder Joseph Anderson of the Seventy, then serving as executive director of the Historical Department, had served for decades as secretary to the First Presidency. When premeeting conversation around a conference table one day turned to the Council of Fifty, Elder Anderson asked what it was. That historians knew much about a council he knew

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1. For some of the earliest scholarly work, see James R. Clark, “The Kingdom of God, the Council of Fifty, and the State of Deseret,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (1958): 132–48; and Alfred Bush and K[laus] J. Hansen, “Notes Towards a Definition of the Council of Fifty, 1957” (Special Collections, University of Utah Marriott Library). Hansen went on to do the most extensive work, including his *Quest for Empire: The Political Kingdom of God and the Council of Fifty in Mormon History* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1967), a book that helped imprint its subject on the Mormon historical landscape. Based on additional records, in the early 1980s seminal pieces in *BYU Studies* by Michael Quinn and Andrew Ehat detailed membership and shed new light on the rules and functioning of the council; see D. Michael Quinn, “The Council of Fifty and Its Members, 1844 to 1945,” *BYU Studies* 20, no. 2 (1980): 163–97; and Andrew F. Ehat, “‘It Seems Like Heaven Began on Earth’: Joseph Smith and the Constitution of the Kingdom of God,” *BYU Studies* 20, no. 3 (1980): 253–79. The most recent book-length treatment is Jedediah S. Rogers, ed., *The Council of Fifty: A Documentary History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2014).

nothing of surprised him and elicited his reminiscence about President Heber J. Grant introducing him to the contents of the First Presidency's file room when he first began working for the President in 1922. After President Grant pointed out the location of various records he would be using or caring for, he pointed to a box labeled "Council of Fifty" and announced, "You won't be needing those." Elder Anderson noted that he had passed by the box many times over the years but never knew what was in it. Now we know—and the publication of the Nauvoo minutes stored in that box as part of the Joseph Smith Papers makes the records accessible for all. In September 2016, the Church Historian's Press will release *The Joseph Smith Papers, Administrative Records: Council of Fifty, Minutes, March 1844–January 1846*.<sup>2</sup> An excerpt of that volume, "Afternoon Meeting of the Council of Fifty, April 11, 1844," follows this article.

### The History of the Record

William Clayton, appointed clerk of the Council of Fifty when it was organized in March 1844, inscribed the original minutes on loose sheets of paper. In the summer of 1844, soon after the murder of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, Clayton began copying the minutes into a small bound book with pages six inches tall and just under four inches wide. When Brigham Young reorganized the council in February 1845, Clayton as clerk continued keeping minutes on loose pages that he later copied into that same small book, and then into another, and finally a third. Each small book bears the title "Record of the Council of Fifty or Kingdom of God." By the time the exodus from Nauvoo began in February 1846, Clayton had inscribed into the three small books 780 pages of minutes documenting meetings of the council under Joseph Smith in 1844 and Brigham Young in 1845 and early January 1846. As the time for leaving Nauvoo neared, Clayton apparently rushed to finish his record. He included minutes for the two council meetings held the second week of January 1846, but he never copied into his permanent record the minutes for January 18 and 19, the last two Nauvoo meetings. Because Clayton created these Nauvoo minutes as a continuous record,<sup>3</sup> the Joseph Smith Papers volume includes all of them.

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2. The volume is edited by Matthew J. Grow, Ronald K. Esplin, Mark Ashurst-McGee, Gerrit J. Dirkmaat, and Jeffrey D. Mahas. General editors are Ronald K. Esplin, Matthew J. Grow, and Matthew C. Godfrey.

3. In addition to each volume having a nearly identical title page, each has an abbreviated title on the spine with the 1–3 volume designation added. Volumes 1 and 2 end with a note referring the reader to the next volume.



The Nauvoo Council of Fifty record. William Clayton, the first clerk of the Council of Fifty, kept the minutes of the Nauvoo-era council meetings and copied them into these three small blank books. The books are housed in the Church History Library. Photograph by Welden C. Andersen. Courtesy Church History Library. © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

It appears that Clayton kept the three small books in his possession until he gave them to Brigham Young in Winter Quarters in April 1847.<sup>4</sup> In 1857, President Young transferred them to George A. Smith and Wilford Woodruff to extract information “for the history.”<sup>5</sup> After they returned the minutes to Young in 1862,<sup>6</sup> he apparently kept them in his possession until George Q. Cannon became custodian of the records sometime after his appointment as council recorder in 1867.<sup>7</sup> Cannon still had control of the books when John Taylor sought them in March 1880 so that he and associates could read the Nauvoo minutes before reconvening the council.<sup>8</sup> After the reorganized council held its final meetings in the mid-1880s, the records appear to have remained in the custody of the First Presidency, where Joseph Anderson encountered them in 1922 with President Grant, who became a member of the council in the 1880s and was one of the last remaining members.

Although these records were not among the Joseph Smith documents the Office of the First Presidency inventoried and made available to the Joseph Smith Papers project early on, I anticipated that as work on the Joseph Smith Papers progressed to the point where

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4. William Clayton, Journal, April 14, 1847, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.

5. Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal: 1833–1898 Typescript*, ed. Scott G. Kenney, 9 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983), 5:125, 139 (November 26 and December 18, 1857). Wilford Woodruff and George A. Smith were preparing a history of Brigham Young that was published serially in the *Deseret News* beginning in 1858.

6. Woodruff, *Journal*, 6:28 (February 26, 1862).

7. Council of Fifty, Minutes, January 23, 1867, Papers, 1845–1883, Church History Library.

8. Franklin D. Richards, Journal, March 3, 1880, Richards Family Collection, Church History Library.

the minutes were relevant and needed, they would be made available. That proved to be the case. The records were transferred to the Church History Department in late 2010, and scholarly work on them began in 2012. An article about the Joseph Smith Papers in the September 7, 2012, *Church News* made public First Presidency approval for Church History Department staff “to use the Council of Fifty minutes as reference and footnote material in upcoming Joseph Papers books and to eventually publish the minutes in full as a separate volume.” The third and final volume of the Journals Series of the Joseph Smith Papers, published in 2015, made use of the previously unavailable records in annotating entries from the organization of the council in March through May 1844.<sup>9</sup> From fall 2016 forward, the full record will be accessible in the print edition of the Joseph Smith Papers.

### The History of the Council of Fifty

The evening of November 12, 1835, Joseph Smith met with members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Six months earlier, Smith had organized the quorum and instructed them in their duties in preparation for a quorum mission. Having returned in late September, they gathered now to be instructed in matters pertaining to the House of the Lord. But first Smith shared with them a concern that had weighed on his mind when he had gone to Missouri in 1834 with the Camp of Israel, the military expedition later known as Zion’s Camp. What if he had died? “I supposed I had established this church on a permanent foundation,” he told them, “and indeed I did so, for if I had been taken away it would have been enough.” Bishops functioned in both Missouri and Ohio, and in 1834, the year of the expedition, he established local presidencies and high councils in both Church communities to supplement the presidency of the high priesthood, soon to be known as the First Presidency. The winter after Joseph Smith returned to Ohio, he organized the Twelve and the Seventy. Much, then, of the organization required for a growing community was in place by fall 1835, but he foresaw more. “I yet live, and therefore God requires more at my hands,” he stated to the Apostles that November.<sup>10</sup>

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9. For example, Andrew H. Hedges, Alex D. Smith, and Brent M. Rogers, eds., *Journals, Volume 3: May 1843–June 1844*, vol. 3 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2015), 200 n. 882; 201 n. 884; 202 nn. 885, 891; 206 n. 901; 227 n. 1021.

10. Dean C. Jessee, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, *Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839*, vol. 1 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*,



Much of what remained had to do with the temple,<sup>11</sup> the subject of this gathering with the Twelve, but in Nauvoo Joseph Smith also created additional institutions. Some but not all were temple-related. In March 1842, he oversaw bringing the women into a Church organization “after the pattern, or order, of the priesthood.”<sup>12</sup> In September 1843, he established a “quorum” of men and women who had received temple ordinances and who would oversee work in the Nauvoo Temple upon its completion.<sup>13</sup> And in March 1844, less than six months later, he organized what was his final institution—the Council of Fifty. Although the council functioned for less than three months before his death, it nonetheless played a significant role during those months (and in the year and a half that followed) and left a lasting imprint on its members.

Unlike prior entities organized by Joseph Smith, the Kingdom of God, soon called the Council of Fifty in reference to its approximate number of members, was not an ecclesiastical or church institution but one concerned with civil and political affairs. Though emerging from an understanding of prophecy and revelation, the council was distinct from the Church even as it sought to create conditions that would protect the rights of the Church and its members. Joseph Smith and his associates saw the council as a form of government under priesthood leaders informed by revelation—a “theo-democracy,” they sometimes called it, referring to its distinctly Mormon blend of government by the revealed will of God *and* the common consent of the governed. The institution also had millennial overtones, a harbinger of things to come. For Joseph Smith and his associates, the council was the nascent “kingdom of God” on earth to one day govern men in the civil sphere. Council members spoke of the council as the beginnings of the kingdom

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edited by Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2008), 96–97.

11. See Ronald K. Esplin, “The Significance of Nauvoo for Latter-day Saints,” *Journal of Mormon History* 16 (1990): 71–86; and Larry C. Porter and Milton V. Backman Jr., “Doctrine and the Temple in Nauvoo,” *BYU Studies* 32, nos. 1–2 (1992): 41–56.

12. “First Organization,” ca. July 1880, Relief Society Records, quoted in *The First Fifty Years of Relief Society: Key Documents in Latter-day Saint Women's History*, ed. Jill Mulvay Derr, Carol Cornwall Madsen, Kate Holbrook, and Matthew J. Grow (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2016), 6–7.

13. Hedges, Smith, and Rogers, *Journals*, Volume 3, 104–5 (September 28, 1843); see also “Glossary,” on Church Historian's Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, s.v. “Quorum,” <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/topic/quorum>.

## And the April 7, 1842, Revelation?

Since the 1950s, studies of the Council of Fifty have referenced a typescript housed in the L. Tom Perry Special Collections in the Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, as evidence that the full name of the council was revealed to Joseph Smith in April 1842, nearly two years before the council was organized. Although it is plausible that such a spring 1842 “event” precipitated discussion of a political “Government of God” before the July 15, 1842, publication of an essay by that title in the *Times and Seasons*, there is no corroborating evidence.

The typescript preserves cryptic notes of the April 10 and 21, 1880, meetings of the Council of Fifty when John Taylor reconvened the council for the first time since Brigham Young’s death. Andrew F. Ehat, one of the scholars who cited the transcript, learned from the late Chad J. Flake, then a curator in Special Collections, that Flake had created the typescript from a record donated to the university by the family of L. John Nuttall, a document later transferred to the Church Historian’s Office. Ehat was subsequently permitted to see the original in Salt Lake City. Jeffrey D. Mahas, a historian with the Joseph Smith Papers, confirmed that the original penciled notes are in the hand of L. John Nuttall, secretary to John Taylor.

Nuttall’s brief notes are on one of two loose sheets (the second is a list of members). Because no other minutes for this April 10, 1880, meeting exist, Nuttall’s brief and problematic notes stand alone. Nuttall wrote:

The name given this Council on the day it was organized by the Lord. April 7th 1842. was read from the Revelations as follows: “The Kingdom of God and His Laws with the Keys and powers thereof and Judgment in the hands of his servants.”

Some of the first members spoke upon the objectives of the Council &c. & repeated many things that had been said by the Prophets [names of seven who spoke follow].

Mahas located diaries of many who attended the April 10, 1880, meeting, some of whom had read the 1844 minutes in March. Those who alluded to the history of the council appear to have understood—and one explicitly mentioned—that Joseph Smith



Daniel saw in vision<sup>14</sup> and a pattern of how Christ might rule when he returned to reign as Lawgiver and King.

However, in 1844 and 1845, what engaged them more were immediate practical challenges. The minutes—and the meetings they document—concerned themselves mainly with these proximate matters. Meetings of the council became Joseph Smith’s forum of choice for managing his political campaign and several other ongoing initiatives—especially the one William Clayton highlighted in his record the day the council was organized:

All seemed agreed to look to some place where we can go and establish a Theocracy either in Texas or Oregon or somewhere in California &c. The brethren spoke very warmly on the subject, and also on the subject of forming a constitution which shall be according to the mind of God and erect it between the heavens and the earth where all nations might flow unto it. This was considered as a “standard” to the people an ensign to the nations.<sup>15</sup>

This was to be a religious and political undertaking to seek a place beyond the borders of the United States where Latter-day Saints could

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14. Daniel 2:34–35; see also D&C 65:2 and David J. Whittaker, “The Book of Daniel in Early Mormon Thought,” in *By Study and Also by Faith*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 155–201, available online at <http://publications.mi.byu.edu/fullscreen/?pub=1128&index=13>.

15. Minutes, March 11, 1844, Council of Fifty. This intent to form a new government outside the boundaries of the United States and to design that government as a theocracy help explain the requirement of secrecy about activities of the council and its records.

organized the council on March 11, 1844. No diary mentions an 1842 revelation or any early record other than the 1844 minutes themselves—which unambiguously document the revelation of the name of the council on March 14, 1844, three days after the council’s formal organization.

The enigmatic reference to 1842 with no known authority or corroboration in cryptic notes nearly forty years after the fact should not be taken as evidence for an otherwise unknown 1842 revelation.

—Ronald K. Esplin

form a new government that would protect them in the exercise of their religion—and similarly protect the rights of any who cared to settle under their banner. A number of council initiatives were designed to help realize this larger objective.

### **What We Learn from the Council Minutes**

Because record keeping in the 1840s was much better than what came before, indeed among the best in all early Mormon history, many aspects of the council's "program" have long been known. Other documents—letters, petitions, diaries, even other minutes—contain information about matters discussed in the council. Also, some participants later spoke about their involvement with the council, and, as noted, in the 1850s historians extracted information from council minutes for the history. After more than half a century of probing these other records in an effort to understand the Council of Fifty, historians came to understand the broad outlines of council decisions and initiatives—even if it was not always clear in what forum a discussion occurred or on what grounds a decision was made. Still, the minutes provide much information not heretofore known and provide a clearer and more detailed picture. Not surprisingly, this new information will compel reexamining and adjusting some earlier explanations.<sup>16</sup>

The records provide significant new information and perspectives on a number of matters that deeply concerned Joseph Smith during the last months of his life and became central to Brigham Young and the Quorum of the Twelve after his death. For example, other records preserve something of both the idea and the term "theo-democracy," but we now have discussions about it. We have long known that the Council of Fifty had an interest in Texas, but now we have a more complete view of the matter. What the records provide us, then, is not a hidden history but a fleshing out of some aspects of that history. Where we understood certain decisions and could see the unfolding of certain policies, we can now have a seat at the table when decisions were made—and better understand the reasons for them. The minutes also provide a clearer view of the larger goals from which individual initiatives and decisions emerged.

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16. As a graduate student in 1971, I wrote what I then considered a useful paper; it may still be useful as a collection of Brigham Young's later thoughts on the subject but needs updating in light of the minutes. Ronald K. Esplin, "The 'Council of Fifty' in History and Theology: An Inquiry into the Role of the Government of God in the Last Days," unpublished paper, 1971, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

An overview of the meetings and the minutes is instructive. Occasionally council meetings were relatively short, but most lasted several hours, and on days when the council met twice, its participants “spent the day in council,” as some noted in their diaries. Clayton’s record has entries on seventeen different days between March 10 and May 31, 1844. The council held two sessions on eight of those days, for a total of twenty-five meetings recorded by Clayton before Joseph Smith’s death. For the council under Brigham Young, Clayton’s record documents meetings on twenty separate days, on seven of which the council met twice, for a total of twenty-seven meetings. Although the number of meetings is more or less comparable, more of the one hundred thousand words in the total record are devoted to the post-1844 minutes than to the Joseph Smith era. Whether Clayton adjusted his minute-taking style on his own or was instructed to keep a more detailed record is not known, but in 1845 Clayton captured considerably more discussion and debate than earlier.

Entries for the first four meetings in March 1844 are among the least detailed. The original and no doubt more complete minutes of these meetings seem to have been burned, leaving Clayton to recreate his shorter entries for those days from memory, his own diary, and other documents. The minutes for March 26, 1844, two weeks after the organization of the council, illustrate another limitation. Clayton kept several pages of minutes for each of the two (morning and afternoon) sessions, but in both cases the record is essentially transactional in nature, omitting the details of significant events during the hours of meeting that were not related to the immediate business at hand. At a pause in the morning session, the minutes note, “Pres. J. Smith continued his instructions on heavenly things and many other important subjects.” Nothing of what he said is recorded.

This matters. In general, we want to know what he said of “heavenly things” and not only what other “important subjects” he addressed but what he said about them. Could these “instructions” on “important subjects” have included what came to be called Joseph Smith’s Last Charge to the Quorum of the Twelve? A study of accounts of that event suggests not only that it occurred in a Council of Fifty meeting but also that it was this day, March 26, likely in the morning—but the record is silent. There is reason to believe that Sidney Rigdon did not witness the “last charge,” and there is no evidence that Rigdon attended the morning session, compared to certain evidence that he attended in the afternoon. Not only was he involved in the afternoon’s “transactional” business, but near the end of the meeting, “as there was no [more] business before the house,” Elder Rigdon “addressed the council on the subject of the

Kingdom of God.” The minutes note his “most spirited and animated manner,” but provide almost nothing of the substance of his remarks, which, characteristically for Rigdon, may have been lengthy.

Some later minutes in 1844 are more complete, and, as noted, minutes for 1845 are more extensive still. Had Clayton been writing with the same detail in March 1844 as he did in March 1845, presumably we would *know* if the Last Charge was among Joseph Smith’s “important instructions” the morning of March 26, 1844, which seems likely and which later minutes tend to confirm. One year later, March 25, 1845, the Last Charge and the longest written summary of the event make an appearance in the minutes when Orson Hyde presented his draft account of the event for approval prior to publication. Young by implication confirmed that the event occurred in the council in 1844, and he did not dispute the general accuracy of Hyde’s account,<sup>17</sup> but he tabled the matter, ending discussion. Hyde intended that his account of the event be part of his pamphlet against Rigdon, but Young instructed him to finish his writing about Rigdon without trying to make a case for the Twelve—and then let “Rigdon and Rigdonism” alone.

Several of the April and May 1844 minutes are more detailed—and therefore more complete—than the March example. For instance, minutes of the afternoon session on April 11, 1844, reproduced in this issue, capture important statements by Joseph Smith on freedom and religious liberty. In contrast, the morning minutes that same day say little about what some may see as the most sensational event associated with the council: “receiving” Joseph Smith as king. That this event occurred, even that it happened on April 11, has been known, but without detail and context. The actual minutes treat this matter-of-factly and with less information than is in William Clayton’s diary, mined by Andrew Ehat for his *BYU Studies* article more than thirty years ago.<sup>18</sup>

Judging only from Joseph Smith’s diary or even from the minutes themselves, the council, organized within hours of a meeting to consider a

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17. The limitations of Hyde’s account and Young’s lack of enthusiasm for it will be discussed in my article on this topic in a forthcoming issue of *BYU Studies Quarterly*. See also Alexander L. Baugh and Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, “‘I Roll the Burthen and Responsibility of Leading This Church Off from My Shoulders on to Yours’: The 1844/1845 Declaration of the Quorum of Twelve Regarding Apostolic Succession,” *BYU Studies* 49, no. 3 (2010): 4–19.

18. Ehat, “‘It Seems Like Heaven Began on Earth,’” 268; and James B. Allen, “No Toil nor Labor Fear”: *The Story of William Clayton* (Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 2002), 121.

proposal from the Wisconsin Pineries<sup>19</sup> to locate a settlement in the South, seems to spring from idea to embodiment overnight. In reality, it emerged from fertile soil and fit comfortably both within a long-developing discourse and the concerns and activities of Joseph Smith in Nauvoo in spring 1844. Its roots reached back to the 1830s, and its immediate context explains much of its initial business. For example, the council became the embodiment of Joseph Smith's ideas about councils and governance that emerged when he instructed the first high councils in 1834 and when organizing the first Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1835. Early revelations suggest a future in which a literal Kingdom of God would exist on earth, and in June 1842 Smith published as editor of the *Times and Seasons* a lengthy editorial entitled "The Government of God." The unsigned editorial spoke of the government of ancient Israel as a theocracy, with "God to make their laws, and men chosen by him to administer them." So it will be again, it proclaimed, when "the Lord shall be king over the whole earth."<sup>20</sup> The council was understood to be the seed of that future government.

One fruitful way to look at the Council of Fifty in Nauvoo in 1844 is to see it as a new venue for advancing long-standing causes. Interest in the American Indians is a case in point. Efforts to acquaint the Indians with the Book of Mormon and forge friendships with them dated back to Oliver Cowdery's "Lamanite Mission" of 1830–1831 and continued with efforts associated with the 1835 mission of the Twelve. In the winter of 1839–1840, Joseph Smith sent Jonathan Dunham west to the Indians near Council Bluffs and then recalled him to visit Indians in New York. At least by 1839, these were not only—and perhaps not mainly—proselytizing missions but focused on uniting the tribes and making allies of them. Jonathan Dunham, a key player in the endeavor, understood from Smith's 1839 instructions that "a new scene of things are about to transpire in the west, in fulfilment of prophecy" and that there was "a place of safety preparing for [the Saints] away towards the Rocky mountains."<sup>21</sup> Dunham was later sent back more than once to the Indians in western Iowa near the Missouri River, hundreds of miles west of Nauvoo—including as a member of the Council of Fifty, where instructing and

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19. Hedges, Smith, and Rogers, *Journals*, Volume 3, 200–203.

20. "The Government of God," *Times and Seasons* 3 (July 15, 1842): 856–57.

21. Thomas Burdick to Joseph Smith, August 28, 1840, in Joseph Smith Letterbook 2, pp. 174–76, Church History Library, and online at <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/letter-from-thomas-burdick-28-august-1840&p=1>.

uniting the Indians was a frequent topic. In 1845, Dunham died while on assignment from the Council of Fifty to attend a great council of Indian tribes near Iowa's western border.

Interest in the American West as a place of refuge was another central concern of the Council of Fifty that predated its organization. The Indian initiatives and the desire to find a new home, a place of safety in the West, were related, of course. In February 1844, three weeks before the Council of Fifty was organized, the endeavor took on a new urgency when Joseph Smith "instructed the 12 to send out a delegation—& investigate the Locations of Californnia & ~~mex~~ oregon & find a good Location where we can remove after the Temple is completed.—& build a city in a day—and have a gover[n]ment of our own."<sup>22</sup> In Wilford Woodruff's words, this was to be "an exploring expedition to California & pitch upon a spot to build a city." His diary noted that among those selected were Jonathan Dunham and others who would soon advance the same cause as members of the Council of Fifty.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, this entire late February initiative was subsumed into the council once it was organized.

Joseph Smith's 1844 campaign for the presidency of the United States is another example of the council as a continuation of ongoing initiatives. His political campaign had been simmering since fall 1843 and was in full boil before the organization of the Council of Fifty. But after its organization, the council provided the setting for much campaign business, including the selection of Sidney Rigdon as running mate. The minutes provide an additional perspective on the campaign and on Joseph Smith's views on government and the U.S. Constitution more generally.

From the perspective of the council, one can see how the 1844 election campaign fit with other initiatives as part of a broader strategy. A main plank of Smith's political platform for the campaign was the protection by government of the religious and civil rights of all, not just Latter-day Saints. As the tragic experience of Latter-day Saints in Missouri demonstrated, rights expressed in the Declaration of Independence and supposedly guaranteed by the Constitution could be violated by the states with impunity, leaving citizens with no effective recourse. Candidate Smith publically vowed to change this. The matter was also a recurring topic in the council, where he declared, "In relation to the constitution of the United States, there is but one difficulty, and that is the constitution provides the things which we want but lacks the power to carry the laws into effect. We want to alter it so as to make it

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22. Hedges, Smith, and Rogers, *Journals*, Volume 3, 180 (February 20, 1844).

23. Woodruff, *Journal*, 2:351 (February 21, 1844).

imperative on the officers to enforce the protection of all men in their rights.”<sup>24</sup> In his public interface with political leaders, Smith petitioned for redress for past grievances and sought for assurances from presidential candidates that minority rights would in the future be protected. Only when none of these efforts gained traction did he decide to run himself—with a promise to protect the rights of all.

The council discussed a more radical plan if all else failed: seek a place outside the boundaries of the United States where the Saints could have a government of their own that would protect all rights for the Saints. Having experienced the painful results of the lack of protection for civil rights and religious freedom, and increasingly discouraged about the prospects improving, they were ready to embrace such a solution.

The council was a deliberative body (later minutes record extensive discussion and the impatience of some with talk and more talk), with business conducted according to rules of parliamentary procedure. Temporary committees formed for specific tasks dissolved when their work was done. Other than the recorder (Willard Richards) and clerk (William Clayton), the council had only one permanent office—the standing chairman. Only the standing chairs, Smith and then Young, stood apart from the main internal organizing principle: seating and voting—and on occasion speaking—by age, oldest first. Discussion was to be full and free, and each member was under obligation to speak his mind, the more so if he disagreed with a proposed course of action.<sup>25</sup> After discussion, however, action required unanimity. If full discussion produced no consensus, the matter was to be tabled, though in practice members sometimes punted and deferred to the chairman when a course of action was not agreed on.

Although members of the council envisioned a future day when the council would become a powerful government of God under Christ, the immediate usefulness of the council was as a forum for advancing a “temporal” or political program of protecting the Church and advancing its interests. It was a suitable forum not only because many of the Church’s leaders were members and played central roles but because it was also composed of a broader group of talented men, some of whom were not otherwise prominent—and several men who were

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24. Council of Fifty, Minutes, April 18, 1844.

25. At the organizing meeting, March 11, 1844, Joseph Smith said that he did not wish to be surrounded by “dough heads,” and if they did not “exercise themselves in discussing these important matters he should consider them nothing better than ‘dough heads.’” Council of Fifty, Minutes, March 11, 1844.



not Latter-day Saints. After a man was invited to become a member of the council, generally by the standing chairman, admittance required a vote of existing members and a promise by oath to keep the doings of the council secret. All members were required to attend or be formally excused. Alternates could be admitted to temporary membership (as with regular members, by vote and under oath) in the place of those on assignment or otherwise absent for an extended period.

Church leaders, especially the President of the Church and members of the Quorum of the Twelve, took the lead in founding the council and throughout its existence. One could see it as a council dominated by Church leaders—but one that at the same time had nothing to do with Church matters such as proselytizing, ordinances, temple, or ecclesiastical governance. On April 18, 1844, the council discussed how council and Church related. In lengthy discussion, members expressed many views. Joseph Smith then summarized:

There is a distinction between the Church of God and the kingdom of God. The laws of the kingdom are not designed to effect our salvation hereafter. It is an entire, distinct and separate government. The church is a spiritual matter and a spiritual kingdom; but the kingdom which Daniel saw was not a spiritual kingdom, but was designed to be got up for the safety and salvation of the saints by protecting them in their religious rights and worship. . . . The literal kingdom of God and the church of God are two distinct things. The gifts of prophets, evangelists, etc. never were designed to govern men in civil matters. The kingdom of God has nothing to do with giving commandments. . . . It only has power to make a man amenable to his fellow man.<sup>26</sup>

Although some have seen this council as a separate or even superior center of “Church” or “priesthood” authority, there is no hint of that in the record. The organization was involved only in the temporal or political or practical program of protecting the Church and providing space for it to flourish; it focused on the “temporal” or political or external program of interfacing between the Church (and its leaders) and the larger world. There is in the record no discussion of or exercise of priesthood keys, no ordinations, no ordinances, and no explanation of temple teachings or other Church doctrine.

The program of the council might be described in terms of its short-term practical projects, its overarching long-term goal, and its millennial aspirations. The practical program of the council during Smith’s lifetime was straightforward. Those initiatives, some of which began

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26. Council of Fifty, Minutes, April 18, 1844.



before the council was organized and were brought into the council, included managing Joseph Smith's presidential campaign, uniting the western Indians, and petitioning Washington for authority to protect emigrants to the West. Even as they faced immediate exigencies, the council and its members remained committed to the longer-range project of establishing a new home for the Saints outside the boundaries of the United States where they might have a government of their own that would protect their rights and those of any who chose to join them. As Heber C. Kimball said to the council in March 1845, "I feel as though there was something deficient all the time when I reflect that we have not yet sent out men to find a location where we can erect the standard of liberty. When we get that done the nations will flock to it and many of us will live to see it."<sup>27</sup>

The organization of the council and some of the discussion within it also hint of its millennial aspirations: that it was seen as a pattern or model of how government might function under the King of Kings when Christ would return to reign. That vision was one reason for having non-Latter-day Saints in the council. Members of the council saw themselves as modeling a form of government suitable for a theocracy—or theodemocracy—under Christ. During his millennial reign, Christ would rule over all the earth, and those not members of his church would also have representation. (See the April 11, 1844, minutes, in this issue, for more on non-Mormons in the council.) Another form of millennialism sometimes surfaced in council discussions. At such times, the practical and the millennial tended to merge: If God so willed, perhaps Christ's reign could begin now—or at least soon—instead of in some far distant time. God will eventually intervene . . . why not now?

Some documents mentioning these long-unavailable records have hinted about "hundreds of pages" of minutes, implying that they might contain "lost sermons" and perhaps new teachings from Joseph Smith. As we have seen, while there are hundreds of pages in these volumes created by William Clayton, they are very small pages—and the largest portion preserves discussion in meetings of the Council of Fifty in 1845, after Joseph's death. Although the hundreds of pages of the Nauvoo record of the Council of Fifty constitute a substantial volume in the Joseph Smith Papers, the volume does not present hundreds of pages of heretofore unknown information about Joseph Smith and his teachings. However, what the record does contain is significant. The records of the

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27. Council of Fifty, Minutes, March 1, 1845.

Kingdom of God or Council of Fifty are valuable not because they open up a world we knew nothing of, but because:

- They preserve additional teachings and statements of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young on government and related topics,
- They allow us to go behind policies to the discussions that preceded them,
- They provide context for actions and decisions that we did not fully understand,
- They provide reactions to and commentary on events as they unfolded,
- They convey the intensity of feelings about the injustices the council members and their co-religionists had suffered.

Those who read the minutes will find them profitable and instructive as they learn things they did not know before. And the availability of these minutes allows the Joseph Smith Papers Project to deliver on our long-term commitment to provide, either in print or on the web, *all* of the extant papers of Joseph Smith.

### The Document

The documentary transcript and annotations on the following pages are excerpted from *The Joseph Smith Papers, Administrative Records: Council of Fifty, Minutes, March 1844–January 1846*. These sample pages offer a complete transcription of the afternoon session of the April 11, 1844, meeting. This sample includes not only an extended statement but perhaps the most powerful statement of Joseph Smith on a topic he felt passionate about: the inalienable right of every woman and man to voluntarily choose “his God, and what he pleases for his religion.” It is the first law of all that is sacred, said Smith to the council, to protect “those grand and sublime principles of equal rights and universal freedom to all men.”

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This paper is adapted from a presentation given June 6, 2014, in San Antonio, Texas, at the annual meeting of the Mormon History Association.

# Minutes of the Afternoon Meeting of the Council of Fifty, April 11, 1844

*Matthew J. Grow, Ronald K. Esplin, Mark Ashurst-McGee,  
Gerrit J. Dirkmaat, and Jeffrey D. Mahas*

In his essay “Understanding the Council of Fifty and Its Minutes,” on the previous pages in this issue, Ronald K. Esplin overviews the history of the Council of Fifty and the three books in which William Clayton recorded its minutes. He tells what these minutes add to our understanding of Church leaders’ concerns about outreach to American Indians, Joseph Smith’s presidential campaign, and the desire to claim religious liberty. The text presented and annotated below is excerpted from *The Joseph Smith Papers, Administrative Records: Council of Fifty, Minutes, March 1844–January 1846*.

## Document Transcript

Thursday April 11<sup>th</sup>. 1844 2 o clock P.M. Council met pursuant to adjournment and opened by singing two Hymns

The chairman made some remarks on the absence of brother Edward Bonney the cause of absence, and his good feelings towards the council &c<sup>1</sup>

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1. Bonney left his home in Indiana in February 1844 to journey west to find a new place to live somewhere along the Mississippi River. While visiting Nauvoo, he was made a member of the Council of Fifty. Excited by its commercial prospects, Bonney decided to move his family to Nauvoo. He later recorded, “I accordingly returned home to Indiana about the first of april and in the month of may 1844 Returned to Nauvoo with my family,” a return apparently referenced in the May 19, 1844, entry in Joseph Smith’s journal: “Bonney returnd from the east.” Edward Bonney, “Banditti of the Prairies,” microfilm of handwritten original, 4–5, Church History Library. The original manuscript is in the Ellison Manuscripts, 1790–1949, Lilly Library, Indiana University,

He then went on to say that for the benefit of mankind and succeeding generations he wished it to be recorded that there are men admitted members of this honorable council, who are not members of the church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, neither profess any creed or religious sentiment whatever,<sup>2</sup> to show that in the organization of this [p. [116]] kingdom men are not consulted as to their religious opinions or notions in any shape or form whatever and that we act upon the broad and liberal principle that all men have equal rights, and ought to be respected, and that every man has a privilege in this organization of choosing for himself voluntarily his God, and what he pleases for his religion, inasmuch as there is no danger but that every man will embrace the greatest light. God cannot save or damn a man only on the principle that every man acts, chooses and worships for himself; hence the importance of thrusting from us every spirit of bigotry and intolerance towards [p. [117]] a man's religious sentiments,<sup>3</sup> that spirit which has drenched the earth with blood—When a man feels the least temptation to such intolerance he ought to spurn it from him. It becomes our duty on account of this intolerance and corruption—the inalienable right of man being to think as he pleases—worship as he pleases &c being the first law of every thing that is sacred—to guard every ground all the days of our lives.<sup>4</sup> I will appeal to every man in this council beginning at

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Bloomington. See also Andrew H. Hedges, Alex D. Smith, and Brent M. Rogers, eds., *Journals, Volume 3: May 1843–June 1844*, vol. 3 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2015), 254 (May 19, 1844).

2. Following Joseph Smith's address to the council, Uriah Brown confirmed that he was not a member of any "religious body." In his account of his experiences along the Mississippi River, Edward Bonney recounted that he was not "much of a religionist." Nothing is known of Merinus G. Eaton's religious affiliation. Bonney, "Banditti of the Prairies," 5.

3. Owenite socialist John Finch visited Nauvoo in September 1843 and commented on the tolerance Joseph Smith showed toward other religions. Finch wrote that Joseph Smith was "liberal and charitable, in speaking of other sects, said he considered that the great principle of christianity was love, and affirmed that there was more of this love-spirit among his followers than is to be found in any other sect." Finch was impressed that Joseph requested him to stay in Nauvoo and deliver lectures on his beliefs to his people. He stated, "Joe Smith was in the practice of inviting strangers, who visited Nauvoo, of every shade of politics or religion, to lecture to his people. An Unitarian minister, from Boston, was to lecture to them the following Sunday. He said that he allowed liberty of conscience to all, and was not afraid of any party drawing his people away from him." John Finch, "Notes of Travel in the United States," *New Moral World and Gazette of the Rational Society* (October 5, 1844): 113.

4. In a letter to James Arlington Bennet in 1842, Joseph Smith similarly wrote of tolerance, "This is a good principle; for when we see virtuous qualities in

the youngest that when he arrives to the years of Hoary age he will have to say that the principles of intollerance and bigotry never had a place in this [p. [118]] kingdom, nor in my breast, and that he is even then ready to die rather than yeild to such things. Nothing can reclaim the human mind from its ignorance, bigotry, superstition &c but those grand and sublime principles of equal rights and universal freedom to all men. We must not despise a man on account of infirmity. We ought to love a man more for his infirmity. Nothing is more congenial to my feelings and principles, than the principles of universal freedom and has been from the beginning.<sup>5</sup> If I can know that a man is susceptible of good feelings & integrity and will stand by his friends, he is my friend. The only thing I am afraid of is, that I will not live long [p. [119]] enough to enjoy the society of these my friends as long as I want to.<sup>6</sup> Let us from henceforth drive from us every species of intollerance. When a man is free from it he is capable of being a critic. When I have used every means in my power to exalt a mans mind, and have taught him righteous principles to no effect—he is still inclined in his darkness, yet the same principles of liberty and charity would ever be manifested by me as though he embraced it. Hence in all governments or political transactions a mans religious opinions should never be called in question. A man should be judged by the law independant of religious prejudice, hence we want in our [p. [120]] constitution those laws which would require all

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men, we should always acknowledge them, let their understanding be what it may in relation to creeds and doctrine; for all men are, or ought to be free; possessing unalienable rights, and the high, and noble qualifications of the laws of nature and of self-preservation; to think, and act, and say as they please; while they maintain a due respect to the rights and privileges of all other creatures; infringing upon none. This doctrine I do most heartily subscribe to, and practice.” Joseph Smith to James Arlington Bennet, September 8, 1842, in Andrew H. Hedges, Alex D. Smith, and Richard Lloyd Anderson, eds., *Journals, Volume 3: December 1841–April 1843*, vol. 3 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2011), 138.

5. Taking notes of a Joseph Smith sermon in July 1843, Joseph’s scribe Willard Richards reported him saying, “Civil and religious liberty—were diffused into my soul by my grandfathers. while they dandld me on their knees.” Hedges, Smith, and Rogers, *Journals, Volume 3*, 55 (July 9, 1843).

6. Joseph Smith’s journal entry of August 16, 1842, records his reflections on his friends: “They shall not want a friend while I live. My heart shall love those; and my hands shall toil for those, who love and toil for me, and shall ever be found faithful to my friends.” A year later he stated, “Frie[n]dship is the grand fundamental prin[c]iple of Mormonism.” Hedges, Smith, and Anderson, *Journals, Volume 2*, 95 (August 16, 1842); Hedges, Smith, and Rogers, *Journals, Volume 3*, 66 (July 23, 1843).

its officers to administer justice without any regard to his religious opinions, or thrust him from his office. There is only two or three things lacking in the constitution of the United States. If they had said all men all born equal, and not only that but they shall have their rights, they shall be free, or the armies of the government should be compelled to enforce those principles of liberty. And the President or Governor who does not do this, and who does not enforce those principles he shall lose his head. When a man is thus bound by a constitution he cannot refuse to protect his subjects, he dare not do it. And when a Governor [p. [121]] or president will not protect his subjects he ought to be put away from his office.

I can cloth the old skeleton (referring to a figure used by Er [Reynolds] Cahoon to shew his views of the present constitution)<sup>7</sup> although it was an old dead horses head, but it is not necessary for it only requires two or three sentences in a constitution to govern the world. Only cloth the officers of government with the power of free tolerance and compel them to exercise and enforce those principles and we have what we want. Give our Marshal the power of free tolerance and see if he would not exercise it.<sup>8</sup> Only think! When a man can enjoy his liberties and has the power of [p. [122]] civil officers to protect him, how happy he is”.

While the president was speaking on these subjects he felt animated and used a 24 inch gauge or rule<sup>9</sup> pretty freely till finally he broke it in two in the middle.

Er B. Young said, that as the rule was broken in the hands of our chairman so might every tyrannical government be broken before us.

Mr Uriah Brown arose to thank the chair for the explanation given concerning himself and the two other gentlemen, who are admitted members of this council and are not members of the Church. He is not connected with any religious body. He has sought after [p. [123]] virtue and truth, but has seen mens practices so contrary to their preaching that he had turned his attention another way. He is most happy to day to see the liberality displayed by this body. He related an anecdote of an old Indian who visited Washington, when at supper the landlord had nothing

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7. Cahoon made this comparison in the April 5, 1844 meeting. Council of Fifty, “Record,” April 5, 1844, Church History Library.

8. John P. Greene, a member of the council, served as Nauvoo city marshal between December 21, 1843, and September 10, 1844. “Nauvoo City Officers,” in Hedges, Smith, and Rogers, *Journals*, Volume 3, 471.

9. The “24 inch gauge” (two-foot ruler) was one of the implements of an entered apprentice (new initiate) in Freemasonry and symbolized the twenty-four hours of the day. Thomas Smith Webb, *The Freemason’s Monitor* (Cincinnati: Moore, Wilstach, Keys, and Co., 1859), 46.

but skunk to eat—it was skunk upon skunk and nothing but skunk—and he considered it was just so with the sectarian religion it was skunk upon skunk & nothing else. He concluded by illustrating his views of the situation of our government by relating an anecdote of a sick woman.

Er A[masa] Lyman said, “whilst he had been listening to the remarks made [p. [124]] he had been led to reflect whether he had ever heard of any thing in religion that was calculated to make a man happy except the principles enjoyed here. This is the happiest time he ever saw. He never has been very unhappy. At this time there are those things that create in him feelings of which he has only enjoyed a very small taste, and he now begins to feel the inconvenience of not having capacity to enjoy more. There is a spirit in it which demonstrates an eternal progress. It is like a fire in his bones,<sup>10</sup> and he feels full and ~~wants~~ to enjoy more. he must know more. If he were to go according to his feelings he should be perfectly ridiculous. The feelings originate in his being pleased. [p. [125]] and as this thing pleases him better than anything else he ever knew before he feels more happy. He looks for a full and perfect emancipation of the whole human race, that the sound of oppression should be buried in eternal oblivion. The paltry considerations of earthly gain and glory falls into insignificance before the glories we now realize. The object we have in view is not to save a man alone or a nation, but to call down the power of God and let all be blessed, protected, saved and made happy—burst of the chains of oppression. This is a kingdom worth having. The political principals of this kingdom comes down from heaven and reaches down to the prisons of the dead.<sup>11</sup> What we want of it is just [p. [126]] enough to protect a man in his rights. but we never read of a government that would do that. Reference had been made to the government of Enock, but it went away.<sup>12</sup> It was so like God and so unlike man that they could not bear it. He referred to the kingdom spoken of by Daniel as a stone cut out of the mountain without hands which rolled untill it filled the whole earth.<sup>13</sup> A stone does not roll up hill, but down. This stone was to roll, and

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10. See Jeremiah 20:9; and Lamentations 1:13.

11. See 1 Peter 3:19–20.

12. An 1830 Joseph Smith revelation expanded on the biblical description of the prophet Enoch and described his establishment of a city that was “called the City of holyness even Zion.” According to the revelation, “Enoch and all his people walked with God and he dwelt in the midst of Zion and it came to pass that Zion was not for God received it up into his own bosom and from thence went forth the saying Zion is fled.” Old Testament Revision 1, pp. 16, 19 (Moses 7:19, 69), Church History Library.

13. See Daniel 2:34–35; and Revelation, October 30, 1831, in Matthew C. Godfrey, Mark Ashurst-McGee, Grant Underwood, Robert J. Woodford, and



expand, gather strength and gather force all the while, so the kingdom of God will begin to roll and continue to roll, and attract to itself all the purity, virtue and goodness out of every nation and kingdom wherever it exists. It is like the magnet, it will [p. [127]] attract every thing of similar properties to itself. This is the kind of a kingdom that pleases him. He is glad to live in this age, and is glad that he did not live sooner. He wants to live to see the rolling of the kingdom. The assurance of the everlasting and eternal duration of the kingdom will cap the climax of our happiness and joy. If God has appointed a man to rise to immortal glory he will rise with him, for he will hold on to the skirts of his garments. He has not reflected on the sacrifice we may have to make, for he does not think any sacrifice to great to make for the glories of this kingdom, even if it requires us to leave father, mother, wives & children. He that will not leave ~~that~~ these, cannot enjoy the kingdom, because he cannot [p. [128]] attend to it.<sup>14</sup> He referred to the excuses made at the marriage supper spoken of in a parable by the Saviour.<sup>15</sup> It proves to us, that there is nothing so dear, no ties so great that we cannot part with for the kingdom even if the ties be as strong as existed in the bosom of Abraham towards Isaac. If a man will not sacrifice, the principle of a God is not in him. When a man is tried in every point, then nothing is left but the will of God, and he will then be clothed with the power of God, and it brings him peace and eternal happiness.<sup>16</sup>

Er Rigdon arose to give some reasons for the course he had taken [p. [129]] in relation to this last kingdom—this last order of Heaven—this last order of Government &c that will ever take place. He is well aware that there are some things necessary to enable any man, however competent, to realize the importance of this subject. There are certain things necessary to be observed to uphold any reflecting mind in this thing. He can see that according to the highest light and evidence that we have, one question is settled, that is, that the earth is fast approaching its dissolution. There were things in relation to this world that must approximate to the crisis now approaching. There never has been an

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William G. Hartley, *Documents, Volume 2: July 1831–January 1833*, vol. 2 of the Documents series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, Richard Lyman Bushman, and Matthew J. Grow (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2013), 93 [D&C 65:2].

