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The Book of Mormon As an Ancient Book

C. Wilfred Griggs

Typical of attempts to deny the authenticity of the Book of Mormon are a work entitled *The Truth about the "Lehi Tree-of-Life" Stone*¹ and an unpublished manuscript recently sent to the author by a professional journal for evaluation. In both instances, the authors list parallels between Lucy Mack Smith's account of a dream which Joseph Smith, Sr., experienced in ca. 1811² and the account of the Tree of Life dream in 1 Nephi 8 through 15. The purpose for listing the parallels is to show that Joseph Smith, Jr., got the inspiration from his father (either directly or perhaps indirectly through his mother) for most of the symbols in the dream. One author, Hougey, avers that "arbitrary or unexpected similarities" in the two accounts "rule out the possibility of independent development,"³ although he does not give criteria for determining when similarities can be considered "arbitrary or unexpected." Within the framework of his own bias, Hougey is apparently unwilling to see any alternative to his hypothesis that Joseph Smith simply borrowed the dream account from the Smith family traditions.⁴

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¹Hal Hougey, *The Truth about the "Lehi Tree-of-Life" Stone* (Concord: Pacific Publishing Co., 1963).

²Both authors refer to the first edition of Lucy Mack Smith's biography of Joseph (*Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet, and His Progenitors for Many Generations* [Liverpool: S. W. Richards, 1853], pp. 58–59), although the account of the dream has not been changed in the revised edition (*History of Joseph Smith by His Mother, Lucy Mack Smith* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954], pp. 48–50). I have used the account in the revised edition.

³Hougey, *"Lehi Tree-of-Life" Stone*, p. 24.

⁴There is no evidence that Lucy Mack Smith committed her material to writing before 1845, and because the Book of Mormon was printed by 26 March 1830, some question exists regarding the influence of the Book of Mormon phrasing on Lucy Smith's work. According to Lucy's chronology, the particular dream of her husband which is used by critics in their comparison occurred in 1811, nineteen years before the Book of Mormon was published in English and thirty-four years before Lucy's work was written. The complex nature of possible influences over so lengthy a period of time in narrating a dream experience is beyond reconstruction with certainty. Hougey argues polemically and tendentiously that if one suggests the Book of Mormon account influenced Lucy Smith in her phrasing or wording in recounting the dream of Joseph Smith, Sr., one must then admit "that Joseph Smith's mother was dishonest, and that she willingly and purposely jeopardized the reputation of her son" (Hougey, *"Lehi Tree-of-Life" Stone*, p. 25). He then states that such could not have been the case "in view of all the things she says about him," returning to his simplistic theory that the only direction of influence was from Lucy Smith to her son.

DETERMINING THE METHOD

The major weakness of such criticisms is the one-dimensional approach taken to problems which the Book of Mormon presents. The assumption that any parallels between the world of Joseph Smith and the world of the Book of Mormon, real or imagined (e.g., the similarities to the account of the dream of Joseph Smith, Sr., in the case of the former, and the superficial points of contact with Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews* in the case of the latter), are sufficient to discredit the Book of Mormon is naive. The challenge of the Book of Mormon lies elsewhere. It claims to be an ancient book, and it must be examined and criticized in terms of this claim.

If, as Joseph Smith states, it is a translation, any modern language source material which the translator found useful or helpful in his translating efforts cannot be used *ipso facto* as evidence against the authenticity of his work. In addition to identifying any language parallels with modern language sources, the critic must also analyze the historical, cultural, and social elements which are found throughout the narrative of the Book of Mormon and then must show that these elements cannot represent the ancient world home claimed for them before he can disprove the antiquity of the book. Since it is highly unlikely that anyone could invent a work which represents Ancient Near Eastern society accurately, and in such great length as the Book of Mormon (even a transplanted segment of that society would retain many characteristics of its original home which could be checked for accuracy), subjecting the book to the test of integrity in a historical context would be a reasonable task for any scholar to undertake. Criticism of fraudulent texts which use Christ as the subject (e.g., the *Archko Volume* or the *Infancy Gospels*) as well as of numerous other non-Christian forgeries shows how rather easily scholars can discredit such attempts.

The Book of Mormon deserves the same kind of test, especially in view of the continuing avalanche of materials relating to the Ancient Near East that have been recovered during the last century. Because such materials were unknown in the early nineteenth century, they provide an ideal control against which to measure the Book of Mormon, for Joseph Smith obviously could not have had access to them while writing the book. It is precisely this dimension of historical criticism, however, which has been almost totally neglected in attempts to prove the book a fraud. Hugh Nibley, the leading Mormon scholar in the field of antiquity, is one of the few individuals up to the present time who has applied serious tests of historical

compatibility to the Book of Mormon.⁵ This paper attempts to continue in this methodology, a methodology accepted generally in disciplines related to ancient studies.

An instructive example of how to handle a text such as the Book of Mormon has recently been provided through the providence of manuscript preservation and recovery. In 1958, Professor Morton Smith of Columbia University was examining manuscripts in a monastery near Jerusalem when he happened on a two-and-one-half page text purporting to be a letter of Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150 to ca. 215) to a certain Theodore.⁶ The letter does not correspond to any previously known texts of Clement and there is no known Theodore who associated with the Alexandrian theologian. The paper on which the text was found is a heavy white binder's paper commonly found in books in Venice during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the handwriting on it is dated variably from the late seventeenth century to the early nineteenth century.⁷ By scholarly consensus, Smith was able to date the manuscripts at 1750, plus or minus fifty years. Although the scribe is acknowledged to be experienced, as noted by good spelling and correct use of accents (the language is Greek), the nature of the writing indicates he was in a hurry. It is therefore impossible to tell whether he is responsible for the high quality of the text or if he is simply copying a work of unusually good literary and grammatical character.