14. See Matthew 19:29; Mark 10:29–30; and Luke 18:29–30.

15. See Matthew 22:1–14; and Luke 14:15–24.

16. On August 27, 1843, Joseph Smith cited Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac as an example of the principle that a man must be willing to "sacrific[e] all to attain, to the keys of the kingdom of an endless life." Hedges, Smith, and Rogers, *Journals, Volume 3*, 86 (August 27, 1843); see also Genesis 22:1–18.



organization, no odds by whom or[p. [130]]ganized, of a government whether monarchical, aristocratic or Republic that was adapted to the wants of the community at large. If there ever had been such it would have been on the earth at this day. The organization of this government is an anomaly, brought into existence to accomplish a something which no other government ever did. He understood the great Jehovah to be the God of the whole earth,<sup>17</sup> its founder & author &c, and he never would rest untill he had accomplished his purposes in relation to it. God looked down upon the nations of the earth as a father looks upon his children. He saw one of his children trying to rule another, [p. [131]] inventing systems of religious government &c., trying to gain power and ascendancy over one another, but he had decreed that he would put an end to such an order, because he loved them, and establish a government so exalted in its principles as not to permit of corruption. However the world may have looked upon us, they will view us in a very different light. They will view us as the only persons in possession of the pure principles of wisdom and intelligence God designed that we should give our assent to the appointment of a King in the last days; and our religious, civil and political salvation depends on that thing. [p. [132]]

The nations of the ~~are~~ earth are very fast approximating to an utter ruin and overthrow. All the efforts the nations are making will only tend to hasten on the final doom of the world and bring it to its final issue. All the various inventions and specimens of the ingenuity of man, although calculated to increase the happiness of man, will tend to hasten on the approaching dissolution of the earth.

God looked through the vista of unborn time, and saw the history of unborn nations from the beginning” The speaker then glanced at the character of the various nations and kingdoms of the earth from Moses to Nebuchadnezar.<sup>18</sup> He said “It is arts and sciences [p. [133]] that makes a nation terrible in war, Antiquity shows us that those nations never ceased their civilizations and overthrows of each other. Civilization was a curse, and the efforts men made was only preparing them for destruction. The nations now have no better understanding, nor are they better calculated to govern than they were then. Death and desolation will

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17. See Book of Mormon, 1830 ed., 477, 501–2 [3 Nephi 11:14; 22:5]; and Isaiah 54:5.

18. At the March 19, 1844, council meeting, Rigdon had similarly “followed the course of the history of the several kingdoms down to the days of Nebuchadnezar and then to the present day in which we live.” Council of Fifty, “Record,” 19 Mar. 1844.

come next. Wars the most terrible. The destruction of Jerusalem was but a small circumstance compared to that which will follow the work of the last days.<sup>19</sup> Well might the great father say, that he will cut the work short in righteousness.<sup>20</sup> He looks at the present state of things. He contemplates [p. [134]] the approaching dissolution when men will be ruined by their own inventions He referred to the blessings God would bestow upon his people when he had established his kingdom. The toil of man and the sweat of his brow would cease. Every thing would be fruitful and happy.—<sup>21</sup>

Er Orson Spencer said he felt like a person who enters a vineyard where there is an abundance of every good thing but is careful which to touch. He referred to the glorious instructions and intelligence which had dropped from the lips of the preceeding speakers. He said the principle of free toleration is noble and endearing. It is only the guilty mind that is intolerant: they are afraid of Exposure. [p. [135]] He felt that we are certain of success in the accomplishment of our purposes, viewing the union which exists in our midst. He referred to the contrast between this council and the situations of the nations of the earth. He concluded his remarks by expressing his grateful feelings for the principles inculcated by the members of this council.

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19. See Matthew 24:3–22; compare New Testament Revision 1, pp. 56–57 [Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:4–20].

20. See Romans 9:28; Revelation, June 6, 1831, in Michael Hubbard MacKay and others, eds., *Documents, Volume 1: July 1828–June 1831*, vol. 1 of the Documents series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, Richard Lyman Bushman, and Matthew J. Grow (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2013), 328 (D&C 52:11); Revelation, September 22–23, 1832, in Godfrey and others, *Documents, Volume 2*, 301 (D&C 84:97); and Prayer, March 27, 1836, in *Prayer, at the Dedication of the Lord's House*, [2], Church History Library (D&C 109:59).

21. Genesis presents the Garden of Eden as a garden of fruitful trees from which Adam and Eve could freely eat. Isaiah and other Old Testament prophets predicted a redemption of Israel to an Edenic state. The Book of Mormon incorporated Isaiah's prophecy. Millenarian groups like the Latter-day Saints often used primeval Eden as a representation of the peace and plenty of the anticipated Millennium. A hymn by council member William W. Phelps stated that in the millennium of peace the "earth will appear as the garden of Eden." Genesis 1:29; 2:9, 16; Isaiah 51:3; Ezekiel 36:35; Joel 2:3; Book of Mormon, 1830 ed., 75 (2 Nephi 8:3); [William W. Phelps], "Home," *The Evening and the Morning Star* (March 1833): [8]; Hymn 18, *Collection of Sacred Hymns* [1835], 24, Church History Library; see also Richard T. Hughes and Leonard Allen, *Illusions of Innocence: Protestant Primitivism in America, 1630–1875* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 133, 147–48.

Er G. J. Adams spoke of some things he had thought of during the day. He would like to have a king to reign in righteousness, and inasmuch as our president is proclaimed prophet, priest and king. He is ready when the time comes to go and tell the news to 10000 people. The people will be for war when [p. [136]] we have grown, yet they will say let us not go to war against Zion for the inhabitants thereof are terrible.<sup>22</sup> He referred to the remarks made by Catlin [Catiline] to the Roman Senate and compared them to our governors and statesmen.<sup>23</sup>

Er D[avid] D. Yearsley expressed his satisfaction for the principles of liberality so nobly displayed during the day. He then referred to the principles afloat in the world, especially those of infidelity. He spoke<sup>24</sup> on the constitution of the U.S. its liberality &c He referred especially to the liberal (Ironical) principle which requires a foreigner to serve seven years before he can become a government officer.<sup>25</sup> He also referred to the situation [p. [137]] of the sectarian world, showing that their progress had been by bloodshed and oppression, and to the principle of slavery being cherished in the United States. He hinted at an expression in Volneys ruins of Empires.<sup>26</sup> He thought if Volney had lived he would have been a Mormon. He wished the day would soon come when he could have the privilege of proclaiming to the heads at Washington that the kingdom of God was set up.

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22. See Revelation, c. March 7, 1831, in MacKay and others, *Documents*, Volume 1, 280 (D&C 45:70).

23. Catiline was a Roman senator who tried to overthrow the Roman Republic in 63 B.C. When his conspiracy was exposed and denounced by Cicero, Catiline reportedly warned the Senate, "Since, then, . . . I am circumvented and driven headlong by my enemies, I will quench the flame raised about me by the common ruin." Sallust, *Bellum Catilinae*, chap. 31.

24. Text: Possibly "spoke".

25. The U.S. Constitution requires an individual to be a citizen for seven years before being elected to the House of Representatives and nine years before being elected to the Senate. U.S. Constitution, art. 1, secs. 2-3.

26. In 1791, Comte de Volney published *Les Ruines, ou Méditations sur les révolutions des empires*, a historical and philosophical treatise on the nature of government and religion, in which he decried tyrannical governments and the practice of slavery. In the book's conclusion, Volney pictured a world where all religions would put aside their differences and unite behind a common search for truth. The book was immensely popular in Europe and the United States, with at least twenty editions of the English translation by the 1830s. In 1844, both Jeremiah Hatch Jr. and Heber C. Kimball presented a copy of *Les Ruines* to the Nauvoo Library and Literary Institute. Nauvoo Library and Literary Institute Record, 1844, [29], [32], Church History Library.

Er R. Cahoon thinks that although much has been said there are many things which have not been hinted at. He was comforted at the sound of the word liberty, but never felt as though he fully realised it. He expressed his gratification for the privilege of being [p. [138]] a member of this council, and his delight at the displays of the principles of freedom and liberality as they exist amongst us. He looked back to the expressions of his father, and related a dream which his father dreamed before he died.<sup>27</sup> He considered that whatever we can get that is good and beneficial for ourselves, it is good for our neighbors. He spake of the kingdom of God in the last days, and did not expect that it would ever be thrown down, but that the standard would be exalted and all nations flow unto it. He considers that his life is but a trifle compared with the glory which surrounds us. He feels much interested for the salvation of his family. He feels grateful for the power [p. [139]] and blessings which God has poured on him. He realizes the glory of it. He referred to the persecution in Missouri. that there was no patriot to take their part. Also that they had appealed to Congress for redress but they would do nothing for us.<sup>28</sup> He signified his determination to use his endeavors

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27. William Cahoon Jr., the father of Reynolds Cahoon, died in October 1828 at Kirtland, Ohio. Geauga Co., OH, Probate Court, Probate Records, 1806–1941, vol. B, p. 350, microfilm 877,782, U.S. and Canada Record Collection, Family History Library.

28. Since their expulsion from Jackson County, Missouri, in 1833, and from the state of Missouri in 1838–39, Church members had sought in vain for redress from local, state, and federal government officials and bodies, including the U.S. Congress. The most recent attempt to appeal to the U.S. Congress began in November 1843, when John Frierson, a surveyor from Quincy, Illinois, wrote a memorial on behalf of the Latter-day Saints to Congress. Frierson recounted the robbery, destruction of property, and murder that Church members suffered at the hands of the Missourians. The memorial asked Congress to consider the crimes committed against the Mormons, “receive testimony in the case, and grant such relief as by the Constitution and Laws you may have power to give.” Joseph Smith and the city council signed the memorial on December 16, 1843. The memorial was ultimately signed by 3,419 inhabitants of Hancock and Adams Counties and was carried to Washington, D.C., by Orson Pratt, who left Nauvoo in March 1844. On April 5, 1844, James Semple, U.S. senator from Illinois, presented this memorial to the U.S. Senate, and it was referred to the Senate Committee on the Judiciary. Shortly thereafter, Orson Hyde and Orson Pratt drafted a bill that they presented to the same committee asking that \$2 million be appropriated for the Mormons’ relief. The committee took no action on either the memorial or the draft bill. Joseph Smith and others, Memorial to U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, January 27, 1840, in

to carry on this work if it took all he had. He referred to the time when every man would sit under his own vine and fig tree and there would be none to make them afraid<sup>29</sup>

A motion to adjourn was heard from several members.

Er John M. Bernhisel wished before adjournment to make a few remarks on the present<sup>30</sup> prospects of Texas being annexed as stated in the public papers. [p. [140]] He thinks there is no doubt but it will be annexed if it is not already done.<sup>31</sup>

The chairman said we need have no apprehensions on the subject inasmuch as God has the matter in his own hands.

The motion to adjourn was renewed whereupon the council adjourned till next thursday at 9 o clock to meet in the council Room.—  
[6 lines blank] [p. [141]]

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Record Group 46, Records of the U.S. Senate, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; Elias Higbee and others, Memorial to U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, January 10, 1842, photocopy, Material relating to Mormon Expulsion from Missouri, Church History Library; Hedges, Smith, and Rogers, *Journals*, Volume 3, 134–35, 145, 149 (November 25–26 and 28–29, 1843; December 16 and 21, 1843); Joseph Smith and others, Memorial to U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, November 28, 1843, Record Group 46, Records of the U.S. Senate, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; Letter of Recommendation for Orson Pratt, March 12, 1844, draft, Joseph Smith Collection, Church History Library; *Congressional Globe*, 28th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 482 [1844]; Letters from Orson Hyde, April 25 and 26, 1844, *Council of Fifty, Minutes, March 1844–January 1846*, 171.

29. See Micah 4:4.

30. Text: Possibly “presents”.

31. The United States and Texas conducted secret negotiations over the terms of a treaty of annexation for several months in early 1844. By March leaked reports were circulating, especially in the Southern press, of an impending treaty, though these reports were dismissed by many Northern publications as exaggeration and rumor. On March 16, the *Daily National Intelligencer*, a Washington, D.C., publication opposed to the annexation of Texas, mournfully passed along to its readers information about the “unauthorized and almost clandestine” treaty negotiations. The editor concluded that “so far as the President of the United States and the President of Texas are concerned, the Treaty is all but made.” These rumors were proven true. On April 12, the day after this meeting of the council, an annexation treaty was secretly signed between Texas and U.S. officials. “The Texas Question,” *Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington, D.C.), March 16, 1844, [3]; “Treaty of Annexation,” April 12, 1844, in Proceedings of the Senate and Documents relative to Texas, from Which the Injunction of Secrecy Has Been Removed, S. Doc. no. 341, 28th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 10–13 [1844].

# The Cordwainer

## *A day on the mission*

We sagged into his slim room  
From the dusty street,  
His company a dirt floor and dog.

I had never seen a  
Beast of such sorrow:  
His daughter blind, his wife gone,  
His health only a memory.

He knew the cobblestone miles  
From Montevideo to Melo,  
The enmity between flesh and field,  
The bruised heel, the cursed climb.

Scraps of light shifted across  
The floor of his shop. He offered us  
Bread, water, a chair. I gave him ten *pesos*,  
All I had. I removed my shoes.  
From a high shelf he chose the finest leather,  
Then knelt and measured my bare feet,  
And cut, stitched, glued.

In my stupor I saw,  
Comprehending at last  
The small miracle of making a life,  
The quietude, the tuck of leather to tread.

After all, it wasn't his sorrow we were meant to seek,  
It was his hands.

—Terresa Wellborn

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This poem won second place in the BYU Studies 2016  
Clinton F. Larson Poetry Contest.

# Joseph Smith and Egyptian Artifacts

## A Model for Evaluating the Prophetic Nature of the Prophet's Ideas about the Ancient World

*Kerry Muhlestein*

Joseph Smith's collection of Egyptian antiquities has been the point of much interest, both in his day and ours. Among those things that piqued great attention during the Prophet's lifetime, and continue to do so today, are his explanations of the drawings (known as vignettes when referring to ancient Egyptian literature) on the papyri he possessed and the connections he made between the papyri, mummies, and biblical characters. While we have few statements directly from Joseph Smith himself, there are a number of accounts from people who heard either first- or secondhand the Prophet's ideas about his collection of antiquities and the meaning of the vignettes on the papyri. Evaluating the pertinent accounts and what they tell us either about the contents of the papyri or Joseph Smith's prophetic abilities, or both, can become a byzantine endeavor, with no clear-cut way of determining which statements are historically reliable and which are not.

Even more important is the confusion that results from not knowing which of the Prophet's purported statements about Egyptian drawings are prophetic and which might not be. Joseph Smith either authored or approved of the descriptions of Facsimiles 1, 2, and 3 that were published in the *Times and Seasons* in 1842, as will be further discussed in this paper. Apart from these explanations, we have no other recorded statements from Joseph Smith about the meanings of the Egyptian vignettes on the papyri he possessed. At the same time, we have several accounts of those who heard Joseph Smith express explanations of various vignettes on these papyri. While the explanations associated with Joseph Smith and published in the *Times and Seasons*, which have now become part of the

Pearl of Great Price, carry with them the weight of his prophetic mantle, it is less clear how descriptions of other drawings on various fragments, which were never refined or published, should be understood by Latter-day Saints, especially since we have only hearsay accounts of these descriptions. In this paper, I will explore various options regarding how believers and nonbelievers might assess noncanonical statements reportedly made by the Prophet about the ancient texts and vignettes he possessed. Given Joseph Smith's far-ranging enthusiasm for things of the ancient world,<sup>1</sup> it is further hoped that this paper will be one step forward in creating a paradigm that could be used to filter through the Prophet's expressions about the ancient world in general, thus adding to a larger and hopefully ongoing dialogue about such issues.

In the interest of full disclosure and intellectual honesty, I understand that researchers and readers must also address point of view, or bias. It is impossible to approach this subject without bringing to the task a mindset through which a researcher filters all of the historical evidence and with which he or she creates paradigms of how to use and interpret the evidence. This is true of any historical issue<sup>2</sup> but is especially so when it impinges on religious beliefs.<sup>3</sup> Thus, those who do not believe Joseph Smith was a prophet who translated ancient texts by the power of God will be unable to avoid seeking first for explanations to support that opinion.<sup>4</sup> Those who do believe in the inspired ability of

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1. As evidenced by the papers in *Approaching Antiquity: Joseph Smith and the Ancient World*, ed. Lincoln H. Blumell, Matthew J. Grey, and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2015).

2. Antonio Loprieno, "Slaves," in *The Egyptians*, ed. Sergio Donadoni (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 186.

3. See Rachel Cope, "Hermeneutics of Trust vs. Hermeneutics of Doubt: Considering Shaker Spirituality," *Journal for the Study of Spirituality* 3, no. 1 (2013): 56–66; see also E. H. Carr, *What Is History? The George Macaulay Trevelyan Lectures Delivered in the University of Cambridge January–March 1961* (Hampshire: Macmillan, 1986).

4. For a discussion of the hermeneutic of doubt, or "school of suspicion," see Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Dennis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970); also on an approach of distrust leading to methodological atheism, see Stuart Parker, "The Hermeneutics of Generosity: A Critical Approach to the Scholarship of Richard Bushman," *Journal of Mormon History* 32, no. 3 (2012): 12–27. See also Steven C. Harper, "A Seeker's Guide to the Historical Accounts of Joseph Smith's First Vision," *Religious Educator* 12, no. 1 (2011): 169–72, where he speaks of a hermeneutic of suspicion as opposed to a hermeneutic of trust. Of course it is hoped that both



Joseph Smith will likewise more readily seek and more easily conceive of theories that naturally stem from that perspective. Therefore, I wish to be clear that I begin with the presumption of Joseph Smith's prophethood. In order to properly evaluate my writings, readers will need to understand that this is my point of view.

My experiences, both those of intellectual endeavor and those of a revelatory nature, cause me to approach this research with full confidence in the prophetic abilities of Joseph Smith. Therefore, I desire to use all of my academic training to more fully understand the perspectives that could account for the evidence at hand, while admitting that I more easily understand perspectives that match my original assumptions as framed by my religious point of view. No historian can avoid this. At the same time, I am attempting to fairly represent all points of view to the best of my ability and earnestly hope that those who approach the work from a different perspective will do the same.

I also wish to be very clear that I do not have the ability or desire to represent the point of view of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Brigham Young University, or any subsets of those entities. None of the models presented below should be taken as anything other than the attempt of one scholar to sift his way through possible approaches in handling the evidence that lies before us. This is not an apologetic effort but rather an attempt to understand information and ideas that are important to my faith community and to any scholars who are interested in that faith or its community. Exploration and enhanced understanding is the goal.

By examining the Prophet's reported statements about his Egyptian antiquities, this paper takes one step toward evaluating Joseph Smith's statements about antiquity. The ideas presented here are intended to be only a small piece of what will hopefully be a larger conversation.

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believers and nonbelievers will allow evidence to affect their views and beliefs. At the same time, the initial choice of belief or nonbelief regarding the possibility that Joseph Smith could be inspired is so large that it influences how most data is interpreted. If one believes it is impossible for Joseph to have received inspiration, one will interpret all evidence differently than someone who thinks he has received, or that he could receive, inspiration. Individuals who choose the latter viewpoint have a range of ways they can interpret evidence. While categorizing people as either believers or nonbelievers is surely an oversimplification—for people can be persuaded and can change their minds—still, the initial starting point is so important that this simplification is useful for this paper.

In order to assess Joseph Smith's ideas about his antiquities, the contents of his papyri and the meaning of their vignettes, we will have to take four steps: (1) We must understand what antiquities he acquired and how he acquired them. (2) We must explore the historical accounts of what he is reported to have said about these antiquities, especially what he thought the vignettes on them represented but including what he thought about his antiquities in general. (3) After this, we can compare the historical statements with modern academic ideas about his antiquities and the meanings of the vignettes. (4) We can then propose models about how to evaluate those statements.

### STEP ONE:

#### BRIEF HISTORICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

In July 1835, Michael Chandler arrived in Kirtland, bringing with him four mummies and a small collection of papyri. The day after his arrival, he met with Joseph Smith, who was allowed to take the papyri home with him to study.<sup>5</sup> Soon the Mormon Prophet announced that the papyri contained the writings of Abraham and Joseph.<sup>6</sup> He arranged to purchase the papyri and was soon busy translating.<sup>7</sup> Years later, some of his translation was published in the *Times and Seasons*.<sup>8</sup> More of the translation was promised<sup>9</sup> but never came. It is not clear whether Joseph

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5. See Edward Tullidge, "Dr. John Riggs," *Tullidge's Quarterly Magazine* 3, no. 3 (1884): 282–83.

6. 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), 2:236 (hereafter cited as *History of the Church*). Original source is Manuscript History of the Church, Book 1, p. 596, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as CHL).

7. It is not completely clear whether or not Joseph Smith discovered that the writings of Abraham and Joseph were on the papyri before or after the scrolls were purchased. On the timing of the purchase of the papyri and the translation and publication of the Book of Abraham, see Kerry Muhlestein and Megan Hansen, "The Work of Translating: The Book of Abraham's Translation Chronology," in *Let Us Reason Together: Reflections on the Life of Study and Faith, Essays in Honor of Robert L. Millet*, ed. Spencer Fluhman and Brent L. Top (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2015), 140.

8. "The Book of Abraham," *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 9 (March 1, 1842): 704–6; "The Book of Abraham," *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 10 (March 15, 1842): 719–22.

9. "We would further state that we had the promise of Br. Joseph, to furnish us with further extracts from the Book of Abraham. These with other articles that we expect from his pen, the continuation of his history, and the resources

Smith published all he had translated at that point or if he had already translated more but was never able to publish it. In any case, the *Times and Seasons* publications of excerpts from the book of Abraham eventually worked their way into the booklet entitled *The Pearl of Great Price*,<sup>10</sup> which was later canonized.<sup>11</sup>

Published alongside the text of the book of Abraham were facsimiles of some of the vignettes on the papyri, accompanied by explanations of them.<sup>12</sup> While we do not know if Joseph Smith is the original author of these explanations,<sup>13</sup> we know he participated in preparing them and gave them editorial approval. For example, on March 1, 1842, his journal records that he was at the printing office “correcting the first plate or cut of the records of father Abraham, prepared by Reuben Hedlock for the *Times and Seasons*.”<sup>14</sup> The next day he wrote that he served for the first time as the editor of the *Times and Seasons*, reading through the proofs “in which is the commencement of the Book of Abraham.”<sup>15</sup> Published in the March 1 issue of the *Times and Seasons* was this statement: “This paper commences my editorial career, I alone stand responsible for it, and shall do for all papers having my signature henceforward. I am not responsible for the publication or arrangement

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that we have of obtaining interesting matter; together with our humble endeavors, we trust will make the paper sufficiently interesting.” Editor [John Taylor], “Notice,” *Times and Seasons* 4, no. 6 (February 1, 1843): 95.

10. Joseph Smith, *The Pearl of Great Price, Being a Choice Selection from the Revelations, Translations, and Narrations of Joseph Smith* (Liverpool: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1851).

11. It was canonized in 1880. See Journal History of the Church, October 10, 1880, 4, CHL. See also H. Donl Peterson, “The Birth and Development of the Pearl of Great Price,” in *Studies in Scripture: Volume 2, The Pearl of Great Price*, ed. Robert L. Millet and Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City: Randall Books, 1985), 8–22.

12. “A Facsimile from the Book of Abraham, No. 1,” *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 9 (March 1, 1842): 703; “A Facsimile from the Book of Abraham, No. 2,” *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 10 (March 15, 1842): insert; and “A Facsimile from the Book of Abraham, No. 3,” *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 14 (May 16, 1842): 783.

13. As has been pointed out by John Gee, “Joseph Smith and Ancient Egypt,” in *Approaching Antiquity: Joseph Smith and the Ancient World*, ed. Lincoln H. Blumell, Matthew J. Grey, and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2015), 437–38.

14. Andrew H. Hedges, Alex D. Smith, and Richard Lloyd Anderson, eds., *Journals, Volume 2: December 1841–April 1843*, vol. 2 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2011), 39, spelling corrected.

15. Hedges, Smith, and Anderson, *Journals, Volume 2*, 39.

of the former paper: the matter did not come under my supervision.”<sup>16</sup> While this statement makes it clear that Joseph Smith was involved in approving the content of the paper, the statement was smaller and more concise than what the Prophet had originally intended to be put in the paper. The letter he originally dictated for the newspaper, probably edited down due to size constraints, was more explicit:

A considerable quantity of the matter in the last paper. was in type, before the establishment come into ~~our~~ My hands,— Some of which went to press. without ~~our~~ my recivecd, ~~or~~ knowledge ~~Thh~~ and a multiplicity of business= while enteri[n]g on the additional care of the editorial departmet of the Times & Seasons. mu[s]t be my apology for what is past.—

In future, I design to furnish much original matter, which will be found of enestimable advantage to the saints, – & to all who — desire a knowledge of the kingdom of God.— and as it is not practicable to bring forth the new translation of the Scriptures. & varioes records of ancient date. & great worth to this generation in ~~book~~ <the usual> form. by books. I shall prenit [print] specimens of the same in the Times & Seasons as fast. as time & space will admit. so that the honest in heart may be cheerd & comforted and go on their way rejoici[ng].— as their souls become expanded.—& their undestand[ing] enlightend, by a knowledg of ~~what~~ Gods work through the fathers. in former days, as well as what He is about to do in Latter Days—To fulfil the words of the fathers.—

In the penst [present] no. will be found the Commencmet of the Records discovered in Egypt. some time since, as penend by the hand. of Father Abraham. which I shall contin[u]e to t[r]anslate & publish as fast as possible till the whole is completed.— and as the saints have long been anxious to obtain a copy of these rec[o]rds, those are now taking this times & Seasons. Will confer a sp[e]cial favor on their brethren, who do not take the paper, by infor[m]ing them that. They can now obtain their hearts.<sup>17</sup>

16. The heading over this section reads, “Tuesday, March 15, 1842,” though it was printed in the March 1, 1842, edition of the paper. See *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 9 (March 1, 1842): 710.

17. Joseph Smith to *Times and Seasons*, c. March 1842, 1–2, Joseph Smith Collection, CHL, available online at Church Historians Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/letter-to-times-and-seasons-circa-march-1842?p=1>.

Here it is even clearer that Joseph was taking personal charge of what would be printed in the newspaper, especially in connection with the writings of Abraham.

Joseph Smith's involvement with the publication continued. On March 4, he worked again with Reuben Hedlock preparing the cut for the second facsimile.<sup>18</sup> On March 9, he examined the copy of the *Times and Seasons* in which that facsimile would be published.<sup>19</sup> All of this taken together suggests that Joseph Smith was most likely the author of the explanations. Even if someone else originally penned them, at the very least Smith was involved in the process, was familiar with the text, and approved the publishing of the explanations as they stood.

After Joseph Smith's death, his mother took care of the antiquities.<sup>20</sup> When Lucy Mack Smith died, the Prophet's widow, by then remarried, sold the mummies and papyri to Abel Combs.<sup>21</sup> Most of this collection was in turn sold to a museum, and eventually was burned in the Great Chicago Fire.<sup>22</sup> Unknown to Latter-day Saints, Combs had given a few fragments to his housekeeper, and in due course these made their way to the Metropolitan Museum of New York. In 1967, the museum presented them to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,<sup>23</sup> which continues to hold and preserve them today. These eleven papyri fragments are commonly known as JSP (Joseph Smith Papyri) I through XI and are readily available for viewing on the Internet.

While a great deal has been written about the eleven papyri fragments the Church now owns, most of these writings have been concerned with

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18. Hedges, Smith, and Anderson, *Journals*, Volume 2, 40.

19. Hedges, Smith, and Anderson, *Journals*, Volume 2, 42.

20. As evidenced in sources such as "A correspondent of the Albany Atlas, writin from Nauvoo," *Cleveland Daily Herald*, September 13, 1845, 1; Miss F. J., "Visit to Nauvoo," *Ladies' Magazine* 11 (1846): 134–35; and M, "Correspondence of Friends' Weekly Intelligencer," *Friends' Weekly Intelligencer* 3, no. 27 (October 7, 1846): 211. See also H. Donl Peterson, *The Story of the Book of Abraham: Mummies, Manuscripts, and Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1995), 215–16; and John Gee, "Some Puzzles from the Joseph Smith Papyri," *Farms Review* 20, no. 1 (2008): 115.

21. H. Donl Peterson, "The Mormon Mummies and Papyri in Ohio," in *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: Ohio*, ed. Milton V. Backman Jr. (Provo, Utah: BYU Department of Church History and Doctrine, 1990), 132–33.

22. Peterson, "Mormon Mummies and Papyri," 133–34; Peterson, *Story of the Book of Abraham*, 212–16.

23. Peterson, *Story of the Book of Abraham*, 236–42.

the few fragments that are associated with the original drawing of Facsimile 1.<sup>24</sup> Their relationship with the Book of Abraham continues to be researched and debated.<sup>25</sup> Less work has been done on Joseph Smith's views concerning the rest of the papyri, especially his ideas about the drawings, or vignettes, present on the papyri. Yet these less-studied views are worth exploring, both because they shed some light on Joseph Smith's feelings about the antiquities he possessed and because they are part of a larger picture of nineteenth-century ideas about Egyptian artifacts in general.

## STEP TWO: THE HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS

As we work toward creating models that can be used to evaluate Joseph Smith's ideas about antiquity, we must now examine the historical records that report what he thought about his antiquities. Let us begin by looking at statements about the vignettes on the papyri he owned. The accounts that contain explanations of these vignettes span nearly the entire length of time during which Joseph Smith possessed his papyri. They come from a variety of people who had a corresponding assortment of familiarity with the Mormon prophet and things of the ancient world and a wide spectrum of views on his prophetic abilities. If Joseph Smith had commented on any of the statements others had made about his views on the papyri, either to correct or confirm such statements, we would have a better idea of how reliable the accounts are. Unfortunately, we have found no such comments from the Prophet and

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24. The facsimiles that appeared first in *Times and Seasons* and later in the Pearl of Great Price were produced from woodcuts made of the original drawings on the papyri.

25. See, for example, Gee, "Some Puzzles from the Joseph Smith Papyri," 113–37; Kerry Muhlestein, "Egyptian Papyri and the Book of Abraham: Some Questions and Answers," *Religious Educator* 11, no. 1 (2010): 90–106; and Kerry Muhlestein, "Egyptian Papyri and the Book of Abraham: A Faithful, Egyptological Point of View," in *No Weapon Shall Prosper: New Light on Sensitive Issues*, ed. Robert L. Millet (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2011), 217–43; Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *The Case against Mormonism*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1968), 2:159, 3:1–52; Hugh Nibley, "A New Look at the Pearl of Great Price: Part 1, Challenge and Response," *Improvement Era* 71, no. 2 (1968): 14–21. Charles M. Larson, *By His Own Hand upon Papyrus: A New Look at the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Institute for Religious Research, 1992).







must do our best to determine the reliability of each statement, as will be discussed below.

Accounts Reporting Statements about Fragments

Name	Date of viewing	Date of source	Name of source
Oliver Cowdery	1835	1835	<i>Messenger and Advocate</i> 2, no. 3.
Henry Caswall	1842	1842	<i>City of the Mormons</i> , 22–23
Sarah Leavitt	c. 1837	1875	“History of Sarah Studevaut Leavitt”
William Appleby	1841	1848	Autobiography and Journal
Charlotte Haven	1843	1890	<i>Overland Monthly</i>

Oliver Cowdery’s Statement

The earliest of the pertinent documents does not purport to be an account of Joseph Smith’s interpretations. Instead it was written by Oliver Cowdery within a few months of acquiring the papyri. Cowdery did not claim he was sharing Joseph Smith’s interpretation but rather may have been the originator of the views he expressed in his writings. However, it is clear that Joseph Smith was at least nominally involved in the history Cowdery was trying to record. We know this because Smith divided responsibilities for writing histories between Cowdery and others<sup>26</sup> and because Cowdery wrote that Joseph Smith was assisting him with those historical writings.<sup>27</sup> While it is likely that at this time Cowdery’s interpretations were shared with Joseph and closely aligned with his understandings, the most we can say is that these were views Cowdery held after having worked closely with Joseph Smith on the papyri.<sup>28</sup>

26. Karen Lynn Davidson and others, eds., *Joseph Smith Histories, 1832–1844*, vol. 1 of the Histories series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian’s Press, 2012), 38.

27. Davidson and others, *Joseph Smith Histories*, 39–40.

28. As evidenced by the October 1, 1835, journal entry: “This after noon labored on the Egyptian alphabet, in company with brsr O[liver] Cowdery and W[illiam] W. Phelps: The system of astronomy was unfolded.” Dean C. Jessee,

Cowdery provided an extensive description of the papyri in the *Messenger and Advocate*.<sup>29</sup>

Upon the subject of the Egyptian records, or rather the writings of Abraham and Joseph, I may say a few words. This record is beautifully written on papyrus with black, and a small part, red ink or paint, in perfect preservation. [He then described in several paragraphs the story of how the records were obtained.]

The language in which this record is written is very comprehensive, and many of the hieroglyphics exceedingly striking. The evidence is apparent upon the face, that they were written by persons acquainted with the history of the creation, the fall of man, and more or less of the correct ideas of notions of the Deity. The representation of the god head—three, yet in one, is curiously drawn to give simply, though impressively, the writers [*sic*] views of that exalted personage. The serpent, represented as walking, or formed in a manner to be able to walk, standing in front of, and near a female figure, is to me, one of the greatest representations I have ever seen upon paper, or a writing substance; and must go so far towards convincing the rational mind of the correctness and divine authority of the holy scriptures, and especially that part which has ever been assailed by the infidel community, as being a fiction, as to carry away, with one might [*sic*] sweep, the whole atheistical fabric, without leaving a vestige sufficient for a foundation stone. Enoch's Pillar, as mentioned by Josephus, is upon the same roll. . . . The inner end of the same roll, (Joseph's record) presents a representation of the judgment: At one view you behold the Savior seated upon his throne, crowned, and holding the sceptres of righteousness and power, before whom also, are assembled the twelve tribes of Israel, the nations, languages and tongues of the earth, the kingdoms of the world over which satan is represented as reigning. Michael the archangel, holding the key of the bottomless pit, and at the same time the devil as being chained and shut up in the bottomless pit.<sup>30</sup>

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Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds., *Journals, Volume 1: 1832–1839*, vol. 1 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2008), 67.

29. For information about Oliver as editor, see John W. Welch, "Oliver Cowdery as Editor, Defender, and Justice of the Peace in Kirtland," in *Days Never to be Forgotten: Oliver Cowdery*, ed. Alexander L. Baugh (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2009), 255–60.

30. Oliver Cowdery, "Egyptian Mummies—Ancient Records," *Messenger and Advocate* 2, no. 3 (December 1835): 234, 236.



Joseph Smith Papyrus VI (left) and V (right), which contains a figure of a walking serpent. Courtesy Church History Library, © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.

Joseph Smith Papyrus (JSP) V has a vignette that might be what Oliver identifies as Enoch's Pillar and another vignette that depicts a walking serpent speaking with a figure Oliver would think of as a woman.<sup>31</sup> JSP IV, upper left image, contains a depiction of three people seated together that may be what Oliver thought of as the godhead.<sup>32</sup> JSP III contains some elements that might match his description of an enthroned Christ and a chained Satan.<sup>33</sup> Of course, he may have been referring to depictions we no longer have, since none of the vignettes on the extant papyri fully fit this description. However, the descriptions hold enough in common with a later account given by Henry Caswall, which does seem to fit JSP III, that it is possible Cowdery was interpreting JSP III but was doing so in a way that does not match well with what we see in that drawing. The similarity between the accounts of Cowdery and Caswall also lends weight to the notion that others, perhaps including Joseph Smith, held these same interpretations about the meaning of the figures on the vignettes. However, there are enough differences between Cowdery's and Caswall's descriptions to make it equally or perhaps more likely that they were describing two different vignettes. Because of the similarities, it is important to compare the two accounts.

### Henry Caswall's Account

Henry Caswall visited Nauvoo in 1842, more than six years after Cowdery's description of the papyri was published. Caswall was hoping to meet the Prophet and see the antiquities. Joseph Smith was not in town during part of his visit, but Caswall was able to prevail upon a storekeeper to let him in to see the antiquities. He recorded his visit thus:

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31. Robert K. Ritner, *The Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri: A Complete Edition* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2011), 155, sees this as the vignette referred to. While my comparisons have been done independently, others have also looked at what remaining vignettes match these descriptions. In particular, see Jay M. Todd, *The Saga of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1969), 194; and John Gee, "Eyewitness, Hearsay, and Physical Evidence of the Joseph Smith Papyri," in *The Disciple as Witness: Essays on Latter-day Saint History and Doctrine in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson*, ed. Andrew H. Hedges, Donald W. Parry, and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2000).

32. Ritner, *Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri*, 155, independently suggests this may be the case.

33. Ritner, *Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri*, 205–6, argues for this.

He led me to a room behind his store, on the door of which was an inscription to the following effect: "Office of Joseph Smith, President of the Church of Latter Day Saints." Having introduced me, together with several Mormons to this *sanctum sanctorum*, he locked the door behind him, and proceeded to what appeared to be a small chest of drawers. From this he drew forth a number of glazed slides, like picture frames, containing sheets of papyrus, with Egyptian inscriptions and hieroglyphics. These had been unrolled from four mummies, which the prophet had purchased at a cost of twenty-four hundred dollars. By some inexplicable mode, as the storekeeper informed me, Mr. Smith had discovered that these sheets contained the writings of Abraham, written with his own hand while in Egypt. Pointing to the figure of a man lying on a table, he said, "That is the picture of Abraham on the point of being sacrificed. That man standing by him with a drawn knife is an idolatrous priest of the Egyptians. Abraham prayed to God, who immediately unloosed his bands, and delivered him." [I refer to this as Caswall's first description.] Turning to another of the drawers, and pointing to a hieroglyphic representation, one of the Mormons said, "Mr. Smith informs us that this picture is an emblem of redemption. Do you see those four little figures? Well, those are the four quarters of the earth, And do you see that big dog looking at the four figures? That is the old Devil desiring to devour the four quarters of the earth. Look at this person keeping back the big dog. That is Jesus Christ keeping the devil from devouring the four quarters of the earth. Look down this way. This figure near the side is Jacob, and those are his two wives. Now do you see those steps?" "What," I replied, "do you mean those stripes across the dress of one of Jacob's wives?" "Yes," he said, "that is Jacob's ladder." "That is indeed curious," I remarked; "Jacob's ladder standing on the ground, and only reaching up to his wife's waist." [I refer to this as Caswall's second description.]<sup>34</sup>

A number of things must be considered as we read this account. First, Caswall describes two different portions of papyri, taken from two different drawers. Second, since Caswall got these reports from the storekeeper and another Mormon who presumably got their information from Joseph Smith, this is a thirdhand account of what Joseph Smith said about the meaning of these drawings. Also, one must take into account that Caswall's book is generally anti-Mormon.<sup>35</sup> Thus we

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34. Henry Caswall, *The City of the Mormons; or, Three Days at Nauvoo in 1842* (London: J. G. F. and J. Rivington, 1843), 22–23.

35. On Caswall's visit, see John W. Welch, "Joseph Smith's Awareness of Greek and Latin," in *Approaching Antiquity: Joseph Smith and the Ancient*



cannot simply take the source at face value. However, counter to this perspective is the first description, which seems to be of the original papyrus drawing of Facsimile 1. This first portion of the description provided by Caswall matches perfectly with what Joseph Smith had published about that facsimile only one month earlier.<sup>36</sup> Such precision and reliability suggests that we can place a certain amount of trust in Caswall's second description.

This description seems to be of JSP III. It should be noted that Caswall said several fragments were shown him. These, he said, came from a chest of drawers and were mounted in what looked to be picture frames. He then gave detailed descriptions of two different papyrus fragments from two of the drawers of this chest. It seems most likely, then, that both of these fragments were mounted in picture frames. When we consider that JSP III was mounted in just such a way,<sup>37</sup> and that Caswall's description matches so well with the vignette depicted on JSP III, I believe it is very likely that we are reading an account of what Caswall heard others say was Joseph Smith's interpretation of JSP III, an interpretation that describes some of the figures as being Christ, Satan, the four quarters of the earth, Jacob, his wives, and Jacob's ladder.

As noted above, there are a few similarities between Caswall's second description and that which was given by Cowdery. Cowdery's description does not mention Jacob, but it does describe Christ on a throne with scepters of power. This description could match JSP III, but in a way that differs from Caswall's description of which figure represented Christ and what role the Savior was fulfilling. They both describe Satan being held back, though they differ as to who is holding him back. They also both include enough elements that are not in common that it seems more likely they are describing two different vignettes. It is also possible that Cowdery was relating his own interpretation of the vignette, that Caswall provides a third-hand account of Joseph Smith's interpretation, and that Joseph and Oliver differed somewhat on their ideas as to what the vignettes meant. Another possibility is that Cowdery's description

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*World*, 312–14; also Craig L. Foster, "Henry Caswall: Anti-Mormon Extraordinaire," *BYU Studies* 35, no. 4 (1995–96): 152.

36. See "A Facsimile from the Book of Abraham, No. 1," *Times and Seasons* 3, no. 9 (March 1, 1842): 703.

37. See Kerry M. Muhlestein and Alexander L. Baugh, "Preserving the Joseph Smith Papyri Fragments: What Can We Learn from the Paper on Which the Papyri Were Mounted," *The Journal of Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 22, no. 2 (2013): 67.



Joseph Smith Papyrus III. Courtesy Church History Library, © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.



represents his and Joseph Smith's thinking soon after acquiring the papyri and that Caswall's account conveys how that thinking evolved over six years. It is also possible that Cowdery and Caswall just remembered things differently from one another. We do not have enough evidence to designate one of these options as much more probable than the others.

### **Sarah Leavitt's Description**

Caswall's account that Jacob's ladder was believed to be depicted on the papyri is confirmed from another description, the result of a visit by Sarah Leavitt five years before Caswall's visit, in about 1837. When writing many years later, Leavitt says, "We went into the upper rooms, saw the Egyptian mummies, the writing that was said to be written in Abraham's day, Jacob's ladder being pictured on it,"<sup>38</sup> and lots more wonders that I cannot write her[e], and that were explained to us."<sup>39</sup> It is not clear who told Leavitt that Jacob's ladder was depicted in the Egyptian vignettes. Presumably this was the same depiction that Henry Caswall was shown years later, indicating that this idea was at least somewhat prevalent and was held for some time.

### **William I. Appleby's Record**

Further ideas about the meanings of these Egyptian vignettes were conveyed by William I. Appleby, who visited Joseph Smith and was shown the papyri in 1841. While Appleby finished his autobiography in 1848, he seemed to be quoting from his own journal, suggesting that he wrote the account of his visit much closer in time to the actual event than 1848. He says:

There are also representations of men, beasts, Birds, Idols, and Oxen attached to a kind of a Plough, and a female guiding it. Also the serpent when he beguiled Eve. He appears with two legs, erect in the form and appearance of man. But his head in the form, and representing the Serpent, with his forked tongue extended. There are likewise, a representation of an Alter erected, with a man bound and laid thereon, and a

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38. It is, of course, unlikely for the papyri to have been created in Abraham's day and also include a picture of Jacob's Ladder, since Abraham was dead before Jacob had his vision.

39. Sarah Studevant Leavitt, "History of Sarah Studevant Leavitt," April 19, 1875, Americana Collection, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, 7.

Priest, with a knife in his hand, standing at the feet, with a dove over the person bound on the Altar, with several Idol Gods, standing around it.

A Celestial Globe, with the planet “Kolob” or first creation of the Supreme Being, a planet of light, which planet makes a revolution once in a thousand years—Also, the Lord revealing the Grand Key Words of the Holy Priesthood to Adam in the Garden of Eden, as also to Seth, Noah, Melchizedeck, Abraham, and to all who the Priesthood was revealed. Abraham also in the Court of Pharaoh sitting upon the Kings throne reasoning upon Astronomy, with a crown upon his head, representing the Priesthood as emblematical of the grand Presidency in Heaven, with the scepter of Justice and Judgment in his hand. And King Pharaoh, standing behind him, together with a Prince—a principal Waiter, and a black slave of the King.<sup>40</sup>

Some of Appleby’s writings about the vignettes convey only description without explanation, such as listing that there were birds,<sup>41</sup> oxen, and a plough.<sup>42</sup> Other portions of this writing contain descriptions and explanations that fit perfectly with the published facsimiles and their explanations, though Appleby certainly had a published version of these explanations with him as he wrote this.<sup>43</sup> Thus he could have used the published facsimiles as a source for these descriptions rather than his memory. The account also supplies us with one explanation that is not part of the facsimiles. Appleby informs us that there was a legged

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40. William I. Appleby, *Autobiography and Journal*, 1848–1856, 72–73, July 6, 1848, CHL, spacing corrected.

41. There are some human-headed birds that Appleby may have referenced here, such as on JSP IV and VI. It is more likely that he was either referring to the depiction of the falcon on JSP V or the swallow on JSP VI, or to birds that are on portions of the papyri we no longer have. The falcon and swallow as depicted in JSP V and VI are parts of spells designed to help transform the deceased into these birds, which can represent Horus and greatness respectively, since these are the glyphs for these words. See Alan H. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 3d ed. (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1982), 467 (sign G5) and 471 (sign G36).

42. The plough comment is likely describing JSP II. This seems to be a representation of Book of the Dead [BoD] 110. See Michael D. Rhodes, *Books of the Dead Belonging to Tshemmin and Neferirnub: A Translation and Commentary*, Studies in the Book of Abraham vol. 4 (Provo, Utah: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2010), 56. While the only text here states that they are plowing the entire sky (*sk3 pt 3w*), the spell is associated with coming to the field of reeds and having all that one would want there. Here others are to do the plowing for you. See BoD 110 and BoD 6.

43. Later in the account, Appleby quotes from the *Times and Seasons* publication.

serpent with his tongue sticking out, but he also provides the explanation that this was a depiction of the serpent beguiling Eve. This accords with Cowdery's writings. The detail of the forked tongue indicates that Appleby, and thus probably Cowdery, were looking at one or more papyri we no longer have because the only legged serpent present on the extant papyri (see JSP V) has no visible tongue.

### **Charlotte Haven's Letter**

This idea of the serpent on the papyri representing the one who beguiled Eve is strengthened by Charlotte Haven's writings. She visited Nauvoo in 1843 and gave detailed accounts of her visit in letters. She writes of Egyptian vignettes, one of which was interpreted as "Mother Eve being tempted by the serpent, who—the serpent, I mean—was standing on the tip of his tail, which with his two legs formed a tripod, and had his head in Eve's ear."<sup>44</sup> Again we see the association of the legged snake with the story of the Fall. Additionally, the scene described does not match the one depiction of a legged snake on the papyri fragments we currently have, which forms a strong suggestion that Cowdery, Caswall, and Haven are all describing a scene we no longer have (certainly Caswall and Haven are), an idea that is already indicated by the fact that Haven said the scene was on a roll, not one of the fragments.

Having gone through the pertinent accounts of what Joseph Smith said about the meanings of the noncanonical vignettes on his papyri, we are able to take the next step toward evaluating his views about his antiquities. We can now compare these historical accounts with modern academic ideas about the vignettes.

### **STEP THREE:**

#### **EXAMINING INTERPRETIVE CONGRUENCE AND DISSONANCE**

It must be remembered that these accounts, for the most part, are recollections of what a few people thought Joseph Smith said about the vignettes on the papyri. It is difficult to determine how accurately these recollections reflect the Prophet's actual views. Some ideas, such as

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44. Charlotte Haven to her mother, February 19, 1843, cited in "A Girl's Letters from Nauvoo," *Overland Monthly* (December 1890): 624. While Haven says this is an interpretation of hieroglyphics, her statement makes it clear she is describing a drawing, or vignette, rather than hieroglyphic text. The distinction between the two was often not made in the nineteenth century, nor is it made by many I talk with today.

Jacob's ladder and a serpent tempting Eve, are in enough sources over a long enough period of time that they at least represent what many thought Joseph Smith believed, and we have no record of his providing a corrective statement. Thus, at least some credence is probably due to those ideas, with less trust being put in other sources that do not have corroborating accounts.<sup>45</sup> With that tentative conclusion in mind, we can now examine these statements about the vignettes in light of current Egyptology. Doing so is somewhat problematic. As will be noted below, we are not sure that Joseph Smith was trying to tell us what ancient Egyptians would have thought of these drawings, and even if we were, we can only compare them to what Egyptologists say about them, rather than to what actual ancient Egyptians would have said.

This distinction is an important one. Because we have not performed a thorough Egyptological study of the meaning of these vignettes or of what would be a "standard" way of depicting them,<sup>46</sup> we cannot here perform a detailed examination of the vignettes from an Egyptological point of view. Instead we must be satisfied with a cursory survey, one which will highlight similarities and differences between a superficial academic explanation of the meanings of those drawings and Joseph Smith's purported explanations. A thorough study of each kind of drawing must be done in order for us to truly gain an understanding of the vignettes from an informed scholarly view and to distinguish how these particular vignettes may or may not differ from the norm. Again, given the current state of scholarship, we are very limited in our ability to compare Joseph Smith's interpretations with an Egyptological perspective. Moreover, we do not know that this is the correct comparison to make. Yet it is worth making this comparison, for it is the only one we are able to make.

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45. See Kerry Muhlestein, "Joseph Smith's Biblical Views of Egypt," in *Approaching Antiquity*, 459–60.

46. Mosher's unpublished dissertation is a very good starting point, but much more must be done in order to really understand the history of presentation and symbolism behind these vignettes. See Malcolm Mosher Jr., "The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead in the Late Period: A Study of Revisions Evident in Evolving Vignettes, and the Possible Chronological or Geographical Implications for Differing Versions of Vignettes" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1990). See also See Malcolm Mosher Jr., "Theban and Memphite Book of the Dead Traditions in the Late Period," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 29 (1992): 143–72.

With that caveat in mind, let us begin. From the present limited Egyptological point of view, the legged snake certainly would not represent the serpent who conversed with Eve in the Fall. We would usually say it was the *sa-ta* snake, a creature often pictured in the Book of the Dead, though its function is not well understood.<sup>47</sup> Presumably the snake is associated with the earth since its name literally means “son of the earth”<sup>48</sup> and because the text associated with this section of the Book of the Dead is about going forth from the earth on legs.<sup>49</sup> The serpent in the story of the Fall is also associated with the earth as part of its curse (Gen. 3:14). However, this is a weak connection given the natural tendency to associate the earth with an animal that lives in holes and slithers on the ground.

If Cowdery’s description of Enoch’s Pillar refers to JSP V, then this description also fails to square with an Egyptological interpretation, for this depiction looks like Ta-Sherit-Min, the ancient owner of the JSP V, standing in front of the hieroglyph for the city of Heliopolis.<sup>50</sup> Because we have no record of Josephus mentioning a pillar associated with Enoch,<sup>51</sup> we have no way of determining whether the meaning Cowdery attached to this depiction would bear any similarity to Ta-Sherit-Min approaching Heliopolis. It seems unlikely that there would be a strong connection.

If Cowdery’s description of the Godhead is his interpretation of JSP IV, then he is speaking of that which appears to an Egyptologist as a typical representation of figures sitting next to each other. On this

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47. See Rhodes, *Books of the Dead*, 48, 137; Mosher, “Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead,” 289–90; and Ritner, *Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri*, 177.

48. See Rainer Hannig, *Großes Handwörterbuch Ägyptisch-Deutsch: (2800–950 v. Chr.): die Sprache der Pharaonen*, Kulturgeschichte der antiken Welt (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1995), 651, 912. Also John A. Wilson, “The Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri, Translations and Interpretations: A Summary Report,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 3, no. 2 (1968): 77; and Ritner, *Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri*, 177 n. 138.

49. Rhodes, *Books of the Dead*, 74.

50. Rhodes, *Books of the Dead*, 44; and Ritner, *Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri*, 178. See Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 495 (sign O28).

51. It seems likely that Cowdery was confused with a reference Josephus made to Adam’s pillars. See Lincoln H. Blumell, “Palmyra and Jerusalem: Joseph Smith’s Scriptural Texts and the Writings of Falvius Josephus,” in *Approaching Antiquity*, 355, 380.

fragment we see Ta-Sherit-Min facing three seated deities.<sup>52</sup> In this case, Cowdery's interpretation bears a strong similarity to the Egyptological interpretation in that he identified a set of three deities acting in concert as the unified godhead. A Trinitarian association with Egyptian solar religion is a somewhat commonly held view by Egyptologists.<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, this is not how most Egyptologists would describe this particular vignette.

From an Egyptological point of view the vignette depicted on JSP III, which is presumably the depiction described to Caswall as an emblem of redemption, is part of a judgment and presentation scene associated with Book of the Dead chapter 125.<sup>54</sup> A few of Caswall's descriptions bear similarities to Egyptological interpretations. One could term the vignette a redemption scene, since it represents the deceased successfully passing judgment and being presented triumphantly into the presence of deity. The figures Caswall described as the four quarters of the earth<sup>55</sup> did have an ancient association with the cardinal directions, though it was not their primary function.<sup>56</sup> Egyptologically, the "big dog" that was interpreted as wanting to devour the four quarters of the

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52. Rhodes, *Books of the Dead*, 56; Mosher, "Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead," 325; Ritner, *Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri*, 192. See also Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 544, section C.

53. Ritner, *Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri*, 192 n. 204.

54. Both Ritner, *Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri*, 206, and Rhodes, *Books of the Dead*, 57, independently agree with this assessment. Presumably, this is the fragment John Gee referenced when he said there was a judgment scene associated with BoD 125 among the JSP. See John Gee, "Facsimile 3 and Book of the Dead 125," in *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, ed. John Gee and Brian Hauglid (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2005), 102. Gee, "Facsimile 3 and Book of the Dead 125," 95–101, provides an excellent description of what is typical and atypical in judgment scenes.

55. The judgment scene was initially associated with BoD 30B but came to be tied to BoD 125. Besides Gee's analysis of typical judgment scenes, as a point of comparison we will refer to six other judgment scenes, though a much larger study is necessary to determine what is truly standard for Book of the Dead depictions and what is unusual. In P. Ani (EA 10470/3), the four sons are present atop the lotus next to Osiris in a manner similar to JSP III, as also in P. Hunefer (EA 9901/3), and P. Nedjmet, though this is a very abbreviated weighing and judgment scene (EA 10541). However, the four sons are not in P. Anhai (EA 10472/4–5); or P. Kerasher (EA 9995/4); or P. Nebseny (EA 9900/4).

56. John Gee, "Notes on the Sons of Horus" (paper published by Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1991), 33–34. These are the four sons of Horus, presented in the way they are traditionally depicted and labeled





Joseph Smith Papyrus IV. Courtesy Church History Library, © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.



earth is a slightly unusual depiction of Ammut,<sup>57</sup> a creature whose role was indeed to devour.<sup>58</sup> Its association with Satan is also quite reasonable, since Ammut's role was to devour souls, bringing about a second and final death for them. This certainly mirrors Satan's desire and role from an LDS point of view.

However, there are some elements of the description that do not have any ready parallels with an Egyptological interpretation. While the figure behind Ammut has deteriorated, enough of it remains to make it fairly certain that Thoth is the Egyptian god depicted.<sup>59</sup> This is confirmed by the text in columns 6–9, where the name of the god is largely illegible, but the epithet, which includes being from Hermopolis (*hmnw*<sup>60</sup>), Thoth's traditional origins, and being the scribe of the Ennead (*sš-m3't psdt*),<sup>61</sup> is clearly about Thoth.<sup>62</sup> One could make an argument that Thoth's role here, which is to record the results of the judgment that has just taken place, has a kind of parallel with Christ and the "Lamb's Book of Life" (Rev. 13:8; 21:27; D&C 132:19). But a parallel with the role of holding the devourer back from the four quarters of the earth is somewhat weak in this respect, though it does hold some plausibility.

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as such in the text above. Columns 3–5 in the facsimile read, *ddmdw in ims[t] hpy dw3-mw.t=f qbḥ-sn=f*, which are the names of the four sons of Horus.

57. Ammut is present in P. Ani, P. Ankhwahibra (EA 10558/18), P. Kerasher, P. Hunefer, and P. Anhai; but is not in P. Nedjmet.

58. Again, both Rhodes, *Books of the Dead*, 57, and Ritner, *Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri*, 206, independently agree. See also Gee, "Facsimile 3 and the Book of the Dead 125," 100; Ian Shaw and Paul Nicholson, *British Museum Dictionary of Ancient Egypt* (London: British Museum Press, 1995), 30, 55; and Leonard Lesko, "Book of Going Forth by Day," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, 3 vols., ed. Donald B. Redford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1:195.

59. Again, both Rhodes *Books of the Dead*, 57, and Ritner, *Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri*, 206, independently agree. Gee, "Facsimile 3 and Book of the Dead 125," 100, outlines how regular it is to have Thoth depicted in this kind of scene. Thoth is present in P. Ani, P. Ankhwahibra, P. Kerasher, P. Hunefer, and P. Anhai; but he is not present in P. Nedjmet unless we take the small baboon as a representation of Thoth as scribe.

60. Column 9.

61. Column 9.

62. See Manfred Lurker, *The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Egypt: An Illustrated Dictionary* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 121, for a description of Thoth's Hermopolite connection and scribal role. On these roles and his association with the judgment scene, see Denise M. Dorey, "Thoth," in Redford, *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, 3:398–400.

While there is a Christian notion that recording the names of those to be exalted does prevent Satan from devouring all souls in every quarter of the earth (Rev. 20:8–12), Thoth is not typically thought of as playing that role, though his recording of a successfully passed judgment is indeed what prevents Ammut from devouring the deceased. Thus, there is a plausible parallel, but it is not as strong as those mentioned above.

The parallels are far weaker when it comes to what Caswall relates as Jacob, his wives, and his ladder. There are indeed three figures on the lower-right corner of JSP III. The genders of the figures do not fully match Caswall's description, but their appearance could be taken in the way he describes. In its Egyptological context, the woman furthest on the left is the goddess Ma'at, as is made clear by the role she plays, the text in column 10, and the hieroglyph above her head.<sup>63</sup> She is leading the center figure, Nefer-ir-nebu, the woman who is being judged,<sup>64</sup> and who is presumably the figure identified to Caswall as Jacob. Her depiction could be taken as a male. The papyrus is deteriorated and cut to the right of this figure, making it impossible to specifically identify the third person,<sup>65</sup> but it is almost certainly another accompanying goddess.<sup>66</sup> I suppose it is possible that the story of Jacob bringing his family to Bethel, the place where he came into God's presence, so that they could make a covenant with God, is a kind of parallel. It is not a very strong one. At the same time, I do not see any connection between any part of their clothing, or any other elements near them, and Jacob's ladder. While Jacob's ladder is about coming into the presence of God, which is what this scene is about Egyptologically, we would normally not associate the piece of clothing associated with the ladder as being emblematic

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63. Again, both Rhodes, *Books of the Dead*, 57–58, and Ritner, *Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri*, 206, independently agree. Column 10 reads *dd mdw in m3<sup>c</sup>.t s3.t r<sup>c</sup>*, or “words spoken by Ma'at, daughter of Ra.”

64. Rhodes, *Books of the Dead*, 57–58. The text in column 12 indicates this is who is represented: *nfr-ir-nbw*, or “Nefer-ir-nebu.”

65. In P. Anhai, Anhai is accompanied at the weighing of the heart by Horus, as is Hunefer. Kerasher is accompanied by Ma'at. Ankhwahibra is also accompanied by Ma'at. Nedjmet is accompanied only by her husband, Herihor. Ani appears to be escorted by Isis and Nephthys.

66. Ritner, *Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri*, 206, suggests another representation of Ma'at while Rhodes, *Books of the Dead*, 59, suggests it might be Isis. The depiction does not make it possible to identify her, and it is not clear whether or not the text *ii.(t)hr m3<sup>c</sup>.t*, or “coming bearing truth” is to be applied to this figure or is describing what Ma'at and Nefer-ir-nebu are doing.

of coming into the presence of deity. That being said, the left-most part of Nefer-ir-nebu's clothing has a ladder-like appearance.

After first having read the historical accounts related above in a cursory manner, I did not have the impression that there were any agreements between them and what my Egyptological training led me to see in these vignettes. Thus, I was surprised to find several Egyptological parallels as I studied more carefully. The parallels were more numerous and stronger than I had supposed they would be. Nevertheless, there is much in these accounts that, at the present time and with our present understanding, seems questionable. This is an important aspect to understand as we move toward creating a model for evaluating Joseph Smith's purported statements about antiquity.

### FURTHER INTERPRETIVE CONSIDERATIONS

Before we begin to make such models, there are several more things to consider, for we must be cautious in examining the explanations of these vignettes. For example, the account related by Caswall, as noted above, is a thirdhand account of what Joseph Smith said a vignette represented. Thus we cannot put a great deal of trust in the validity of this account, especially when other parts of his recorded visit seem to be complete fabrication.<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, we cannot be sure it really was JSP III that was described to him. Still, the description matches this vignette closely enough and has enough parallels with Cowdery's accounts that we must address the probability that it is an accurate account of Joseph Smith's explanation of JSP III. It would be tempting for those with a believing perspective to aver that the elements that have Egyptological parallels were accurately described and those that do not were incorrectly related. I do not believe this is methodologically acceptable. It would be equally tempting for those with a nonbelieving point of view to dismiss the parallels while accepting as authentic the descriptions that have no such validation. This would be equally unacceptable. Thus, we must ask, what are we to do with an account that is ambiguous both in its reliability and its congruency with Egyptological explanations?

Similarly, Charlotte Haven's account relates a teenager's narration of what Lucy Mack Smith said that Joseph Smith said. Haven's writings at

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67. Hugh Nibley, "The Greek Psalter Mystery or Mr. Caswall Meets the Press," in *Tinkling Cymbals and Sounding Brass: The Art of Telling Tales about Joseph Smith and Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1991), 304–406.

this point in her life<sup>68</sup> seem to be at least partially designed to poke fun at Joseph Smith and the Latter-day Saints. Thus she may be apt to exaggerate somewhat in her letters to her mother. Even if we were to assume that all that Lucy Mack Smith said was recorded fully accurately, which is improbable,<sup>69</sup> we cannot be sure that Joseph Smith concurred with the explanations conveyed by either Cowdery or Lucy Mack Smith. In fact there are a number of cases in which Mother Smith displays a tendency to somewhat exaggerate when speaking of the antiquities.<sup>70</sup> Thus Haven's description, while important, must be used with appropriate historian's caution.

At the same time, the various accounts agree on several particulars, such as a legged serpent representing a scene from the Garden of Eden, or scenes where Satan desires to destroy the earth. Moreover, when men like Appleby or Caswall made comments about the vignettes that were published as facsimiles with a printed explanation of them, their comments were congruent with that which Joseph Smith published. Taken together, these agreements suggest a certain amount of validity. How can we reconcile the important historical-critical questions we must ask about hearsay accounts with the evidence for their validity?<sup>71</sup> Again we find ourselves asking how we can properly evaluate the historical validity of these accounts.<sup>72</sup>

We should not address these questions in isolation. Similar issues help to put them in perspective. The most noticeable are the claimed identity of the mummies and of the handwriting on the papyri. Let us examine the accounts that convey information about these topics.

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68. Her letters home become more evenhanded over time, but the account of her visit with Lucy Mack Smith contains an element of mockery.

69. On the overall reliability and some specific possible unreliabilities of Haven's account, see Muhlestein, "Joseph Smith's Biblical Views of Egypt," 456–67.

70. On Lucy Mack Smith's possible exaggerations, see Muhlestein, "Joseph Smith's Biblical Views of Egypt," 458–59, 463–65.

71. On employing historical method in this way, see Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, trans. Peter Putnam (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), 120; and Theodor Mommsen, "History and Literature," in *The Varieties of History: Voltaire to the Present*, ed. Fritz Stern (New York: Random House, 1973), 192.

72. On evaluating this, see Gee, "Eyewitness, Hearsay, and Physical Evidence of the Joseph Smith Papyri," 175–217.

## INTERPRETIVE CONSIDERATIONS IN LIGHT OF STATEMENTS ABOUT MUMMIES AND AUTOGRAPHS IN THE SOURCES

While we have so far examined accounts that discuss the meanings attached to drawings, others attributed to Joseph Smith further ideas about the papyri. Many felt that he had said things about the identity of the mummies and about the handwriting on the papyri.

### Signatures and Authorship

Several accounts of visits with Joseph Smith or his mother speak of whose handwriting was on the papyri. For example, S. M. Bartlett, who visited Joseph Smith in Nauvoo, reported that the Prophet showed him the papyri and said that “‘These ancient records,’ said he [Joseph Smith], ‘throw great light on the subject of Christianity. They have been unrolled and preserved with great labor and care. My time has been hitherto too much taken up to translate the whole of them, but I will show you how I interpret certain parts. There,’ said he, pointing to a particular character, ‘that is the signature of the patriarch Abraham.’”<sup>73</sup>

We do not know if the papyrus fragment Joseph Smith was pointing to was one that we still have today. As discussed above, all of the extant fragments are from the Greco-Roman period, many centuries after Abraham’s day. It seems unlikely that whatever fragment the Prophet was highlighting was contemporary with Abraham. Thus, it is not probable that he was looking at an actual signature of Abraham, if by “signature” he means the actual handwriting of the patriarch.

### The Autograph of Moses

Similarly, many years after Josiah Quincy visited the Prophet, he wrote something of the authors of the papyri, saying that the Prophet had shown him the papyri and told him, “This is the autograph of Moses, and these lines were written by his brother Aaron. Here we have the earliest account of the Creation, from which Moses composed the First Book of Genesis.”<sup>74</sup>

As will be discussed shortly, the report of Moses’s or Aaron’s handwriting being on the papyri is probably inaccurate. Yet we should ask

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73. S. M. Bartlett, “A Glance at the Mormons,” *Quincy Whig*, October 17, 1840, quotation marks added.

74. Josiah Quincy, *Figures of the Past from the Leaves of Old Journals* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1892), 386.

ourselves what to make of it if it were. If we were to assume that Quincy quoted Joseph Smith correctly and assume that by “autograph” Joseph Smith meant the actual handwriting of Moses, then Joseph Smith would be claiming that some portion of the papyri he owned was written on by Moses, who lived about a thousand years earlier than any of the papyri we currently have were created.

However, Quincy’s account is somewhat problematic because he is the only one who recalls writings of Moses and Aaron being on the papyri. Additionally, we have no record of Joseph Smith translating anything from Moses after acquiring the papyri. This suggests either that Quincy did not remember the conversation well or that Joseph Smith never translated the portion about which he was speaking, nor did he speak of it often to others. Moreover, in reporting their experience, Quincy’s traveling companion used wording that is more similar to that in the Book of Abraham, stating that the book was written by the hand of Abraham,<sup>75</sup> rather than Quincy’s “autograph of Moses” statement, which casts further doubt on the validity of Quincy’s account. It is also important to note that of the sixty-nine times I know of a biblical character being associated with the papyri, this is the only time Moses or Aaron was mentioned. All of this strongly suggests that Quincy misremembered the names of the biblical personalities he had been told were on the papyri. It is far more likely that he was told that the writings of Abraham and Joseph were present.<sup>76</sup>

Still, even if it were only the handwriting of Abraham that was thought to be on the papyri, it is most probable that the ink on the papyrus was not put there by Abraham himself (which is quite a separate issue from whether or not the text was originally authored by Abraham himself). What should be made of this?

### Identity of the Mummies

A similar question is connected to the identity of the mummies. A number of accounts speak of who the mummies were. The earliest such mention is made by Oliver Cowdery in 1835, when he averred that they did not know the identity of the mummies, though they were sure none

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75. See Charles Francis Adams, *Diary*, “1 September 1843–19 May 1845,” May 15, 1844, Adams Family Collection, reel 67, Massachusetts Historical Society; Martin B. Duberman, *Charles Francis Adams, 1807–1886* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), 92.

76. Muhlestein, “Joseph Smith’s Biblical Views of Egypt,” 460–65.

of them were Abraham.<sup>77</sup> In 1838, Joseph Smith also denied knowing the identity of the mummies.<sup>78</sup> The first time of which I am aware of the mummies being ascribed royalty is when a visitor to Quincy, Illinois, reported that Father and Mother Smith displayed the mummies while Joseph Smith was still in Liberty Jail and that they told this visitor that the mummies were royalty.<sup>79</sup>

An account of a visit with Joseph Smith soon after this also speaks of the mummies being royal. S. M. Bartlett, who at the time of the visit was quite friendly toward the Latter-day Saints, described something of Joseph Smith's ideas about who the mummies were. "'The embalmed body that stands near the centre of the case,' said he [Joseph Smith], 'is one of the Pharaohs, who sat upon the throne of Egypt; and the female figure by its side was probably one of the daughters.' 'It may have been the Princess Thermutis,' I replied, 'the same that rescued Moses from the waters of Nile.' 'It is not improbable,' answered the Prophet; 'but time has not yet allowed me fully to examine and decide that point.'"<sup>80</sup> This secondhand account of what Joseph Smith thought of the mummies' identities indicates that he thought one had been a king of Egypt and assumed, but was not sure, that one of the others was the daughter. He was clear that he did not know their exact identities. It is equally clear that Bartlett felt free to speculate on the identities and that his speculation tended toward the grandiose, since he immediately thought of one of the most famous father-daughter sets of Egyptian royalty. These ideas seem to have taken hold and are conveyed frequently thereafter.

From this point forward, we encounter more and more second- and thirdhand accounts describing the mummies as royalty. Seemingly what began as speculation experienced a steady progression in its circulation and acceptance.<sup>81</sup> Eventually there was something of a widespread

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77. Cowdery, "Egyptian Mummies," 233–34.

78. "History, 1838–1856, volume B-1 [1 September 1834–2 November 1838]," 675, on Church Historians Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/history-1838-1856-volume-b-1-1-1-september-1834-2-november-1838?p=129>.

79. Henry Asbury, *Reminiscences of Quincy, Illinois, Containing Historical Events, Anecdotes, Matters Concerning Old Settlers and Old Times, Etc.* (Quincy, Ill.: D. Wilcox and Sons, 1882), 153.

80. S. M. Bartlett, "A Glance at the Mormons," *The Sun* (New York City), July 28, 1840, quotation marks added.

81. See Muhlestein, "Joseph Smith's Biblical Views of Egypt," 462–63.



belief that the collection of antiquities in Nauvoo included the mummies of Egyptian kings.

There is one account from this time period that reports Mother Smith teaching that one of the mummies was the body of Abraham.<sup>82</sup> Because in every other account Lucy Mack Smith spoke of the mummies being royalty, and because from the time of their acquisition the Saints had denied that any of the mummies were Abraham, this report seems unlikely to be accurate. This same account also states that a picture of Noah's ark was on the papyri. Again, while this is possible, it is unique among the accounts. On the whole, there are a number of dubious aspects about this report, so we are best served to rely on the consistency of the majority of accounts. Reports of royal mummies were consistent, while this account is fully unique. It is probable that the author of this account remembered things inaccurately. It is also quite possible that Lucy Mack Smith embellished as she showed the antiquities. She had reason to do so, and there are other times when it seems she may have.<sup>83</sup>

I have already highlighted the improbability that the papyri contained the actual handwriting of Abraham. It is equally unlikely that any of the mummies were the remains of an Egyptian king, especially the king of the Exodus. If Lebolo had discovered a royal mummy and had known it, he almost certainly would have reported it as such and even more certainly would not have shipped it to be sold along with a cache of other mummies and papyri in such a nonchalant manner.

Furthermore, we can identify most of the royal mummies that are possible candidates for the pharaoh of the Exodus, and none of them were owned by Joseph Smith.<sup>84</sup> If any of his mummies had contained

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82. A. W. Harlan, "Mormon Mummies: Remarkable Experiences of Mr. H[arlan] during a visit to Nauvoo, City of the Saints," newspaper clipping dated March 2 (no year and no publisher) found by John W. Welch in the Keokuk History volumes in the Keokuk Public Library, Keokuk, Iowa; digital photograph of clipping in author's possession.

83. See Muhlestein, "Joseph Smith's Biblical Views of Egypt," 458, 463.

84. For summaries of the location of royal bodies, see Peter A. Clayton, *Chronicle of the Pharaohs, the Reign-by-Reign Record of the Rulers and Dynasties of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 158, assuming that the Exodus took place sometime between the reigns of Hatshepsut and Merneptah. See also Aidan Dodson and Dyan Hilton, *The Complete Royal Families of Ancient Egypt* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004), 127–83. On

the kind of lavish accoutrements and goods we would expect to accompany royalty, then it certainly would have been mentioned by some eyewitness at some point. While we can never fully rule out the possibility that the mummy of some king of Egypt reached Ohio in 1835, it is so improbable as to be a virtual certainty that none of the Smith mummies were royalty. It may not have seemed so unlikely to the people and culture of Joseph Smith's time and place, but today this seems implausible. While we do not know with certainty that Joseph Smith thought the mummies were royal, the idea became so widespread and was never corrected in any way, it seems quite likely that Joseph Smith at least somewhat accepted this point of view.

#### **STEP FOUR: MODELS FOR DEALING WITH CONGRUENCE AND DISSONANCE**

While we may not be able to sift through each individual account of explanations of the vignettes, identifying mummies, and assigning autographs with enough precision to know what aspects truly came from Joseph Smith or to what particular mummy or papyrus he was referring, the conglomerate mass of evidence suggests that Joseph Smith said many things that find good academic parallels, but also that he believed several things about his Egyptian artifacts that are not fully congruent with modern academic Egyptology. We must then decide how to deal with such information. Here we will explore several options

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the dating of the Exodus, see Dan'el Kahn, "A Geo-Political and Historical Perspective of Merneptah's Policy in Canaan," in *The Ancient Near East in the 12th–10th Centuries BCE: Culture and History Proceedings of the Conference held at the University of Haifa, 2–5 May 2010*, ed. Gershon Galil and others (Munster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2012), 255–68; M. G. Hasel, "Israel in the Merneptah Stela," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research (BASOR)* 296 (1994): 45–61; K. A. Kitchen, "The Physical Text of Merneptah's Victory Hymn (The 'Israel Stela')," *Journal of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities (JSSEA)* 29 (1994): 71–76; James K. Hoffmeier, "What Is the Biblical Date for the Exodus? A Response to Bryant Wood," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society (JETS)* 50, no. 2 (2007): 225–47; Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Pharaoh Triumphant: The Life and Times of Ramesses II, King of Egypt* (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1982), 70–71; and James K. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 116–21.

without attempting to explore every possibility.<sup>85</sup> As scholars continue to find, research, and analyze the evidence that bears on this subject, future studies will undoubtedly illuminate other theories that have not yet been conceived. Here we will cursorily explore what seem to be the most important possible theories.

### Model One: No Inspiration

Each of these models purports a different perspective on Joseph Smith's revelations concerning the papyri. For those who approach the subject from a nonbelieving starting point, the answer is simple. Joseph Smith, like so many in his day, was excited about ancient artifacts and was imaginative in his approach to them.<sup>86</sup> He freely assigned his imaginative ideas to inspiration and touted them as absolutely true, which was then accepted by his followers. Thus, in this paradigm, Joseph Smith received no revelation at all.<sup>87</sup> This perspective would be equally applied

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85. John Gee is working on a more exhaustive analysis of the many theories that might be used to explain Joseph Smith's explanations of the facsimiles. While I have spoken frequently with Gee about his work on these ideas and have made some small contributions to his thinking, and while I have read early drafts of some of his writings on this subject, here I am presenting ideas that I had before reading his work, though I have further refined and developed my thinking since then. There is no doubt that our oral and written conversations with each other have helped refine and improve my ideas, and I am grateful to John Gee for this. It should be kept in mind that I am responsible for the theories presented here, and any failing in either the idea or my ability to present it is not due to Gee or any others who work on this topic.

86. See John Gee's lecture at the 2013 Church History Symposium, found online at *YouTube*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XVAEC1wJFqY>; Kerry Muhlestein, "European Views of Egyptian Magic and Mystery: A Cultural Context for *The Magic Flute*," *BYU Studies* 43, no. 3 (2004): 137–48; Kerry Muhlestein, "Prelude to the Pearl: Sweeping Events Leading to the Discovery of the *Book of Abraham*," in *Prelude to the Restoration: From Apostasy to the Restored Church* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2004), 130–41; and S. J. Wolfe and Robert Singerman, *Mummies in Nineteenth Century America* (Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2009), 96–133.

87. See, for example, Grant H. Palmer, *An Insider's View of Mormon Origins* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 16. See also Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *The Case against Mormonism*, 2:159, 3:1–52; and Charles M. Larson, *By His Own Hand upon Papyrus: A New Look at the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Institute for Religious Research, 1992), 51, 199–226.

to the canonized interpretations of the Facsimiles and the text contained in the Book of Abraham. However, this approach fails to account for the many textual, geographic, historical, and interpretive accuracies conveyed in the book of Abraham and in Joseph Smith's explanations of its vignettes and those on the other papyrus fragments.<sup>88</sup> It also fails to deal with the real and valid revelatory epistemological experiences of millions of believers.<sup>89</sup> Ignoring such experiences as if they did not happen is as methodologically problematic as is ignoring other kinds of evidence. While a failure to deal with all of the evidence represents a real weakness, the strength of this model is that it explains any inaccuracies and offers a more simple explanation of some issues than those offered by scholars of a believing perspective. It is a simple enough hypothesis that I do not believe it needs further explanation here. All other options are more complicated.

### Model Two: Complete Inspiration

Many who analyze the topic beginning with a believing point of view may conclude that Joseph Smith was fully inspired and correct in all of his ideas and interpretations about the mummies and papyri. This belief would lead to the conclusion that modern academic practice has failed to come to the point where it can produce this correct understanding through its own methods. This would suggest that we are incorrect in interpreting our evidence about royal mummies (if Smith held that

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88. For a few of the many possible examples, see Kerry Muhlestein, "Egyptian Papyri and the Book of Abraham: Some Questions and Answers," 90–106; Kerry Muhlestein and John Gee, "An Egyptian Context for the Sacrifice of Abraham," *Journal of Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 20, no. 2 (2011): 70–77; Kerry Muhlestein, "Abraham, Isaac, and Osiris-Michael: The Use of Biblical Figures in Egyptian Religion, a Survey," in *Achievements and Problems of Modern Egyptology*, ed. Galina A. Belova and Sergej V. Ivanov (Moscow: Russian Academy of Sciences, 2011), 246–59; John Gee, "An Egyptian View of Abraham," in *Bountiful Harvest: Essays in Honor of S. Kent Brown* (Provo: Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2011), 137–56; John Gee, John A. Tvedtness, and Brian M. Hauglid, eds., *Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham* (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2001).

89. See Steven C. Harper, *Joseph Smith's First Vision: A Guide to the Historical Accounts* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2012), 3–8, 121–24; and Kerry Muhlestein, "Egyptian Papyri and the Book of Abraham: A Faithful, Egyptological Point of View," in *No Weapon Shall Prosper*, 235–36.

point of view) and that we have either dated the papyri we now have incorrectly or that Joseph Smith was speaking of papyri we do not currently have and that such papyri were substantially older than those with which it was surrounded when it arrived in the United States.

The former (royal mummies) is possible, though it seems unlikely, at least to this academic author. The latter (older papyri) is also possible and seems somewhat more likely. We do not know if Lebolo was particularly systematic in grouping mummies and papyri together to be sold. There is no evidence that he felt the collections he intended to sell should contain only artifacts from the same time period, nor can we be certain that, even if he felt that way, he was capable of determining what time period various mummies and papyri came from. Furthermore, tombs from the area he was excavating were sometimes reused and thus had artifacts within them stemming from several eras of Egyptian history.<sup>90</sup> However, given the possibility that many of the fragments we now have may once have been part of the scrolls from which Joseph Smith seems to have translated,<sup>91</sup> it appears more plausible that the papyri were all from the same time period.

When it comes to the text of the Book of Abraham and explanations of the vignettes, there are several other variables that must be taken into account. Regarding the text, one may postulate that it was written (or dictated) by Abraham and was passed down for generations without any changes or redactions, arriving in Kirtland in its pristine, original form. While God is undoubtedly capable of making this happen, it would be a singular occurrence in the history of even sacred texts,<sup>92</sup> including

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90. For example, the Soter family tomb in Thebes was used for many generations. At other times, tombs were reused by those who had no relation or claim to the former inhabitants, hundreds of years later. Nigel Strudwick has been working on this, as reported in "Use and Re-use of Tombs in the Theban Necropolis: Patterns and Explanations," paper presented at the 59th annual meeting of the American Research Center in Egypt, Seattle Washington, April 25, 2008. See also Asunta Redford, "Theban Tomb 188 (the Tomb of Parennefer): A Case Study of Tomb Reuse in the Theban Necropolis" (PhD diss., Pennsylvania State University, 2006). As another example, the Tomb of Hawra (TT 37), a 25th dynasty tomb, was reused in the Ptolemaic era, a case that would not be dissimilar from what could be proposed in this paradigm.

91. For more on this, see John Gee, "Formulas and Faith," *Journal of Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 21, no. 1 (2012): 64–65.

92. For surveys of the transmission process for the Old and New Testaments, see Frank Moore Cross, "The Text behind the Text of the Hebrew Bible,"

modern sacred texts.<sup>93</sup> Under this theory of a perfect text, seemingly anachronistic terms such as “land of the Chaldeans” (Abr. 1:1) are historically correct phrases and we need to revise our current academic understanding of their meaning and the history behind them.<sup>94</sup>

While this theory is possible, it seems more likely that Abraham wrote (or dictated) the text of the Book of Abraham, which subsequently went through a transmission and redaction process similar to other ancient texts.<sup>95</sup> Any anachronisms present in the book of Abraham are similar to those in Genesis and have similar explanations.<sup>96</sup> Those things that do not currently have a plausible historical explanation will be understood when we are able to obtain and fully analyze all of the pertinent evidence, which may not happen in our time. In light of the fact that many things that once seemed academically unacceptable have since become fully reasonable due to good research,<sup>97</sup> this theory cannot be discounted.

Regarding the vignettes, we can postulate that Joseph Smith’s explanations illustrate how an ancient Egyptian in Abraham’s day would have interpreted those vignettes. As noted above, it is also possible that they are intended to explain how a Semite from Abraham’s day, such as Abraham himself, would have interpreted them. An alternative to this is the notion that the Prophet was explaining how an Egyptian living in the era when the papyri were created would have interpreted them, or perhaps

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in *Approaches to the Bible: The Best of Bible Review*, ed. Harvey Minkoff, 2 vols. (Washington D.C.: Biblical Archaeological Society, 1994), 1:148–61; and Darrell Hannah, “New Testament Manuscripts: Unicals, Minuscules, Palimpsests, etc.,” in *Approaches to the Bible*, 1:205–11.

93. For one example of this in modern scripture, see Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Part 1, 1 Nephi 1—2 Nephi 10* (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2004).

94. See John Gee and Stephen D. Ricks, “Historical Plausibility: The Historicity of the Book of Abraham as a Case Study,” in *Historicity and the Latter-day Saint Scriptures*, ed. Paul Y. Hoskisson (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2001), 71–72.

95. On the transmission and redaction process, see Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 199–285.

96. See K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 333–60. For a different point of view, see Anson F. Rainey and R. Steven Notely, *Carta’s New Century Handbook and Atlas of the Bible* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2007), 33.

97. See, for example, Muhlestein and Gee, “Egyptian Context for the Sacrifice of Abraham,” 70–77.

a Jew of that day.<sup>98</sup> Perhaps it is an explanation that would have come from those in that era who were syncretizing these and other belief systems and thus producing symbolic interpretations that could be taken a number of different ways.<sup>99</sup> While this is a more nuanced approach that takes into account the complex intercultural relations that were the reality of that era, a reality that has produced a number of textual and pictorial elements that no one currently understands,<sup>100</sup> it is a theory that is impossible to prove or disprove. It can account simultaneously for all of those interpretive elements that have an Egyptological parallel and those that seem improbable given our current academic understanding. However, it does not account for the unlikely assignments of Abrahamic handwriting on the papyri and royal identification of the mummies. This model can allow for the idea that we may misunderstand what Smith meant when he reportedly said that the signature or autograph of Abraham was on the papyrus.

A third alternative regarding Joseph Smith's explanations of the vignettes that fits within this model is that the Prophet was not explaining what any ancient person would derive from the depictions, but rather was expressing the spiritual symbols and lessons and stories we should derive from them in our day. This is somewhat akin to biblical reception theory.<sup>101</sup> In this case, regardless of whether an ancient Egyptian or Jew would have perceived Facsimile 1 to be a depiction of Abraham's near sacrifice, Smith provided us with an explanation that

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98. Kevin L. Barney, "Facsimiles and Semitic Adaptation of Existing Sources," in *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, 107–30.

99. See Muhlestein, "Abraham, Isaac, and Osiris-Michael"; Csaba A. La'da, "Encounters with Ancient Egypt: The Hellenistic Greek Experience," in *Ancient Perspectives on Egypt*, ed. Roger Matthews and Cornelia Roemer (London: UCL Press, 2003), 157–70; Erik Hornung, *The Secret Lore of Egypt: Its Impact on the West*, trans. David Lorton (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001). For more on the idea that Egyptians and those who lived within her boundaries would appropriate, reinterpret, and adapt the ideas of others, see *Evolving Egypt: Innovation, Appropriation, and Reinterpretation in Ancient Egypt*, British Archaeological Reports International Series no. 2397, ed. Kerry Muhlestein and John Gee (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2012).

100. John Gee, "Abracadabra, Isaac and Jacob," in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 7, no. 1 (1995): 75–77; Terence DuQuesne, "The Raw and the Half-Baked: Approaches to Egyptian Religion," *Discussions in Egyptology* 30 (1994): 34.