The material in the letter was totally unexpected, especially since it speaks favorably of a *Secret Gospel of Mark*, which was essentially sacramental or ordinance-oriented and which depicted Jesus as a mystagogue for Christians who wished to become perfect by being led as "hearers into the innermost sanctuary of that truth hidden by seven veils."⁸ With its modern paper, modern handwriting, and unfamiliar and unexpected contents, one would expect the manuscript to have all the ingredients of a first-class forgery. But Smith chose to judge the document by what he considers "the primary test for authenticity," namely the examination of the text in terms of its

⁵Nibley's three major works in this area are *Lehi in the Desert and the World of the Jaredites* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1952); *An Approach to the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1964); and *Since Cumorah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1967). The debt of any writer in this field, including my own, will be obvious to anyone familiar with Nibley's treatment of the subject, even when, as in the present instance, other materials relating to Book of Mormon origins are being considered for the first time in that context.

⁶Morton Smith, *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), p. ix.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 1. Smith submitted photographs of the manuscript to a number of specialists who generously supplied opinions on the date of the hand. Although different dates were favored by the scholars, Smith states that all agreed on the possibility of an eighteenth-century date.

⁸Clement to Theodore, fol. 1, recto lines 22-23 and line 17.

claimed historical and literary context. After writing nearly 450 pages comparing the style, language, and contents of the short text to already-known ancient sources, Smith concluded that he had found a copy of an authentic letter of Clement and that “the consequences for the history of the early Christian Church and for New Testament criticism are revolutionary.”⁹

If a two-and-one-half page text can elicit 450 pages of analysis and commentary in an attempt to determine its authenticity, one would not expect less from the scholarly world in the case of the Book of Mormon. Nevertheless, the book has received little serious attention from specialists in ancient studies. In this paper, given the limitations imposed by time and space, I will discuss only two specific instances of recently recovered materials which relate to the original world of the Book of Mormon, particularly to Lehi’s dream. They are worth considering here as a limited approach to the larger question of historical compatibility in the Book of Mormon.

THE GOLD PLATES, RIVERS, AND THE TREE OF LIFE

A major religious movement sweeping through the Greek world in the sixth century B.C. became known in later time as Orphism.¹⁰ Although, due to the paucity of extant sources, little is known concerning early Orphism,¹¹ it is believed that after originating in Thrace the religious beliefs spread rapidly via the Greeks throughout the Mediterranean world.¹² The popularity of the movement can be inferred from a literary fragment attributed to the sixth-century poet Ibykos, which says Ὀνομακλυτὸν Ὀρφήν — “well-known or famous Orpheus.”¹³ It can be assumed that the Greeks were familiar with this religious philosophy and that they may have been spreading it throughout the eastern Mediterranean, including Egypt, from the seventh century B.C. We know that the Greeks had good trade

⁹Smith, *Clement of Alexandria*, pp. 4 and ix.

¹⁰G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1964), p. 37f; Jane Harrison, *Themis* (1927; reprint ed., New York: Meridian Books, 1962), p. 462; W. K. C. Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1966), p. 11; and Kathleen Freeman, *Companion to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 1.

¹¹E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966), p. 147. The author states, “But I must confess that I know very little about early Orphism, and the more I read about it the more my knowledge diminishes. Twenty years ago, I could have said quite a lot about it (we all could at that time). Since then, I have lost a great deal of knowledge.” New discoveries tend to upset old theories.

¹²The Thracian origin is argued in Dodds, *Greeks and the Irrational*, p. 147, and Freeman, *Companion to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, pp. 1–2; and on the story relating to Orpheus and Orphic rituals, see Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion*, p. 25ff; F. M. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), p. 178n., mentions possible connections with Iranian or Persian influences on Orphism, suggesting a more eastward origin for the theology of the movement.

¹³Hermann Diels and Walther Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (1952; reprint ed., Berlin: Weidmann, 1960), 1:3, citing Ibykos, fr. 17.

relations with non-Greek countries of the Near East throughout that century.¹⁴

Guthrie implies that it was possible to have come in contact with *Orphica* through writings rather than through direct preaching, because “Orphism always was a literature, first and foremost.” Rather than being a collection of *dogmata* within a narrow tradition, Orphism was a way of life which may not have required worship of a new god or a change in established worship patterns.¹⁵ Indeed, Freeman characterizes the later collection of Orphic literature as “a collection of writings of different periods and varying outlook, something like that of the Bible.”¹⁶ Orphism was influenced by other religions, both Greek and non-Greek,¹⁷ and its syncretistic material was later quoted freely in Christian and Neo-Platonic sources.¹⁸

Beyond the many divergent texts and ideas which become part of the *Orphica*, there appears to have been a special body of material collected into hexametric poems considered authoritative in Orphic circles.¹⁹ The earliest-preserved tradition from the fifth century B.C. concerning this even earlier Orphic poetry states that it was engraved on tablets which were to be found in Thrace.²⁰ According to the Pseudo-Platonic dialogue, *Axiochos*, these tablets were said to have been made of bronze, and the fate of the soul in the spirit world (Hades) was the subject of the message engraved upon them. The plates were further said to have been brought to Delos by two seers from the land of the Hyperboreans,²¹ indicating that it was the religious significance and divine source of the material which justified its being engraved upon metal plates.