101. See David Paul Parris, *Reception Theory and Biblical Hermeneutics*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2008).



conveys what we should get out of the story. Whether any ancient person would have seen part of Facsimile 2 as representing the conveyance of key words or JSP III as a representation of redemption is irrelevant because the Prophet was instead teaching what we should learn from those vignettes today. This theory can account for at least some of the elements of Joseph Smith's explanations that are in harmony with Egyptological interpretations because some symbols are universal enough, such as fierce-looking creatures wanting to devour things, that it is no surprise that a modern spiritual explanation matches an Egyptian religious one. It can also incorporate those elements of his explanations that do not find any ancient parallels because it does not purport to rely on ancient interpretations. However, when it comes to instances of Joseph Smith saying that hieroglyphs on the vignettes say something which is incongruous with modern Egyptological explanations (see Facsimile 3 and Joseph Smith's explanations of the text above the figures' heads), this theory can only suppose that Joseph Smith was not fully aware he was providing an explanation that was unique to modern times. In other words, Joseph Smith may have thought he was interpreting hieroglyphs when in fact he was providing an inspired, homiletic explanation that was independent of its Egyptian origins. This holds a common element with the next model and will be explored more fully below.

### **Model Three: Partial Inspiration**

Both of the earlier paradigms disallow Joseph Smith the ability to have both inspiration and personal opinions or ideas about any of the ancient artifacts in his possession. The first model suggests that if Joseph Smith is wrong about anything he is wrong about everything, an idea that must be based on the notion that he could not express an incorrect opinion about anything and still be a prophet. In other words, Joseph Smith did not have the right to be wrong. The second model also assumes he never uttered personal opinions on all these matters. This view also presupposes that he did not have the right to be wrong because it assumes that everything spoken about the papyri was inspired of God. There is another approach that someone with a believing perspective might take that does not rest on these presuppositions.

Model Three proposes that God inspired Joseph Smith in matters that concerned important doctrinal concepts but not in all things, not even in all things connected with the ancient artifacts about which he did receive some revelation. Under this paradigm, when Joseph Smith followed through with his ideas to the point of official publication, he

was inspired. This does not mean that each text will not have its own textual history, with the possibility of anachronisms and human error creeping in. Even Book of Mormon writers admitted that their flaws were apparent in the record (see Ether 12:23–25), and Joseph Smith called that book the “most correct,”<sup>102</sup> not the “completely correct” book. An inspired idea does not mean it is free from human frailties. Thus, under this model, ideas Joseph Smith followed through on are likely products of inspiration and should be taken as such.

Those elements in these categories that have not yet found academic corroboration are presumed by those who subscribe to this model to be the fault of either the academy or our understanding of what Joseph Smith really meant or said, and these things will be corrected as we learn more, whether in this life or the next.

However, in this model one does not assume the same to be true for those things the Prophet did not see through to official publication, for in these cases he may have been allowed to exercise his own human musings, however able or flawed they may have been.<sup>103</sup>

To fully understand this paradigm, we must explore two elements: the idea that the Prophet was not infallible, which, in turn, creates the need for a method of discerning his prophetic inspiration from his human opinions.

While Latter-day Saints do not hold a doctrine of infallibility for the leader of their church, it is sometimes hard to know exactly how to sift through this notion in regard to its founding prophet.<sup>104</sup> This concept, then, bears some exploring. I have written elsewhere that I do not think we fully understand or appreciate the scope and richness of the revelatory life of Joseph Smith.<sup>105</sup> My evidence-based belief<sup>106</sup> that his

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102. Wilford Woodruff, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal* (Salt Lake City: Kraut's Pioneer Press, 1982), November 28, 1841.

103. Brian M. Hauglid, “The Book of Abraham and the Egyptian Project: A Knowledge of Hidden Languages,” in *Approaching Antiquity*, 476, has also recently written of Joseph Smith engaging in both sacred and profane (or mundane) activities concurrently.

104. See Robert L. Millett, “What Is Our Doctrine?” *Religious Educator* 4, no. 3 (2003): 15–33.

105. Kerry Muhlestein, “One Continuous Flow: Revelations Surrounding the ‘New Translation,’” in *The Doctrine and Covenants: Revelations in Context*, ed. Andrew Hedges, J. Spencer Fluhman, and Alonzo L. Gaskill (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2008), 40.

106. By this I mean both intellectual and spiritual evidence.

experience with the divine was more expansive than Latter-day Saints or others often realize or can relate to, because our own experiences are so limited in comparison to what he reports, also suggests that we may not be able to fully evaluate how much the Prophet was or was not inspired in all things. Believers do have some principles that can guide them as they attempt to assess this issue.

Some of these principles are provided by Joseph Smith himself, who once taught that “‘a Prophet is a Prophet’ only when he is acting as such.”<sup>107</sup> Elsewhere, he spoke of a man who met him and declared “that I was nothing but a man: indicating by this expression that he had supposed that a person to whom the Lord should see fit to reveal his will, must be something more than a man, he seems to have forgotten the saying that fell from the lips of St. James, that Elias was a man of like passions like unto us, yet he had such power with God that He in answer to his prayer, shut the heavens that they gave no rain for the space of three years and six months.”<sup>108</sup>

Other LDS prophets and apostles have spoken of this idea. Quoting an old adage, David O. McKay affirmed that “when God makes the prophet He does not unmake the man.”<sup>109</sup> Bruce R. McConkie writes, “The opinions and views, even of a prophet, may contain error, unless those opinions and views were inspired by the Spirit.”<sup>110</sup> Gordon B. Hinckley explained about his prophetic predecessors, “We recognize that our forebears were human. They doubtless made mistakes. . . . There was only one perfect man who ever walked the earth. The Lord has used imperfect people in the process of building his perfect society. If some of them occasionally stumbled, or if their characters may have

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107. “Journal, December 1842–June 1844; Book 1, 21 December 1842–10 March 1843,” 170, on Church Historians Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/journal-december-1842-june-1844-book-1-21-december-1842-10-march-1843?p=178>).

108. “Journal, 1835–1836,” 20, on Church Historians Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/journal-1835-1836?p=21>; see also Millet, “What Is Our Doctrine?” 21.

109. David O. McKay, in *Seventy-eighth Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1907, 11; Millet, “What Is Our Doctrine?” 21.

110. Bruce R. McConkie, “Are the General Authorities Human?” address delivered at the Institute of Religion Forum at the University of Utah, Salt Lake City, October 28, 1966, cited in Millet, “What Is Our Doctrine?” 21. I am grateful to Brent Top, who brought this to my attention.

been slightly flawed in one way or another, the wonder is the greater that they accomplished so much.”<sup>111</sup> One of those predecessors, Harold B. Lee, taught, “There have been times when even the President of the Church has not been moved upon by the Holy Ghost.”<sup>112</sup> J. Reuben Clark, speaking specifically of Joseph Smith, taught that “not always may the words of a prophet be taken as prophecy or revelation, but only when he, too, is speaking as ‘moved upon by the Holy Ghost.’”<sup>113</sup> Even Paul spoke of seeing through a glass darkly, implying an unclear vision (1 Cor. 13:12). He also said that “we know in part, and we prophesy in part” (1 Cor. 13:9).<sup>114</sup> Elder D. Todd Christofferson recently said, “It should be remembered that not every statement made by a Church leader, past or present, necessarily constitutes doctrine. It is commonly understood in the Church that a statement made by one leader on a single occasion often represents a personal, though well-considered, opinion, not meant to be official or binding for the whole Church.”<sup>115</sup>

With these principles in mind, believers, informed by their own revelation of Joseph Smith’s prophetic ability, can appreciate that amazing outpouring of heavenly inspired revelation that flowed to the Prophet while at the same time acknowledging that he was not inspired in all things at all times. Could it be that what he described as an “overflowing surge”<sup>116</sup> of revelation actually made it difficult for him to tell when his own thoughts were caught up and carried along with that surge? The volume of revelation Joseph Smith received about things of the ancient world may have made him more prone to interest in, excitement about,

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111. Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Continuing Pursuit of Truth,” *Ensign* 16, no. 4 (1986): 5; Millet, “What Is Our Doctrine?” 22.

112. Clyde J. Williams, ed., *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996), 542.

113. “When Are the Writings and Sermons of Church Leaders Entitled to the Claim of Scripture,” address by J. Reuben Clark Jr. to Seminary and Institute Personnel, given at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, on July 7, 1954, 12. I am grateful to Scott Esplin for pointing me toward this source.

114. I am grateful to John Gee for pointing out this reference in connection with this section of the paper.

115. D. Todd Christofferson, “The Doctrine of Christ,” *Ensign* 42, no. 5 (2012): 88.

116. “Journal, December 1842–June 1844; Book 2, 10 March 1843–14 July 1843,” 144, on Church Historians Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/journal-december-1842-june-1844-book-2-10-march-1843-14-july-1843?p=152>.

and speculation regarding ancient things than were others of his day. We should not be surprised that in a culture so saturated with interest in antiquity that a man who had visited with resurrected ancient beings, had handled a number of ancient objects, and had been blessed to receive inspiration regarding ancient texts would be wont to speculate about all things ancient.

With that understanding, some common assumptions held by believers can be thought through and perhaps dropped. For example, why should we assume that if Joseph Smith was inspired to know that some papyri contained the writings of Abraham and Joseph of Egypt<sup>117</sup> that he would also be inspired to know that (at least some of) the papyri themselves were written somewhere between about 300 and 200 BC?<sup>118</sup> Why would Joseph need to know that? If Joseph did not receive direct inspiration about the age of the papyri, it is logical that he would assume that the papyri were contemporary with Abraham. Are we safe in assuming that the Lord would reveal to Joseph Smith that the original text of what he was translating came from Abraham, but the handwriting belonged to someone else? If so, should we then presume that the Lord would also then reveal how transmission, transcription, redaction, papyrus production, burial preservation, and other ancient processes associated with the manuscript worked?

Moreover, if Joseph Smith knew he had the writings of Abraham and Joseph, and if he knew or suspected that these writings did not take

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117. "History, 1838–1856, volume B-1," 676.

118. On dating the Horos papyri (JSP I, X, XI), see Marc Coenen, "The Dating of the Papyri Joseph Smith I, X, and XI and Min Who Massacres His Enemies," in *Egyptian Religion: The Last Thousand Years, Part II. Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Jan Quaegebeur*, ed. Willy Clarysse, Antoon Schoors, and Harco Willems (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 1998), 1103–15; Robert K. Ritner, "The 'Breathing Permit of Hôr' Thirty-Four Years Later," *Dialogue* 33, no. 4 (2000): 99; Marc Coenen, "Horos, Prophet of Min Who Massacres His Enemies," *Chronique d'Égypte* 74, no. 148 (1999): 257–59; John Gee, *A Guide to the Joseph Smith Papyri* (Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2000), 25–27; and John Gee, "History of a Theban Priesthood," in «*Et maintenant ce ne sont plus que des villages . . .*» *Thèbes et sa région aux époques hellénistique, romaine et byzantine. Actes du Colloque tenu à Bruxelles les 2 et 3 Décembre 2005*, ed. Alain Delattre and Paul Heilporn, *Papyrologica Bruxellensia* vol. 34 (Bruxelles: Association Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 2008), 67–69. On dating the Tshemmin and Neferirnebu papyri, see Michael D. Rhodes, *Books of the Dead*, 7–11.

up all the papyri, it is logical that he would assume there were writings from other great biblical figures present as well. Correspondingly, such biblical awareness creates the natural assumption that legged snakes were a depiction of the Garden of Eden story, for it was not until after the eating of the fruit that the serpent was told it would go about on its belly. In consequence of these assumptions, Joseph Smith might have spoken ebulliently about them, caught up in the excitement he was already prone to in regards to ancient artifacts and in his own love for biblical writers. Others who were products of that same culture would also presumably be caught up in that same excitement as they heard Joseph Smith speak about it, and thus their own writings reflect something of a combination of both parties' excitement. This would only be further compounded by Joseph Smith's mother. Most mothers perceive their children's qualities and abilities in a way that exceeds the perspectives of less passionate observers. Moreover, Lucy Mack Smith would make a living off of the wonder and curiosities of everything surrounding this Egyptian collection. These two elements must have influenced the presentations she made to her eager listeners. As noted above, she may not have been the most reliable guide as to what was on the papyri.

Under this paradigm, we cannot safely assume that God would reveal to Joseph Smith the identity of the mummies he had come to own. Nor can we assume that God would provide inspired correction to any incorrect ideas and assumptions the Prophet or others may have been making about those. Do we know if it would matter to the Divine Creator that his prophet had some incorrect ideas about Egyptian antiquities? If so, then should we expect that he would also provide inspired correction to any false ideas about physics, geography, or history that the Prophet had developed? Or, should we rather expect that on most matters God allows us to stumble along the path of our natural progression? And if this latter is the case, should we expect that a love of biblical stories and an excitement about antiquities would create speculations and assumptions about the connection between the Prophet's artifacts and the stories about which he had been revealing more? Given that the Lord had previously brought important religious artifacts to the Latter-day Saints, it was natural for them to assume that it was continuing to happen with every aspect of the Egyptian find. From their perspective, why wouldn't the pharaoh of the Exodus find its way to Latter-day Saint hands? And if they made this assumption, and it was mistaken, under this paradigm we do not need to make another mistaken assumption by presuming that God would tell Joseph Smith he had made such a mistake.

My own experience in both ecclesiastical and teaching settings suggests that most Latter-day Saints sometimes find great difficulty in being able to discern true inspiration from their own wants and desires. As we seek answers to prayers and divine guidance, we are usually on guard against confusing the two, attempting to filter out the heavenly inspired ideas from those that are generated by our own mundane thinking. While sometimes inspiration comes clearly and unmistakably, at other times it is less distinguishable. Proponents of Model Three would suggest that it was similar for the Prophet Joseph Smith. Is it possible that after receiving inspiration about the meaning of some Egyptian vignettes, the Prophet started to think about other depictions on the papyri? For example, after learning through inspiration that four figures represented the four cardinal directions on some of the drawings, when Joseph Smith saw similar figures on JSP III, it seems plausible that he assumed it meant the same thing. He might then start to wonder what else that drawing meant and immediately begin to see important principles that could be conveyed by the drawings. In similar circumstances, who wouldn't assume that a creature that looked like it wanted to eat things was not a representation of the great devourer? Given all of this, would Joseph Smith not be apt to see a ladder-shaped portion of the drawing and have his mind immediately turn to Jacob's ladder, especially since he said that at least some of the papyri were concerned with Jacob's grandfather and some with his son?

From a fully believing perspective, it still seems quite plausible that Joseph Smith was inspired about matters and artifacts that his followers needed to understand and that he simultaneously had his own ideas about other ancient artifacts. Conceivably, the difference between the two was not always immediately apparent to him. Perhaps sometimes even Joseph Smith needed to determine what was inspired and what was mundane. Those who adhere to this theory might ask us to allow Joseph Smith space to work out what is inspiration and what is not, arguing that revelation is sometimes a process and that we must allow Joseph Smith to work through that process. If this is the case, what would that process look like?

Exploring this notion naturally raises an important question for those who may espouse it: how would we know when Joseph Smith was operating under inspiration from heaven and when he was excitedly caught up in his own thoughts? Stated otherwise, does a prophet have the right to speculate, and, if so, how do we determine what is speculation and what is not? Here, in an effort to move an important dialogue



forward, I propose one tentative suggestion. Perhaps Joseph Smith himself has given us at least a partial guide as we navigate this question, a guide that serves as the second premise necessary to understand Model Three as it is proposed here.

Joseph Smith once gave official instructions to the Church regarding baptisms for the dead. He explained that he was writing to Church members regarding this issue because “that subject seems to occupy my mind, and press itself upon my feelings the strongest” (D&C 128:1). This principle seems to have guided the Prophet as he tried to determine which of his thoughts and ideas were from God.<sup>119</sup> While Joseph Smith spoke and wrote of many topics, not all occupied his mind so persistently or pressed themselves upon his feelings so strongly that he sought to spread them to all the Saints. In other words, the Lord may have let Joseph Smith know which ideas were truly inspired by continually pressing them on his thoughts and feelings until he knew that he had to convey them through writing to the Saints. Ideas that originated with Joseph Smith rather than God would naturally and eventually fall by the wayside as God guided him toward efforts to publish abroad the things of God. Furthermore, even true ideas that were not to be prioritized at this time would similarly drop out of the spotlight. This suggests that an appropriate paradigm for determining whether the Prophet meant for us to take something as inspired and prophetic or not would hinge on whether or not he sought to spread it abroad to the Saints, particularly through writing, revising, and attempting to publish.<sup>120</sup> If prophetic leaders following him have felt to do the same about his writings or teachings, then we can again assume they were revelations from God, and that now is the time for them to receive prioritized attention, as happened when Doctrine and Covenants 137 was moved into the canon.

This model exacerbates the dilemma briefly posed when exploring Model Two. It seems possible that as Joseph Smith sifted through the thoughts that came to him in regards to the papyri, learning which were really inspiration and pursuing them, he may not have always been fully

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119. For others who have written about this idea as a guide for perceiving revelation, see L. Lionel Kendrick, “Personal Revelation,” in *Ensign* 29, no. 9 (1999), 6–13; and also Jay E. Jensen, “Have I Received an Answer from the Spirit?” in *Ensign* 19, no. 4 (1989): 20–25.

120. Something close to this has been suggested by Brian M. Hauglid in “Did Joseph Smith Translate the Kinderhook Plates?” in *No Weapon Shall Prosper*, 100–101.

aware of what was from God and what was not as he passed through each stage of working with the papyri. It may be possible that he knew how to interpret certain drawings but was not aware that he was assuming that interpretation was conveyed in the writing on the drawing. As he received revelation about how to translate the papyri, he may not have always been fully aware of exactly what portion of the papyri he was translating. He even might have received inspiration for textual material he needed to convey that was not on that particular set of papyri, somewhat akin to the process he went through while translating the Bible. As we compare the various accounts of how he translated the Book of Mormon with accounts of how he translated the Bible, and even parchments he saw in vision,<sup>121</sup> it becomes clear that any number of processes may have been combined as he translated the Book of Abraham and interpreted the facsimiles. We cannot assume that the Lord felt it necessary to make sure his prophet knew which characters on the papyri were yielding which meanings, or even if sometimes meanings were coming from characters not present. As mentioned above, Mother Smith certainly felt her son could translate material that was not on the papyri. In the end, Model Three suggests that we must be careful about all assumptions we make regarding the experience Joseph Smith had with the antiquities in his possession.

This paradigm does not speak to whether or not the published interpretations of the facsimiles are supposed to be representations of how ancient Egyptians would have regarded them in various eras, or how ancient Semites from any of those same time periods would have interpreted them, or whether they represent what we should learn from these drawings in our day. In this way, Model Three possesses the same strengths and weaknesses that the various subsets of Model Two does. In a similar manner, it answers such questions as to how Joseph Smith could have produced place names or interpretations of ancient drawings that seem to be either confirmed or made highly plausible by the academic process. It likewise leaves us with some challenging unanswered questions. However, it differs from Model Two in that many potentially troubling questions can be largely dismissed, such as those regarding the identification of handwriting on the papyri, the explanation of drawings not in the Pearl of Great Price, and the identification

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121. See the heading for Doctrine and Covenants 7.

of mummies, as well as ideas about the Kinderhook Plates,<sup>122</sup> the identification of American artifacts as belonging to Lamanites,<sup>123</sup> and other matters Joseph Smith did not repeatedly pursue. Under this paradigm, these matters are no longer important. While to the nonbeliever this approach may seem terribly convenient because it explains away so many “problematic” issues, it is at the same time logical and guided by reasonable premises. Moreover, it is not as convenient as it may initially seem because the published translations, explanations, and revelations have always been the major focus of both critics and believers. This paradigm leaves us in the position members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have always held—namely, that confirmation of Joseph Smith’s prophetic calling will be neither proved nor disproved by the mind, but rather through the same kind of inspiration he claimed to receive (see Moro. 10:4).

Those who come from a believing perspective can hold to either Model Two or Three and find them compatible with the assurance they have received through their own revelatory experiences. Those who subscribe to either of these models would likely agree with me as I agree with Wilford Woodruff, who said, “There is not so great a man as Joseph standing in this generation. The gentiles look upon him and he is like a bed of gold concealed from human view. They know not his principle, his spirit, his wisdom, his virtue, his philanthropy, nor his calling. His mind, like Enoch’s, expands as eternity, and only God can comprehend his soul.”<sup>124</sup>

## CONCLUSION

None of these proposed models can account for all of the evidence regarding the Joseph Smith collection of antiquities and the recorded statements about them. At present, no theory, whether from a believing or an unbelieving perspective, can do so adequately. It is hoped that as we continue to find more evidence, better analyze the evidence

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122. Again, see Hauglid, “Did Joseph Smith Translate the Kinderhook Plates?” 93–103.

123. For example, see Kenneth W. Godfrey, “The Zelph Story,” *BYU Studies* 29, no. 2 (1989): 35–56.

124. Wilford Woodruff, in *Journal History of the Church*, April 9, 1837, available online at [https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps\\_pid=IE482906](https://dcms.lds.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE482906), image 49.

we already have, question our assumptions, and further explore these ideas and theories, we will come closer and closer to a hypothesis that is acceptable to those from many perspectives and that more fully accommodates the evidence. Here some initial ideas have been presented in an attempt to advance the conversation. What is clear is that we need to continue the dialogue, and we need to do so in an appropriate, educated, and open manner, working with all points of view and being transparent about those points of view in an attempt to better understand this interesting issue.

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# Anatomy of Invention

*Larry L. Howell*

*BYU Studies has a long history of publishing the annual lecture given by the recipient of the Karl G. Maeser Distinguished Faculty Lecturer Award, BYU's highest faculty honor. It is with great pleasure that BYU Studies Quarterly publishes this year's lecture by Dr. Larry L. Howell, a professor of mechanical engineering. His speech was delivered as a forum address on May 17, 2016, at Brigham Young University.*

**M**y topic today is “Anatomy of Invention.” By anatomy, I mean the structure or the internal workings of something. My experiences have led me to believe that the principles of inspiration, collaboration, and exploitation are important elements of creativity and innovation. We'll start with a story that illustrates these principles then talk about each of them in more detail. Although I'll use examples from engineering, my intent is that the principles are general enough to apply to a wide range of areas, whether personal relationships, politics, art, social science, or other parts of our lives.

## **A Successful Failure**

A few years ago, my lab was doing a research project sponsored by a large international corporation. Imagine working on something like a cool, next-generation flip phone. We looked for inspiration by studying devices with similar motions—everything from toys to switchblades. We would make sure we understood the fundamentals that enabled the motion of each device, including creating mathematical equations to describe the

motion, and with that understanding we could extend that knowledge to create other systems. Some of the new devices we created were compliant mechanisms. A compliant mechanism gets its motion from parts that are flexible rather than using hinges or bearings. So when you see something that is able to move because it is flexible, that's a compliant mechanism. You've seen compliant mechanisms but may not have known them by that name—for example, an elephant's trunk, a shark, a Venus flytrap, and your heart are all examples of compliant mechanisms in nature.

The compliant mechanisms research we were doing for the company was going well—so well that they agreed to buy the patents that had come from the first round of our research, and they also agreed to fund a second round of work. We had come to verbal agreements on both the patents and the research contract, and the signature of a company vice president was the only thing needed to close the deal. It was a Monday morning when our liaison at the company was planning to get that last signature. Unfortunately, he wasn't feeling well and decided to stay home that day. Tuesday morning he went to work, and that was the day the company's European headquarters announced they were closing that entire division of the company. Suddenly everything was gone. There would be no patent sale, there would be no next round of research funding, and all of this was totally out of our control. We were just one day away—one cold virus away—from having these contracts in place, but now there was nothing. I was devastated.

Peter Halverson was one of the graduate students who had been working on the project for his master's degree. He had recently committed to continue on for a PhD with the expectation that the funding from the company would support his dissertation research, but now we had nothing. After we got over the initial disappointment, we began considering how his research could be applied beyond consumer electronics. We searched for areas where the capabilities of our new technology could offer advantages. During that process, Peter made an amazing discovery—our work had the possibility of creating dramatically improved artificial spinal discs to replace damaged or diseased discs in the human spine.

Currently, spinal fusion is a common surgical procedure to treat people who suffer from severe back or neck pain. In spinal fusion, you surgically remove the disc and grow bone to connect, or fuse, the vertebrae and take away the motion in that part of the spine. Though the fusion procedure can address some issues, you can imagine that removing flexibility from your spine can cause other problems, and it often doesn't resolve the pain. We saw that with the theory we'd developed, we could



replace the damaged disc not with a fusion, but with a device that had the potential to restore the motion of the healthy human spine.

Our previous work had explored the fundamentals of the technology, but it needed a lot of research to extend it to the complex motion observed in the spine, to make it biocompatible, and to have it all be compact enough to be implanted in the disc space without injuring the spinal cord.

We read a lot of technical papers, textbooks, and other material to get up to speed on spinal biomechanics. The more we learned, the more we were convinced that not only could our technology result in a new artificial disc, but it had the potential to make a positive impact in many people's lives. Still, although members of our research group were considered world experts in compliant mechanisms, we had zero credibility in the spine world. Without that credibility, it would be hard to convince people of the value of our idea. And we really needed partners because, let's face it, you really don't want *me* messing with your spine.

In our search for partners, we once convinced the president of a spinal implant company and one of his engineers to visit our lab and learn about our work. During the meeting we were talking about some joints that connect the vertebrae, and the joint's name is spelled "f-a-c-e-t." We had used that word before in geometry, and it's pronounced "fă-cet." So in the meeting we were talking about facet joints of the spine and our guests were looking at us with confused expressions. Then finally, the company president said, "Oh, you mean 'fă-'cet.'" It's kind of hard to have credibility when you can't even pronounce the terms.

Soon after this, a miracle occurred. Dr. Anton Bowden, a spinal biomechanics expert, joined the faculty at BYU (fig. 1). We began to collaborate, and he brought with him a wealth of knowledge about the spine and the spinal implant industry, and a network of connections throughout the world. Now we were able to do research more specifically related to the spine, test our prototypes in cadavers, and verify that the motion mimicked a healthy human spinal disc. The research moved forward at an exciting pace, but that wasn't enough. To enable it to make its full impact in helping people with severe back or neck pain, the implant needed to be an approved commercial implant, which is not the domain of the university. Enter Gary Crocker, a business-savvy venture capitalist who had successfully started several previous biotech companies. He started a company based on the spinal implant technology, hired an experienced president and employed Peter after he finished his PhD. But even this skilled team couldn't surgically implant the discs, so they



**FIGURE 1.** Anton Bowden (*left*) and Larry Howell collaborating on the development of an artificial disc to replace damaged or diseased discs in the human spine. Photograph by Mark A. Philbrick, courtesy Brigham Young University.

created a surgeon advisory board made up of neurosurgeon experts from around the world.

This story helps illustrate the principles of inspiration, collaboration, and exploitation that we'll now discuss in more detail.

### **Inspiration**

The first principle we're going to talk about is finding inspiration or insight by continually observing the world around you, seeking to truly understand what you observe, and applying that knowledge to do new things. This inspiration may come from nature, art, science, products, literature, or history, which all can provide insight on how to solve new problems.

The spine story provides two examples of this principle of inspiration. First, in our research with the large company, we evaluated other products, studied their fundamentals, and created mathematical equations to describe their motion; and that knowledge enabled us to create new compliant mechanisms. A less obvious example was when our own device, designed for consumer electronics, provided insights that led to

new spinal implants. We were able to take those fundamentals and apply them in a way that will hopefully make a difference in people's lives.

There is an engineer you may have heard of who taught about this principle. Let me tell you some of his engineering achievements and see how long it takes until you can guess who it is. He designed and built a hunting weapon that helped save his family from starvation. He led the team that designed and manufactured a ship capable of a transoceanic voyage that was centuries ahead of its time. He had a sword (we won't mention how he got it), that he used as a model to make other weapons to defend his people. He taught his people to work with wood and all kinds of ores and alloys. He led the design and construction of infrastructure for a new society, including a temple. That's quite a résumé! This, of course, is the prophet Nephi from the Book of Mormon (see 1 Ne. 16:23, 31; 1 Ne. 17; 2 Ne. 5:14–16). It would be hard to argue that he wasn't an amazing innovator. Now, consider the principle Nephi taught about learning from the words of Isaiah. He encouraged us to understand the fundamentals described there and apply them to other parts of our lives, or in his own words "I did liken all scriptures unto us, that it might be for our profit and learning" (1 Ne. 19:23; see also 2 Ne. 11:2, 8). When we liken the scriptures to our lives, we can become better people. And when we apply this same concept by observing the world around us and likening what we learn to help solve problems, we can become better innovators.

One surprising area where our lab has found inspiration is origami. You may be thinking, "But I did origami in elementary school; surely he can't be talking about that." But that's exactly what I'm talking about. Origami is an ancient art, and origami artists are continually expanding the art form and doing incredible things. Figure 2 shows an example of origami designed by a talented student in our lab, Matthew Gong. It's called "Mother and Child." The mother



FIGURE 2. "Mother and Child" designed and folded by Matthew Gong. The mother is made from a single square piece of paper using only folds—no cuts, tape, or glue. The child is also folded from a single square piece of paper. Courtesy Brigham Young University.



FIGURE 3. Robert Lang's origami "Yellow Jacket," Opus 624. All of the detail in this design is created by folding a single piece of paper. Courtesy Robert Lang.



FIGURE 4. Robert Lang's origami "Organist," Opus 363. Courtesy Robert Lang.

is made from a single, square piece of paper with no cuts, only folds. All the detail—her hair, her facial features, her fingers, her clothes, her feet, everything—is one single square piece of paper. The paper is folded with no cuts, no tape, and no glue. The child is another square piece of paper, and it also is made with only folds. Our lab collaborates with the full-time origami artist and genius Robert Lang. Figure 3 shows his yellow jacket design—again, every detail is from only folding a single piece of paper. For his organist, shown in figure 4, both the organ and the organist are from one piece of paper, and if you pull in the right place the organist moves. It's amazing—there *have* to be things that we can learn from this.

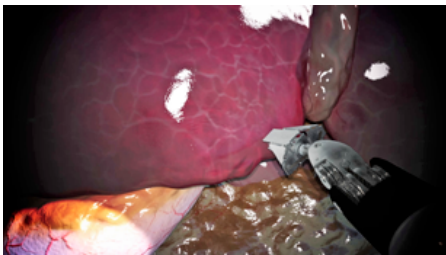
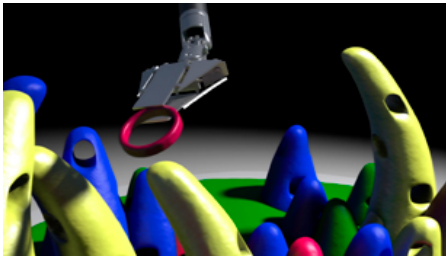
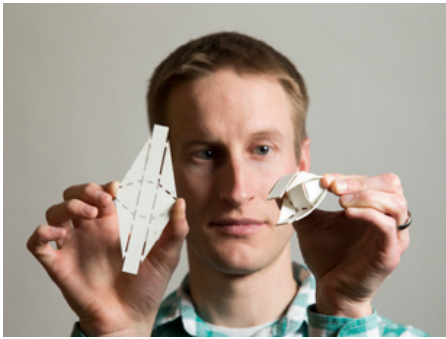
One of the first things our lab did with origami was to study what is called "action origami," which is a type of origami that moves—so a dinosaur with a chomping mouth is action origami, and an origami flower is not. We searched the world for all the action origami books and web sites we could find, and we identified literally hundreds of action origami models. We studied these models and identified what made these compliant mechanisms move. In seeking to understand the fundamentals of origami, we discovered motion and mechanisms that we would not have identified using our traditional engineering approaches.

When you study action origami, you can treat the panels as if they are rigid, like a solid door, and the creases can be treated as hinges that

enable the motion. This is an important fundamental idea that helps us create mathematical equations that describe action origami motion, which then help us extend those concepts to devices that in the end won't even necessarily look like origami.

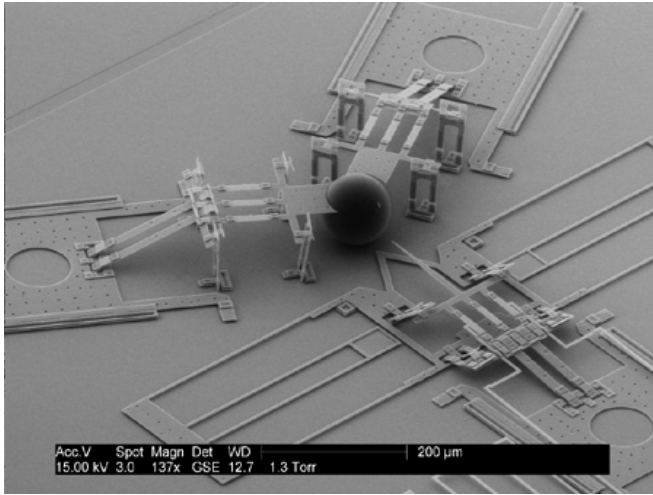
We were recently working on a project where we felt that origami could provide insight for minimally invasive surgery. The idea of minimally invasive surgery is that cameras and surgical instruments can be inserted into the patient through small incisions, and the surgeon controls the instruments from outside the body. Using small incisions can result in a faster recovery time and reduce the risk of certain complications. We wanted to develop compact forceps that could enable even smaller surgical instruments and, therefore, even smaller incisions. The mechanism used to create action origami like Venus flytraps or chomping *T. rex* jaws provided inspiration as a starting point. Because we

understood how the origami worked, we could modify it to provide the motion we needed. We obviously couldn't use paper for a medical device, but other materials don't crease like paper, so it was important to understand how to extend the concept to other materials. Figure 5 (top) shows a demonstration prototype we made out of polypropylene plastic with no traditional creases but with a chomper-like motion. Figure 5 (middle) shows it in



**FIGURE 5.** Origami inspired forceps, or “Oriceps.” (top) A large-scale polypropylene (plastic) demonstration prototype. Photograph by Mark Philbrick, courtesy Brigham Young University. (middle) A computer illustration showing it in a surgery training setup. (bottom) A computer illustration showing it in a surgery. Computer illustrations from animations created by Nathanael Mooth.





**FIGURE 6.** Scanning electron micrograph of a nanoinjector prototype made from the same processes used to make computer chips. The sphere is approximately the same size as a single mouse egg cell. The micrograph was taken by Quentin Aten.

a surgery training setup. It starts small to go through the incision and expands once inside the body. In this case, it is used to grip something, but it could also be configured to clamp or cut. Figure 5 (bottom) is a computer illustration of the device in a surgery. These concepts led to others, and the final result was minimally invasive surgery tools that are smaller and more compact than current devices.

Let's consider another example. Our lab once worked on a project for which the goal was to design a machine so small and precise that it could inject DNA into a single mouse egg cell without damaging the cell. That was a challenge—how do you make something that small and that precise? People were making computer chips by patterning flat layers of silicon. What if we used those same methods, but instead of making a computer chip, have it pop up and morph into the kind of machine that we needed? Something flat that then pops up—doesn't that sound like origami, or even more like a pop-up book? If you look beneath the artistic features of a pop-up book, you can see the fundamentals of how they work. Achieving pop-up motion in silicon, which is brittle like glass, and achieving microscopic precision is not trivial. The image in figure 6 was taken using a scanning electron microscope of an early prototype designed by PhD student Quentin Aten. The sphere is the size



of a single mouse egg cell. We successfully demonstrated injecting DNA into mouse egg cells, and I'll talk more about that later.

When I first mentioned inspiration, you likely expected a discussion on seeking divine guidance. Let me fulfill that expectation now. Of all the things we'll discuss, none of them are as important or as impactful as receiving divine guidance in your work. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matt. 7:7). We talked about Nephi's contributions, but he made it abundantly clear that it was divine inspiration that made his work possible (1 Ne. 17). We have the ability to ask for help from a divine source with infinite knowledge and wisdom. I can testify to you from my own experiences that he is willing to provide that personal revelation.

## **Collaboration**

The second principle we'll discuss is collaboration. By collaboration, I mean working with people who have knowledge, skills, and abilities that are complementary to our own. Collaboration enables us to accomplish goals much greater than what we could do on our own.

When watching movies, I am happy to suspend reality so that I can enjoy a good story. But, when I see a hero or a mad scientist who single-handedly creates some sophisticated new technology, it totally takes me out of the illusion. I just can't suspend reality that far because it is so counter to my own experience. There is a good reason why mad scientists are fictional. It isn't that there aren't scientists capable of horrible things; rather, it's because it takes a lot of people to accomplish complex things. Consider a couple examples from history. The Manhattan Project, which was the development of the atomic bomb during World War II, was estimated to have employed over one hundred twenty thousand people.<sup>1</sup> The Apollo Program, which had the exciting, bold, and audacious goal of putting people on the moon and bringing them safely home, required about four hundred thousand people and twenty thousand companies and universities to make it happen.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Independence Hall Association, "51f. The Manhattan Project," *U.S. History: Pre-Columbian to the New Millennium*, <http://www.ushistory.org/us/51f.asp>.

2. See "NASA Langley Research Center's Contributions to the Apollo Program," NASA, <http://www.nasa.gov/centers/langley/news/factsheets/Apollo.html>. As another example, consider a company like Apple and what it takes for them to bring you that next cool gadget. Apple estimates that they create nearly two million jobs in the United States—that's about seventy-six thousand direct

One of the key elements for successful collaboration is to have respect for people who are different than you. When people with different life experiences, educational backgrounds, and abilities work together, it is important for everyone to appreciate what others bring to the table. This can be particularly challenging in universities, where there can be structural and social barriers between the disciplines.

This principle of collaboration is obvious in the example of the development of the spinal implant. A lab working on the compliant mechanism wasn't enough. It took a spinal biomechanics expert, a venture capitalist, surgeons, and many others to move it forward.

We discussed Nephi as a great innovator, but even he needed his brothers' help to build the ship (1 Ne. 17:18, 49). Getting their cooperation was an impressive feat considering that they had just tried to kill him (1 Ne. 16:37; 17:48).

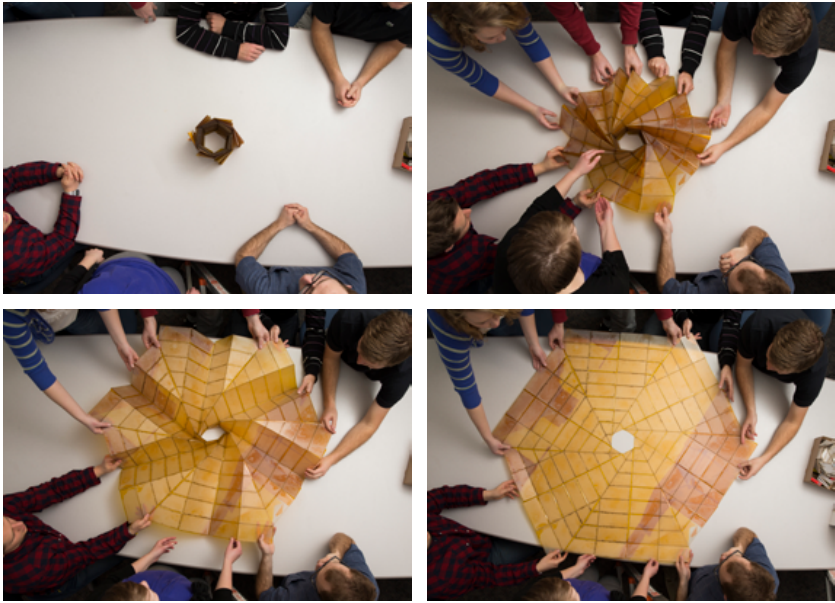
You may be thinking, "Oh, this collaboration idea isn't anything new; this sounds like what I've been taught about teams in my classes." After all, the idea of valuing different kinds of contributions was taught by Paul nearly two thousand years ago using an analogy of different body parts and how they need each other. He said, "And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you" (1 Cor. 12:21). Although collaboration and respecting people of other backgrounds is certainly not a new idea, its role in innovation is often overlooked or underestimated. A lack of collaboration is a common problem that keeps backyard inventors from reaching their full potential, either from a lack of trust or respect for others' contributions or from lack of opportunity for collaboration.

As the sophistication of technology increases, so does the importance of collaboration. The number of inventors on U.S. patents has increased each of the last four decades, from 1.6 inventors per patent in the 1970s to 2.5 inventors per patent in the 2000s.<sup>3</sup> My own patent applications have an average of over 4 inventors per patent, and I am a sole author on only about 1 percent of my technical publications.

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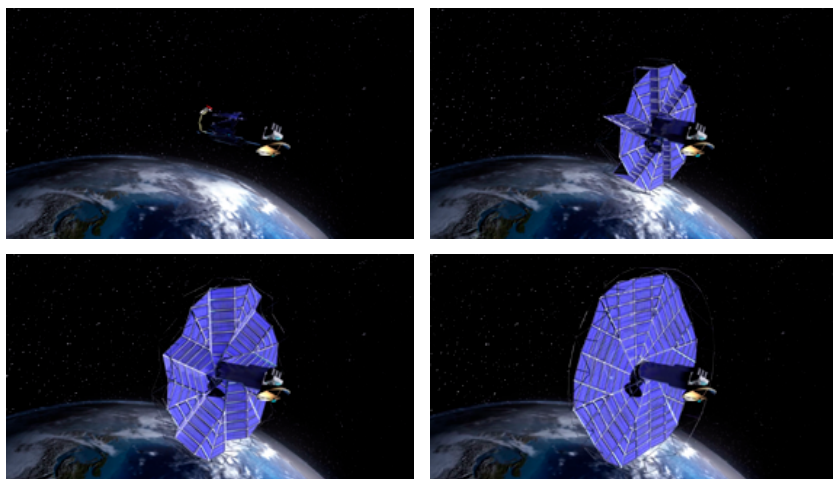
employees, plus the suppliers, manufacturers, app developers, and others (see "Creating Jobs through Innovation," Apple Inc., <http://www.apple.com/about/job-creation/>). When you add the overseas jobs to those two million U.S. jobs, that's a lot of people.

3. The percentage of patents with lone inventors also continues to fall. See Dennis Crouch, "The Changing Nature Inventing: Collaborative Inventing," *Patently-O*, <http://patentlyo.com/patent/2009/07/the-changing-nature-inventing-collaborative-inventing.html>.

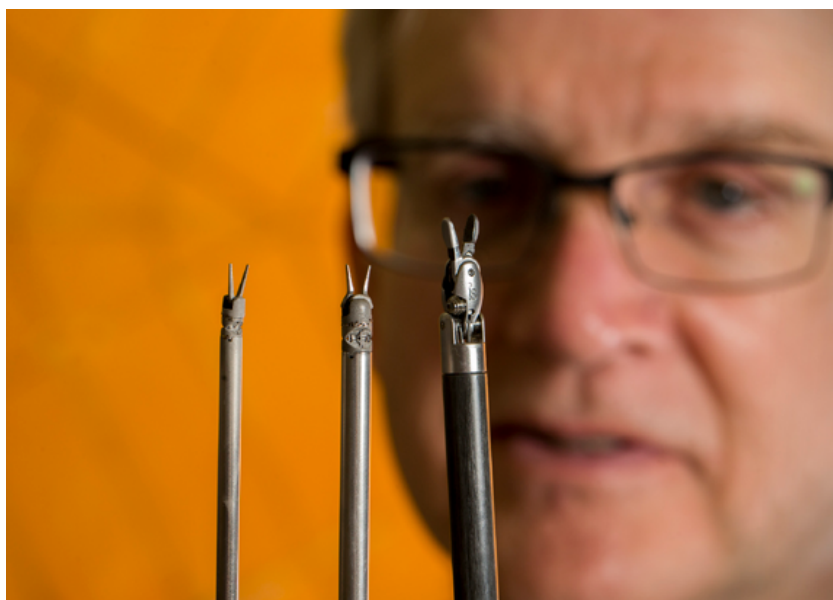


**FIGURE 7.** A  $\frac{1}{20}$  scale prototype of a deployable solar panel array. Photographs by Jaren Wilkey, courtesy Brigham Young University.

Another example of collaboration is our experience working with origami artists and other experts. Our lab once worked on a project where we wanted to create a deployable solar panel for space applications. An origami pattern called the “flasher pattern” served as our inspiration. But there’s this little problem—you can’t crease solar panels. Also, origami patterns assume that everything is paper thin, but these panels would be about a centimeter thick. Accounting for these issues required a combination of mathematics, creativity, and advanced prototyping. PhD student Shannon Zirbel took the lead, and we worked with NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory, origami artist Robert Lang, and many students. Figure 7 shows one of our early prototypes, built at  $\frac{1}{20}$  scale. It deploys to be nine times larger than its original diameter. This means it can be very compact to launch into space, and then, as it gets into space, it can deploy into a large solar panel. The hole in the middle is convenient because that’s where you put the spacecraft. Figure 8 illustrates the solar panel deploying to be twenty meters in diameter—that is big enough to cover about five lanes of traffic and would produce double the amount of power produced by all the solar panels on the International Space Station combined.



**FIGURE 8.** An illustration of the origami-inspired solar panel array in a spacecraft application. Computer illustrations from animations created by Dennis West.



**FIGURE 9.** New small surgical instruments (*left and middle*) next to a commercially available instrument (*right*), shown with collaborator Spencer Magleby. Photograph by Mark Philbrick, courtesy Brigham Young University.

Another example of collaboration was our experience with nano-injection, where we injected DNA into mouse egg cells. You inject the gene into the mouse egg cell while the male and female DNA are mixing, then insert that egg cell into a surrogate mother. The cell will continue to divide until it becomes a baby mouse that will have the gene you injected. It's an efficient way to research genetic diseases and discover what different genes do. There's one complication: I could spell "D-N-A," but that was the limit of my knowledge about transgenic animals and genetic research. Here, Dr. Brian Jensen (also a mechanical engineering professor), our students, and I collaborated with Dr. Sandra Hope, a professor in the Department of Microbiology and Molecular Biology, and together we were able to do things that would not otherwise be possible.

Remember the surgical instruments I mentioned earlier? That work was in collaboration with a company called Intuitive Surgical, which makes the Da Vinci Robotic Surgery System. They are world leaders in robotic surgery, and working together made it possible to create minimally invasive surgery instruments that are smaller than what has been done before. Figure 9 shows our new small instrument next to a current commercially available instrument. The instruments are remotely controlled using the Da Vinci Surgical Robot.

This principle of collaboration, or respecting others with complementary skills, knowledge, and abilities, applies not only to technology development but to all parts of our lives, including our families. My wife, Peggy, graduated from BYU with a degree in accounting. She hasn't worked professionally for many years, but guess who does all of our family finances. And let's be honest, I wouldn't even think of embarrassing myself by leaving the house in a shirt-and-tie combination that's not preapproved by her. Of course collaboration even extends beyond families. If you'll allow me to talk crazy talk, I would say that the benefits of listening to and respecting others may even extend as far as public policy and politics.

One of the most rewarding parts of my career has been collaborating with students and colleagues. For example, Dr. Spencer Magleby and I have worked closely together for years in compliant mechanisms research. This collaboration has not only made it possible to do more than we could do on our own, but the interaction has greatly enriched my life. There's no question that working with a designer like Professor David Morgan helps our results look better, but the collaboration also expands my vision to new possibilities. It is rewarding to work with

students and see them learn and grow, and working with students has probably been the most enjoyable part of my career. BYU administrators and the Office of Technology Transfer have provided essential help and have been supportive of our goals. Time and circumstances don't allow me to mention everyone by name today, but I do want to sincerely thank the students and colleagues with whom I have collaborated over the years—I can't adequately express my gratitude for the blessing it has been to work with them.

## **Exploitation**

The third principle is exploitation. That's kind of a scary-sounding word because it has multiple definitions, but I am referring to making the most of opportunities that present themselves. Make sure that you are constantly moving toward a goal, because it's while you are moving that things happen. But it is also important to be agile and flexible so that you can exploit new opportunities when they arise. This also means, whenever you see challenges or road blocks, that you evaluate those as potential opportunities.

I have a friend, Vern Henshaw, who once was a high school basketball coach. He expressed the frustration he sometimes felt as the team learned plays. When in a game, they would call a play and the players would execute the play as they'd practiced, but the frustration would come when the play would create an opportunity to score, and rather than taking the open shot, the players would continue to execute the play. But that's not the purpose of the play! The purpose of the play isn't to execute the sequence of tasks; it is to create opportunities to score. So it is with invention, creativity, and innovation. You have to be moving and doing things, but you also want to look for opportunities that arise.

If we reflect on the spine example, we were busy developing technologies for consumer electronics, and when the time came we were able to transform an event that appeared to be a roadblock into an opportunity. If the next round of funding would have come from the company as I had hoped, it is unlikely that we would have found ourselves working on the spine application. Fortunately, the opportunity came, it was identified, and we were able to pursue it.

Think of Nephi when his brothers again threatened his life after Lehi's death. Rather than skulking away and feeling picked on, he took the opportunity not only to move to another place, but also to create the foundation of a new nation (2 Ne. 5).



I have to express a caution here—in employing exploitation, you don’t want to always be running after every new idea that comes along. That might be good for invention, but it’s horrible for getting things done. To deal with this, I encourage you to keep a record of your thoughts and of possible opportunities so that you can review and evaluate them to decide if you want to pursue them now or to save the opportunity for another time.<sup>4</sup>

In engineering, we teach a method for developing new products called the engineering design process. It starts out with a customer need that we are trying to fulfill. Understanding the need and measuring how well you fulfilled that need is just good engineering; it’s what engineers do. As good as that process is, I often enjoy doing something counter to it that is sometimes controversial. In this approach, rather than starting with a need, you start with a new technology and you search to identify a need that it can fulfill. This second, more controversial approach is called “technology push” design. You can imagine the criticisms of this approach—it’s sometimes referred to as “a solution looking for a problem,” or “when you have a hammer everything looks like a nail.” There’s definitely some truth to this criticism, but there are also some amazing opportunities. When you look at the history of technologies that have made a significant impact on society, many of them did not start with a need—they preceded or even created the need. For example, before smart phones I never thought, “Wouldn’t it be cool to carry a powerful computer in my pocket that could make phone calls, provide hourly weather predictions, be my navigation system, carry all my scriptures, be my alarm clock and my calculator, and have access to limitless information?” Before microwave ovens, no one was sitting around thinking, “Oh, wouldn’t it be convenient if I could nuke my leftovers and heat them up in thirty seconds?” No one thought that because it didn’t occur to us that such a thing could even be possible. Many great inventions are entirely unanticipated before their creation.

In university research, there are many opportunities to use technology push processes to move research results from the lab into places

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4. An example to illustrate this involves what we call “burst projects” that our lab does in the summers. These projects focus on applications of the theory graduate students have developed in their research. This summer, we are doing four burst projects—but those were selected after evaluating a list of over sixty possible projects ideas.



**FIGURE 10.** A set of hammers from Larry Howell’s garage, ranging from a roofing hatchet to a rubber mallet. Rather than a “hammer looking for a nail,” good technology push design is more like matching the right hammer with the right type of job. Courtesy Larry L. Howell.

where they can make a positive difference. The story of the spinal implant illustrates this concept. We had developed a technology that gave us new capabilities, and we searched for where it could have a positive influence.

It would be unwise to try to apply new technology wherever you might be able to force it; the reward comes from finding those places where the characteristics of your technology are a good match to fulfill a need. Figure 10 is a picture of several hammers in my garage, ranging from a roofing hatchet to a rubber mallet. Each hammer is best suited for a certain type of job. Rather than a hammer looking for nails, good technology push design may be more like trying to match the right hammer to the right job.

You can liken the technology push process to your life. *You* are the hammer. Always be looking for the right nails—how are you going to make a contribution? You have unique abilities, skills, talents, and background. How are you going to use that to make a difference in the world? As you work toward this, you will find that you’re going to be creative in the things you do and that you can make a positive difference in the world, and society will be better off for having you as part of it.

## Conclusion

Today we've discussed the principles of inspiration, collaboration, and exploitation. Although they could be worded differently and could be illustrated with different examples, I have come to believe that these principles are important to the anatomy, or internal workings, of innovation and invention. It's my hope that you can liken them to your own life and that you might find new ways that you can make your unique positive difference in the world.

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Larry L. Howell is Professor and Associate Dean of the Ira A. Fulton College of Engineering and Technology at Brigham Young University. He received his BS degree from BYU and MS and PhD degrees from Purdue University. Prior to joining BYU in 1994, he was a visiting professor at Purdue University, a finite element analysis consultant for Engineering Methods, Inc., and an engineer on the design of the YF-22 (the prototype for the U.S. Air Force F-22 Raptor). He is a Fellow of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME), the recipient of the ASME Machine Design Award, ASME Mechanisms & Robotics Award, Theodore von Kármán Fellowship, NSF Career Award, and the BYU Maeser Distinguished Faculty Lecture Award. He and his wife, Peggy, live in Orem and have four children and two grandchildren.

## Silent Wednesday

Somehow in the strident ring  
of markets and limestone  
and the effervescent pulse of mid-morning,  
the slosh of rejoinders and missed sales,  
and the continuous niggling  
of those who hunched over the law  
like it was their final meal,

you avoided the press  
of those trying to translate  
miracles into Beelzebub and madness,  
of those feigning melancholy  
and rectitude among the masses

under the Mount Moriah sun.  
You authored the final act  
of scribal silence,  
your own scroll  
untainted, purer than gypsum,  
waiting for the heft and diatribes,  
taunts and spittle,  
hanging  
on for the slow march of prophecy,  
the work of flesh and earth  
alone in the will of the Father,  
hidden away in Bethany,  
girding yourself  
for the coronation  
to come.

—Mark Bennion

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This poem won honorable mention in the BYU  
Studies 2016 Clinton F. Larson Poetry Contest.

# Theological Underpinnings of Baptism for the Dead

*David L. Paulsen, Roger D. Cook, and Brock M. Mason*

Lord, are there few that be saved?” (Luke 13:23). This question has troubled thinkers from Christianity’s beginning. The faithful readily accept that, save Jesus Christ, there is “none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Yet, the same loyal followers of Christ wrestle with the puzzling reality that countless persons have lived and died never hearing of Christ, let alone having had an adequate chance to accept the salvation he offers. What is their fate in the eternities? Are they forever excluded from salvation? Thomas V. Morris, former professor of philosophy at Notre Dame, describes this unexplained “scandal” in his book *The Logic of God Incarnate*:

The scandal . . . arises with a simple set of questions asked of the Christian theologian who claims that it is only through the life and death of God incarnated in Jesus Christ that all can be saved and reconciled to

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It should be noted at the outset that much of the research for this paper comes from two longer articles: David L. Paulsen, Roger D. Cook, and Kendel J. Christensen, “The Harrowing of Hell: Salvation for the Dead in Early Christianity,” *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 19, no. 1 (2010): 56–77; and David L. Paulsen and Brock M. Mason, “Baptism for the Dead in Early Christianity,” *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 19, no. 2 (2010): 22–49. See also David L. Paulsen, Kendel J. Christensen, and Martin Pulido, “Redeeming the Dead: Tender Mercies, Turning of Hearts, and Restoration of Authority,” *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 20, no. 1 (2011); David L. Paulsen, Kendel J. Christensen, Martin Pulido, and Judson Burton, “Redemption of the Dead: Continuing Revelation after Joseph Smith,” *Journal of the Book of Mormon and Other Restoration Scripture* 20, no. 2 (2011).

God: How can the many humans who lived and died before the time of Christ be saved through him? They surely cannot be held accountable for responding appropriately to something of which they could have no knowledge. Furthermore, what about all the people who have lived since the time of Christ in cultures with different religious traditions, untouched by the Christian gospel? . . . How could a just God set up a particular condition of salvation, the highest end of human life possible, which was and is inaccessible to most people? Is not the love of God better understood as universal, rather than as limited to a mediation through the one particular individual, Jesus of Nazareth? Is it not a moral as well as a religious scandal to claim otherwise?<sup>1</sup>

This “scandal,” otherwise known as the soteriological problem of evil, stems from the logical tension between three propositions: (1) God is perfectly loving and just and desires that all of his children be saved; (2) salvation comes only through an individual’s appropriation of Christ’s salvific gifts; and (3) countless numbers of God’s children have lived and died without having a chance to hear about, much less accept, these saving gifts. Would a truly loving and just God condemn his children simply because they never heard of his Son or his salvific gifts? Some very influential Christian thinkers have answered in the affirmative,<sup>2</sup> and, consequently, some critics have labeled Christianity as a religion of damnation rather than salvation.<sup>3</sup>

But such a pessimistic view need not prevail in Christian thought. One optimistic response to the soteriological problem of evil is briefly mentioned by Paul in the New Testament—vicarious baptism for the dead, referenced in 1 Corinthians 15:29. It reads: “Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?” In this chapter, Paul argues for the reality and centrality of the resurrection to the Christian faith. In the course of

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1. Thomas V. Morris, *The Logic of God Incarnate* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986) 174–75.

2. The list includes Tertullian, Augustine, Philip Melancthon, Blaise Pascal, John Calvin, John Sanders, and others. Representative statements from Augustine and Calvin illustrate the point: “Many more are left under punishment than are delivered from it, in order that it may thus be shown what was due to all.” Calvin asserted grimly and simply that “the vast majority of mankind will be lost.”

3. Charles Darwin remarked, “I can indeed hardly see how anyone ought to wish Christianity to be true; for if so the plain language of the text seems to show that the men who do not believe, and this would include my Father, Brother and almost all my best friends, will be everlastingly punished. And this is a damnable doctrine.” Charles Darwin, *Autobiography* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1958), 87.



his argument, he introduces this verse. For a majority of scholars, the verse is to be read literally, describing a practice of vicarious baptism of the living on behalf of the dead.<sup>4</sup> The implicit rationale behind this practice is to extend to those who are dead the blessings of baptism and salvation through proxy work: the living are baptized on behalf of the dead. According to Paul, this ritual connects with the belief in and expectation of the resurrection. The two—resurrection and baptism for the dead—are so connected, in fact, that Paul uses one as a way to argue for the other; the efficacy and purpose of proxy baptism become the premise for establishing the resurrection. To modern Christian ears, this must sound quite odd: Paul argues for the now firmly entrenched belief in the resurrection on the basis of what many now consider a heretical and unusual practice. Not only that, but there is evidence that this practice existed for hundreds of years among various Christian groups, including the Corinthians (or some other early saints with whom Paul and the Corinthians are acquainted), Marcionites,<sup>5</sup> Cerinthians or Gnostics, and Montanists.<sup>6</sup>

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4. Michael F. Hull, *Baptism on Account of the Dead (1 Cor 15:29): An Act of Faith in the Resurrection* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 8, 11 n. 14. See Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987), 766; and Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "Baptized for the Dead" (1 Cor 15:29): A Corinthian Slogan?" *Revue biblique* 88 (1981): 532. We will not attempt to argue for the literal reading of this verse here in the paper. Instead, we refer readers to our longer article "Baptism for the Dead in Early Christianity."

5. Born around AD 100, Marcion was raised as a proto-orthodox Christian by his father. Around AD 140, he entered Rome and converted many people to his own Christian theology, now quite distinct from other teachers of the time. It anticipated the teachings of Gnosticism, with ideas of strict dualism within the universe and that Yahweh from the Old Testament was a demiurge (a spiritual being of tremendous power who rebelled against the God of all creation). Because of Marcion's success, he became a marked target for heresiologists (heretic hunters) of the orthodox faith, both contemporary and those far removed (such as Epiphanius).

The Marcionite sect was completely estranged from proto-orthodox believers and met in its own communities rather than worship alongside other believers (as did the Gnostics). According to Epiphanius (late fourth century), Marcion and his followers had stretched into the vast majority of the Christian world: "The sect is still to be found even now, in Rome and Italy, Egypt and Palestine, Arabia and Syria, Cyprus and the Thebaid—in Persia too moreover, and in other places." See Epiphanius, *Panarion: Against Marcionites*, 22, in Frank Williams, trans., *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 294.

6. See Paulsen and Mason, "Baptism for the Dead," 31, 39–42. For evidence of Montanist baptisms for the dead, see William Tabbernee, *Montanist*

This suggests something important about Christian theology in the early centuries of the faith. What Christian doctrines would undergird and motivate baptism for the dead? And what does this practice assume or imply about the theology of some early Christians? In this paper, we will attempt to answer these questions by highlighting important teachings of the New Testament and other early Christian texts that support the practice of vicarious baptism. We will focus primarily on three such doctrines: (1) the necessity of baptism for salvation; (2) the possibility of vicarious work (whether of the living on behalf of the dead or of the righteous on behalf of the unrighteous); and (3) the possibility of receiving salvation after death. These three beliefs provide the necessary groundwork for a vicarious baptismal theology to get off the ground, though each of the three has been seriously challenged in the history of Christianity.

### The Necessity of Baptism for Salvation

Proxy baptisms are based on the conviction that the sacrament of baptism is necessary for salvation, and that none can, in the end, do without it. It stresses the absolute necessity of the ordinance for all, even those who never received the Christian message in this life. Within the New Testament itself, many texts support this understanding of baptism as essential to salvation. First, Christ himself is baptized, suggesting the necessity for Christians to receive the same ordinance. Further, the apostolic message includes the imperative to baptize the nations. For example, Mark 16:15–16—though likely a second-century addition<sup>7</sup>—declares the following: “And he (Christ) said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and

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*Inscriptions and Testimonia: Epigraphic Sources Illustrating the History of Montanism* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997), 414–19.

7. Joel Marcus, *Mark 8–16* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 1088–89. “Most scholars agree that 16:9–20 is non-Markan. . . . These verses are found in the overwhelming majority of manuscripts and in all major manuscript families and are attested already by Irenaeus (*Against Heresis* 3.10.5) in 185 C.E. and perhaps, even earlier, by Justin (1 *Apology* 45, around 155 C.E.). But they were almost certainly not penned by Mark, nor were they the original ending of the Gospel. Matthew and Luke follow Mark’s narrative closely up to 16:8, whereas beyond it they diverge radically, suggesting that their version of Mark did not contain anything subsequent to 16:8. Verses 9–20, moreover, do not exist in our earliest and best Greek manuscripts, Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, both of which terminate at 16:8, as do the Sinaitic Syriac, about a hundred Armenian manuscripts, the two oldest Georgian manuscripts (from 897 and 913 C.E.), and all but one manuscript of the Sahidic Coptic.”

preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”<sup>8</sup> Matthew’s Gospel records a similar imperative as the risen Christ instructs the Apostles: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matt. 28:19–20).

One finds a similar emphasis on baptism in the writings of Paul and Peter. Paul, for example, writes: “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:26–27). To “put on Christ,” in this context, refers to becoming an heir of the Abrahamic covenant with its associated promises and blessings (Gal. 3:28–29); it is the method whereby men and women are brought into the family of God. In Romans, Paul connects baptism with the possibility of overcoming the death of sin to achieve life in Jesus Christ (Rom 6:1–5)—baptism is the method to secure salvation. In this passage of Romans, Paul also explicitly connects the symbolism of baptism with the resurrection, a move he makes more emphatically in 1 Corinthians 15:29 with his discussion of baptism for the dead.<sup>9</sup>

Peter makes a similar tie between baptism and the resurrection. In the third chapter of 1 Peter—*immediately* following his mention of Christ’s preaching to the spirits in prison—the text says the following: “Baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God” (1 Pet. 3:21–22). The connection here that Peter makes between

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8. The phrasing here suggests that belief and baptism are necessary for salvation, but that only disbelief is required for damnation. Thus, if one takes a hard approach to this reading, then to believe and remain unbaptized leaves one in a state of flux and uncertainty—one is neither saved nor damned.

9. In *Paul the Convert*, Alan Segal even goes to the point of arguing that baptism has replaced circumcision as the necessary salvific rite, at least for Paul and other like-minded Christians. Segal argues that Paul understood baptism as a necessary ritual, for through it one begins the process of transformation into a divine angelic state. That transformation continues after baptism, with the culmination being a full transformation in the resurrection. Since baptism begins the transformation process, all Christians must be baptized, and this inevitably raises the issue of baptism for the dead. See Alan Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 119–26, 136–38.

Christ's preaching to the spirits of prison, baptism, and resurrection is very intriguing from an LDS viewpoint, especially as it could relate to baptism for the dead. In any event, 1 Peter explicitly ties baptism and resurrection as the means whereby we are saved—the two provide the possibility of salvation through Jesus Christ.

This belief in the necessity of baptism plays itself out in the historical record as well. For example, throughout the book of Acts, baptism is consistently reported as the mandatory initiation rite for converts into Christendom. Not only that, but Acts 2:38 also explicitly links baptism with forgiveness of sins: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." This suggests that for the author of Acts, baptism is not merely an ordinance of introduction into the church, but it has real salvific value that plays itself out in the missionary efforts of the early Apostles. As one scholar puts the issue: "Those who receive the apostolic message, recognize Jesus as Lord and Messiah, repent, and are baptized in his name receive forgiveness, the Holy Spirit, and salvation."<sup>10</sup>

While we do not wish to maintain that all of the sources agree in every respect on the precise nature of baptism, we do argue that there is remarkable uniformity among many of the earliest Christian texts, especially the New Testament, about the *salvific* nature of baptism. Everett Ferguson<sup>11</sup> writes, "Although in developing the doctrine of baptism different authors had their particular favorite descriptions, there is a remarkable agreement on the benefits received in baptism. And these are present already in the New Testament texts. Two fundamental blessings are often repeated: the person baptized received forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit."<sup>12</sup> From this view of the essential nature of baptism one can understand the first part of a theology that supports the practice of vicarious baptisms for the dead. The second piece of such a theology is the possibility of vicarious work.

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10. Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009), 170.

11. Everett Ferguson serves as Distinguished Scholar in Residence at Abilene Christian University. His book, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries*, is a monumental and thorough examination of the history of baptism and baptismal theology in early Christianity.

12. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 854.

## Vicarious Salvation

By vicarious work, we mean any act whereby one person may enable or make possible the salvation of others by doing something on their behalf, especially by doing something that others cannot do for themselves.<sup>13</sup> This belief stands at the center of baptism for the dead—the view that the living can perform some work that has salvific consequences for the dead. This does not mean, of course, that one’s entire salvation is up to others. It only suggests that one person’s salvation is not wholly unconnected from the work of others.<sup>14</sup>

In the Hebrew Bible, the most obvious example of vicarious work as we have defined it comes from temple rituals and the work of priests. In the Jerusalem temple, the priests performed such works as animal sacrifices, burning incense, and giving prayers on behalf of the people of Israel. These acts were not merely symbolic, but they were believed to have a real salvific effect on the community; the temple work was essential to a proper relationship with the Lord. The culminating ritual in this theology was the high priest’s intercession on behalf of the people on Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement. On this unique day, the high priest would make a sin and burnt offering and then enter the holy of holies to sprinkle the blood of such offerings as an act of atonement (Lev. 16). The high priest’s work removed the sins of the people and restored the people to God.

Similar themes of vicarious salvation appear in the New Testament. In the case of Paul, it is not far removed from his general theology to assume that vicarious ordinance work, particularly proxy baptisms for the dead, was a part of his own beliefs and teachings. Unquestionably, vicarious work—in the figure of Jesus Christ—is the central theme of Christian belief in Pauline theology; Christianity, for Paul, hinges on the salvific gifts of Christ. Christ is a “propitiation [atoning sacrifice] . . .

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13. This definition could also be expanded to include any type of work that affects the salvation of another, making the theme far more expansive and inclusive.

14. For Latter-day Saints, the idea that one’s salvation (or, importantly, one’s exaltation) depends on others comes most prominently in its doctrine of marriage: one cannot reach the highest level of exaltation and blessedness in the celestial kingdom without being sealed in an LDS temple to someone of the opposite sex. Thus, one’s degree of blessedness, happiness, glory, and exaltation does in fact depend on others in a much stronger sense than we have outlined here.

for the remission of sins” (Rom. 3:25). Given Christ’s role in atoning for the whole world, the entire tradition of Christian thought has vicarious work at its core. The author of Hebrews (perhaps Paul or someone influenced by Paul) even references the great temple tradition of the Old Testament, comparing the work of Christ to that of the great high priest (Heb. 4:14–5:10; 9:6–28; 10:5–18). In this way, then, Christ is the prime example of someone performing vicarious work on behalf of another, though this possibility of vicarious work does not end with Christ. Apart from the example of the high priest, Paul even recounts his own “sufferings for you,” where, by his own exertion, he fills up “that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church” (Col. 1:24). In this context, Paul is the one performing vicarious work to make up for the shortcomings of the church as a whole. This suggests that Christ is not alone in his vicarious work. With the emphasis Paul places on baptism elsewhere in his writings (Rom. 6:1–5; Gal. 3:26–29),<sup>15</sup> “it is not a stretch to imagine a Pauline community practicing vicarious baptism for those who had died ‘in the faith,’ but without baptism.”<sup>16</sup>

The *Apocalypse of Peter*,<sup>17</sup> a Christian text of the second century, provides another view on the question of vicarious work in which the righteous can affect the salvation of the condemned. The text presents scenes from the final judgment of the world where the wicked receive their eternal punishment from a just God. In chapter 14 of this work, at the final judgment, some of the damned souls are saved from eternal torment at the behest of those who are righteous. At this point in the Greek text, God says: “[I] will give to my called and my elect whomever they request of me from out of punishment. And I will give them a

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15. Lars Hartman, “Baptism,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 587, while commenting on Galatians 3:26–29, mentions that for Paul, “there is no tension or contradiction to be seen between the two (faith and baptism). . . . One may say that faith is the subjective side of the receiving of the gift of salvation, baptism the objective side.”

16. Jeffrey A. Trumbower, *Rescue for the Dead: The Posthumous Salvation of Non-Christians in Early Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 37.

17. Not to be confused with the gnostic work of the same name. This text dates to roughly AD 100–150; it is first mentioned by Clement of Alexandria in AD 180. This apocryphal work was considered scripture by Clement but was likely composed in Egypt by an unknown author.



beautiful baptism in salvation from the Acherousian Lake which is said to be in the Elysian Field, a share in righteousness with my saints.”<sup>18</sup>

By God’s explicit permission, the text says that the righteous can save certain damned souls who are then released from eternal punishment and receive baptism (literal or figurative),<sup>19</sup> that they might be saved with their counterparts. This is vicarious work of the clearest kind, because God’s elect make possible the salvation of the damned souls by interceding on their behalf. Dennis D. Buchholz argues that this scene “teaches a form of universal salvation, that is, if any who are saved request pardon for any wicked [person], . . . the latter will be released from punishment.”<sup>20</sup> Interestingly, the later Ethiopic translation of the *Apocalypse of Peter* changes the wording of these lines so that no second chance could be interpreted from the text. This was likely done because “someone had theological objections to it.”<sup>21</sup> Further, the *Sibylline Oracles*, which paraphrases this scene from the *Apocalypse of Peter*, contains a small interjectory note written by a later author declaring that the doctrine taught concerning damned souls was “plainly false: for the fire will never cease to torment the damned. I indeed could pray that it might be so, who am branded with the deepest scars of transgressions which stand in need of utmost mercy. But let Origen be ashamed of his lying words, who saith that there is a term set to the torments.”<sup>22</sup> The idea that righteous people could intervene on behalf of the condemned and that their punishment would see an end was apparently held by the authors of the *Apocalypse of Peter* and the *Sibylline Oracles*. All of these texts show an important strain of theology in the early Christian faith—one that believed in and allowed for vicarious work. Moreover, this

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18. *Apocalypse of Peter* 14, translation from the Greek Rainer Fragment by Dennis D. Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened: A Study of the Greek (Ethiopic) Apocalypse of Peter* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1988), 344–45.

19. The text doesn’t clearly specify whether the baptism refers to some specific physical ordinance or whether it is a more spiritual or figurative cleansing of the unrighteous. But this need not trouble the argument here. The relevant theme of this text is that the righteous can perform a vicarious *work* for the dead, namely, choosing them to receive baptism. While it is indeed significant in our view that baptism is the rite discussed, the main issue is that of vicarious salvation, which, as defined above, is clearly illustrated in this text.

20. Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 348.

21. Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened*, 348.

22. Montague R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament: Apocryphal Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Apocalypses* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1924), 524.

vicarious work was not only permissible, but had a real salvific effect. This secures the second part of a vicarious baptismal theology; the third part of such a theology concerns salvation for the dead.

### Salvation after Death

Comments made by Paul the Apostle show that salvation for the dead had been on the minds of Christians since its earliest days. One of the earliest references to this teaching is found in Ephesians, which describes Jesus's triumph over all things, even over "captivity" itself, and briefly describes Christ's descent to Hades: "He [Jesus] had also descended into the lower parts of the earth" (Eph. 4:8–10, NRSV).<sup>23</sup> The triumph over "captivity" and the reference to the "lower parts of the earth" refer to Jesus's visit to Sheol/Hades, the place of resting for the dead, and his release of the prisoners there—what has been called the "Harrowing of Hell."

The epistle of Peter, specifically 1 Peter 3:19–21 and 4:6, also speaks of the Harrowing of Hell and Christ's evangelization of the dead. These verses read: "He (Christ) went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah . . . wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us"; and "For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." Chapter 4, verse 6, is more direct in its wording that those being taught are the "dead" (*nekrois*), meaning those who are physically dead rather than the vague term *spirits* (*pneumasin*). Scholars are divided over the relation of these two passages of scripture and whether or not they refer to the same event in which "spirits" and "dead"

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23. As one unnamed reviewer has helpfully pointed out, the Greek here is ambiguous. The "lower parts of the earth" could refer to Sheol, or it could refer to the earth itself, which is lower than the heavens. While we acknowledge this textual ambiguity, we feel that a good case can be made for reading these verses as referring to a descent into Hades. That case primarily depends upon the Jewish and Christian traditions, both before, during, and after the time of the New Testament, that discuss posthumous salvation and the Harrowing of Hell. For a fuller treatment of this topic, see Paulsen, Cook, and Christensen, "Harrowing of Hell," 56–77. See also Doctrine and Covenants 138 for a latter-day scriptural account of Christ's visit to the spirit world.

are equivalent, with Christ being the subject of both verbs.<sup>24</sup> Regardless of what stance is taken, some form of postmortem evangelism is clearly reported in the verses in question, particularly 4:6.<sup>25</sup> If the dead were indeed given an opportunity to accept the gospel of Christ, then certainly this would open room for the idea of proxy baptisms on their behalf. First Peter suggests baptism as requisite for salvation (3:21),<sup>26</sup> thus providing a basis for a theology that includes vicarious work for those who cannot perform rites for themselves.

Outside the New Testament, the first- or second-century collection of Christian hymns known as the *Odes of Solomon*<sup>27</sup> greatly expands on the Christian themes of the Harrowing of Hell and salvation for the dead. In Ode 42 of this text, Christ speaks and describes his original descent from God and his subsequent descent to Sheol:

Sheol saw me and was shattered,  
and Death ejected me and many with me.  
I have been vinegar and bitterness to it,  
and I went down with it as far as its depth. (11–12)

The text then speaks of Christ's spiritual body and his formation of a community of the righteous among the dead:

Then the feet and the head it released,<sup>28</sup>  
because it was not able to endure my face.  
And I made a congregation of living among his dead;

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24. John H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 654–58, 730–34.

25. For a fuller treatment of this topic, see Paulsen, Cook, and Christensen, “Harrowing of Hell,” 56–77.

26. Hartman, “Baptism,” 591, explains, “Although baptism is mentioned only once in 1 Peter, it plays an important role as a basic presupposition for the presentation in the epistle. In fact, it is so important that scholars have suggested that it represents (parts of) a baptismal liturgy or a baptismal homily. Even though such a supposition may go somewhat too far, there is a wide consensus that 1 Peter makes substantial use of ideas associated with baptism.”

27. The *Odes of Solomon* is a collection of Christian hymns connected to the Johannine community of the late first or early second century AD. Available online at the Gnostic Society Library, <http://gnosis.org/library/odes.htm>.

28. The Odist's worldview holds that a soul will first depart the body's furthest extremity, the feet, exiting the head only at the final point of death. Death's release of Christ follows the same pattern.

and I spoke with them by living lips;  
in order that my word may not fail. (13–14)

The captives of Sheol cry out and plead for Christ's pity and kindness, and Christ now offers them the brilliant promise of escape:

And those who had died ran toward me;  
and they cried out and said, "Son of God, have pity on us.  
And deal with us according to your kindness,  
and bring us out from the chains of darkness.  
And open for us the door  
by which we may go forth to you,  
for we perceive that our death does not approach you.  
May we also be saved with you,  
because you are our Savior." (15–18)

The final verses of Ode 42 indicate that Christ will fulfill all their requests. He hears their pleas and responds to their sincere faith and places his name on the foreheads of the new community of the righteous. This is the Christian rite of *chrism*, or anointing. Christians included the chrism as part of the baptismal ritual in the second century and likely in the first as well; in this rite, initiates were given an anointing with oil immediately before or immediately after baptism. The chrism in Ode 42 connects the initiates to Christ as they now permanently bear the divine name that has been given to Christ by the Father.<sup>29</sup> They now belong to him; indeed, Christ says "they are mine"<sup>30</sup>:

Then I heard their voice,  
and I placed their faith in my heart,  
And placed my name upon their head,  
because they are free and they are mine. (42:19–20)

Given that the Christian author of the Odes would be familiar with both baptism and the chrism, and would understand that one

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29. The book of Revelation explains that those who conquer will personally receive the chrism from Christ: "I will write on you the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem that comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name" (3:12, NRSV).

30. In a clear reference to a premortal existence, the Odist indicates that God knew those who would be faithful and placed the chrism on their faces: "And he who created me when yet I was not knew what I would do when I came into being" (7:9); "And before they had existed I recognized them; and imprinted a seal on their faces" (8:13).

accompanies the other, as well as the fact that he specifically refers to the chrism given to the repentant dead of Sheol, it can be reasonably concluded that baptism is somehow in view here in the text.

These themes are echoed in the Apostles' Creed, which is the oldest Christian creed and is still used today as part of the baptismal liturgy of the Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Lutheran churches. The Apostles' Creed acknowledges a belief in "God, the Father almighty" and in "Jesus Christ, his only Son" who "descended into Hell." Though this idea was noticeably absent in the Council of Nicaea in AD 325, the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Council of AD 381 denounced any who did not affirm the descent; the fourth Council of Toledo made it a point to insert language describing the descent into their writings, and the phrase became a part of the universally accepted version of the Apostles' Creed of the eighth century.

Later, the Council of Sens (AD 1140), supported by Pope Innocent II, condemned an error that had begun to creep into the church surrounding Christ's descent into hell. This error, attributed to Peter Abelard, was the belief that Christ actually went to hell to save those in the underworld—an early Christian understanding of the doctrine. Instead, the Council of Sens declared that "the soul of Christ per se did not descend to those who are below [*ad inferos*], but only by means of power."<sup>31</sup> This change in understanding marked an important turning point for the theological rationale behind baptism for the dead, a significant moment that highlights the current challenges to a Christian theology of vicarious baptism for the dead.

### Rejection of a Vicarious Baptism Theology

Each of the three doctrines behind a vicarious baptismal theology has been challenged by the Christian tradition. The essential nature of baptism and other sacraments was widely challenged following the wake of the Protestant reformation. The concept of vicarious work was also undermined by theologies that accept or lean toward the doctrines of total depravity, prevenient grace, predestination, or the impossibility of righteous works. If salvific works are irrelevant or impossible, as these doctrines suggest, then certainly there can be no vicarious baptismal theology. Many of these changes came following the Reformation,

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31. Alyssa Lyra Pitstick, *Light in Darkness: Hans Urs Von Balthasar and the Catholic Doctrine of Christ's Descent into Hell* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 20.

but some challenges to vicarious baptismal theology came much earlier. For example, Augustine of Hippo in the fourth and fifth century vigorously rejected any idea of posthumous salvation, despite being fully aware of the popularity of the doctrine for lay people as well as for prominent writers and despite his own unequivocal acceptance of Christ's descent into hell. For Augustine, the passages in 1 Peter made no reference to Hades. Augustine strived to explain away the possibility of salvation after death for at least three reasons. First, he felt it would undermine the authority of the church in this life. Second, he thought that "another" chance was unnecessary, for no one who had died since the Resurrection had any excuse for not learning of and accepting Christ. And third, he felt it would defeat the purpose of missionary work in mortality, concluding that "then the gospel ought not be preached here, since all will certainly die."<sup>32</sup>

Under Augustine's influence, Protestant Reformers also denied Christ's descent to hell. John Calvin, for example, completely rejects any notion of Christ visiting hell to save anyone. For Calvin, the idea of a "descent into hell" is simply a reference to the intense suffering that Christ endured on the cross. Calvin explains it away, much like Augustine, into metaphor by referring to Isaiah's prophecy of Christ's sufferings in Isaiah 53: "There is nothing strange in its being said that he descended to hell, seeing he endured the death which is inflicted on the wicked by an angry God."<sup>33</sup> He calls any objections to that explanation (specifically, the question as to why the Creed mentions Christ visiting hell *after* his burial when his suffering *preceded* it) mere "trifling" and dismisses the popular idea that Christ literally visited hell to save souls as "nothing but a fable" and "childish." Martin Luther was just as firm in closing the door on the possibility of salvation after death. He denied "the existence of a purgatory and of a Limbo of the Fathers in which they say that there is hope and a sure expectation of liberation. . . . These are figments of some stupid and bungling sophist."<sup>34</sup> In the aftermath of the Reformation, Christ's descent into hell would be reduced to an obscure view, with but few witnesses to the once-ubiquitous doctrine.

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32. Augustine, *Epistula* 164.4.13.

33. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1:442.

34. Martin Luther, "First Lectures on the Psalms (Psalm 86)," in *Luther's Works* 11 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1976), 175.



## Conclusion

And thus we find ourselves in the current state of Christian thought, one that by and large rejects the practice of baptism for the dead as an, at best, unusual and, at worst, heretical practice. Given some of the theological changes just outlined, this is not necessarily without reason. One can understand the distrust of such a practice when its theological rationale becomes muddled or out of place in contemporary Christendom. Indeed, the loss or rejection of any one of the three doctrines we have outlined—the necessity of baptism, vicarious work, and posthumous salvation—undermines the possibility of baptisms for the dead. In addition to other things, the practice of vicarious baptism needs at least this tripartite theology to support its existence. Given that many Christian denominations reject part or all of these three teachings, baptism for the dead falls by the wayside. But as we have tried to illustrate in this paper, this need not be the case. In fact, the Christian tradition has an abundance of resources within which a theology can be detected or constructed that supports vicarious baptism for the dead, and this theology originates in the earliest days of Christianity itself. It is for this reason that Paul can persuade the Corinthian saints of the importance of Christ's resurrection on the basis of baptisms for the dead, because that practice relies on teachings that were part and parcel of the early Christian faith.

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# On Criticism, Compassion, and Charity

*George Handley*

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I am deeply humbled by this invitation to share my journey as a scholar of faith. I have wrestled with my feelings these past few weeks because I am not sure how much of my experience is applicable to others, nor am I entirely sure that I have enough answers. I do know that I want to communicate honestly, and, most importantly, I want to edify and strengthen your faith. The challenge is that my journey is idiosyncratic. However, I take comfort in two things. Although your story is different from mine, yours is just as idiosyncratic. There are as many ways of reaching Christ as there are people in this world. As Elder Bruce Hafen has said, “Nothing brings the Spirit into a conversation or a classroom more than hearing people bear honest testimony, not so much by exhortation as by just telling the story of their personal experience.”<sup>1</sup> So I seek to speak candidly, but also in love and respect for the dignity of every person here.

This is part autobiography and testimony, but it is also an argument. And here’s my thesis. I believe that the humanities are not just an adornment but are essential to our spiritual lives, and by that I also mean that

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1. Bruce C. Hafen, *A Disciple’s Life: The Biography of Neal A. Maxwell* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2010), xiv.

intellectual and spiritual growth need to occur in at least some relation to one another. However, neither religion nor the humanities can have the greatest impact and best influence in our lives without three crucial ingredients: criticism, compassion, and charity. These three things often work together but sometimes they get separated, and when they do, the quality of our intellectual and spiritual lives suffer.

Let me start by explaining that what scholars refer to as criticism (or critical thinking) is not the same thing as contention. Contention isn't what happens when people disagree. It is what happens when they lose trust and respect for one another. Criticism, on the other hand, is the means by which we protect ourselves from deception and by which we strengthen our autonomy as moral agents. It implies that we can see ourselves in a context of difference and plurality. In critical thinking, we distance ourselves from an experience or from some idea enough to assess and judge its value and interpret its meaning. Without such criticism, we are swept up by the whims of opinion; we parrot what we read or watch or listen to.

Compassion is an important companion to criticism. If we never allow ourselves to feel what others feel or see through another's eyes, our critical judgment will become centripetal and self-reinforcing. We will end up talking to only those we already like or identify with. It can lead to cynicism and categorical mistrust of others. Compassion, which means to "suffer with," can trigger learning and change. And as our own baptismal covenant implies, it is what we owe everyone, both those most different and those most familiar. It helps us not to overgeneralize or bypass the particular circumstances of individuals. Of course, compassion without criticism runs centrifugal risks, something akin to gullibility where we feel impressions, attractions, and distractions at every turn.

Charity, I want to suggest, is the means by which we learn to live with the tension between criticism and compassion. And I want to make it clear that wherever charity emerges, there Christ is also. We know its characteristics: longsuffering, believing, trusting, not easily offended. As the Mexican poet Octavio Paz says, it is akin to what a metaphor does: it holds differences together in a meaningful relationship without collapsing those differences. It helps us not to be driven by emotion, to weigh things in the balance, both the good and the difficult, and it recognizes that there is a gap between our thoughts and God's thoughts that we must seek to overcome by a perpetual search for more truth. In this way, it helps us to avoid polarized and polarizing conclusions. This

is why a personal commitment to repentance and humility, a steady practice of submission to God's will, and a constant plea for Christ's pure love are essential to thinking clearly.

The humanities are a wonderful training ground for charity. They teach us how to imagine communion. They are methods for experiencing reconciliation, for imagining beauty and meaning in the wake of chaos and suffering, and for connecting us to one another and to the cosmos. Reading great literature, learning languages, listening to music, watching live theater or great films, or participating in religious ritual—these are all experiences that are aimed at reinvigorating and expanding our sense of self and belonging in the world. Nothing captures the way literature can teach charity more beautifully than this statement by C. S. Lewis: “Literary experience heals the wound, without undermining the privilege, of individuality. . . . In reading great literature I become a thousand men and yet remain myself. . . . Here, as in worship, in love, in moral action, and in knowing, I transcend myself; and am never more myself than when I do.”<sup>2</sup> Without the experience of charity, we are prone to the allures of mass emotions, which obliterate particularity, or, perhaps worse, we face what some have called balkanization—the abandonment of the quest for community and the retreat to our own like-minded camps.

Sometimes I have experienced charity in the arts and sometimes in religious contexts. I don't think God is as interested in the distinctions we like to make between the sacred and the secular. Like the time a few years ago when my son Sam and I flew out to Los Angeles to visit my brother, and we sat listening to Mahler's Second Symphony with the Los Angeles Symphony. We all wept as we listened to the words, “*What was created/Must perish,/What perished, rise again!/Cease from trembling!/Prepare yourself to live!*” I was both transported and grounded, purely loved and invited to change. Or the time when, on a research trip to Chile, I sat in the celestial room in the Santiago temple by myself at a particularly desperate and low point for me, and I imagined what it would be like to have my deceased brother by my side. Suddenly I felt the real presence of his arms wrapped around me. I felt guided in my research from that moment. Or the time—just two months ago—when I was called into my stake presidency and Elder Marcus Nash asked me

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2. C. S. Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), 140–41.

in an interview to imagine what I would say if Jesus were in the room alone with me. At that moment, Christ's presence became unmistakably real and I was overcome with tears and could only mumble, "Thank you." I felt forgiven, accepted, known, and loved. And called to serve. It was empowering to discover how much I loved Christ.