Guenther Zuntz observes that although metals were not used as writing materials as often as papyrus, animal skins, wood, or stone, “they were so used, and that by no means rarely.”²² Among the

¹⁴R. Sealey, *A History of the Greek City States, 700–338 B.C.* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976), p. 52; J. B. Bury and R. Meiggs, *A History of Greece*, 4th ed. (London: Macmillan & Co., 1975), pp. 84–85; and Chester G. Starr, *The Economic and Social Growth of Early Greece, 800–500 B.C.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 49–51. That religion spread with trade during this period is suggested by Guthrie (*Orpheus and Greek Religion*, p. 11): “It is generally agreed that there was considerable activity, whether nascent or renaissant, in the sphere of Orphic and kindred religion, in the sixth century B.C.”

¹⁵Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion*, pp. 9, 10. I. M. Linforth, *The Arts of Orpheus* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1941), states that before 300 B.C. the description “Orphic” was applied to all sorts of ideas associated with every manner of ritual.

¹⁶Freeman, *Companion to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, p. 5.

¹⁷See note 15, and Harrison, *Themis*, p. 462f.

¹⁸Freeman, *Companion to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, p. 5.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 4. See examples of the hexameters attributed to Orpheus in Plato *Cratylus* 402b; *Philebus* 66c; and a reference to Orphic hexameters in *Ion* 536b.

²⁰Euripides *Alcestis* 965ff. The scholiast on the passage, a contemporary of Plato, stated that the tablets actually existed at that time on Mount Haimos.

²¹Pseudo-Plato *Axiochos* 371a.

²²Guenther Zuntz, *Persephone* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 278.

many examples which could be cited, one notes an inscribed fifth-century bronze disc from Luso in Arkadia,²³ and a number of bronze plaques inscribed with legal texts or dedications.²⁴ Of quite a different nature are the *Defixionum Tabellae* (tablets of enchantments or curses), written on tablets of lead and buried in graves and chthonic sanctuaries. The purpose of burying such texts was to bring the curses to the attention of the deities of the next life whom the plates invoke to pronounce penalties upon the writers' enemies. These lead plates date from the fifth century B.C. onward and are found throughout the Greek world, from Sicily to Syria. Zuntz suggests that lead was used because it changes in time from a shiny silver color when fresh to a "dark color and dead heaviness," an appropriate combination for the pernicious purposes of the texts.²⁵

In the opposite thematic direction from plates containing curses and penalties is the small gold plate (less than one inch in height) which was found at Amphipolis and which has engraven upon it an inscription of ten lines of magical names and formulae, for example, "Βαρουχ Αδωναι Ουριηλ Γαβριηλ Μιχαηλ, κτλ." (Baruch, Adonai, Uriel, Gabriel, Michael, etc.).²⁶ One gold plate, unearthed in Gallep on the Lower Rhine, the site of a Roman camp, contains an inscription of magical names and incantations which Sieburg identified as Egyptian, Jewish, Phoenician, and Babylonian.²⁷ Similar texts have been found inscribed on silver and bronze,²⁸ as well as prescriptions for writing protective and religious spells on tablets of gold, silver, bronze, and tin.²⁹ The gold plates with the magical spells, however, date from the Roman period, while the aforementioned lead plates with the curses date from the classical age of Greece. One might look for gold plates from the earlier period with religious texts inscribed upon them to help establish historical compatibility for the Book of Mormon.

The famous Orphic gold plates provide perhaps the best examples of such early religious texts written upon tablets of gold and buried in the ground. There are at least seventeen such plates known

²³*Inscriptiones Graecae* V, 2. 387; cf. V, 2. 390, 566.

²⁴Zuntz, *Persephone*, p. 278, n. 7, referring to O. Kern, *Inscriptiones Graecae*, 1. 1, pls. 8, 10, and 21. Plate 8 is a bronze plaque from Mycenae and plate 10 is one from Thetonium in Thessaly. Cf. V. Arangio-Ruiz and Olivieri, *Inscriptiones Siciliae et M. Graeciae* (1925) for numerous examples, e.g., an archaic bronze plaque from Policastro (p. 47). These date from the sixth and fifth centuries B.C., and numerous examples from later periods could be cited.

²⁵Zuntz, *Persephone*, p. 279.

²⁶*British Museum Catalogue*, p. 378, no. 3153, cited in Zuntz, *Persephone*, p. 279f. No. 3150 in the *BM* is a similar gold plate, and others have been found.

²⁷F. Sieburg, *Bonner Jahrbuecher*, 103 (1898): 123ff.

²⁸A. Wiedemann, *Bonner Jahrbuecher*, 79 (1885): 215ff; and Sieburg, *Bonner Jahrbuecher*, p. 123ff.

²⁹Sieburg, *Bonner Jahrbuecher*, p. 136ff.

at present, found in ancient burial sites in such widely scattered areas as Italy, Greece, and Crete.³⁰ The plate first found was discovered probably in the eighteenth century, although it was not published until 1836.³¹ The most recently discovered plate came to light in 1972 and was published in 1976.³² Dating of the plates is difficult, due to lack of similar texts to which they may be compared, but Zuntz and Burkert date them from as early as the fifth century B.C. in one instance and as late as the third century A.D. in another (most are dated to the fourth century B.C. or earlier).³³ Zuntz hypothesized the existence of a larger text which was the ancestor of the gold plate texts and which, when read to an audience of initiates, was accompanied by ritual acts, although he did not accept the earlier opinions of Wieten and Harrison that these acts were celebrations of mysteries relating to a mystic death and resurrection for the living.³⁴ Despite Zuntz's reluctance to acknowledge the earlier text as a "didactic poem," a recently found Orphic papyrus, dated to the fourth century B.C. and discovered in a tomb near Thessaloniki, contains a commentary on an authoritative Orphic poem, perhaps a form of the one which preceded the fragments on the gold tablets.³⁵ Because of this ancient commentary, Burkert assumes a date for the original poem to be at least the fifth or sixth century B.C.