I have also had this experience when listening to Church leaders, which gave me a foundational witness of their calling as his special witnesses. I can still recall as a missionary in the MTC the way my hair felt blown back (short as it was) by sheer force of testimony of the living Christ from Elder Oaks and Elder Maxwell. Similarly, with Elder Eyring when he was a Seventy and visited my stake in Oakland when I was in graduate school, with Elder Christofferson when he was a Seventy and visited my stake in Flagstaff when I taught there before coming to BYU, and twice with Elder Ballard here in Provo. In each case, I have felt the unmistakable presence of the Savior and experienced and received their witness of his living reality. These experiences have anchored my hope and faith in the restored gospel. In each case, God's love healed me of doubt, hurt, pain, and discouragement. Doubts sometimes benefit from answers, but most often doubt springs from fear, anxiety, abandonment, or from lack of self-confidence. For this reason, doubt is best resolved, not with knowledge per se, but in loving relationships and with experiences of God's pure love. Nothing is more important to experience than this.

What I want to suggest is that aesthetic and spiritual experiences teach that understanding matters and it comes, but it doesn't matter most and it doesn't come first. As the great Spanish poet Miguel de Unamuno says in his inimitable masterpiece, *The Tragic Sense of Life*, "The primary reality is not that I think, but that I live." Thus, "the end purpose of life is to live, and not to understand."<sup>3</sup> In other words, truth is to be lived more than it is to be apprehended. The most painful and challenging times are invariably the most transformative, even and especially when we don't understand. If we refuse to absorb contradiction and instead rush to premature or shallow explanations, we may end up shielding ourselves from Christ's experience of the matter. It is the same principle in marriage. Amy and I might not always love each other as we should, and we don't always understand or agree with each other, but as

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3. Miguel de Unamuno, *The Tragic Sense of Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 41, 129.

we strive for unity and loyalty in the face of those differences, not despite them, our experience deepens and our character changes.

My first experiences with criticism, compassion, and charity were in family life at home. As Mormons, we lived as a very small minority outside of New York. We were taught to love human diversity and that God must too. Dinner table conversation at my home was free-flowing, covering politics and culture and the Church. We went to concerts and museums in the city, and we hosted friends of other faiths at our home. I was the youngest of three brothers, and the older two were exceptionally bright and observant and full of strong opinions. They read serious literature at young ages, they loved and played classical music, and they knew how to have a meaningful experience in a museum. Even though neither of my parents would have considered themselves experts, they remain among my most important adjudicators of taste. They have always been amateurs in the best sense of the word: lovers of all good things, consistent with the charitable work, as Mormon describes it, of “lay[ing] hold upon every good thing” (Moro. 7:19).

I enjoyed the conversations, but I was intimidated a bit by this at first. I didn’t feel that I had a good vocabulary, and I couldn’t express myself well, and when I looked at a painting or listened to a symphony, I wasn’t sure what I was supposed to feel. I preferred sports, rock and roll, and goofing off. And honestly, I was really, really good at that. My goofing off was innocent at first, but it led me into a struggle with keeping the Word of Wisdom and prolonged spiritual doubts. The good thing was that my parents never seemed overly impatient with me, even though my brothers were much farther advanced in their critical skills and life skills. My parents thought going to church was generally a good idea, but it wasn’t the most important thing. In fact, when we asked our dad why he occasionally decided to stay home or go home early from church, he explained, with a wry grin, that once you went to church three thousand times, it was optional. What mattered most to my parents was being a good person. The most painful conversations I ever had with them pertained to situations where I was struggling to be inclusive or kind to difficult personalities. They were adamant that I not become selfishly attracted only to like-minded or similar personalities, but that I branch out. I watched my parents reach out to extended family, many of whom grew up in economic and cultural circumstances far less privileged than my own. I admired how they could talk to the very poor and the very rich without changing their tone. I am especially grateful for the fact that whenever the conversation got too critical



of people or leaders, my parents always helped each other and us to remember to be charitable.

I suppose according to some litmus tests, they weren't exactly the most active or model Mormons, but anyone who knows them knows them to be profoundly Christian. They didn't follow all the rules exactly, nor did they seem particularly worried that I do so. I don't remember my parents ever getting on my case about grades, about scout advancement, or about going on a mission. I think they trusted me and trusted that their example of good living would pull us through. They were loath to reduce the pursuit of a good life to a rat race or a checklist. My mother often expressed frustration that the formal practices of religion just didn't seem to work for her like it did for others. My father was never entirely satisfied by answers he was given to his questions, but neither of them ever allowed anger or hatred or despair to rule their own hearts or to govern their approach to life. They had better things to do and to see and to understand in the world. They aren't perfect, but I wish more people were like them.

Maybe they didn't feel they could be the ones to plant the seed of the restored gospel in its entirety, but they were careful not to trample the soil of my faith with their own overstated doubts. As we have been taught recently by Elder Holland and President Uchtdorf, doubting our doubts can be an expression of faith. Without my parents' forbearance, I don't believe I would have had the freedom to discover my own testimony of the restored gospel. Criticism or disagreement is not an enemy to faith and belief. What seems to undermine faith and belief is distrust and fear either directed at ourselves, others, or at God, and it can lead, paradoxically, to inflexible and dogmatic thinking.

Elder Maxwell warned, "We can also meekly let our ideas have a life of their own without oversponsoring them. Rather, let the Spirit impel our worthy ideas."<sup>4</sup> I think he means that we should be careful not to assume we have arrived at the proper conclusions about reality. Thinking is an experiment, not a test. Sometimes I am embarrassed for football players who celebrate a sack on second down, only to be burned by a touchdown pass on the next play. I have learned that on the most sensitive and the most divisive issues, instead of tightening up and prematurely interpreting the meaning of a situation, we should be more careful to listen to all sides. Such listening puts us in the position to do

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4. Neal A. Maxwell, "'Repent of [Our] Selfishness' (D&C 56:8)," *Ensign* 29 (May 1999): 23.

our most creative and best thinking. Derek Walcott insists, for example, that great poetry can never be based in revenge, anger, or nostalgia but only in acceptance and assimilation of the facts of experience. If we truly wish to “enlarge the place of [our] tent” (Isa. 54:2), we must not chase people off by shaming them for their questions. They need a refuge, as they are, while they wait upon the Lord.

Many years ago, during a job talk I gave at an eastern university, I was faced with a room full of scholars. During the question-and-answer session, someone asked my opinion about a book that was related to my research. I hadn’t even heard of the book, so I couldn’t even give a half-baked answer. I just said in front of everyone, “I don’t know the book, so I can’t answer the question.” Afterward, one of the members of the search committee expressed admiration that I had the courage to say, “I don’t know.” He said, “I wish more of us had that kind of courage.” That may have been the only time in my academic life when ignorance was a virtue, not enough of a virtue to get me the job, mind you, but it was nice for once to be congratulated for being ignorant. In his marvelous essay, “The Way of Ignorance,” Wendell Berry insists that the burden of the gospels is to “accept our failure to understand, not as a misstatement or a textual flaw or as a problem to be solved, but as a question to live with and a burden to be borne.”<sup>5</sup> We might know some things. We might even be in possession of some fundamental truths, but truth is no trophy you can hold up. Its value isn’t in possessing it. Its value is the love we muster to build relationships in its pursuit. This is why we need God, each other, even our enemies, to teach us truth. Paul made it clear: you can talk truth all the day long, but if you don’t have charity, you have nothing (see 1 Cor. 13:1–3). There is something truer than truth, and it is love.

So my parents didn’t pass on knowledge to me so much as they allowed my experiences to be deep, authentic, and my own. They insisted I do with my life what I most wanted. They told me to go to the school and major in the field of my choosing. This is particularly marvelous when you consider their burdens. They were in the midst of striving to help their firstborn, Kenny, through terrible depression that eventually led to his suicide; helping their second son, Bill, deal with the intensity of coming to terms with his homosexuality; and helping me, their youngest, to emerge from the fog of a misspent adolescence. They never pointed fingers at each other after the death of their son, and they

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5. Wendell Berry, *The Way of Ignorance and Other Essays* (Washington, D.C.: Shoemaker and Hoard, 2005), 131.

worked through the process of Bill's coming out with grace and care, managing to keep their own marriage strong, their relationship to both their sons locked in even as we took different paths, and their relationship to people of all persuasions and to the Church open and fair. Their example of thoughtful criticism, compassion, and charity is perhaps the most heroic and most Christian example I have in my life, even though it isn't tied formally to institutional life in Mormonism. I love the Church. It is where I belong. It is where we all belong, in my mind, but I have never hesitated to love and admire them or anyone else who does good work in the world outside the walls of my church. I believe Christ would expect nothing less from me.

I wouldn't have gone to Stanford, majored in comparative literature, or taken my career path as a professor without my brother Bill's example, encouragement, and brilliance that lighted every step of the way for me through my education. He was and is my intellectual soul mate. My freshman year at Stanford included a yearlong dorm-based intensive course on the Western tradition, perhaps the single most valuable educational experience of my life. In the hallways and in class, we debated the meaning of Greek tragedies, the value of biblical wisdom, and the very nature of the universe. We wrestled with the theories of Darwin, the meaning of grace according to Luther, the root causes of poverty, and the legacies of the Holocaust. I was debating with atheists, with other Christians, with Muslims and Jews and Hindus. This, for me, was heaven! The experience that year was enough to convince me I wanted to make a career out of reading, discussing, and writing about great ideas. What was especially exciting was that we could explore ideas without restraint, without preestablished conclusions, and in the company of a wide diversity of viewpoints. I learned that part of criticism is listening to the criticism of others, something central to scholarly work. I felt comfortable saying something that I might later decide was utter hogwash. I was often told my ideas were, indeed, hogwash, although my friends used other words for it. Sometimes it meant I got stinging and hurtful criticisms of my beliefs, but more often than not such exchanges helped me to recognize my own sexism or racism or naiveté about the world. I sensed my professor—an atheist, a Jew, and a Marxist—was not thrilled with the idea of me wanting to serve a mission, but he also had a respect for and an interest in Mormonism. He had already read the Book of Mormon but wanted to read more, so I gave him a collection of essays by one of my most influential models of a Mormon scholar in

those days, Gene England, which he enjoyed. When I got too worked up in my criticism of a writer, whether it was Marx or Nietzsche, he would ask me if I was reading carefully enough to understand their point of view. I figured that if he had bothered to read about Mormonism, I should bother to be as curious about other ideas.

I was fortunate to have spent my summer before and after my freshman year with another pivotal model for me, Lowell Bennion. I worked as a counselor at his boys' ranch. Lowell was a man who balanced criticism, compassion, and charity better than anyone I knew. I also devoured his books in those days, as I did the books of another important influence, Elder Maxwell. Both were men of learning and of careful and bold judgment, but they also devoted their lives not to thinking brilliantly, as brilliant as they were, but to service. Lowell took time to treat my wounds in the wake of my brother's tragic death, and he helped me keep things simple when looking at the Church and thinking about the gospel. He had lived with his questions, particularly about blacks and the priesthood, and he never stopped asking them openly and honestly, but he also never let such questions overshadow his life or lead him to anger. For him, life always boiled down to "What can I do to help?" What a gift that man was.

My one semester at BYU after my freshman year and before my mission exposed me to many more professors and peers who modeled lives of integrity, intellectual curiosity, and deep faith. It was an embarrassment of riches. Indeed, Brigham Young's vision of education sunk deep into my soul and ultimately drew me back here to teach. As I think about it now, it was as if I always knew I would be here. Since my arrival here almost eighteen years ago, I have taught, recreated, researched, worshipped, mourned, and rejoiced with my exceptional peers, women and men who are among the most remarkable people I have ever known. Our conversations together on complex and difficult topics have been the most exciting and soul-fulfilling conversations in my life. And I cannot overstate how much I admire and love the students at BYU. I will always defend this place and believe in it as the most exciting and important experiment in higher education. We don't always get things right here at BYU, of course. We sometimes prefer to coerce consensus or to micromanage it. We are overly anxious about differences of opinion. I think it probably comes with the territory of engaging in an unusual but essential experiment. Elder Holland says, "In this Church there is an enormous amount of room—and scriptural commandment—for

studying and learning, for comparing and considering, for discussion and awaiting further revelation. . . . In this there is no place for coercion or manipulation, no place for intimidation or hypocrisy.”<sup>6</sup> I hope we can work harder to create an atmosphere for honest conversation and exploration as brothers and sisters. Since faith is strengthened more by relationships than by ideas, this is vital.

We can do better than what at Stanford and at Berkeley was a conversation limited to a hermeneutics of suspicion, that is, a method of interpretation that starts and ends at a position of distrust. Don’t get me wrong. I believe in the worth of such suspicion. I believe it can keep at bay a whole host of evils. I believe it has helped me, for example, to keep my distance from the allures of capitalism, from the seductions of propagandistic punditry, from the sometimes false illusions of our own national innocence, and from the glossy appearances of a mythologized past. I think it was useful for understanding the kind of persecution we suffered as Mormons, which I think is why I found myself drawn to minority discourse in graduate school. I was suspicious of the ways in which majority cultures and hegemonic discourses forge and perpetuate their own authority by means of denigrating, ignoring, or otherwise oppressing minority voices. This is perhaps why I became a comparatist. It helped me check the norms and assumptions of one culture against those of another.

But a hermeneutics of suspicion can lead to a categorical suspicion of the centers of power and of all kinds of authority. It can motivate us to be more cynical, less trusting, and more angry than everyone else. As Alan Jacobs brilliantly described it, it is an attitude of distrust that “would rather suffer anything than the humiliation of being fooled.”<sup>7</sup> Ultimately this leaves us feeling utterly and totally self-satisfied with ourselves and our own like-minded crowd. After listening to a particularly tiresome rant against Republicans by my colleagues one day at Berkeley, I remember asking if any of them actually had any Republican friends. I was met with blank stares. Liberals don’t have a corner on paranoia and mistrust of everyone else, however. During my one semester at BYU in the fall of 1984, I once said to my friend as we crossed campus, “Sometimes it feels around here as if people believe a good Mormon can’t be

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6. Jeffrey R. Holland, “A Prayer for the Children,” *Ensign* 33 (May 2003): 85.

7. Alan Jacobs, *A Theology of Reading: The Hermeneutics of Love* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2001), 88.

a Democrat.” Just as I said this, a student passing us turned and yelled, “You CAN’T be a good Mormon and a Democrat!” I guess apparently you can’t have a majority of like-minded people without your share of chauvinists either. Suspicion today is the ethos of government, the ethos of public discourse, and the ethos of civic duty.

I prefer what scholars have called a hermeneutics of love, or of recovery, a way of interpreting that uses criticism to complete or fulfill or restore. It is the difference between looking for the faults of others in order to justify mistrust and using those faults as a way to measure how the Spirit nevertheless moves through weak human vessels. To my mind, it is Christian to see what it is an author or artist aspired to, even if they didn’t quite achieve it. This is what I learned from Caribbean novelist and theorist, Edouard Glissant, who admired the white southern writer William Faulkner but also suspected that his representations of black characters and of women were perhaps a symptom of his own biases. Faulkner’s racism mattered, but Glissant decided it was better to imagine and work to complete the vision of a postslavery world of which Faulkner was first to catch an essential glimpse. In other words, the most appropriate response to limited human instruments through whom inspiration comes is not deconstructive cynicism or condemnation but the creativity to help build on the inspiration offered. Similarly, when I was ordained as a bishop, the stake president told me to listen for what his blessing was trying to say. I thought that was good advice for any Sunday.

The other day, two young friends from my ward asked me how I reconcile a belief in the universal claims of the restored gospel with the diversity of the world. What a great and important question. I suppose I would say that the challenge of doing so is itself so much more meaningful than giving up on the possibility of truth. It is an illusion to believe that belief of any kind, even belief in a universe of absolute relativism, doesn’t involve a wager of faith of some kind; categorical suspicions about belief in God or in revealed truths that do not recognize their own wagers about what is ultimately true seem to me to be both hypocritical and impotent. A mind that only knows skepticism and suspicion abdicates the risk and the responsibility of discernment, along with all of its benefits. The benefit of a belief in God, especially one grounded in humility and acknowledgement of our human weakness, is that we make ourselves answerable for our sins and we remain vigilant about the dangers of creating and worshipping a worldview made after our own whims and appetites. And most importantly, once we begin to trust

in the living God, we make ourselves more available to experience his love, which, as Nephi teaches, is enough to keep us on the good path even with unanswered questions.

As I started college, I knew at least the meaning of God's love. When my oldest brother, after a prolonged battle with clinical depression, took his life in the middle of my senior year of high school, I was comforted one night when I experienced the living presence of my brother in my bedroom and where I received confirmation that he was at peace and that he loved us. I knew then that God was involved in the details of my life, not to the degree, of course, that he will always arrange things to my liking or prevent terrible things from happening, but that he will respond to our experiences with genuine compassion and mercy.

I still want to know why biology seemed to have betrayed my brother. I still want to know why anyone should have to suffer severe mental illness. But God's love took me one step further. My patriarchal blessing told me there were things I could still do for my brother. Later, I realized I needed to perform the ordinances of the temple for him. I did so and afterwards had a dream in which he told me with great excitement that he was learning so much from the best teachers. You had to know his insatiable curiosity for learning to appreciate what that meant. I knew then that the ordinances of the temple were effectual for life after death, that the powers of the Atonement reached beyond the grave, and that my brother was progressing beyond his earthly limitations.

On my mission a few years later, I read in the writings of Joseph Fielding Smith that he felt a member of the Church should never go through the temple for someone who had committed suicide. This was disappointing, to be sure, but I didn't bristle at this or feel inclined to judge. I have never said anything about it publicly until now. I don't recall that I said anything to anyone about it. I want to be clear: I don't share this to undermine trust in the leaders of the Church. I say it because maybe it is helpful to someone who might be struggling to realize that such contradictions shouldn't cancel out your knowledge of God's love. The general consensus of the General Authorities over time on the essentials of the gospel is what matters most. Styles, personalities, isolated statements, and even policies can change, but the fundamentals of the gospel—such as obedience, service, repentance, and faith—do not. Our challenge and responsibility is to hold fast to the iron rod, especially in the mists of darkness when we can't see clearly. Keeping ourselves committed to the fundamentals will not always provide answers to our questions, but it will provide the strength to live with the questions. If that consensus still conflicts with your beliefs,



be like Lowell Bennion. Still look for and uphold the good and truth of the Church, keep your covenants, love and serve generously, keep asking questions, and wait on the Lord. The important thing is to maintain access to Christ's healing power and keep yourself open to the possibility of more understanding.

Like many of you, I suppose, criticism and compassion can sometimes create sparks of tension. Church life is a source of great joy, but it can also be a source of sorrow. I am fiercely loyal to the Church, but I struggle to agree with everything that is said or done by Church leaders. I admire so many in the Church who stay and thrive, and I miss and long for so many good people who have gone, people I fear we who stayed didn't make enough room for. I love my temple marriage to Amy and all that it has given us, but I also deeply love and feel great compassion for my one and only remaining sibling, Bill. Given what happened to our oldest brother, perhaps you can understand the anxiety it causes me to know that I might be the cause of any more pain.

The policy change last week was an acutely hard challenge in this regard. I love the leaders of this church. I trust them. I know they pray and act on behalf of all God's children. It is important to remember, as a believing gay friend of mine says, that there are no bad guys here. It is certainly true that my difficulty is because I am not valiant enough. But I believe that in my sorrows and my contradictory feelings, I share something of the contradiction it was for Jesus to feel abandoned by his Father and friends just at the moment when he fulfilled his Father's will and suffered everything for all of us. Christ suffered even this moment, you see. Because of his charity, no one's feelings are unknown to him, no one's perspective is incapable of finding a basis in an important truth. If you feel tempted to leave, please reconsider. We need you. We need to hear your pain. We need your questions. We need your gifts. We will all be better for working this through together.

It would be, I think, a colossal mistake not to mention hypocrisy of the deepest order for any of us to refuse to offer charity to others just because we perceive their actions or views as uncharitable. So look around you. There are others who are hurting. We are all members of the same body. As the humanities teach us, there is something fundamentally healing about listening compassionately to the stories of others. Let's listen together. In this regard, the way that the Church makes us responsible and answerable to people different than we are is an opportunity to offer our charity widely. I have heard some people say that this is a "sifting" moment in the Church, a time for "thinning

the herd.” Church leaders might occasionally be called upon for compassionate judgment on behalf of individuals whose life choices have placed themselves or others in serious spiritual danger, but let’s be clear: you and I are repeatedly warned about the dangers of judgment and condemnation of others in our hearts. We have no right to be sifters. We are commanded to be gatherers, one by one.

I still don’t understand all things, but I know God loves us and that we should love one another. As I have prayed over my family’s situation, the Lord has never revealed why things have happened the way they have in my family. Instead he has repeatedly told me, almost to the point of redundancy, to love, love, and love some more. He has told me to relieve the suffering of others. That’s it. To have charity. When I have instead focused on wanting answers or on trying to explain or justify things, I find it can make me a bit crazy, and sometimes I get filled with anger. Then there is the temptation of finding someone to blame and feeding an anger addiction. The Internet is good for that. How I wish people of faith would learn to defend their faith with love, not with vitriol. How I wish critics too would exhibit even a modicum of the kind of love they claim the Church doesn’t have. Even wounds of love can spread hate like toxic pollution if we don’t have charity. God is gentle with us, he sorrows with us, and he absorbs the reality of the world day by day with charity and forbearance. Knowing that should give us more reason to be gentle with others.

In answer to my young friends’ question, I would say that I have lived long enough to see that the gospel has worked and borne good fruit. When I had finally decided after a few years of Word of Wisdom abuses in high school to keep the commandments, I noticed a remarkable peace come into my life. I felt strong. When I prayed and studied the scriptures, I felt deep longing and connection. All through my challenging and stimulating years at Stanford and at Berkeley, I learned that obedience to the commandments is a low-risk/high-yield proposition and that to deliberately drop God’s commandments until my mind could sort everything out was, on the other hand, a high-risk/low-yield proposition. I have sinned and repented often in my life—honestly I think I am somewhat of an expert. I don’t say that to be cute or funny or falsely humble. And it has taught me how easily my mind and worldview shift according to my level of obedience. It has been tempting to change my worldview rather than to change my life. While I am not proud of my mistakes, I will never, ever be ashamed to proclaim the blessings of the atonement of Jesus Christ. Christ has made me what I am and given me everything I have.

I am not here because I learned perfect obedience once and for all. I am only here because God is gracious.

One of his most gracious gifts is friends. To tell but one story, I was admitted to Stanford and keen on attending but was worried about having enough support from fellow Mormons to stay strong. As I prayed about it, I felt that I would be all right. At Stanford, you fill out a roommate card during the summer, and, based on that information, they choose your roommate for you. I didn't indicate my religion, since it didn't ask, but I remember writing, "I don't want a roommate who parties too much." My brother helped me to move in the first day. My roommate had already moved in, but he wasn't there. On his desk sat a Book of Mormon. My brother and I looked at each other, astonished. We thought, was he an anti-Mormon?! This just seemed too improbable. As it turned out, there were only four male Mormons entering the freshman class of 1,500 students. My roommate, Andy Sorenson, was from California and also had recently gotten active in the Church and decided to go on a mission. He too had arrived at Stanford with a prayer in his heart that he would have help to get on his mission.

God brought us together, and we remain best friends. We helped each other to stay active and to serve missions, which established a solid foundation for us to later begin our relationships with our respective future wives in that small, wonderful Stanford ward. I could have devoted most of my talk to my most important friend, Amy, but suffice it to say that I married a calm, steady, loyal, and brilliant woman whose critical capacities and compassion are exceptional and whose commitment to charity have helped me never to take myself or my ideas or my perspective too seriously. She is patient with contradiction, with difficult trials and difficult institutional situations, and has held strong through my darkest hours. She doesn't overreact to my struggles and helps me to keep things simple. So I guess that moment of grace to start my college career was a small but pivotal and eternally important gift. I started out and remain a free spirit, but I was immature. I was sorrowful too. I could cry easily, and I often did. I could fall apart. I think because of my brother's recent death, I felt at any time that all I knew and could believe in could be swept up in a dark tornado of violence at any moment. Or that I myself might drop the sacred value of my life on a whim, and that would be the end of me. I have lived with a sense of urgency and anxiousness that has kept me clinging to Christ. It has been a lifelong struggle, and only the grace of good friends and good family and God's tender mercies have saved me.

Enough experiences with God's love, then, and you will realize something fundamentally good and true about the Church and the gospel, and also something fundamentally good and true about yourself and your life. Existence itself becomes a miracle and a rare and beautiful gift. This is the basis of my interest and research in environmental stewardship. It isn't because it's a political trend. It's because nature as an expression of Christ's glory has healed me of my sorrows and because creation care is how I show gratitude for his gifts. There is a scene in my favorite novel, Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, that captures how God's love increases our ability to bear contradictions, to withstand doubts, to endure suffering, and to embrace physical life with all of our heart. Zosima the monk is Alyosha's spiritual mentor, and he tells Alyosha his entire life story. Zosima says, "Even one day is enough for a man to know all happiness."<sup>8</sup> Think on that. If we were truly aware of how little we have earned and how much is already given, we would have no needs, no anxieties or dependencies. Going in to the monastery, Alyosha was weighed down by unanswered questions about his own life, but he emerges from the monastery and collapses under the weight of life's joy:

Night, fresh and quiet, almost unstirring, enveloped the earth. The white towers and golden domes of the church gleamed in the sapphire sky. The luxuriant autumn flowers in the flowerbeds near the house had fallen asleep until morning. The silence of the earth seemed to merge with the silence of the heavens, the mystery of the earth touched the mystery of the stars. . . . Alyosha stood gazing and suddenly, as if he had been cut down, threw himself to the earth. He did not know why he was embracing it, he did not try to understand why he longed so irresistibly to kiss it, to kiss all of it, but he was kissing it, weeping, sobbing, and watering it with his tears, and he vowed ecstatically to love it, to love it unto ages of ages.<sup>9</sup>

It took me many years to learn to accept myself and to see this exceptional privilege of the bare facts of existence, unadorned by the promises of money or good looks or reputation or fortunate circumstances, and unattached to anxieties about worthiness or being good enough. None of this is earned, you see. This body, this planet, these beautiful people around you, the mountains, the clouds, the very fabric

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8. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1990), 289.

9. Dostoevsky, *Brothers Karamazov*, 362.

of life's inconceivable diversity. Maybe in some ways that means God's pure love, his charity, can feel impersonal, since it is available to anyone. But that's just it. It is universal, so it is yours for the taking and yours also for the giving, to assist others in their pursuit of deeper happiness in Christ, the Creator and the Redeemer. I have, in other words, the privilege and responsibility to love those I come to know in all their individuality and to love my corner of the earth I have come to inhabit in all its particularity. I look around at the bounty of what I have here, and I can do nothing more, and nothing less.

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# “This Is Very Historic”

## The Young Ambassadors 1979 Tour of China

*John Hilton III and Brady Liu*

On October 1, 1949, the People's Republic of China (PRC) was established by Mao Zedong and the Communist Party of China. While this commenced a new political organization in China, it marked at least a temporary end of the potential for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to directly proselytize in mainland China.<sup>1</sup> While LDS proselyting took place in Taiwan and Hong Kong over the next several decades, there was no formal LDS Church presence in mainland China. The United States government did not officially recognize the People's Republic of China as the legitimate government of China, causing a frosty relationship between the two nations. During this time period there were “virtually no diplomatic relations, no summits,

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1. These latter-day efforts had been initiated in 1852, when Hosea Stout and two companions were called to establish a missionary presence in China. Although Stout traveled to Hong Kong, he and his associates found the language and culture barriers to be too great; less than two months after arriving in Hong Kong they determined that it would be too difficult to preach to the Chinese. Juanita Brooks, *On the Mormon Frontier: The Diaries of Hosea Stout*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1964), 2:477–82. Other attempts to initiate the establishment of the Church in China include the tours of Alma Taylor and David O. McKay. Reid L. Neilson, “Alma O. Taylor’s Fact-Finding Mission to China,” *BYU Studies* 40, no. 1 (2001): 176–203; and Reid L. Neilson, “Turning the Key That Unlocked the Door: Elder David O. McKay’s 1921 Apostolic Dedication of the Chinese Realm,” *Mormon Historical Studies* 10, no. 2 (2009): 86–92.



## John Hilton III

In 2006, I began learning Chinese after meeting some people from China and feeling disappointed that I could not communicate with them. One year later I had the opportunity to travel to China to watch my younger brother perform with BYU's Young Ambassadors. I enjoyed their performance immensely and could tell that the Chinese audience did too. After what appeared to be the last number, I noticed several people making a bee-line for the exit (I didn't blame them as the theater was packed). However, a gong sounded, and one final number began.



It was a Chinese song and as soon as the first bars of music filled the room, the crowd was completely silent. The musicians began to sing, and the audience joined in. The feeling in the room was electric. The audience began to clap in rhythm with the music and everyone rose to their feet. I could not understand the words, but I understood the feeling. I began to weep; the feeling of mutual love, respect, and happiness was overwhelming. It was as though goodwill was literally being created before my eyes.

In the intervening years, I have continued to study Chinese and have spent several summers teaching at universities in China. But across all of my experiences in China, I have never forgotten that moment when the Young Ambassadors sang the song in Chinese and have wanted to learn more about the historical connection between the Young Ambassadors and China. As I learned more about the 1979 tour I became convinced that it was a story that needed to be more completely told. Writing this article has truly been a delight.

no joint meetings, and no exchanges of tourists, business leaders, or academics.”<sup>2</sup>

In the late 1960s the United States and China began exploring ways in which the two countries could begin to reestablish relations; these efforts included such circuitous routes as communicating through diplomatic leaders in Pakistan, who had relationships with both countries. As the 1970s dawned, several factors began to bring a thawing to their association. Many in the United States believed that strengthening U.S.–Chinese relationships would have a negative impact on the USSR.<sup>3</sup> The Chinese were similarly motivated by a negative relationship with the USSR and also were interested in engaging more broadly with the global community. At least a part of China’s motives for more open relationships concerned developing better technology so as to expand their petroleum industry.<sup>4</sup>

A breakthrough occurred in April 1971, when China invited the United States ping-pong team to play in China. Later that summer, National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger made a secret trip to China, and in the fall the United States gave up opposing the PRC taking Taiwan’s place as the official country representing China in the United Nations.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps most significantly, in February 1972, Richard Nixon became the first U.S. president to visit China.<sup>6</sup> Notwithstanding this forward progress, Watergate and the death of Chairman Mao temporarily stalled deepening relationships between the United States and China. Some evidence suggests that China was still resistant to foreign influences; for example, in 1976 a devastating earthquake struck China, yet China completely refused all foreign aid.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, in 1978, China sent 480 students to twenty-eight different countries to study; 433 of these students came to the United States.<sup>8</sup>

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2. Margaret Macmillan, *Nixon and Mao: The Week That Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2007), 105.

3. Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 3d ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2013), 576.

4. Lianyong Feng, Yan Hu, Charles A. S. Hall, and Jianliang Wang, *Chinese Oil Industry: History and Future* (New York: Springer, 2011), 7.

5. Spence, *Search for Modern China*, 566.

6. Macmillan, *Nixon and Mao*.

7. Spence, *Search for Modern China*, 583.

8. Spence, *Search for Modern China*, 589.

In December 1978, significant changes came to China as the government drastically changed its economic, political, and international policies, which allowed for more opportunities for collaboration with Western companies, such as Boeing and Coca-Cola.<sup>9</sup> On January 1, 1979, the United States and China announced that they would establish full diplomatic relations and exchange ambassadors on March 1 of that same year. This diplomatic change created the possibility that cultural and perhaps even religious relationships could again be established between China and the outside world.

The purpose of this paper is to chronicle a tour of China by Brigham Young University's Young Ambassadors that many people, including Dallin H. Oaks, consider miraculous. The Young Ambassadors, a performing arts group composed of BYU students, left for China just six months after the United States established formal diplomatic relationships with China. Their tour provided the first opportunity in decades for an organization connected with the LDS Church to be in China. Elder James E. Faust, who accompanied the Young Ambassadors on the tour, frequently said during the trip, "This is very historic."<sup>10</sup> Before discussing how this tour came to be, we first provide context regarding Brigham Young University's performing tour groups.

### Brigham Young University's Performing Tour Groups

In an effort to help BYU students use their talents to be ambassadors of goodwill throughout the world, Ernest L. Wilkinson established the Public Service Bureau in 1919–20, while he was a student at Brigham Young University. It started quite small, but over the next thirty years it continued to expand; it later became known as the Program Bureau. The Program Bureau provided a great outlet for students to perform wholesome entertainment for positive purposes. In 1952, Brigham Young University administrators, in an effort to increase the scope and reach of its performance groups, appointed Janie Thompson as the director of the Program Bureau.<sup>11</sup> Also in 1952, the Delta Phi Chorus was one of the first BYU performance groups to travel outside Utah, as they went on a tour to

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9. Spence, *Search for Modern China*, 590–92.

10. Bruce Olsen, Journal, July 5, 1979, copy in possession of the authors.

11. Ernest L. Wilkinson, Bruce C. Hafen, and Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years*, 4 vols. (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1976), 4:363.

the Pacific Northwest.<sup>12</sup> Several groups were part of the Program Bureau, including the Ballroom Performance Team, the International Folk Dancers, Young Ambassadors, the Lamanite Generation, the Sounds of Freedom, A Cappella Choir, Curtain Time USA Troupe, Holiday in the USA, Startime BYU, and Say It with Music.<sup>13</sup>

From 1960 to 1974 the Program Bureau accelerated its efforts to perform throughout the world. During these years, “variety groups of the Bureau visited Europe seventeen times, the Orient eleven times, Greenland twice, the Caribbean twice, and the Middle East, South Africa, and South America once each.”<sup>14</sup> These tours made a strong impression on those who saw the performances. For example, after seeing BYU’s International Folk Dancers in a performance in the Portugal National Agricultural Fair at the International Folk Festival in 1964, W. Tapley Bennett Jr., former U.S. ambassador to Portugal, wrote, “Several Portuguese groups took part in some or all of these affairs and there were groups from several European countries including Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Ireland, Italy and Spain. . . . But our young people from Brigham Young University were unquestionably the big hit. . . . I don’t think we need to worry about the broad appeal of our country for people abroad when we have outstanding representatives like the Brigham Young University group traveling and making friends.”<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, BYU’s performing arts groups were becoming known throughout the world. An article in the *California Intermountain News* stated, “BYU has served the continental U.S., South America, Europe, and Asia in the performing arts by producing and sending high-class dramatic art and musical troupes to these areas.”<sup>16</sup> These significant efforts had created an environment in which a BYU performing group could potentially travel to China.

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12. Edward L. Blaser, “The World Is Our Stage,” BYU devotional address, May 9, 2006, available online at <http://www.byutv.org/watch/d6e1ff14-2ec3-442d-a7a7-ec89861c31c6/byu-devotional-address-edward-blaser-5906>.

13. Wilkinson, Hafen, and Arrington, *Brigham Young University*, 3:644.

14. Wilkinson, Hafen, and Arrington, *Brigham Young University*, 4:363–66.

15. W. Tapley Bennett to Wallace F. Bennett, June 28, 1967, Wilkinson Presidential Papers, cited in Wilkinson, Hafen, and Arrington, *Brigham Young University*, 4:370.

16. “BYU Students Donate More Service Time Than Any Other School in U.S.,” *California Intermountain News*, July 29, 1976.

## Attention to a Prophetic Call

Although BYU performing arts as well as U.S.–China relations had been developing for many years, the rapidity with which the opportunity came for the Young Ambassadors to travel to China was due in large part to the prophetic vision of President Spencer W. Kimball and those who followed his counsel. In September 1978, President Kimball gave an address to the regional representatives of the Church on the topic of taking the gospel to “the uttermost parts of the earth.”<sup>17</sup> He spoke of nations such as China, India, Saudi Arabia, and others and added that if Latter-day Saints could make a small beginning in these nations, then eventually the gospel would be preached to all nations.

Dallin H. Oaks, then president of Brigham Young University, recalls that upon hearing the address, he “asked [his] assistant, Bruce L. Olsen, to begin planning for a BYU performing group to go to China. That idea was farfetched, because at that time the United States had no diplomatic relations with China, and U.S. tourists were not welcome there. But a prophet had called for beginnings, and this was a beginning BYU could attempt.”<sup>18</sup> In 1978, after the Young Ambassadors returned from their tour in the Soviet Union,<sup>19</sup> someone had asked Bruce Olsen, “Well, now you’ve been to Russia, where are you going to go next?” Olsen recalled, “I remember saying ‘China!’ I thought to myself, ‘That was one of the dumber things

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17. Spencer W. Kimball, “The Uttermost Parts of the Earth,” *Ensign* 9 (July 1979): 2–9.

18. Dallin H. Oaks, “Getting to Know China,” BYU devotional address, March 12, 1991, available online at [https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/dallin-h-oaks\\_getting-know-china/](https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/dallin-h-oaks_getting-know-china/). As part of these initial efforts, Gene Bramhall, working in BYU’s Office of the General Counsel, contacted his friend Alfred C. Ysrael in Guam. Ysrael had contacts with China through business and through the All China Youth Federation. Ysrael wrote a letter to Wu Hung-Fan, who was a council member of Chinese People’s Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries. Ysrael wrote in part, “Attached are some of the newspaper clippings of their recent performances, which you will note have been outstanding. They would like to be invited to China sometime during April of 1979.” Alfred C. Ysrael to Wu Hung-Fan, October 17, 1978, copy in Dallin H. Oaks, Office of the President Records, UA 1085, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. In appreciation for Ysrael’s kindness, the Young Ambassadors visited Guam and performed there. Bruce Olsen, email to John Hilton III, August 8, 2016.

19. “News of the Church: First BYU Performers Tour in Soviet Union,” *Ensign* 8 (September 1978): 78–79.

you've ever said.”<sup>20</sup> But less than one year later, Olsen was given the task to start planning for a performance group's tour in China.

At the time, the task seemed impossible, particularly because of the challenging diplomatic relationships between the United States and China. However, two months after Oaks's direction to Olsen, President Jimmy Carter unexpectedly announced that beginning January 1, 1979, the United States and China would establish official diplomatic relations. Suddenly, the idea of “a BYU trip to China became at least a theoretical possibility.”<sup>21</sup>

In a series of what Oaks termed “miracles,” doors began to open. In order to perform in China a group would need an official invitation. Brigham Young University sought the help of Frank Church, a United States Senator from Idaho, in securing permission to perform in China. Church accordingly wrote a letter to China's U.S. ambassador, which in part said, “I would hope that all possible consideration could be given their request. A tour such as this can help strengthen the bonds between the People's Republic of China and the United States, and on a personal level develop many lasting friendships and mutual understanding and trust that is so essential for our societies to fully comprehend one another.”<sup>22</sup>

Edward Blaser, the director of Performing Arts Management at BYU from 1976 to 2015, recounted the efforts to obtain an official invitation as follows:

Our first challenge was to develop some contacts in China that would extend to us an invitation. At the time no American tourists could go to China without an invitation from their government and tourism bureau. We heard that a tour operator out of New York, Friendship Ambassadors, which we had used to travel to and perform in Romania two years prior to that, was planning a trip to China via their contacts in Romania. We asked if we could be included in that trip and they agreed.<sup>23</sup>

Blaser, along with Young Ambassador director Val Lindsay, traveled with the Friendship Ambassadors group to China during the last two

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20. Bruce L. Olsen, interview by Brady Liu, June 8, 2015, Provo, Utah.

21. Oaks, “Getting to Know China.”

22. Frank Church to Chai Tse-Min, January 5, 1979, copy in Oaks, Office of the President Records. Oaks would later write to Church, stating, “This trip would not have been possible without the Chinese invitation secured by your strong recommendation of BYU to the Chinese Ambassador.” Dallin H. Oaks to Frank Church, August 17, 1979, copy in Oaks, Office of the President Records.

23. Edward Blaser, email to John Hilton III and Brady Liu, May 4, 2016.

weeks of February 1979. Because their connection was through the Romanian government, they had to take a circuitous route that included traveling through Pakistan. Prior to the trip, a colleague in Guam had given Blaser contact information for members of the China Travel Service, which arranged for performing arts groups in China. Blaser met with these individuals while in Beijing and presented them with the idea of hosting BYU's Young Ambassadors. He showed them video and audio materials and was encouraged at their response.<sup>24</sup>

After returning from China, Blaser continued discussions with China Travel Service, examining logistics such as schedules, finances, and visas.<sup>25</sup> Thanks to countless efforts by Blaser, early in the spring of 1979, BYU received an invitation to come to China.<sup>26</sup> Because President Oaks had acted on faith and begun planning even at a time when the event seemed impossible, Brigham Young University would have the opportunity to perform in China. This was not a proselyting venture, and there were very specific guidelines regarding not doing "missionary work" while in China. It was, however, an opportunity to begin building a relationship with China.

### **Formation of the Young Ambassadors Group Performing in China**

In late March or early April 1979, final approval was given for BYU to bring a performing group to China.<sup>27</sup> Artistic directors had only a couple of weeks to select the performers, who would be gone for much of April and May on other performing tours. Randy Boothe, a twenty-eight-year-old faculty member who was one of two directors for the Young Ambassadors, was given the assignment to be the artistic director for the China tour. It was determined that they would create a group of twenty students drawn from the Young Ambassadors and Lamanite Generation and would participate in the tour under the name Young Ambassadors. The twenty students selected to perform were Joseph Ahuna Jr., Christy Bates, Lauri Crebs, Michael Farnes, Tami Jeppson,

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24. Blaser, email.

25. Blaser noted, "Following our return to Provo, the only successful way to communicate was via Telex. With a language barrier, it was important to have things in writing. China Travel Service had access for Telex. At the time, the bookstore was the only place on campus for Telex so my office purchased a small computer and subscribed to a Telex service so we could communicate back and forth." Blaser, email.

26. Blaser, email.

27. Oaks, "Getting to Know China."





The students selected to tour in China with their accompanying leaders and support staff. *Left to right, front row:* Joe Ahuna, Michael Farnes, Robert Murri, David Weed, John Stucki. *Second row:* Ruth Faust, Lauri Crebs, Tami Jeppson, Laura Lee Smith, Darla O'Dell, Christy Bates, Cindi Whittaker, Pamela Terry, Kay Durrant. *Back row:* Elder James Faust, Kenneth Tingey, Steven Kapp Perry, Timothy Taylor, Chris Utley, Richard McEwan, Clint Utter, Bruce Olsen, Stephen Durrant, Randy Boothe. *Not pictured:* Linda Tang, Kenneth Sekaquaptewa. Photo by Mark Philbrick, Brigham Young University.

Richard McEwan, Robert Murri, Darla O'Dell, Steven Kapp Perry, Kenneth Sekaquaptewa, Laura Lee Smith, John Stucki, Linda Tang, Timothy Taylor, Pamela Terry, Kenneth Tingey, Chris Utley, Clint Utter, David Weed, and Cindi Whittaker. In addition to the performers, Elder James E. Faust and his wife, Ruth, attended on behalf of the Church Board of Education; Bruce L. Olsen as the senior BYU administrator; Randy Boothe as the performance director; and Kay and Stephen Durrant as cultural advisors.

Many of those selected to perform had special experiences that prepared them to be a part of the tour to China. For example, Kenneth Tingey, who became the trumpet player of the group, was a business

student during this time period. Boothe asked Tingey to attend a Young Ambassadors performance and although Tingey had a busy schedule and no prior associations with the Young Ambassadors, he decided to go. Tingey relates: “[The performance] was at the Hotel Utah for the church leaders. I took all my accounting books. It was kind of funny [to be] with all the Young Ambassadors and in that green room [when Randy] announced . . . that things were in the works with China. I had this overwhelming feeling that I would go with them [but I thought] ‘I’m not even a member and I wasn’t even doing music.’”<sup>28</sup> A couple of weeks later, on a Thursday night, Tingey was again invited to attend a performance of the Young Ambassadors at the Hotel Utah. On that occasion the group’s trumpet player announced that he was quitting. Boothe approached Tingey and invited him to join the Young Ambassadors. Tingey struggled to decide, weighing his efforts in earning his MBA with the potentially rewarding experiences touring with the Young Ambassadors. Boothe invited Tingey on a trip to Idaho to perform with the Young Ambassadors; the only catch was that the tour left in less than twenty-four hours. Although Tingey had multiple tests, he was able to juggle his different priorities and perform that weekend. On the bus ride back from Idaho, Tingey determined that he would join the group. He later reflected, “I was blessed to go and I know I was meant to go partly because I was going in an entirely different path and I got pulled into that path. They announced it was going to happen and I wasn’t even a member but I knew I was going.”<sup>29</sup>

Tami Jeppson, another member of the cast, had a similar experience. She has perfect pitch and had been playing the piano for years. When she received her patriarchal blessing, the patriarch told her that she would use her talents to share the gospel throughout the world. The impression that immediately came to her mind was that she would one day perform in China. On the evening that a Young Ambassador tour to China was announced she was dumbfounded. Jeppson recounts, “I just had this flood come over me and I thought, ‘Oh my word. My patriarchal blessing is really happening. I’m going to go to China!’”<sup>30</sup> However, Jeppson was not automatically accepted to be part of the China tour. Performers were invited to audition specifically for this trip, and there were two finalists for the position of piano player—Jeppson and a student named

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28. Kenneth Tingey, interview by Brady Liu, August 15, 2015, Provo, Utah.

29. Tingey, interview.

30. Tami Jeppson, interview by Brady Liu, August 15, 2015, Provo, Utah.

Dan. Tami recounts, “[Dan] was an incredible piano player. . . . I went into that interview with Randy and he just looked right at me and said, ‘Well, you know Dan’s a better piano player than you.’ I go, ‘Yeah . . .’ Then he said, ‘But you know you have to go to China don’t you?’”<sup>31</sup> Jeppson was shocked because she had not shared her experiences with Boothe and felt blessed that she was invited to participate.

Before the tour to China was even announced, Linda Tang, a former BYU performer who was interning in San Francisco, had a unique experience. Tang was from Hong Kong, and while at work one day, she felt a powerful spiritual impression that BYU’s Young Ambassadors would soon travel to China and that she would be a part of it. Several days later, she called Boothe and shared her experiences with him.<sup>32</sup>

Of this experience, Boothe recalled,

Tang called me on the phone and said, “Randy, I have a feeling that you’re going to have a tour in China.”

I said, “Linda, there is no way. There’s no way. These tours are planned years in advance.”

She said, “Well, I just feel I have the spiritual impression. When you get informed, I want you to know . . . whatever I need to do, but I want to go to China with the Young Ambassadors.”

I said, “Okay, that will be great. I’ll contact you.”

I had no idea. I hadn’t been brought into the circle at all with Elder Oaks or with Bruce Olsen at that point. [But] sure enough, within just a short time, I got informed that this was being investigated. . . .

I told them about Linda [and received permission to notify her]. I called her back. She said, “I told you so.”<sup>33</sup>

All of the performers made significant sacrifices to be a part of the tour. As one example, Joe Ahuna was married, and going on the trip would require him to leave his wife and one-month-old son. It would also cause him to postpone graduation by one semester. Ahuna and his wife determined, however, to make the sacrifice so that Ahuna could participate in this historic event. He recollected, “During the trip, I felt that my wife and son were with me while performing and sharing our ‘Aloha’ with the people of China.”<sup>34</sup>

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31. Jeppson, interview.

32. Oaks, “Getting to Know China.”

33. Randy Boothe, interview by John Hilton III and Brady Liu, May 21, 2015, Provo, Utah.

34. Joe Ahuna, email to John Hilton III and Brady Liu, October 28, 2015.



Stephen Durrant teaching Chinese language and culture to the Young Ambassadors. Students, *front row from front to back*, David Weed, Christy Bates, Steven Perry, Darla O'Dell, Timothy Taylor, Chris Utley, Ken Tingey, Linda Tang; *back row*, Pam Terry, Richard McEwan. Photo by Mark Philbrick. Courtesy BYU.

After the performers were selected, they made intense preparations. Because of previously scheduled tours and other commitments, the newly formed Young Ambassadors group had only a few weeks in June to “learn the complex choreography and music associated with [the] . . . production.”<sup>35</sup> Olsen states, “For three grueling weeks the students had four hours per day of language and culture training and eight to twelve hours of rehearsals.”<sup>36</sup> Their set list included family favorites such as “I’ve Got No Strings” and “Bare Necessities”; classic songs such as “Singin’ in the Rain” and “I Got Rhythm”; and variety pieces such as a fire knife dance, Navajo twenty-two-hoop dance, and Hawaiian war chant, among many other numbers.

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35. Bruce L. Olsen, “A Small Beginning,” address to Annual University Conference, Brigham Young University, August 28, 1979, L. Tom Perry Special Collections.

36. Olsen, “Small Beginning.” These rehearsals were, of course, on top of significant individual preparations that participants had previously made to perfect their showmanship.

Steven Kapp Perry, one of the performers, recalled that in addition to learning about culture and rehearsing dances, the Young Ambassadors were also invited to spiritually prepare. Although they could not proselyte, it was emphasized to them that this was the first opportunity a BYU group had had to perform in China; the significance of this fact was repeatedly impressed upon them.<sup>37</sup> While both rehearsals and culture training were vital to the success of the tour, the culture training appeared in retrospect to be particularly valuable. Stephen Durrant, an assistant professor of Asian Languages, provided language and culture training. Olsen reported, “Dr. Durrant’s contribution was vital to the success of the mission. He taught and the students memorized introductions to numbers in Chinese, and this breaching of the language barrier was to save us at the critical point of entry and endeared us to audiences thereafter.”<sup>38</sup>

### **A Last-Minute Dilemma and First Performances**

On June 27, only four days prior to the group’s departure for China, BYU received a telegram from China Travel Service, the organization that had invited them to come.<sup>39</sup> Their instructions from the Chinese organization were clear: “Please bring only simple musical instruments for unofficial performances at schools or factories pending approval.”<sup>40</sup> The Young Ambassadors group had assembled multiple costumes and other performance equipment that collectively weighed over one ton. Scaling back to the level of “simple musical instruments” would involve a radical redesign of the performances.

Oaks informed Faust of this development and the two of them, along with Olsen and Boothe, met to determine the best course of action. After prayerful consideration, they determined to travel with all of the equipment and costumes that they had prepared and plan that the Lord would “open the way.”<sup>41</sup> Boothe recalled that as he expressed his concerns about this approach Faust said, “Randy, where’s your faith?” To which Boothe thought to himself, “Well, that’s a good question coming from an Apostle.”<sup>42</sup>

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37. Steven Kapp Perry, interview by John Hilton III and Brady Liu, May 20, 2015, Provo, Utah.

38. Olsen, “Small Beginning.”

39. Olsen, “Small Beginning.”

40. Olsen, interview.

41. Olsen, interview.

42. Boothe, interview.

Flying with faith towards China, the Young Ambassadors departed on July 1, 1979. When the Young Ambassadors arrived in Guangzhou on July 3, their Chinese hosts were visibly concerned with the amount of technical equipment carried by the Young Ambassadors. Faust and Olsen expressed to the officials how excited they were to perform in China, how they wanted to give the very best performance, showing pictures of previous performances and explaining why the costumes and other equipment would be necessary.<sup>43</sup> Faust called over some students who recited lines in Mandarin and began to perform selected acts, including singing a favorite Chinese song, *Mo Li Hua*.

Crowds gathered around the performers and the hosts began to soften. Boothe recollected, "They started singing along and clapping. They said, 'We'll make a phone call.' They were basically beaming by the time they had heard the kids speaking in Chinese, singing in Chinese, seeing all the pictures. . . . They agreed to let us bring the equipment on to Beijing and we would have a trial performance the next morning."<sup>44</sup> After a four-hour flight to Beijing, the Young Ambassadors met their tour guides. Upon greeting the group, Mr. Fu, one of the guides, said, "We look forward to your performances. We feel that your visit will turn a new page in the relationship between our two countries."<sup>45</sup>

On July 4, 1979, the Young Ambassadors gave their debut performance in China. They had been invited to perform at the National Minorities Institute in Beijing in what was to be a trial performance. The Young Ambassadors would perform for a few students from the institute, as well as several Chinese officials who would determine whether any additional performances would be given. Every line of lyrics had been translated into Chinese overnight so that the officials would be able to fully vet every number.<sup>46</sup>

Performer John Stucki wrote in his entry in the 1979 Young Ambassadors tour journal of a small challenge that occurred prior to the performance: "We sat at tea with the leaders and it was kind of uncomfortable because we didn't drink the tea and they were wondering why."<sup>47</sup> However, once the performance got under way the audience appeared to warm up. A testament to the success of this initial performance was that

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43. Olsen, Journal, July 3, 1979.

44. Boothe, interview.

45. Olsen, Journal, July 3, 1979.

46. Boothe, interview.

47. John Stucki, 1979 Young Ambassadors Tour Journal, July 4, 1979, original in possession of Randy Boothe, copy in possession of the author.





The Young Ambassadors gave a spontaneous performance at the Independence Day celebration sponsored by the U.S. Ambassador to China. Performers, *front to back*, David Weed, Michael Farnes, Darla O'Dell, Christy Bates. Courtesy BYU Young Ambassadors.

the Young Ambassadors were invited to perform at the prestigious Red Tower Theater two days later.<sup>48</sup> The Boston Philharmonic Orchestra had previously played there, and the Young Ambassadors were excited for this opportunity to perform for China's elite.

After a lunch following their performance at the National Minorities Institute, the Young Ambassadors went to see the Forbidden City.<sup>49</sup> Later that afternoon, the Young Ambassadors traveled to the residence of the United States ambassador to China, where more than 1,500 people had gathered to celebrate the first Independence Day since diplomatic relations had been established. There they were introduced to Lucille

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48. Later in the tour, the tour guides opened up a bit more about their perspective of this moment. Olsen recorded, "Miss Wong . . . said that when we arrived that they were greatly upset that we had brought all the equipment even though they had tried through letter and through telegram to discourage us. It was obvious that we had come with a serious intent to perform. . . . So the first show in Peking was a real test to see what we could do. When they saw how good the kids were and the show content, they were determined at that point to do whatever they could to place us in fine auditoriums." Olsen, *Journal*, July 13, 1979.

49. During this afternoon, Elder Faust performed a special prayer. Oaks, "Getting to Know China."





The touring group at the Great Wall. *Left to right, front row*, Timothy Taylor, David Weed, Michael Farnes, Ken Sekaquaptewa, Clint Utter, Joe Ahuna; *second row*, Kay Durrant, Laura Lee Smith, Cindi Whittaker, Christy Bates, Linda Tang, Pamela Terry, Lauri Crebs, Tami Jeppson, Darla O'Dell, Sister Ruth Faust; *third row*, Randy Boothe, Stephen Durrant, Chris Utley, Steven Perry, Robert Murri, Ken Tingey, John Stucki, Richard McEwan, Elder James E. Faust. Courtesy BYU Young Ambassadors.

Sargent, a member of the LDS Church who was working in the American embassy at the time. Olsen recalled Faust reporting that Sargent had lived in Beijing as the solitary member of the Church in the country (so far as she knew).<sup>50</sup> Sargent was very happy to have fellowship with Church members and spent as much time as she could with the group.<sup>51</sup>

On July 5, the group toured the Great Wall of China, and when they returned to Beijing they dined on a local specialty, Peking duck. In the words of performer Darla O'Dell, this dinner consisted of "every part of the duck but the bill."<sup>52</sup> The eighteen-course meal was a new treat for the Americans, although some of the participants were squeamish about eating duck feet and duck brains. Many of the Young Ambassadors

50. Olsen, Journal, July 4, 1979.

51. When the group left Beijing, Sargent came to the airport to see them off. Jeppson states, "We sang 'God Be with You' for her and I do remember that being very, very touching. She was just in tears." Jeppson, interview.

52. Darla O'Dell, 1979 Young Ambassadors Tour Journal, July 5, 1979.



The fire knife dance by Joe Ahuna. Courtesy BYU.

didn't realize that the Chinese custom is to continue serving guests until they leave food on their plates. The Young Ambassadors, however, were following the American custom of politely finishing all the food one is given. Olsen recalled that this led to Sister Faust receiving an inordinate amount of pickled duck feet, which Olsen ate for her, earning for himself the title of her adopted son.<sup>53</sup>

After the dinner, the group had a meeting in which Boothe told them about a serious concern Miss Wong, one of the travel guides, had expressed. She had said to Boothe, "I don't want to alarm the students, but I am very afraid for them."<sup>54</sup> Miss Wong explained that at their performance the following evening at the Red Tower Theatre, there would be 1,600 seats filled with the artistic elite of Beijing. O'Dell noted that the Young Ambassadors felt the pressure to perform: "We really got worried [after the meeting] and began to analyze ourselves. If the show failed it could be the last for all performers and groups like ours. We would be the first. We definitely needed the help of the Lord and He always comes through."<sup>55</sup>

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53. Olsen, interview.

54. Olsen, "Small Beginning."

55. O'Dell, 1979 Young Ambassadors Tour Journal, July 5, 1979.

The Red Tower Theatre was among the most prestigious performance halls in Beijing. In a Young Ambassadors tour journal entry, Tim Taylor referred to it as the “#1 hall” in the city.<sup>56</sup> The performance was a great success; Olsen recalled that the “audience demanded four encores and not only gave a standing ovation, but also held their hands high over their heads while clapping. It was the most enthusiastic response I have seen anywhere in the world.”<sup>57</sup>

This show, as with many aspects of the trip to China, was filled with little miracles. Michael Farnes recollected that during this performance, one of his contact lenses fell out. Losing that contact was going to make it much harder for him successfully complete the tour. While standing off stage, he noticed a spotlight hitting the floor at just the right angle so that his contact lens reflected the light. He ran back on stage and retrieved his contact. He said, “It was just a small miracle, but it’s so many things that you see things come together and you know the Lord’s watching out for you, just in those small and simple ways that are just very gratifying.”<sup>58</sup>

Over the next eight days, the Young Ambassadors would continue to tour China, performing in Hangzhou, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. In many instances they were told that they were the first American performers that their audience had ever seen,<sup>59</sup> and they performed for sold out crowds.<sup>60</sup> Among the favorite songs of the crowd was “Do Re Mi” from *The Sound of Music* because nearly everybody had heard it. The Chinese also responded especially favorably to the Chinese folk songs that the Young Ambassadors performed.<sup>61</sup> The musical accomplishments were both a tribute to the talent of the Young Ambassadors as well as the incredible skill of Randy Boothe. Speaking to this latter point, Olsen recorded, “Randy Boothe is truly a genius. I have to take my hat off to him at accomplishing so much in 28 years.”<sup>62</sup>

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56. Tim Taylor, 1979 Young Ambassadors Tour Journal, July 6, 1979.

57. Olsen, “Small Beginning.”

58. Michael Farnes, interview by Brady Liu, June 12, 2015, Provo, Utah.

59. Bob Murri, 1979 Young Ambassadors Tour Journal, July 9, 1979.

60. At the Hangzhou performance more than 3,000 people gathered to watch a performance at a theater that only could seat 2,500 people. Boothe reports that the Chinese officials “showed the movies outside in another area of the park to make them feel better about not getting a seat.” Randy Boothe, Journal, July 7, 1979.

61. Wendy Gougler, “China Impressed with Y Singers,” *Daily Universe* [BYU newspaper], August 7, 1979, 1.

62. Olsen, Journal, July 14, 1979.



Young Ambassadors hoop dancers Joe Ahuna and Ken Sekaquaptewa perform at the Red Tower Theatre. Courtesy BYU Young Ambassadors.

### **Interactions between the Young Ambassadors and the Chinese People**

Of all the interactions between the Young Ambassadors and the Chinese people, perhaps the most significant took place when performer Ken Sekaquaptewa met several of his relatives for the first time. Sekaquaptewa grew up in Phoenix, Arizona; his father was Native American and his mother was Chinese. He said, “The Chinese side of my family took a backseat to the Indian side of the family in Arizona, and my mom really didn’t talk a whole lot about her childhood or much about China.”<sup>63</sup>

When the China Young Ambassadors group was assembled, Sekaquaptewa was asked to highlight Native American culture, specializing in the hoop dance. He could not believe his good fortune to visit his ancestral country. His mother immediately contacted her family members in Shanghai and let them know of the opportunity to see Ken. Sekaquaptewa’s first encounter with a relative came as the Young Ambassadors

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63. Ken Sekaquaptewa, interview by Brady Liu, June 2, 2015, Provo, Utah.

arrived in Shanghai. As the train pulled into the station he noticed a woman running to keep up with the train. As Sekaquaptewa disembarked he saw the woman and guessed it was his mother's half-sister. He recounts that after he called out to her that she smiled and rushed to him. Sekaquaptewa said, "I smiled back at her, quickly gathered my things together, and as I stepped from the train she greeted me with a hug, her eyes still moist and her smile growing bigger and bigger."<sup>64</sup>

Sekaquaptewa only had a few minutes to visit with his aunt and other relatives who came to the train station before needing to depart on the tour bus with the Young Ambassadors. The next morning he and Olsen traveled to meet Sekaquaptewa's grandfather, who lived in Shanghai. Other relatives had traveled hundreds of miles to visit Sekaquaptewa. Sekaquaptewa recounted:

As we entered the room on the sixth floor many of the people that I met the night before at the train station were there. But there was one special new face. Rising slowly from a chair, his bright eyes gleaming and a broad smile on his face was my 86-year old grandfather. He was short and frail, and moved slowly over to me to shake hands, and then we gave each other a long hug, as though we were renewing a long lost friendship. . . . I was told that he had been quite ill and confined to a bed several months ago, but letters from my mother and myself telling of my brief chance to visit were like good medicine for him. During my visit, he walked around the room and seemed to be quite alert and healthy.<sup>65</sup>

Sekaquaptewa had grown up surrounded by Native Americans and had always thought that he looked like a Native American; however, sitting next to his grandfather he felt that he looked Chinese, the image of his grandfather.<sup>66</sup> Although China Travel Service said it could be difficult to obtain tickets for Sekaquaptewa's family to come to a performance, Sekaquaptewa was able to obtain sixteen tickets for his family members to come to the Communist Party Central Committee Theatre in Shanghai. Sekaquaptewa wrote, "My Grandfather rested up all day so that he could come to the performance. It had been months since he had even been out of his apartment. I felt great that we had done one of our best shows of the tour that night and afterwards I was able to gather all my family members in a room off the stage to visit with them and take

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64. Ken Sekaquaptewa, 1979 Young Ambassadors Tour Journal, July 12, 1979.

65. Sekaquaptewa, 1979 Young Ambassadors Tour Journal, July 12, 1979.

66. Sekaquaptewa, interview.



Ken Sekaquaptewa and his grandfather.  
Courtesy BYU Young Ambassadors.

pictures.”<sup>67</sup> For Sekaquaptewa, this time with his family was the highlight of the entire trip.

Sekaquaptewa’s grandfather, Chen Su Ming, wrote a letter to the Young Ambassadors, which one of Sekaquaptewa’s uncles translated into English. In part the letter reads:

I am the grandfather of Sekaquaptewa. I am 86. Despite my old age and ill health, I have come to attend your concert. I must say it’s worth it. . . . I am so excited that I have to say something from the depth of my heart. You have travelled such a long way to China bringing with you the dear friendship of the American people, including the

regards of my relatives. This is the best proof of the friendship between our two peoples. . . . I wish that the friendship between the people of China and America will live forever.<sup>68</sup>

In retrospect, Sekaquaptewa noted that “about six months after the tour, [my grandfather] passed away so it was really a tender mercy to be able to meet him and have that experience with relatives before he passed away.”<sup>69</sup>

While Sekaquaptewa’s experience with the native Chinese was certainly unique, others on the trip experienced special exchanges with the local people with whom they interacted. Some of the specific instances that participants recalled related to conversations surrounding Christianity. While the Young Ambassadors strictly observed the rules forbidding proselyting, there were a few occasions when gospel topics came up. For example, during some free time in Shanghai, Olsen and Cindi Whittaker were exploring the city and taking some photos. They met Mrs. Sung,

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67. Sekaquaptewa, 1979 Young Ambassadors Tour Journal, July 12, 1979.

68. Chen Su Ming to the Young Ambassadors, July 12, 1979, in 1979 Young Ambassadors Tour Journal, July 14, 1979.

69. Sekaquaptewa, interview.



a woman who spoke English who introduced herself as an artist. They went to her home to receive some paintings from her. As they conversed, Mrs. Sung told them that prior to the Cultural Revolution she had been educated at a Baptist college. In response, they told Mrs. Sung that they were a part of a school with twenty-five thousand Christians. Olsen stated, "I will never forget the sadness with which she said, 'I used to be a Christian.'" <sup>70</sup> After giving Olsen and Whittaker a watercolor painting and some small wooden dolls, Mrs. Sung took them back to the street. Olsen recalled, "As we parted we thanked her for her hospitality and generosity and then looking into her eyes, I said, 'God Bless You.' She hesitated for a moment and then looking back into my eyes she said, 'And God bless you too.' I knew she was still a believer. . . . It was one of those beautiful experiences where the spirit of the Lord was very strong." <sup>71</sup>

Boothe wrote that while waiting for preparations to be made in an auditorium in Hangzhou, he met a student who asked him if the BYU students were Christian. Booth recounted, "I answered in the affirmative. He said, 'Do they read the Bible?' and I said, 'Oh yes, they love to read the Bible' and he said, 'I think that the Bible must be a very good book, and I would like to read it, I am very eager to read it. But, unfortunately, in China there is no such book.' I then said, 'I am sure that one day you will have an opportunity to read it.'" <sup>72</sup>

One other experience relating to Christianity occurred in Shanghai, after a banquet. The Young Ambassadors sang "Love at Home" to show appreciation for their hosts, telling them that it was a special song. "One lady just lit up and with tears in her eyes quietly asked for a copy of the words. 'I used to sing that hymn,' she said." <sup>73</sup>

Many of the exchanges that the Young Ambassadors had with Chinese people were simple expressions of mutual love and friendship. For example, performer Chris Utley felt a deep connection with people that he saw, as he recognized that they shared common hopes and dreams. For him, an important lesson was recognizing that regardless of political, economic, or cultural differences, they were all children of God. He recalled, "Because of the language barrier, I didn't connect with that many of the native Chinese that we encountered. However, there were occasions where I would make eye contact and smile and get a smile back or have some connection that wasn't through language or words

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70. Olsen, interview.

71. Olsen, interview.

72. Boothe, *Journal*, July 8, 1979.

73. Olsen, *Journal*, July 12, 1979.





Young Ambassadors making friends with Chinese citizens. *Left to right*, Ken Sekaquaptewa, Tami Jeppson, Darla O'Dell. Courtesy BYU Young Ambassadors.

or speaking.”<sup>74</sup> Such experiences were, to him, particularly significant in light of Utley’s future missionary service in Taiwan (he received his mission call while on the return trip from China).

Olsen recounted an example of a simple interchange that represents hundreds of warm moments between the Young Ambassadors and the Chinese people they met. While on a long train ride, the Young Ambassadors had invited the train personnel to come to their car and watch a brief performance. However, because of their work schedules there was never a time when all of the employees were able to assemble. Toward the end of the trip, an employee invited the group to the dining car, where all of the staff had gathered together. Olsen recalled, “As we entered they clapped for us and we clapped for them and then the BYU students sang. I could tell that Elder Faust was certainly moved by it and I was too. A couple of our girls took the hands of some of the Chinese girls as they sang. But it was a beautiful expression of warmth and love on the part of our students which was certainly reciprocated by the young Chinese.”<sup>75</sup>

74. Chris Utley, interview by John Hilton III, July 22, 2015, Provo, Utah.

75. Olsen, Journal, July 3, 1979.

Boothe felt proud of his Young Ambassadors. While on the tour he noted that he was traveling with a “fine group of young people who have been exemplary in every way. . . . I thrill as I see them work by talking with people, giving, sharing, trying to use their Chinese.”<sup>76</sup>

Perhaps the closest relationships the Young Ambassadors developed on the tour were with their guides. Christy Bates recalls that there were tears when the time came to say goodbye. Both sides exchanged gifts and expressions of love and best wishes. Olsen recorded that “Miss Wong cried and Mr. Chen had tears in his eyes [and] read a formal speech. [Later] Miss Wong said, ‘I have been a guide for a year and a half. I have met a lot of wonderful and very nice people, but this is the first time I have ever shed a tear. I want you to know that I love you and appreciate all you have done since we met you for the first time with your beautiful command of the Chinese language. I fell in love with you.’”<sup>77</sup>

### Memorable Events

In addition to the exchanges with Chinese citizens, members of the group recalled many other memorable events. One of these involved a dilemma with a Sunday performance. It was not until the Young Ambassadors were already in Beijing that they realized that a performance was scheduled for Sunday in Hang Zhou. Olsen had been instrumental in setting rules that prevented Sunday performances and was stymied when discovering that there was no possibility of moving the performance to a different day. Elder Faust suggested if there were an honorable way to excuse themselves from the performance that that would be the best course of action. Olsen proffered a variety of reasons why the performance should be cancelled, stopping short of specifying their desire to honor the Sabbath day. But the Chinese resolved every objection that Olsen raised, and Olsen was not sure what to do. While pondering the matter, he thought about how students studying in Jerusalem had their worship services on Saturday, as is the custom in Israel. He realized that Monday in China would be Sunday in Utah and proposed that they hold their Sunday services on Monday instead of Sunday. Faust agreed and this course of action was taken.<sup>78</sup>

For the Young Ambassadors, a unique aspect of the trip involved interactions with the Elder and Sister Faust. For example, Perry recalled

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76. Boothe, *Journal*, July 5, 1979.

77. Olsen, *Journal*, July 16, 1979.

78. Olsen, *Journal*, July 8, 1979.

that during one dance he would do split leaps. While doing one during a performance, his pants completely ripped. He said, “[Sister Faust] ran over and took off her sweater, and said, ‘Tie this around your waist!’ . . . I did the rest of the show with her sweater on.”<sup>79</sup> Back at the hotel, Sister Faust volunteered to sew his pants for him. While she was sewing, Perry had the opportunity to visit with Elder Faust. He recalled being so impressed that the Fausts would reach out to him when he knew how badly they must have wanted to sleep.

Utley also remembered a treasured experience with Elder Faust. One day, Utley entered an elevator and was surprised to find Elder Faust already on it. Faust told Utley that he was about to give a blessing to another member of the group and invited Utley to participate. As a newly ordained elder, this was a new experience for Utley, who recalled, “My very first blessing of the sick was done with Elder Faust. It was a very special experience.”<sup>80</sup>

Farnes remembered a time when the group was hurrying to get to a flight. He noticed that a member of the group had his shoes untied and Farnes was about to make a sarcastic comment when Elder Faust stopped the participant and knelt down and tied his shoelaces for him. Farnes recalled, “I thought, what a great example of a Christian.”<sup>81</sup>

While Faust was clearly there in a presiding role, he also was a warm, friendly part of the group. For example, Tingey said that one of the performers was teasing Elder Faust about how he was wearing a suit coat and invited him to relax with the group. He said, “Elder Faust ditched the coat, ditched the briefcase and he came back in the bus with the rest of us! The funny thing is he did and he became one of our buddies. He joined the gang! I thought it was really great that he joined the group and we got to know him really well.”<sup>82</sup>

The trip was not easy for the Fausts, but they were an example of patience, kindness, and gratitude to the participants. Boothe recounts, “[The Fausts] were just so grateful and so head over heels taking every opportunity to recognize and acknowledge people and things [people] were doing for them.”<sup>83</sup>

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79. Perry, interview.

80. Chris Utley, interview by John Hilton III, July 22, 2015, Provo, Utah.

81. Michael Farnes, interview by John Hilton III, June 12, 2015, Provo, Utah.

82. Tingey, interview.

83. Boothe, interview.

For Boothe this gratitude was particularly impressive considering the physical challenges faced by the Fausts. He continued: “[Sister Faust] . . . had a lot of [knee] pain. . . . You would see it was hurting. . . . Elder Faust had asthma and had to use an inhaler quite frequently and sometimes . . . you could hear the labored breathing. . . . Never once did it slow him down from doing what he was there to do. [He] Didn’t ever worry about it, just kept smiling and being grateful and being a great representative.”<sup>84</sup>

### **The Impact of the Trip**

The influence of the Young Ambassadors trip to China appears to have reverberated throughout China in many ways. A letter from Jiao Yen, director of the Shanghai Song and Dance Troupe, dated September 27, 1979, illustrates the feelings of some of the Chinese who saw the Young Ambassadors perform. In part Jiao Yen wrote, “You brought us the profound emotion and deep friendship of the American people and brought us a step closer in the friendly relationship of our two countries. To you, unashamed ambassadors of friendship, I must represent myself and all the comrades of our song and dance troupe in expressing to you our sincere sentiments and regard.”<sup>85</sup>

Irving Mitchell of Los Angeles wrote a letter dated August 17, 1979, and effusively praised the Young Ambassadors. He had been part of an organized tour group in China and saw the Young Ambassadors perform in Shanghai. He wrote, “The audience, overwhelmingly Chinese, applauded very little for the preliminary acts of Chinese performers. By the time the Brigham Young group was on for ten minutes the Chinese audience had lost their reserve and were clapping and stamping their feet. . . . [The Young Ambassadors are] a credit to the university and our country.”<sup>86</sup>

Marion D. Hanks recorded praise regarding the Young Ambassadors performance in China. Hanks was in a meeting with Dr. Sammy Lee, a two-time Olympic gold medal winner for platform diving, who had been present for one of the performances. Lee wrote to Hanks, “During my visit to China, I had the pleasure and inspiration of seeing the America I believe in and love. . . . You can be mighty proud of your

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84. Boothe, interview.

85. Jiao Yen to Randy Boothe, September 27, 1979, copy in possession of the authors.

86. Irving Mitchell to BYU’s public relations director, August 17, 1979, copy in possession of the author.

group and your church. . . . Their singing and their demeanor made USA number one.”<sup>87</sup>

One of the most significant results of the 1979 tour was an invitation for the Young Ambassadors to return in 1980. On that occasion the Young Ambassadors were recorded, and performances were aired on television. Boothe said, “[People] knew BYU because of this show. They almost all had the music memorized. They just watched it over and over and over again. That was a phenomenal experience. Anyplace we would go, they would know the numbers. They would know the songs that we had done.”<sup>88</sup> Clearly if the 1979 tour had not been successful, there would have been no 1980 tour and no televised broadcasts of the BYU Young Ambassadors. Boothe’s words were echoed by many others.

For example, Performing Arts director Edward Blaser wrote, “BYU quickly became well known in China mainly due to extensive TV coverage. At the time Chinese Central Television did not have access to very much programming so they would tape the BYU shows and broadcast them over and over again. . . . Over the years I have heard many Chinese say that ‘BYU is the best known American University in China.’ Our performing groups played a key role in that.”<sup>89</sup>

These type of accolades were also stated by those who lived in China during the late 1970s and early 1980s. One recent and significant example of this came in the public remarks of Cui Tiankai, the Chinese ambassador to the United States. He said, “I first got to know something about BYU . . . more than 30 years ago. . . . There was a TV broadcast of the Young Ambassadors performance from BYU in China. That was my first opportunity to be exposed to American culture. . . . Ever since then I have had the dream that someday I could come here.”<sup>90</sup>

Many others in China can attest to the significance of the 1979 Young Ambassadors tour and the televised broadcasts that came as a result of its success. For example, Wu Man, currently a famous performing artist in China, wrote, “In early 1980s, the first time I saw BYU student performance on Chinese television I was in high school. That show left me a deep impression of the talent and positive spirit of the young generation

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87. Sammy Lee, quoted in Marion D. Hanks to Dallin H. Oaks, February 5, 1980, copy in possession of the authors.

88. Boothe, interview.

89. Blaser, email.

90. Cui Tiankai, Chinese Ambassador to the United States, Public Address Given at Brigham Young University, October 6, 2015.



Audience at a Young Ambassadors' performance in China. Courtesy BYU Young Ambassadors.

of Americans. Since then, there are several generations of Chinese that still vividly remember BYU's Young Ambassadors visiting!"<sup>91</sup>

JingJing Lin was a university student in Beijing during the 1979 Young Ambassador tour. Although Lin did not attend the concert in 1979, she heard about it from her friends. Lin recalled, "I don't think people had seen this kind of performance before in China. The Young Ambassadors were probably the first university group from another country—so the young people thought they were amazing." Lin saw the Young Ambassadors on TV several times, and in 1983 Lin was able to see a live performance. What stood out to Lin the most was the enthusiasm of the Young Ambassadors. She said, "They were very warm to the Chinese people—they would come down from the stage and talk to the people and shake hands. That was the first time in China I had seen any professional group do that." Lin eventually traveled to the United States and became employed by Brigham Young University. She reflected on the influence of the BYU tours by stating that as she accompanied various

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91. Wu Man, email to John Hilton III and Brady Liu, May 2, 2016.

BYU groups to China in the 1990s, the hosts would frequently remark, “Oh, you are from BYU. You have very good performing groups.”<sup>92</sup>

Jiamin Huang was a student at the elite Beijing Dance Academy in 1980 when she first heard of the Young Ambassadors. While she did not personally get to attend as all of the tickets were sold out, her friends told her how amazing it was to see performers who could sing, dance, and act. She recalled that her friends were impressed with the passion and energy of the Young Ambassadors. Huang felt that the first Young Ambassadors tour was particularly significant because of the tenor of that time period. She noted that because China had only recently concluded the Cultural Revolution, many people were still suspicious of Western culture. However, the Young Ambassadors’ clean and uplifting performance opened people’s eyes to the positives of Western culture. Huang said, “I think BYU Young Ambassadors really set that good example and gained great trust, not only from ordinary people, but from government officers and the arts education field.”<sup>93</sup>

The success of the Young Ambassadors tour in 1979 not only opened the door for their 1980 tour and television broadcasts, it created the opportunity for many other BYU performing groups, including International Folk Dance Ensemble, Living Legends, Chamber Orchestra, and Ballroom Dance Company, to tour in China. In total, BYU has sent twenty-eight tours to China since 1979. “Thousands attended each concert and millions more have watched on TV,” wrote Blaser.<sup>94</sup> Collectively these performances have helped build bridges between Brigham Young University and the People’s Republic of China.

## Conclusion

Following the trip, Faust wrote Oaks saying, “Everything went unbelievably well. . . . The Young Ambassadors . . . were everything that is finest in our young people. They were disciplined, responsive, and were open, warm and friendly. Their talent was great, but their spirits were even greater. . . . I have nothing but commendation for Brigham Young University and its leaders who have produced such a fine group of young people. . . . Ruth and I were proud to be with them.”<sup>95</sup>

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92. Jingjing Lin, interview by John Hilton III, April 29, 2016, Provo, Utah.

93. Jiamin Huang, interview by John Hilton III, May 4, 2016, Provo, Utah.

94. Blaser, email.

95. James E. Faust to Dallin H. Oaks, July 17, 1979, copy in Oaks, Office of the President Records.



President Kimball asked for a report of the Young Ambassador tour to share with the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Olsen and Boothe created a series of slides highlighting the trip and summarizing what had been accomplished. Oaks, as president of BYU, later received a letter from Ezra Taft Benson, who was then serving as the President of the Quorum of the Twelve. This letter said in part, "As you know, the First Presidency and Twelve had the privilege of seeing the slide presentation of the BYU Young Ambassadors' cultural exchange visit to China. . . . The Brethren were very impressed with the conduct of these fine young people and the opportunities which they brought to the Church and country."<sup>96</sup>

At the conclusion of the trip, Elder Faust said, "I can think of no better way to introduce our people [the Latter-day Saints] to the Chinese than through what has been accomplished by the Young Ambassadors on this tour."<sup>97</sup> This commendation was echoed by Benson who wrote, "The Brethren express their unanimous appreciation to the Young Ambassadors and their leaders for the great contribution they made in advancing the work in China."<sup>98</sup>

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John Hilton III is Assistant Professor of Ancient Scripture at Brigham Young University. He has a master's degree from Harvard and a PhD from BYU, both in education. Besides being with his family, his favorite hobbies are reading, writing, and learning Chinese. He has recently published in *Educational Researcher*, *Educational Technology Research and Development*, and *Religious Education*. He has also published several popular books with Deseret Book, including *52 Life-Changing Questions from the Book of Mormon*.

Brady Liu is an undergraduate at Brigham Young University studying physiology and developmental biology. He appreciates being invited by Dr. Hilton to participate in this project. He found and interviewed several of the 1979 Young Ambassadors and helped write the article. In the process, he developed a deep connection to the project.

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96. Ezra Taft Benson to Dallin H. Oaks, September 7, 1979, copy in possession of the authors.

97. Bruce Olsen, 1979 Young Ambassadors Tour Journal, July 28, 1979.

98. Benson to Oaks.

# Quds

*Bentley Snow*

The part that got me was that I had to take off my Chacos to enter the sanctuary. I was irked at first, drifting at the back of our group—apathetic, iPod on—deliberately detached and not in the mood for ceremonial inconveniences. I looked into the sanctuary’s square, open-air center. The floor, I had to admit, was beautiful—thin blue rivulets streamed deep within white marble—but imagine how many feet had mixed their oils with the dirt that faintly coated it. Red wooden poles lined the edges of the square, rising out of white pedestals to support the red tiles that sloped down toward the center, where the rest of my friends had gone on ahead. I skirted the poles until I came to a few rows of shoes lying simply beside a pole on my right. Amid them, I recognized two small, slipperlike white ones, then, almost reflexively, imagined their owner’s face; then I recognized more shoes, and then I saw more faces; then the cold stones finally sent thrills through my feet.

The baring of my feet no longer felt ceremonial, but significant: I stood somewhere else—somewhere like the Himalayas, someplace steeped with seclusion where principle trumped practicality: the hidden place where faith lives.



One year before, a different group of friends and I were welcoming Heidi back from Jerusalem, or *al-Quds*—the Holy. Someone had just slighted the Muslims with an ignorant joke. Heidi’s eyes weren’t angry, but their blue was clearly burning: “You have no idea how good, how generous, and how warm-hearted those people are,” she said, which

is when I realized, “Neither do I.” Once I knew I didn’t know, I knew I wanted to, and I began to imagine a journey I never thought I’d go on.



After the chill shot through my feet, I turned off my iPod and caught up with our guide, who was in the shade beneath the Muhammad Ali Sanctuary’s portico up ahead. The mosque wasn’t named for the famous American boxer. Rather, Cassius Clay, when he converted to Islam, admired the same medieval Muslim for whom the mosque was named and so took on the name Muhammad Ali too. Our guide’s name was Islam, which added a little to the confusion of names: when I caught up to him, he was explaining his religion and namesake to my friends while guiding them around the mosque—one of Cairo’s glories. The whole country, like Islam’s faith, felt foreign to me, such that frankly I felt afraid of its adherents, because I didn’t know “them,” *Muslims*, they who had taken such pains in producing the surrounding geometries of art and architecture. That jolt through my feet reminded me of what I’d felt through Heidi: they were worth knowing better.

I had heard that Muslims rise at daybreak to pray, and they pray three more times throughout the day, then once more at sunset; and I had heard of Ramadan, the month in which the faithful do not eat or drink while the sun is in the sky; and I knew that these were only two of the religion Islam’s pillars, even before our guide Islam brought them up; but these facts had never meant much to me. I suppose it was their concept of God I was after, the place I hoped to find some overlap. But as Islam described Muslim prayers, my reservations rekindled: it sounded like prayer to Muslims meant reciting prescribed supplications. That felt like a forced faith, to me.

I don’t like the idea of an impersonal God or the vibe from people who believe in one, or anyone who seems to believe that man was made for the Sabbath, not the other way around. I do believe that one God fits all, and I believe that one religion fits all—his—but I also believe he reaches for us through anything he can, through everything he can. He sends sacred wisps to reach for us throughout the fallen world. He’ll speak to us through broken words, imperfect pictures, or any of the Hero’s thousand faces—any echo of the Savior’s story. I cling to each of the thousand for the glimpses of the Hero himself they sometimes give to me. Myths aren’t lies, said Tolkien; in fact, though they “contain error, [they] will also reflect a splintered fragment of the true light. . . . They steer however shakily towards the true harbor.”<sup>1</sup>

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1. Humphrey Carpenter, *J. R. R. Tolkien: A Biography* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1977), 147.

I have sometimes seen gleams in them—splinters of the whole light. Even in the true and living Church of Jesus Christ, which I believe I am in, we see through a glass darkly: hence, “One of the grand fundamental principles of Mormonism is to receive truth, let it come from whence it may,”<sup>2</sup> according to Joseph Smith; hence I hoped for help from Islam, a faith I’d heard essentially described as “virtuous, lovely, and of good report or praiseworthy” (A of F 1:13). But a religion that would not let a man speak his mind or heart to God—this I could not identify with, that being near the essence of my concept of God: if he really cared, he would listen to anything, not just the right things. He would understand.

“But when you are working, as I am right now, you are not expected to pray,” said Islam, which seemed a lot less prescriptive and offered me a glimmer of hope. “And if you are sick or pregnant, you do not need to fast.” Hmm. So God does understand, to Muslims. He doesn’t ask you to sacrifice when it’s unwise, just to do so truly when it’s time. When you pray, for example, Islam went on, “you put your nose and your forehead on the ground to give God your power and dignity and authority.” In other words, you hold back nothing; in Christ’s words, you lose your life, then find it (see Matt. 16:25). If there’s one thing I wish for, that is it: to have learned to not hold back. That’s part of why I’m so distrustful of ceremony, I think: ceremonial obedience has not brought me to life. If I could just find more sincerity, I think God would, though.

Islam’s dark Egyptian face—hair and brows just darker than his skin—seemed to glow while he talked. Who could love the doctrine of holding nothing back save someone who was willing to do it? I considered how much, so far as I could tell, Islam had not held back: he was fit enough to excel in soccer; smart enough to have learned English in addition to Arabic; diligent enough to have a PhD in Egyptology, though he was thirty years old, if that; and cool enough to be a popular deejay and confident dancer. All this he seemed to love letting go. Above all this, he was a Muslim, “one who submits himself to God.”



When Jesus first came to the ancient Americas, to prove, among other things, that no sheep were forgotten, he said very little before the people bowed before him: “Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets

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2. 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), 5:499; see also “History, 1838–1856, volume E-1 [1 July 1843–30 April 1844],” p. 1666, on Church Historian’s Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/history-1838-1856-volume-e-1-1-july-1843-30-april-1844?p=36>.

testified shall come into the world. And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning” (3 Ne. 11:10–11). Of that passage in the Book of Mormon, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland once observed that surely the Savior, in that “initial and profound moment of spellbinding wonder,” made literally crucial points: after announcing that he was the Savior, “his submission to his father [was] the first and most important thing he wishe[d] us to know about himself.” Then Elder Holland continued: “Frankly, I am a bit haunted by the thought that this is the first and most important thing he may want to know about us.”<sup>3</sup>

I feel haunted by that possibility too, because I know that I do not suffer the will of the Father in all things; but I wanted to obey a little more while I learned about Islam’s religion, about the way they pray and how they give all when they do.