All commentators agree that the material on the gold plates is not indigenous to Greece but represents foreign influences from the sixth century or earlier. Zuntz suggests that the apparent cultic influence on the earlier version of the ritual formulary could well have come from Egypt, a hypothesis proposed by others before him.³⁶ Harrison, however, attributes the enrichment of the poem with ritual elements to Iranian influence.³⁷ The influence was certainly from the Ancient Near East, even if there is no agreement on where the ideas were found originally.

Commentators agree that the texts on the plates are related to

³⁰In addition to the list of plates and their origins given in Zuntz, *Persephone*, p. 286, two others are known to the author. One is in the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles and the other was discovered in southern Italy (Hipponios) in 1972 and published by Zuntz, "Text der Lamelle von Hipponion," in *Wiener Studien (WST)* 89 (1976). The last mentioned plate will be discussed in some detail.

³¹Zuntz, *Persephone*, p. 355.

³²Zuntz, *WST* 89 (1976), esp. p. 132 for text.

³³Zuntz, *Persephone*, pp. 294ff, 355ff. Walter Burkert, while visiting U.C. Berkeley as the Sather Classical Lecturer in 1977, gave some information and opinions concerning the plates, which information will be used in this paper.

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 343.

³⁵This papyrus was discussed in some detail by Professor Burkert, who stated that it clearly predates the tomb in which it was found. Presocratic concepts from Anaxagoras and Democritus were found in the text, but nothing later than the fifth century can be seen in the work.

³⁶Zuntz, *Persephone*, pp. 342f, 370ff; Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion*, pp. 177, 198, 208; and Freeman, *Companion to the Greek Pre-Socratic Philosophers*, pp. 7, 14, et passim.

³⁷Harrison, *Themis*, p. 462ff.

one another, even though various plates contain different parts or aspects of the original work. I am not concerned here with the task of reconstructing the parts into the original order of the whole or with determining how each aspect of the original has been altered or preserved on the different plates. For the present, the consideration of various elements of the poem is as important as an examination of the places they occupied in the original work. Following Guthrie, Zuntz, Burkert, and others, the texts will be translated and presented as concisely as possible in order to place the general story before the reader. Where another translator is not named, I present my own rendition.

“This is the tomb [rule] of remembrance if someone is about to die.³⁸
You go to the well-fashioned houses of Hades [realm of departed spirits].”

“You shall find to the left of the House of Hades a spring . . .
to this spring you must not come near.”³⁹

“Go to the right as far as one should go, being right wary in all things.”⁴⁰

“There is to the right a spring,
near which is standing a white cypress.
There the souls of the dead who descend refresh themselves.”⁴¹

“Further on, you shall find another, the Lake of Remembrance, and cold water flowing forth, and there are guardians above it.⁴²
They will ask you in their astute minds,
‘For what purpose are you searching [wandering] about the dark regions of the destructive netherworld?’ ”⁴³

“Who are you? Whence are you?”⁴⁴
[The answer follows]
“Here I stand before you, pure from impurity, Queen of those below,⁴⁵
and Eukles and Eubouleus, and the other immortal gods and daemons,⁴⁶

³⁸The first part of the text is taken from the Hipponios tablet found in 1972. It is one of the earliest of the plates, dating perhaps to the fifth century. There is some question whether “tomb” or “rule” should be read, but I here follow the editors of the text.

³⁹Petelia Plate (B₁), lines 1–3. In this plate alone, the tree mentioned below is found by the forbidden spring on the left. Elsewhere the tree is beside the spring on the right, where commentators agree it belongs.

⁴⁰Plate from Thurii (A₄), line 2, translation of Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion*, p. 173.

⁴¹Hipponios plate, lines 2–4.

⁴²Combined from B₁, lines 4–5, and Hipponios plate, lines 6–7.

⁴³Hipponios plate, lines 8–9.

⁴⁴Plates from Crete (B₃–B₈), line 3.

⁴⁵This text comes from the plates from Thurii, designated A₁–A₃, and from B₁. A composite rendering of the four is given below. The more common rendering, “I am come from the pure, pure Queen of those below,” is rejected by Zuntz, *Persephone*, p. 306, following E. Rohde et al., *Psyche* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 2:218. The adjective is unsuitable for the goddess, and, ritually speaking, it is the soul which has become καθαρά ἐκ καθαρῶν (“pure from the pure”). No agreement exists on the goddess’s identity.

⁴⁶Zuntz notes that the words “suggest an assembly of gods which it is hard, even so, to visualize” (*Persephone*, pp. 311–12).

for I also profess that I am one of your blessed race,
and I have paid the penalty for unrighteous deeds.”
“Say, ‘I am a son of earth and of starry heaven,
but my race is of heaven alone. This you yourselves know.’”⁴⁷

“‘But I am parched with thirst and I am about to perish. Give to me
quickly the cold water which flows forth from the Lake of Memory.’”⁴⁸

“And they will have pity under the king of the underworld,
[or perhaps: “And they will initiate you to the king of the under-
world”]

and they themselves will give you to drink from the holy spring,
and thenceforth among the other heroes you shall have lordship.”⁴⁹

[The gods speak:]

“Hail, you who have suffered the suffering. This you have never
suffered before.

You are become god from man.

A kid you are fallen into milk.

Hail, hail to you journeying the right hand road

By the holy meadows and groves of Persephone.”⁵⁰

“You are going a long way, which others also [go],
initiates and Bacchoi, heirs of the holy way.”⁵¹

The preceding text is a composite of the various texts which have already been acknowledged as being associated in origin and thought.⁵² A commentary on the text represents a sampling of the scholarly opinions presently held concerning the material.

The major difficulty for many has been to specify the religious movement with which the plates are to be identified. They have long been known as the “Orphic gold plates,” but Zuntz observes that on no plate is there a clear hint pointing to Orpheus or Dionysius, and “no reason remains for describing the religion to which they witness as ‘orphyic.’”⁵³ Still, the claim in Pseudo-Plato *Axiochos* that the subject of the ancient bronze plates was the fate of the soul in the spirit world is precisely the subject of the texts considered above.⁵⁴ It

⁴⁷Hipponios plate, line 10, and B₁, lines 6–7.

⁴⁸Hipponios plate, lines 11–12, and B₁, lines 8–9.

⁴⁹Hipponios plate, lines 13–14, and B₁, lines 10–12. The alternate translation was suggested by an emended spelling proposed by M. West. It is left in parentheses in favor of the reading on the plate, although spelling difficulties exist in line 13 as it stands.

⁵⁰A₄, lines 3–7, translated by Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion*, p. 173.

⁵¹Hipponios plate, lines 15–16.

⁵²Analysis of the metrical difficulties in the poetic lines, and also of the presence of some prosaic elements in certain of the plates, has led to attempts at determining what portions of the texts were original and which were added later. There is no real agreement at present on solutions to such problems, and even suspected additions must be earlier than the basic composition given above, that is, prior to the fourth century B.C.

⁵³Zuntz, *Persephone*, p. 326. The single exception is the term *Bacchoi* in line 16 of the Hipponios plate, not known when he wrote this book. Burkert considers this at best a slender thread to connect with “Orphism.”

⁵⁴Pseudo-Plato *Axiochos* 371a.

is further claimed that the bronze plates of Pseudo-Plato are the same as the "Thracian tablets which tuneful Orpheus carved out," as mentioned by Euripides in the *Alcestis*.⁵⁵ There is considerable harmony in subject matter between the anciently attested bronze plates of Thrace as reported in ancient sources and the gold plates which have been recovered in modern times. Gunthrie summarizes the message of the gold plates as follows:

The purpose of the plates is clear from their contents. The dead man is given those portions of his sacred literature which will instruct him how to behave when he finds himself on the road to the lower world. They tell him the way he is to go and the words he is to say. They also quote the favourable answer which he may expect from the powers of that world when he has duly reminded them of his claims on their benevolence.⁵⁶

Zuntz suggests that the text and some unspecified accompanying rites "in which the journey of the deceased to Persephone was symbolically enacted" were celebrated by the living at the burial of the dead. The rites "were considered indispensable if a soul was to attain to its 'proper and blissful consummation.' " He attempts to identify the ritual drama with Pythagorean rites and argues that "the preservation, through the centuries, of these texts, and the custom of inscribing them on gold leaves to accompany the dead, became understandable . . . as elements, and evidence, of these Pythagorean rites."⁵⁷

The ritual nature of the text is further suggested by the fact that although the engraved Hipponios tablet was found in the grave of a female, line ten says, "I am a *son* of earth and of starry heaven." The same text seems to be necessary for all participants, male and female. A separate study of related sources reveals the necessity of also performing such ritual acts on behalf of the dead.

As the spirit of the deceased enters Hades, or the realm of departed spirits, counsel is given to avoid the path on the left and to keep to the one on the right. Plato may be drawing upon the same religious or literary tradition when he has Socrates say of the path to Hades:

To be sure, the journey is not as Aeschylus has Telephos speak of it. For he states that the path leads straight to Hades, but it seems to me to be neither straight nor single. Otherwise there would not be any need of guides, for surely one would not go astray if there were only one path.⁵⁸

⁵⁵Euripides *Alcestis* 967–70.

⁵⁶Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion*, p. 172.

⁵⁷Zuntz, *Persephone*, p. 343.

⁵⁸Plato *Phaedo* 108a.

Plato is more explicit in the *Gorgias*, where in the final pages Socrates gives a mythical account of the judgment which takes place in Hades.⁵⁹ Socrates gives his opinion that after death men go to a great meadow where there is a crossroads. Those who are deemed just in the judgment given there may take the path in Hades which leads to the Isles of the Blest, while the unjust must take the path which leads to Tartaros. Hades is not only a place of judgment but also a temporary abode for those in transit to a more permanent residence. Finally, in the *Republic*, Plato appears to make allusion to the same source as that which is behind the gold plates.⁶⁰ Socrates is speaking to Glaucon and tells him of a story in which, after the judgment of souls, the unjust had to take the path leading to the left and downward, while the just could take the path leading to the right and upward. In the gold plates, then, the avoidance of the spring on the left is clearly equivalent to the avoidance of a place of suffering, or hell.