After exiting the sanctuary’s lower tier, we left—replacing our shoes—and walked a few dusty roads and staircases up to a higher, second sanctuary. The walls of the upper courtyard and the washbasin at its center were carved intricately and were the color of ivory. There, the ground looked dirty too, but I removed my Chacos without hesitation: green straps on brown soles on frosty white stone—winter’s shadows kept some of even Egypt cold. Here, something about that chill beneath my feet convinced me if the walls could topple outward, a sea of sky-skewering mountains would be revealed, majestic and endless and white with the blood of the heavens. I felt enshrined within them again, somewhere sacrosanct.



When I came to Jerusalem, I thought of myself as relatively enlightened, someone who had to put his light under a bushel because of the Jerusalem Center’s nonproselytizing agreement with Israel. I could not preach Jesus Christ or him crucified (see 1 Cor. 2:2). And yet when I got here, I found people who, while they didn’t worship Christ in name, loved

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3. Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Will of the Father,” devotional address given at Brigham Young University, January 17, 1989, [https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/jeffrey-r-holland\\_will-father/](https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/jeffrey-r-holland_will-father/).

him in spirit and in truth (see John 4:24). They moved me with their love for light, or—more simply put—their goodness. I remember:

- How the head host at the Garden Tomb, whose name I do not even know, kindly let Bonnie and Greg and me sit in the carefully tended flowerbeds. Thanks to his liberality, we didn't miss a thing about the Easter sunrise service.
- The way Hisom, a merchant on the *Via Dolorosa*, introduced me to his brother, Jaat, sounding vulnerable yet protective as he explained, "He's handicapped."
- How Elias rejoiced in even the simplest facts of life: "My grandsons are three and five!" He was a survivor of the Holocaust, or Shoah, who visited with our group one night. It changed my memory of Dachau, which he'd visited about six decades before I did, back when it wasn't Dachau but *Dachau*. I saw the beauty of the old man before me, his joy, and shuddered at my memory of the place.
- The spirit the Baptist med student shared as we watched a game of March Madness in a Galilean lounge. Texas A&M vs. BYU. At one point, he mentioned that he was an A&M fan to the death—except when they were playing our friends from BYU, of course. It didn't feel like sycophancy or even a polite lie—it felt like a gift. Like grace. The warmth of Southern hospitality, far away in Galilee.
- The Middle-Eastern hospitality that Palestinians showed me, a stranger. It happened again and again—with Amjad, Ibrahim, the teenagers along the dirt road, even the band of kids within the Kidron Valley. The boys looked about eight years old and were roasting wild onions and potatoes on a burning pile of trash. When Alli Sham, Dan King, and I approached—three American adults about three times their age—they welcomed us in broken English to their fireside and food.
- The way Elias spoke as he showed us a black-and-white photo of his family. He and the photo were all that was left of them. I remember gazing at his father's face as Elias told us how his family starved in the Warsaw ghetto. I saw the joy of the patriarch as he smiled amid his family and believed it was no coincidence that he had starved first.
- Zeki's mustache, which always broadened, and eyes, which always brightened, as I'd come up to him in the Jerusalem Center's cafeteria line. He would err on the side of excess when he served me food—nicer stuff than I, an American, was accustomed to eating.

I remember how he buried my steak in mushrooms once, heaping a gift to me that he probably couldn't enjoy for himself. It was his job to serve food, not to remember that a certain kid loved mushrooms, and not to proactively lavish it upon him. *Shucran, shucran, Zeki!*

The thing about my experiences with these people is that their goodness didn't just "move" me, it moved me closer to my God. Protestants, Muslims, Catholics, and Jews had made me a better Mormon, a better member of the restored Church of Jesus Christ. Although they didn't formally belong to the true and living Church of Christ or even believe Christ was their Savior (speaking of the Muslims and Jews, although the Muslims do consider him a prophet), they still helped me to do so. I wonder if this isn't because they had accepted him in spirit even though some had rejected him in name. This is a roundabout way of wondering at the same time whether I may be the opposite, whether I have accepted him in name while rejecting him somewhat in spirit. While I belong to the Church of Jesus Christ, do I truly belong to Jesus?

Not truly enough, to be honest. That's why I clung to those people. Because something in them moved me to follow Jesus Christ more truly. Because I need that something at all costs, to be utterly undogmatic, as I hope for Christ. Because Christ is the point.

I think that is why his Church is so important—it helps conduct us to him. But I suspect the only reason it exists is to help us know him better, since to know him is to have eternal life (see John 17:3). The same goes for the scriptures: they matter because through them we can know him. And they say that he is love (see 1 Jn. 4:8).

Of course, to "know him" means more than merely knowing superficial things about him, like his name, for example, a point I've been trying to make all along. This is why his Church is so important. It offers us full access to his grace, the greatest evidence of his love, the core of who he is. Yet in some way I don't entirely understand, that attribute explains why there is hope for the pure souls currently outside of his church too. At least that's my interpretation of Moroni 7:48: "whoso is found possessed of [love] at the last day, it shall be well with him." If a soul has begun to love, begun to bring others to Christ, he or she will have begun to live eternally. In other words, to truly know him. And if they truly know him, how can they fail to know him by name in the end? Don't most of his names mean "He who saves" anyway, in essence, "He who loves"?



Holiness hung like a thick mist within the mosque, just too pure to see. Dozens of golden globes dangled out of reach above me, though nowhere near the capacious dome that soared stories beyond them. As my eyes continued to adjust to the mosque's darkened interior, I noticed marble waves of jade and turquoise clashing across the ceiling, beneath the gleam of golden Arabic script. Some of it must have echoed the melodious Middle-Eastern voice resounding richly through the air. "Allah is merciful," Islam translated, as I shivered in the room and its beauty. Then on that exotic note of God's reverberating mercy, Islam announced the tour was over. We had fifteen minutes to ourselves before we had to be back to the bus. While our group explored—some wandering outside to gaze off a grand balcony at Cairo, some still standing pensively beneath the marvelous dome overhead—Islam wanted to take the opportunity to pray.

I glanced at a clump of worshippers nearby, kneeling low on the deep carpet, and paused, reflecting on them and their religion. The things I knew were so few, yet I thought I knew enough to love them and their faith. I had found a holiness alive here, and I hadn't even been looking for it. That still seems very significant to me, the memory of how something holy shimmered throughout me. Islam answered a few last questions while I stood off to the side. I was thinking about my power, my dignity, and my authority—things that I was holding back. I came up as the last questioners left.

"Is your mike on?" I asked him.

"No, it's off," he said.

"Can I pray with you?"

He considered me.

"Of course."

We went to a secluded area beside a large pillar then tapped its stone base three times—both hands—because I was not pure to pray. Islam had washed earlier. "Normally, you would leave to wash, but because there is no time, you must do this," he said, as he ran his hands over each other, as with something from out of the stone. I followed suit, grateful that my meaning counted although I couldn't show it well. Three more taps cleansed our faces, our heads, then our feet.

He had me stand just behind him and to the side so it was clear who was leading the prayer. This was important so people knew who to walk behind. No one should walk between a man who prayed and God, who is there before him.

I imitated his Arabic as well as I could while he pronounced the appropriate words as we stood, then hunched—our hands on our knees—then knelt, then bowed, then repeated each step a few times. “Because you cannot say what I am saying,” he’d told me, “your prayer must be just God and you understanding each other.” Such a prayer was fine with me. “I understand.”



As the final Chronicle of Narnia, *The Last Battle*, is ending, so is the world. All the Narnians have been defeated and scattered. Several main characters look on from the forest as the evil priests of a false god take power. These priests disbelieve in Tash, the dark god, but hypocritically use his name to rule the people with fear. Anyone who wishes to, they claim, is free to look upon him, though he kills all who dare behold him. Their ploy seems perfect since no one is brave enough to call their bluff, until a young man named Emeth steps forward. The priests remind him of the price of seeing Tash. He answers, “Gladly would I die a thousand deaths if I might look once on the face of Tash.”<sup>4</sup> Emeth enters the building and doesn’t come out. When the world ends not long after, and Aslan, or Christ, saves his people, he also saves Emeth.

Emeth’s fate is beautiful to me because he seems to represent Muslims, based on the way Lewis describes the culture of Emeth’s people; and because, to me, the perspective of traditional Christianity has failed to perceive faithful Muslims as I believe Christ will. I say this as someone who has failed too for most of my life, as someone who has not yet read significant amounts on the subject, and as someone who knows there are counterexamples in their faith of tremendously vicious behavior. I also say this as someone who has often heard and repeated popular phrases for displaying fair-mindedness—“But of course we Christians have some terrible people among us too, and we wouldn’t want to be judged by them, and most Muslims, just like us, are actually good people”—and as someone who, despite this reasoning, still feared them. Fear—the absence of belief and of love. What I’m trying to convey, I suppose, is something of what I experienced, which convinced me where reason could not, that there was great goodness in this faith, goodness that I ought to concede, and goodness that I ought to embrace. I don’t want to go unbolstered by any example of devotion. I regret that

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4. C. S. Lewis, *The Last Battle*, Chronicles of Narnia vol. 7 (New York: Macmillan, 1956), 104.

most Calormenes—the villainous people who worship Tash—seem to be modeled on Muslims. I exult in the character of Emeth—because it means my favorite author is a little more consistently Christian for admitting the existence of the faithful among other faiths (how many times did the Savior say he had “not found so great faith, no, not in Israel” [Matt. 8:10]?), and simply because I love that character. I don’t know how well Lewis understood Muslims or, of course, how well I do, but I believe he understood what was essential within Emeth and Aslan.

Emeth wonders at the offer of salvation: “Yet I have been seeking Tash all my days.”

“Beloved, . . . unless thy desire had been for me thou wouldst not have sought so long and so truly. For all find what they truly seek.”<sup>5</sup>



After Islam finished the last of the ritual words, his hands and forehead pressed deep into the carpet, he went silent, and it was just each of us and God understanding. After I had offered a little more of my power, my dignity, and my authority, I prayed for Islam: that he would find all of the light. It didn’t occur to me then, but I wonder now if he might have prayed the same for me. And I wonder, if we both did, how much else really matters, how much else really will, on the day all things shall fail but one.

We cut around the pillars to leave, arcing toward a large doorway. Once I looked at it, I could see little else: the sun itself seemed to overflow the frame. It washed over the figure of Islam, engulfing his edges while I tried to follow across the plush carpet, blinded to all but him and the pure light before me. His last few words still sounded in me—“Peace be unto you, my brother”—mixed with the way I’d wished the same to him, the way I wished the same to all. I wished until I was swallowed by light, when hot stone abruptly gritted against my feet. Then I paused and realized that I was still holding my Chacos, and that I didn’t want to put them on again.

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This essay by Bentley Snow won second place in the 2016 Richard H. Cracroft Personal Essay Contest.

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5. Lewis, *Last Battle*, 156–57.

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Vol. 3 of the Documents series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, ed. Ronald K. Esplin and Matthew J. Grow. Salt Lake City: The Church Historian's Press, 2014.

*Reviewed by James B. Allen*

Beginning in the year 2008, the Church Historian's Press has published a dozen volumes in the *Joseph Smith Papers* series. As explained on the *Papers* website ([www.josephsmithpapers.org/articles/about-the-project](http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/articles/about-the-project)), this highly important and long-awaited project eventually will publish "all known and available documents meeting the project's criteria as Joseph Smith documents. . . . All Joseph Smith documents, even routine ones such as certificates, will be published on this website, and many documents will be published in print volumes. It is expected that roughly two dozen print volumes will be published, at a rate of about two per year." *BYU Studies Quarterly* has reviewed some of those already published, and more reviews are forthcoming.

The published volumes will be divided into six series: Documents; Journals; Histories; Revelations and Translations; Administrative Records; and Legal, Business, and Financial Records. The three volumes reviewed

here begin the Documents series, which comprises the core of the entire project. When complete, this series will include all of “Joseph Smith’s outgoing and incoming correspondence, his revelations, reports of discourses, editorials for which he was responsible as editor of a periodical, minutes of meetings in which he played a role, and other ecclesiastical and miscellaneous materials, all arranged chronologically” (1:xxi). The printed volumes include only representative samples of routine documents such as licenses, certificates, bank notes, and other miscellaneous items, but images of all the extant documents will be found online.

These volumes do not lend themselves to casual reading. Rather, they help provide the documentary underpinnings for historians and other scholars to do their work. However, others who are seriously interested in early Mormon history should find them fascinating. Here they will discover the earliest extant transcripts of Joseph Smith’s revelations, as well as hundreds of other Joseph Smith documents, whether they are in the library of the Church Historical Department, in other libraries, or in private hands, with no need to visit those repositories.

Volumes 1–3 cover the period from July 1828 through March 1834. This was the formative period of Mormon history during which the Book of Mormon was translated and published, the Church was organized, Church headquarters was established in Kirtland, the Saints settled in Missouri, Church organization was enhanced, considerable doctrinal development occurred, bitter persecution commenced both in Ohio and Missouri, and Church record keeping began.

These volumes continue the superb editorial work that researchers have come to expect in the Joseph Smith Papers Project. The documents are organized chronologically into sections, each representing a historically significant time period and introduced by a short historical essay. Each document is introduced by a source note giving information about the physical aspects of the document itself: its appearance, its current location, its provenance, and whose handwriting it contains. Joseph Smith’s handwriting practically never appears, but when it does, it is identified in the text with bold type. The source note is followed by a careful historical introduction that some readers may consider the most important or, at least, the most informative part of the whole publication. Here the editors place the document in its historical setting and provide valuable information about the various issues approached in the text. Since all the documents are in chronological order, simply reading the historical introductions provides an insightful overview of some aspects of Church history.

In addition, the documents are meticulously annotated, often with additional historical information that greatly enhances the reader's understanding. This additional information is especially valuable with respect to the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants (which account for a major portion of these three volumes).

Most who study these volumes will want to compare the revelation transcripts with the Doctrine and Covenants. Such comparisons will, of course, reveal a variety of differences. These early handwritten documents contain little punctuation, spelling and capitalization are often different, and there is no division into verses. There are other differences, sometimes related simply to human error in either dictating or recording revelations. Clearly, however, the Saints themselves realized the need for revision. In the minutes of one conference, for example, it shows that it was "Resolved . . . that Br Joseph Smith Jr correct those errors or mistakes which he may discover by the holy Spirit while ~~receiving the revelations~~ reviewing the revelations & commandments & also the fulness of the scriptures" (2:123).

Some changes are accounted for by the fact that the original revelation was amended at a later date. With respect to section 20, for example, the earliest document does not include what are now verses 65–67 (1:116–26). These verses mention bishops, high priests, and high councilors, none of which existed in the Church when the revelation was initially recorded. There is some evidence, the editors suggest, that it was the intent to continue updating this revelation, known as the "articles and covenants of the Church of Christ" (1:117). Interestingly enough, Oliver Cowdery wrote a similar document, as early as June 1829, in response to an earlier revelation (1:368–74).

A look at the first and last documents in the volumes reviewed here provides further interesting examples of how all the documents are treated.

Volume 1 begins with a transcript of the revelation that eventually became section 3 of the Doctrine and Covenants, which rebukes Joseph Smith for allowing Martin Harris to take the Book of Mormon manuscript so far translated to show his wife. The historical introduction sets it in context and rounds out the story by telling what happened both before and after the revelation, including Joseph Smith's tremendous sorrow and uncontrollable weeping after he discovered the manuscript was lost. How or when the revelation was committed to paper is unknown, but the editors speculate that originally Joseph may have dictated it either to Emma or her brother Reuben Hale. Whatever the

case, the source note reveals that the earliest extant version is in the handwriting of John Whitmer and was entered into Revelation Book 1 around March 1831. The document includes a heading not included in the Doctrine and Covenants, and a footnote indicates that Whitmer created the heading when he copied the text into the book. The first part of the text reads as follows:

July one Thousand Eight hundred & Twenty Eight Given to Joseph Smith the Seer after he had lost certain writings he had Translated by the gift & Power of God

Saying the ~~words~~ <works> of & designs & the Purposes of God cannot be frustrated . . . (1:116–26)

The strikeout indicates what was struck out in the text, and the brackets indicate insertions. As finally recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants, the revelation begins: “The works, and the designs, and the purposes of God cannot be frustrated” (D&C 3:1).

Volume 3 concludes with a long letter written to Edward Partridge and others by Oliver Cowdery, dated March 30, 1834. Cowdery wrote the letter two days after Joseph Smith’s return to Kirtland; the Prophet had been recruiting individuals to go to Missouri with the Camp of Israel (that is, Zion’s Camp) to help the persecuted Saints there. Upon his return, he found several letters from Church leaders in Missouri. They included criticism of Joseph and other Kirtland leaders, partly because of mistakes made in a published version of a December 1831 revelation, and partly because of the lack of financial support from Kirtland. In the letter, Joseph expressed his frustration over the complaints but also his desire to forgive for the sake of unity. Among other things, the letter provides insight into problems, both internal and external, in both Kirtland and Missouri, and comments on the expected expedition to Missouri and the difficulty of obtaining support for it. The original letter is not extant, but this transcription comes from a copy in the handwriting of Thomas Bullock located in the Oliver Cowdery letter book in the Huntington Library, San Marino, California. The editors provide forty-five informative footnotes that either lead us to other sources or explain certain parts in the letter.

Another interesting example of the painstaking editorial work in these three volumes involves one of the most well-known and oft-quoted revelations, section 76 of the Doctrine and Covenants, originally titled “The Vision.” Here Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon beheld the Savior and received considerable new doctrinal knowledge concerning



the nature of salvation (2:179–92). Through the introductory material readers learn something about how the revelation was received, which was never described by either Joseph or Sidney but was later recounted by Philo Dibble, who was there at the time. According to Dibble, Joseph, Sidney, and twelve other men were in the upstairs room of the John Johnson home in Hiram, Ohio, when the revelation came. By turns, either Joseph or Sidney would say, “What do I see,” relate what he saw, and then the other would say, “I see the same.” “Not a sound nor motion was made by anyone,” said Dibble, and neither Joseph nor Sidney “moved a joint or limb during the time I was there” (2:182). It is unknown how or when the revelation was written down, but the version transcribed here was copied into Revelation Book 2 sometime between February 16 and March 8, 1832. It is mostly in the handwriting of Frederick G. Williams, except that what are now verses 6 and 7 were written by Joseph Smith. In the text, sixty-seven footnotes provide considerable interesting information and cross-referencing.

The Documents series in the *Joseph Smith Papers* online includes some 1,600 documents, all of which will eventually be published, making this “the most extensive series of *The Joseph Smith Papers*, with a breadth of coverage unequaled in any other component of the *Papers*” (1:xxi). In addition, the website provides a photograph of each document as well as a tool for searching within the documents. The three volumes reviewed here include 266 documents.

All the revelations included in the Documents series are also included in the Revelations and Translations series. The difference is that the Documents series presents the earliest extant text of each revelation and provides extensive information about the historical setting but no textual analysis, while the Revelations and Translations series provides in-depth textual analysis that notes all changes made in the text as it developed. There are numerous such changes, some of them significant. In section 28, for example, it is said in verse 9 that the city of Zion shall be located “on the borders by the Lamanites” but in the earliest extant transcription this was recorded as “among the Lamanites” (1:186).

In many cases these volumes provide some details about the nature of Joseph Smith’s revelations that are not apparent in the Doctrine and Covenants and that most Mormon historians may not be aware of. Section 42 is one example. The introduction to this section tells that the revelation was given through Joseph Smith on February 9, 1831, and that the Prophet said it embraced “the law of the Church.” However, in volume 1 we learn that verses 1–72 of the revelation were initially a compilation

of five separate “commandments,” each given in response to a particular question. Assembled elders asked the questions and Joseph Smith dictated the answers. Curiously, the answers to the last two questions are not included in the Doctrine and Covenants. Verses 74–93 were the result of three more questions asked on February 23, to which Joseph Smith gave responses. The editors hypothesize “that ‘the Law’ was a working document, meant to be revised or expanded as new circumstances raised new questions” (1:247). The answer to the first of the February 12 questions, which had to do with sending elders to the west, is not in the Doctrine and Covenants, while the last part of the transcript is now verses 74–77.

Another example of how these volumes teach us things that are not immediately apparent in the Doctrine and Covenants has to do with section 82. Verse 1 says the following: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, my servants, that inasmuch as you have forgiven one another your trespasses, even so I, the Lord, forgive you.” The discussion in volume 2 clarifies what this refers to. Preceding the text of the revelation is the text of the minutes of meetings held on April 26 and 27, 1832, which says that in the first meeting “all differences settled & the hearts of all run together in love” (2:232). In a footnote to the minutes and in the discussion of the revelation, the editors inform us that the references to settling differences and forgiving each other concern a disagreement between Edward Partridge and Sidney Rigdon that was settled amicably during a break in the meeting.

In addition to the revelation manuscripts, these volumes include many other documents of interest. The following is a list of a few examples: a January 16, 1830, agreement between Joseph Smith and Martin Harris authorizing Harris to sell copies of the Book of Mormon until he collected enough money to repay him for the cost of printing (1:108); the November 2, 1831, “Testimony of the Witnesses to the Book of the Lords commandments,” signed by eighteen men and bearing witness of the truth of the revelations soon to be published (2:110–114); minutes of several significant conferences at which Joseph Smith presided or participated; a January 28, 1832, letter from Oliver Cowdery giving Joseph Smith information about the welfare of the Missouri Saints (2:163); two letters from Joseph to Emma Smith (2:246, 304); the tremendously important 1832 document that was Joseph Smith’s first attempt to write his own history and contained a most significant early account of his First Vision (2:275); a deed transferring ownership of Joseph and Emma Smith’s farm in Harmony, Pennsylvania, to Joseph McKune Jr. (3:158); a proposal by

Edward Partridge for Zion's City Center (3:308); and a warrant, issued October 21, 1833, warning several Saints, including Joseph Smith and his family, to leave the Kirtland township immediately (3:325).

Each volume includes a section at the end called "Reference Material," a kind of capstone that helps make this series an essential research tool for scholars. In volumes 1 and 2, this material begins with a "Calendar of Documents" that lists chronologically all known Joseph Smith documents, including various versions, created in the period covered in that volume, identifying authors, genre, places of creation, and other important information. It includes nonextant versions and even, in the case of volume 1, some Mark Hofmann forgeries (identified as such, of course). There is no explanation as to why such a calendar is not included in volume 3. Next in each volume is a section titled "Source Notes for Multiple-Entry Documents." This is an effort to save space by providing a source note for a source from which several entries in the book were drawn. For example, *The Evening and the Morning Star* is the source for nine documents in volume 3, but rather than providing a long source note for each of those entries, the editors provide a reference to the multiple-entry note. Next comes a detailed chronology for the years covered by the volume. This is followed by a "Geographical Directory" that describes most places mentioned in the volume, including waterways, followed by a series of maps. Each volume then provides a Joseph Smith pedigree chart and a very helpful "Biographical Directory" listing most of the persons mentioned in that volume. Volumes 1 and 2 also include short sections dealing with ecclesiastical organization as well as a glossary of terms that have particular meaning in Mormon usage. Each volume also provides an essay on sources, a bibliography of works cited and, finally, a chart listing the various sections of the Doctrine and Covenants and their corresponding section numbers in key editions: 1833, 1835, 1844, the modern LDS edition (listed as 1981 in volumes 1 and 2 and as 2013 in volume 3), and the Community of Christ's 2004 edition. The listing includes only those items written before the death of Joseph Smith.

In perusing these volumes, I am struck once again by how much Joseph Smith accomplished in his lifetime, the myriad things he was involved in as he struggled to build God's kingdom on earth, his devotion to the importance of keeping records, and the tremendous problems he faced. I also feel his spirit as he expressed anguish over the persecution of the Saints, his appreciation for and confidence in those closest to him, his sorrow over his own weaknesses, his distress over the degraded state of the world as he saw it, and his concern for the

well-being of his wife Emma. One passage in a letter to Emma dated October 13, 1832, reveals something of his apocalyptic outlook as he reported his impression of the people of New York:

Their iniquities shall <be> visited upon their heads and their works shall be burned up with unquenchable fire the inequity [iniquity] of the people is printed in every countenance and nothing but the dress of the people makes them look fair and butiful all is deformity there is something in every countenance that is disagreeable with few exceptions Oh how long Oh Lord Shall this order of things exist and darkness cover the Earth and gross darkness cover the people.

Another passage in the same letter reveals his concern for Emma as she struggled with certain problems while he was gone from Kirtland:

I pray to God to soften the hearts of those arou[n]d you to be kind to you and take <the> burden off[f] your shoulders as much as possible and not afflict you I feel for you for I know your state and that others do not but you must comfort yourself knowing that God is your friend in heaven and that you have one true and living friend on Earth your Husband Joseph Smith Jr.

He added a P.S. and signed it “I remain your affectionate Husband until Death Joseph Smith Junior” (2:307–13).

I am taken with the excellent editorial work in these volumes, and I find no real weakness. I could quibble and call for more extensive historical information and for some textual analysis, but these additions would only make the already huge volumes larger and are not really suited to the editors’ purposes. The historical essays are very adequate, and the textual analysis is taken care of in the Revelations and Translations series. Nothing is perfect, but I find nothing in these volumes that deserves criticism.

Joseph Smith’s *History of the Church*, edited by B. H. Roberts and first published over a century ago, was a remarkable achievement for its time and is still the documentary source most often cited in historical writings about the Church’s founding era. However, with the continuing publication of the *Joseph Smith Papers*, that should change. When this multivolume, multiseries project is complete, scholars interested in this era will be sadly amiss if they do not consult and cite it often. The continuing appeal of Roberts’s work is its first-person narrative format that is easily followed by the casual reader. Its major disadvantages, so far as professional historians are concerned, are twofold: (1) it was drawn from a variety of sources, and since it is not clear what those sources were, it is also

unclear what is actually Joseph Smith's work and what came from other sources; and (2) the text itself was edited, so we do not know exactly what the original source said. Clearly this confusion is being avoided in the Joseph Smith Papers Project, which makes these volumes an absolutely essential resource for those who want to explore the life of Mormonism's founding prophet in detail. We eagerly look forward to all future volumes of the Documents series, which is the core of the project.

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Gerald E. Smith. *Schooling the Prophet:  
How the Book of Mormon Influenced Joseph Smith  
and the Early Restoration.*

Provo, Utah: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, BYU, 2016.

*Reviewed by Mark L. Staker*

Scholars studying Mormonism have documented Joseph Smith's preference for citing the Bible rather than the Book of Mormon in his sermons and writings. Terryl Givens asserts in his influential study of the book that Joseph Smith only made "brief allusions to the Book of Mormon" in his teachings.<sup>1</sup> While it is easy to see confirmation of these conclusions in statistical studies of the number of references Joseph Smith made to biblical verses in comparison to the number he drew from the Book of Mormon, the meaning of these statistics has been less obvious. The general academic consensus, however, has been that Joseph Smith spent most of his time reading and pondering the Bible rather than the Book of Mormon. Philip Barlow, an exceptional scholar who has studied this issue carefully, notes that "compared to the Bible, the Book of Mormon was used surprisingly little. . . . There is little evidence that he [Joseph Smith] ever took time to study its contents as he did the Bible's." Barlow asserts, "The Book of Mormon was valued by its adherents, but it did not become the basis for early Church doctrine and practice—Smith's day-to-day revelations did that."<sup>2</sup>

Conclusions such as this have contributed to a perception that the Book of Mormon exerted little influence on early Mormon thought or practice other than as a manifestation of Joseph Smith's prophetic calling. Grant Hardy offers a typical assessment when he argues that the Book of Mormon "contributes little to LDS ritual (aside from the

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1. Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 85.

2. Philip L. Barlow, *Mormons and the Bible: The Place of the Latter-day Saints in American Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 44.

wording of sacramental prayers).”<sup>3</sup> These arguments have led scholars to consider the idea that the Book of Mormon played an insignificant role in shaping doctrine, teachings, or practices in the early Church.

Gerald E. Smith provides much new information in his thoughtful book *Schooling the Prophet: How the Book of Mormon Influenced Joseph Smith and the Early Restoration* by asking if the demonstrable lack of frequent public reference to the Book of Mormon in Joseph Smith’s work is adequate evidence that the book had no influence on him. His answer is a carefully reasoned analysis of the relationship between Joseph Smith and the book he translated, which concludes that the Book of Mormon influenced Joseph Smith’s thinking on a number of significant subjects. The author finds ample evidence that the Book of Mormon was “not merely *derivative* from the Prophet, but actually may have been *formative* on his life and work as a prophet” (3), which seems reasonable considering the Book of Mormon translation was both his first and most sizable endeavor as a seer.

Givens points out in his brief introduction to *Schooling the Prophet* the appropriateness of Grant Hardy’s suggestion that, if the Book of Mormon’s purpose was only to serve as evidence that Joseph Smith was a prophet, a pamphlet would have accomplished the task. But no one has produced a serious, book-length study until now that explores in detail the formative role the Book of Mormon played in Joseph Smith’s thinking. Gerald Smith explores how the Book of Mormon influenced Joseph Smith in issues ranging from his organization of the new church—drawing its formal name of “the Church of Christ” from the text (46)—to shaping its ecclesiastical structure and priesthood offices (180–86). He argues the Book of Mormon was critical in establishing Joseph Smith’s early theology and doctrine, and influential in his introduction of rituals such as the sacrament and baptism.

One compelling avenue of study the author pursues is the role the Book of Mormon played in developing ideas of temple and temple theology. He observes “many Mormon and non-Mormon observers believe [Joseph Smith’s concept of temple worship] happened spontaneously by revelation to the Prophet in 1842” (4). *Schooling the Prophet* outlines a temple theology and the genesis of a Latter-day Saint temple-building program shaped by the Book of Mormon. He asserts that although temple worship was no longer part of the practice of Jews or Christians

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3. Grant Hardy, introduction to Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), xxvii.



when the Book of Mormon was published, this volume of scripture included an account of postresurrection Christian temple worship in America that suggested temples were to continue playing a role within Christianity (145), and it was the Book of Mormon that generated Joseph Smith's interest in temple building.

Gerald Smith concludes his work noting:

Scholars have studied the impact of the Book of Mormon as a sign of Smith's prophethood—the miraculous account of ancient gold plates recovered from the ground by divine assistance from an angel. We now fill in an important space on an incomplete canvas that has been missing for nearly two centuries. To conclude that the Book of Mormon did indeed influence the Prophet is a beneficial contribution, but this would be an understatement. The Book of Mormon—with its depth and breadth—influenced the theological DNA for the church's first formal statement of doctrine (the 'Mormon Creed') articulated in the 'Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ' in 1830. It provided a tangible vision and theology of Zion with an American New Jerusalem and a scriptural heritage anchored in the New World. It defined the meaning of Christ-centered temple worship in a postresurrection world where altar sacrifice was replaced with endowed instruction and communion with Christ as seen in the Nephite endowment. (210)

As Joseph Smith neared the end of his life's work while in Carthage jail the evening before he was murdered, he read with his brother Hyrum passages from the Book of Mormon about disciples experiencing divine rescue. Apparently aware no divine rescue would come, Joseph's brother Hyrum carefully folded down a page marking the prophet Moroni's farewell "unto my brethren whom I love" that his friends also took to be Hyrum's final farewell (Ether 12:38). Certainly Joseph Smith considered the Book of Mormon more than just a sign of his prophetic call. "I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion," he once said, and he turned to it for solutions to the last.<sup>4</sup>

While Gerald Smith's academic training is in business—he has a Harvard Business School MBA and a PhD from Boston University and is a business professor at Boston College—he also teaches religion courses

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4. "History, 1838, volume C-1 [November 2, 1838–July 31, 1842]," p. 255, on Church Historian's Press, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, <http://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/history-1838-1856-volume-c-1-2-november-1838-31-july-1842?p=427>.

for the Boston LDS Institute of Religion and has clearly thought seriously about the Book of Mormon for many years. He draws heavily on the scholarship of others who have contributed to the field to build his work. Gerald Smith's thesis is a useful starting point for further study about the influence of the Book of Mormon on other early Latter-day Saints. While Parley P. Pratt's influential *Voice of Warning* includes heavy reference to the Book of Mormon in its concluding chapters, for example, the earlier chapters addressing dual priesthoods and other doctrinal topics also fit nicely with *Schooling the Prophet's* identification of the Book of Mormon as a major source of thinking on priesthood and related subjects. Although Gerald Smith's primary audience is scholars who study the Book of Mormon or early Latter-day Saint history and are interested in the role the book played in the formative Church, it is also a useful volume in helping anyone who reads the Book of Mormon appreciate its role in influencing Joseph Smith's thinking and in developing Latter-day Saint doctrine. It contributes toward a greater understanding of those doctrines.

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Randall Balmer and Jana Riess, eds.  
*Mormonism and American Politics*.  
New York: Columbia University Press, 2016.

*Reviewed by J. B. Haws*

This is a book that lives up to its blurbs. It really does feel “deft, discerning, and nearly definitive” (Jon Butler, from the book’s back cover).

*Mormonism and American Politics* brings together ten papers (along with three additional essays) that were originally presented at a February 2012 Columbia University conference on Mormonism and politics. It says something that the conference was convened at the suggestion of Mark C. Taylor, then chair of the religion department at Columbia. Timing surely was part of the broad interest this topic was generating in 2012—the conference took place in the thick of the Mitt Romney-driven “Mormon Moment.” But reading these essays four years later will remind readers that questions about Mormons’ place in America’s religious and political landscape are still worthy of study—and maybe more so—one election cycle later. Those who are drawn to Mormon history, especially recent Mormon history, as well as those who are interested more generally in contests about the changing role of American religion in the public square, should not miss this book.

The essays are organized in a roughly chronological order. That ordering strengthens the book, and while each essay can be read as a stand-alone piece, reading the essays in order gives a sense both of transformations in Mormon attitudes about their American host society, as well as the persistence of some underlying Mormon tenets and tendencies that continually create interesting, and often unexpected, tensions. The editors have been effective in arranging the essays so that they build on one another—more on that later. The editors and authors are to be commended, too, for fleshing out and updating the papers as they took them from presentations to published essays. The substantial endnotes that follow the chapters make the volume even meatier.

A number of important things can be said about this book, but here are two things that stand out. First, the editors introduce the book with this line: “The story of Mormonism in America is inextricably tied to politics” (ix). Each essay that follows makes that case well, and several historical episodes and periods in Mormonism take on new vitality when viewed through the lens of political implications.

In chapter 1, for example, Richard Bushman offers a very perceptive reading on how the Book of Mormon envisions and “values a politics of harmony,” one that “measured political success by righteousness, peace, and unity” (10, 12). Bushman’s detection of an affinity between Joseph Smith’s presidential platform and the Book of Mormon “in a shared distaste for dissent and contention” (12) is more persuasive than a superficial reading of the Book of Mormon that might see it as offering unqualified support for some form of modern democracy.

John Turner, in his chapter on Brigham Young’s church presidency years, demonstrates just how betrayed Latter-day Saints felt by what they saw as the U.S. government’s constitutional failings to protect them and their prophet (a sentiment borne out by the new publication of the minutes of the Council of Fifty in the Joseph Smith Papers Project). Turner also highlights how Mormon polygamy befuddled and exposed antebellum proponents of popular sovereignty whose arguments for states’ rights seemed increasingly slavery-specific when confronted by the Mormon case.

In chapter 3, Jana Riess gives an important retelling, from a gendered perspective, of the campaign to deny B. H. Roberts a seat in Congress in 1898–99. Riess argues that American Protestant women’s groups decried Roberts just as vehemently as they had campaigned against polygamy a decade earlier. Roberts parted company with other Mormons in his stance against female suffrage, and this generated extra vitriol among “the temperance-loving, suffrage-seeking Protestant churchwoman of the East” (38). Riess also points out that men became more involved in the anti-Roberts push than in earlier antipolygamy initiatives because “polygamy had become inextricably linked to a ‘male’ prerogative—politics” (42). Riess closes with a look at the Reed Smoot case to suggest how, in just a few short years, American attitudes about gender and polygamy and Mormon men marked a new trajectory for the LDS Church’s public image—a trajectory that Jan Shipp’s essay (chapter 5) then traces through the twentieth century. Shipp’s attention to Ezra Taft Benson as a representative figure both reflects her own astute sense of Mormonism’s national reputation and highlights

Benson's significance in modern Mormonism. In light of Shipps's overview, it is little wonder that Benson is the subject of a number of forthcoming scholarly biographical works.

A second key idea in *Mormonism and American Politics* comes to the fore in Philip Barlow's essay on exceptionalism. Barlow's essay is a pivotal one, not only because the chapter is the numerical midpoint of the book (chapter 7), but also because its "dominant and recessive gene" metaphor is packed with explanatory power in thinking about Mormonism. Barlow uses the gene imagery specifically to address Mormon attitudes about chosenness (Mormons' status as a chosen people, and America's status as a chosen nation), and especially to highlight the sometimes paradoxical strains of exceptionalism *and* inclusivism that run through Mormonism—strains that can seem to appear alternately as dominant or recessive.

Barlow's metaphor can be applied productively in various other places in the book as well. It has something to say in the important attention Matthew Bowman gives to aspects of Mormon theology that resonated with the impulse of progressivism (chapter 4), such that Mormonism's early twentieth-century reshaping can be seen as more authentic and internally driven than is often admitted by analysts who see only a concession to "mainstream" American values. The metaphor has something to say, too, in Russell Arben Fox's discussion (chapter 6) of how Mormon theology continues to make Americans uncomfortable. Despite signs of Mormon patriotism, the preeminence—and primacy—of revelation in the Mormon theological system, Fox argues, raises questions as to whether Mormons should be—or even can be—included in the broad tent of shared American civic religion when the specter of theocracy is hovering nearby.

This persistent American discomfort is at the heart of Randall Balmer's chapter (chapter 8) contrasting the public religious personas of John F. Kennedy, George Romney, and Mitt Romney. Balmer's significant suggestion is that Mitt Romney should have spoken *more* about his religion, since "Americans generally prefer candor to subterfuge" (127). Balmer's point is a fascinating one, and he has done as much as anyone to trace the way religion has influenced presidential politics in the past half-century. But it is difficult to know how such a turn would have played, especially in 2007, considering just how deeply seated Christian fears about Mormons have appeared to be. The Christian antipathy for Mormonism that Riess traces in chapter 3 still has something to say in Balmer's chapter 8.

The dominant and recessive gene framing is also pronounced in Max Mueller's chapter on Mormon attitudes about race. Mueller's nuanced analysis centers on underexplored stories that have led "the modern church [to emphasize] Mormon universalism over racial particularity" (159). At Mueller's hand, these include an important reading of the Book of Mormon that shows it "does not solely teach an ethic of white 'chosenness.' It also teaches the possible redemption of all humanity, even those accursed with dark skin" (163). Thus, while the "Book of Mormon's conception of whiteness as the standard to which all people should aspire rightfully makes us squirm" (164), still, and unlike many contemporaries, early Latter-day Saints "were professing the 'modern' view that racial categories were mutable and constructed" (163). Mueller's call for attention to Mormon stories other than that of "racial exclusion" is provocative; he writes of "a parallel history," "almost never told," of "Mormon empathy, even kinship with African Americans . . . created out of a shared past of persecution by 'white' or 'gentile' America" (160).

Perhaps nowhere in the book are the pushes and pulls of "dominant and recessive genes" in Mormon thought and practice more keenly felt than in discussions surrounding LGBT issues. Claudia Bushman's essay (chapter 11), for example, draws on a number of contemporary oral histories recorded with Mormon women, some of whom are the mothers of gay children. Bushman's chapter, "Mormon Women Talk Politics," gives voice to Mormon women's strong rebuttals of antipolygamy campaigns in the 1870s, as well as Mormon women's views on both sides of the Equal Rights Amendment debate of the 1970s. But half of the essay is devoted to Mormon women's views of recent same-sex marriage ballot initiatives. The expressions of faith and of real pain in these interviews are equally moving. "What we see in these potent narratives is a story in which politics and church instructions impinge on family relationships," Bushman writes, "changing the direction of the story. . . . When the church speaks the response is never simple and in one voice" (189).

In that same vein, Joanna Brooks's chapter on Proposition 8 is a thought-provoking look at an episode that will likely loom large in future histories of twenty-first century Mormonism. Brooks gives us an important take. Her analysis, based on theories of outsider-insider discourse, suggests that Mormons in the California campaign "undergrounded" (Brooks's term) their temple-marriage-based theological opposition to same-sex marriage, but used coded language that appealed to a broader coalition. Brooks points out that this raised old suspicions about Mormon secretiveness. However, what looks like dissembling from one

political point of view can look like consensus building from another. Brooks's essay begs for more discussion about the intellectual weight behind opposition to same-sex marriage, as well as more consideration of contextual differences between the ERA campaign of the 1970s and the 2008 Proposition 8 campaign (and its aftermath); lobbying strength and changes in national opinions seem, at first glance, to be two such differences. Granted, there is only so much that one can do in a limited essay—and what Brooks does, she does well. But if *Mormonism and American Politics* could have been one chapter longer, a chapter surveying contemporary Mormon conservative political thought and the theological bases of such thought on family policy and religious liberty, for example, would have rounded out an already remarkable volume.

These theological bases figure here in part because, regardless of one's political persuasion, Mormon conservatism is interesting for the ways Mormon voters often diverge from expected patterns. This comes across clearly in a crucial chapter by three authors, David Campbell, Christopher Karpowitz, and Quin Monson. Their essay discusses places where Mormon theology seems to position Mormons in a different place on the political spectrum than, say, evangelical Protestants, on issues like abortion or immigration or civil rights for those in the LGBT community. Mormons tend to have more politically moderate views on these points. Here are the surprises of the dominant/recessive genes again. Hence Joanna Brooks notes that "on the issue of homosexuality, it would be inaccurate to characterize the quality of LDS discourse about homosexuals as more intense than that of other socially conservative religious denominations" (193)—this is what makes the Proposition 8 story so complex. These complexities also speak to a strong call issued in the chapter by Campbell, Karpowitz, and Monson for more thoughtful attention to what they call the "costs of partisan homogeneity" in Mormonism (148).<sup>1</sup>

Fittingly, Peggy Fletcher Stack's concluding chapter, "Mitt, Mormonism, and the Media," provides a case study of sorts that brings together all of these historic tensions and surprises, both internal and external. Stack's piece is the type of essay that Mormons will want to have on hand to pass out to religiously curious acquaintances, and reporters

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1. Ideas in their essay are treated with more length and more data in David E. Campbell, John C. Green, and J. Quin Monson, *Seeking the Promised Land: Mormons and American Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014)—a good companion read to *Mormonism and American Politics*.



would do well to start their research for any Mormon-related assignment with a reread of this essay. From her prime vantage point as a veteran religion writer at the *Salt Lake Tribune*, Stack was especially well positioned to experience some of the high points and low points in the media's coverage of Mormonism during Mitt Romney's two presidential campaigns. Stack's essay sparkles with insights about the press: reporters often asked the wrong questions; they assumed a Protestant model that missed the essence of Romney's LDS Church callings of bishop and stake president; journalists made a detectable turn to quoting practicing Latter-day Saints as expert voices—and Stack points out that Jon Krakauer, author of *Under the Banner of Heaven*, was conspicuously missing from 2012 media coverage. That 2012 coverage, Stack notes, felt different to many observers than did coverage of Romney's Mormonism four years earlier—from “latent misunderstandings” to “questions about what do Mormons actually do,” in the words of LDS spokesman Michael Otterson (223). This “dance,” Stack writes, “between the mainstream media and the Utah church . . . produced surprising results. Mormons saw themselves reflected in their country's pluralistic mirror, not as outsiders but as part of the crowded field. They faced some of the tougher issues in their history and had a chance to erase false perceptions. Some Mormons discovered more diversity in their own movement than they knew existed. Meanwhile, many other Americans met the real Mormonism for the first time, rather than its tabloid version” (213).

That is a good description, too, of what readers will find in *Mormonism and American Politics*.

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