Despite the apparent confusion in the various plates about the number of springs of water (the *spring* near the cypress is not always identified with the *Lake* of Memory, nor is the distinction always clear between the spring on the left and the one on the right), scholars generally assume that there are only two springs.⁶¹ Zuntz suggests that the spring near the tree may actually be flowing from the Lake of Memory,⁶² but the essential unity of the two springs on the path to the right is still maintained. The spring of *Lethe*, or forgetfulness, is likely the one on the left because the spring and lake on the right are associated with *Mnemosyne*, or remembrance.⁶³

Lethe, or forgetfulness, appears as a personified goddess first in Hesiod's *Theogony*, but she is found in rather bad company:

But abhorred Strife bare painful Toil and Forgetfulness and Famine and tearful Sorrows, Fightings also, Battles, Murders, Manslaughters, Quarrels, Lying Words, Disputes, Lawlessness and Ruin, all of one nature, and Oath who most troubles men upon earth when anyone willfully swears a false oath.⁶⁴

This mention of *Lethe* occurs in the context of a description of the goddesses who, as the offspring of Night, have the task of punishing sinners with appropriate penalties.⁶⁵ By the time of Plato, *Lethe* had

⁵⁹Plato *Gorgias* 523ff, esp. 524a.

⁶⁰Plato *Republic* 614ff, esp. 614c.

⁶¹Jane Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (1903; reprint ed; Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1959), p. 574; cf. below, note 63.

⁶²Zuntz, *Persephone*, p. 378.

⁶³Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religions*, p. 177f; Zuntz, *Persephone*, p. 378ff; and Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, p. 574f.

⁶⁴Hesiod *Theogony* 226–30.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 211–25.

become a river which was destructive to the unjust and which was to be avoided by the just. Plato tells the myth of Er, the Pamphylian, who dies in war and is miraculously restored to life. In this tale, obviously well-known enough to be proverbial by the fifth century, Er gives an account of the nature of the world of departed spirits, and Socrates concludes from the myth that only the souls of the just can escape the punishment of drinking from the spring of *Lethe* and forgetting everything.⁶⁶ Elsewhere, Plato speaks of the soul which has not followed in the path of the gods as one which falls to the earth burdened with a load of forgetfulness and wrongdoing.⁶⁷ Zuntz states that “death is, in essence, forgetting,” whereas to seek the drink from the spring or lake of memory is to seek life, and “they who retain memory are those who are ripe for a higher form of existence.”⁶⁸

The tree beside the spring has been consistently identified as a “Tree of Life,” although the Greek phrase, “white cypress,” is troublesome to many:

This ‘white cypress’ indeed has never ceased puzzling students; for the cypress is not white. . . . Even if the Greek adjective is taken in its wider and basic sense (‘shining’), its application to this dark tree remains unexplained.⁶⁹

Guthrie also admits his uncertainty concerning the description of the tree:

Concerning the white cypress I do not see that it helps towards an explanation to say that by white cypress the writer meant a white poplar (as Comparette in *Laminetti Orfiche*, Florence, 1910), an admittedly common, as well as extremely beautiful tree, and one, moreover, which had associations with the dead. It is a striking feature of the poem, and I hope that some day our knowledge of infernal history may be widened sufficiently to include it.⁷⁰

A. B. Cook proffers the suggestion that “on the whole it seems most likely that the tree of the tablets was a miraculous cypress.”⁷¹ As such, he continues, the white cypress is in line with such marvelous trees as the silver apple tree of the Celts or the twelve-fruited tree of the Revelation. One should also note that, according to Pseudo-Kallisthenes, when Alexander the Great consulted the two oracular

⁶⁶Plato *Republic* 621. *Lethe* is forgetting, and the Greek word for truth, *aletheia*, has been seen as “non-forgetting.” The reward for the just is to have knowledge preserved or restored, just as the punishment for the unjust is to forget what they know.

⁶⁷Plato *Phaedrus* 248c.

⁶⁸Zuntz, *Persephone*, pp. 380–81.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, p. 373.

⁷⁰Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion*, p. 182.

⁷¹A. B. Cook, *Zeus* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1940), 3:420–21.

trees of the Sun and the Moon in Prasiake, the trees were similar to cypresses, although nothing is said concerning their color.⁷²

The ritual nature of the plates has been noted above, but just what comprised the ritual actions or how they accompanied the text has not been clearly determined or agreed upon by commentators. Zuntz argues for Pythagorean mysteries, Guthrie for Orphic rites, and Harrison for Cretan adaptations (in an Orphic manner) of Egyptian funerary ceremonies. Guthrie notes that it is impossible even to tell whether the dialogue occurs between the initiate and the gods of Hades or the guide of the spirit of the deceased.⁷³ There is one matter concerning the plates upon which all do agree: they originated in or were strongly influenced by Near Eastern culture and religion.

THE NEAR EASTERN CONNECTION

One of the earliest commentators to make the connection between Orphic beliefs and Egypt was Herodotus. In a famous statement from his book on Egypt, the historian states that Egyptians did not permit woolen articles in their temples nor would they be buried in woolen garments. "In this," he continues, "they agree with the so-called Orphika or Bacchika, which are really Egyptian and Pythagorean. For in these rites also, if a man share in them, it is not lawful for him to be buried in woolen garments."⁷⁴

In the present instance of the so-called Orphic texts, virtually all modern scholars have suggested an Egyptian origin for them because of the reference in some of the gold tablets to ψυχρὸν ὕδωρ ("cold or refreshing water"). This connection is usually based on some funeral monuments bearing the following inscription: δοίη ὁ Ὄσιρις τὸ ψυχρὸν ὕδωρ ("May Osiris grant [to you] cold or refreshing water").⁷⁵ These monuments date no earlier than the Roman Empire, however, and their relevance to the gold plates has been disputed.⁷⁶ Language similar to that on the plates has also been found on a magical papyrus from Egypt: "Hail to the water white and the tree with the leaves high hanging."⁷⁷ Similarity of both the gold plates and the Egyptian sources just quoted with the early Christian term *refrigerium* denoting the "refreshment" of the dead in

⁷²Pseudo-Kallisthenes *Historia Alexandri Magni* 17. 27ff.

⁷³Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion*, p. 176f.

⁷⁴Herodotus *Hist.* 2. 81.

⁷⁵*Inscriptiones Graeciae (Ital et Sic.)* XIV, 1488, 1705, 1782.

⁷⁶Zuntz, *Persephone*, p. 370.

⁷⁷B. C. Dieterich, *Abraxos*, p. 97, cited in Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, p. 576. (Χαίρε δὲ λευκὸν ὕδωρ καὶ δένδρεον ὑψιπέτηλον "Hail to the white water and to the tree with lofty foliage.")

Paradise has also been of great interest to students of early Christian doctrines.⁷⁸

The Greek word ψυχρόν not only means “cold” but also suggests “refreshing,” and it is also related to the term ψυχή, or “soul.” Jane Harrison made the following observation regarding the ψυχρὸν ὕδωρ of the well of Osiris and the water and tree in the magical papyrus: “The well would be both cool and fresh and *life-giving*; by it the soul would revive (ἀναψύχειν), it would become ‘a living water, springing up into everlasting life.’ ”⁷⁹ The tree growing by the fountain or spring of living water is thus a Tree of Life, and “it is only the soul whose purity is vouched for which is to be allowed to drink from it.”⁸⁰

Much earlier than the funeral monuments and the magical papyrus, and therefore much more significant for similarities to the gold plates under discussion, are the Egyptian funerary texts frequently placed in graves from the time of the Old Kingdom through the Roman period. Zuntz summarizes the relevance of the *Book of the Dead* literature for the tablets:

Concerned lest their dead, at their resting-places on the edge of the desert, should lack the vital moisture, the Egyptians sought to provide it for them by including suitable spells and pictures in the *Book of the Dead*. Hence we find in it representations of the dead, on their way through the Netherworld, scooping water from a basin between trees, or catching in a bowl water poured out either by an arm which grows from a tree beside a large basin, or by a goddess inside that tree.⁸¹

Chapter 58 of the *Book of the Dead* is entitled “the Chapter of Breathing the Air and of Having Power over the Water in the Underworld.” The accompanying illustration on the Ani Papyrus shows Ani and his wife, Thuthu, drinking water with the right hand from a pool which is bordered by palm trees laden with fruit.⁸² The text presents a dialogue between the god Osiris and Ani: “Open to me! Who are you, and where are you going? I am one of you.” The next chapter has a similar heading, and the accompanying illustration shows Ani kneeling beside a pool of water next to which is growing a sycamore tree. The goddess Nut is in the tree pouring water into Ani’s hands from a vessel. The text with the illustration begins,

⁷⁸Zuntz, *Persephone*; cf. Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, p. 575, n. 2; Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion*, p. 192, n. 14; et passim.

⁷⁹Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, p. 576.

⁸⁰Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion*, p. 177.

⁸¹Zuntz, *Persephone*, p. 371.

⁸²E. A. Wallis Budge, trans., *The Egyptian Book of the Dead: The Papyrus of Ani in the British Museum* (1895; reprint ed.; New York: Dover Publications, 1967), pp. 314–15.

“Hail, sycamore tree of the goddess Nut. Grant thou to me of the water and the air which are in thee.” In chapters 107 and 109 a spell is given to enable the initiate to enter the regions of heaven. Two sycamore trees are described as being at the door of the Lord of the East, and the initiate approaches the trees and the door by being guided in a boat (obviously on a river), the barge of the god. South of the trees and the door are the lakes of a thousand geese and the great fields of the god, which Piankoff associates with a type of paradise composed of green pastures and hunting grounds.⁸³ Also in the *Book of the Dead* are spells in which the initiate is required to give specific secret or ritual names and responses to questions of identity and purpose before he is allowed to enter the realm of the god.⁸⁴

Elsewhere in Egyptian funerary literature, the water of the god Osiris is spoken of as *cold* water, just as in the examples from the Roman period cited previously. “This cold water of yours, O Osiris, this cold water of yours, O King, has gone forth to your son, has gone forth to Horus.”⁸⁵ One can also find warnings where the soul of the deceased is told to avoid the lake of the evil-doer.⁸⁶ The purpose of the warnings, instructions, and dialogues is implied in one of the Pyramid Texts: “Thou art departed that thou mayest become a spirit, that thou mayest become mighty as a god, an enthroned one like Osiris.”⁸⁷

Despite obvious similarities shared by the writings on the Grecian gold plates and the Egyptian literature, in addition to the proven contacts between the Greek and Egyptian civilizations from the critical seventh century B.C. and later, sufficient differences have been noted to show that some modification accompanied the borrowing of motifs. The only refreshment mentioned in the Grecian gold tablets is a drink of water, but the soul in Egyptian texts is refreshed “not only with water but also with fruit and frankincense.”⁸⁸ The Greek plates always refer to a cypress tree, while the Egyptian literature consistently mentions a sycamore, and Zuntz states, “There could not easily be trees more different than these two.”⁸⁹ The drinking of a “living water” by the soul parched with thirst is common to both

⁸³A. Piankoff, *The Wandering of the Soul*, Bollingen Series XL (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 6:4-8.

⁸⁴*Book of the Dead*, chap. 125, cited in Piankoff, *Wandering Soul*, pp. 8-10.

⁸⁵R. O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), Utterances 32, 33, 423, etc.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, Utterances 214 and 500. Zuntz appears to have missed such sources, for he states that the Egyptians have nothing corresponding to the two springs of some of the plates.

⁸⁷Spell 752b, cited in Piankoff, *Wandering Soul*, p. 3.

⁸⁸Zuntz, *Persephone*, p. 372.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*

sources, but, so far as is known, Egypt had neither springs of Lethe nor Mnemosyne. While chapter 25 of the *Book of the Dead* gives a formula to allow a man to possess memory in the Netherworld,⁹⁰ no mention is made of a well or drinking of water in that context. The designation of the two springs as Lethe and Mnemosyne was considered by Harrison to be a Greek development from the neutral fountains mentioned in the Egyptian literature.⁹¹ Because the Egyptians are not known to have used inscribed gold plates before the Roman period, either for the living or the dead, Zuntz suggests that this practice was also a Greek innovation upon an older tradition.⁹²

The differences in the two civilizations allow for independent development within a common tradition, or more likely, a tradition borrowed by one from the other. Zuntz summarizes his views on the relationship between the Greek gold plates and the Egyptian sources:

In both countries these texts are equally designed to accompany the dead into their graves in order to tell them what awaits them in the other world and how they are to meet it. In Egypt this had been the custom for hundreds and even thousands of years, while in Greece there is no trace of it, apart from the few Gold Leaves, whose texts witness to a set of very specific persuasions. Hence it can reasonably be agreed that the narrowly confined and recent Greek usage derives from that older civilization to which Greeks owed so much and which they often proclaimed as their teacher of "wisdom."⁹³

The burial of the texts with the dead does not preclude the sacred significance of the materials to the living, especially when one considers the ritual purposes commentators attach to them. The recitation of the text, or at least part of it, on special ritual occasions, would be necessary to prepare the living initiate for his journey into the world of departed spirits. The burial of the text with the deceased insures that he will have a familiar and faithful guide for his heavenly journey, one whose warnings and reminders will protect him and assist him in achieving his divine potential.

THE BOOK OF MORMON AND THE DREAM OF LEHI

It is apparent the accounts of Lehi's dream in the Book of Mormon have much in common with those on the Greek gold tablets and the related Egyptian literature. The Book of Mormon narrative claims Egyptian connections (1 Nephi 1:2; Mosiah 1:4; Mormon 9:32),

⁹⁰Budge, *Egyptian Book of the Dead*, p. 87f.

⁹¹Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Literature*, p. 576.

⁹²Zuntz, *Persephone*, p. 376.

⁹³*Ibid.*, pp. 375-76.

probably quite similar to the mercantilistic connections of the Greeks in Egypt.⁹⁴ The Book of Mormon begins at the close of the seventh century B.C. (1 Nephi 1:4; 5:13; 10:4; etc.), a date which coincides precisely with the seventh–sixth century origins of the religious materials on the Greek gold plates. The use, or borrowing, of typically Egyptian motifs and the practice of inscribing religious writings upon gold plates are of considerable significance to the student of the Book of Mormon, and the striking resemblances in all the materials under discussion would be remarkably coincidental if they were not connected to a common source or origin. Since the Greek gold tablets are assigned to an Egyptian origin, which agrees in time and content with the Egyptian associations of the Book of Mormon, the most feasible and plausible explanation for the internal characteristics shared by both is that seventh–sixth century B.C. Egypt provides the common meeting ground for both traditions.

In the first narration of the dream account in 1 Nephi, the one given by Lehi, the following description elements are noteworthy. Lehi's dream begins in a dark and dreary wilderness, through which he can advance safely only with the assistance of a guide (1 Nephi 8:4–7). Following his guide through the “dark and dreary waste” for a long time, Lehi reaches a large field through which flows a river (1 Nephi 8:9–13). Near the river stands a tree, laden with a sweet white fruit which refreshes the wanderer. At this point Lehi himself becomes a guide to some of his own family, who are apparently lost in the dark wilderness with nobody else to guide them (1 Nephi 8:14–16). As details of the dream come into focus, Lehi further describes a path leading to the tree (1 Nephi 8:20–22) and many other paths leading to doom and destruction (1 Nephi 8:23, 28, 32). Some of the multitude of souls wandering in the dark world are assisted in their journey by a “rod of iron” (1 Nephi 8:19, 24, 30), but many are drowned in the hitherto unidentified fountain, or river (1 Nephi 8:32). In addition to those drowned in the river, others enter into a “great and spacious building,” described as being on the opposite side of the river from the tree (1 Nephi 8:26). The building is superterrestrial and filled with people of wealth who scorn those eating from the fruit of the tree (1 Nephi 8:27f., 33). Not all who go to the tree for refreshment enjoy the experience, suggesting that some are not properly prepared to receive the fruit, and others wander off and are lost in a great mist of darkness, indicating they have not

⁹⁴Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert*, p. 36ff.

secured an adequate guide to help them achieve the goal of the tree (1 Nephi 8:23–28, 32).

In this brief account, narrated from the perspective of Lehi, the only two elements without corresponding features in the Greek plates or the Egyptian literature are the “rod of iron” and the “great and spacious building.”⁹⁵ It was noted earlier that despite similar differences between the Greek plates and Egyptian texts (Lethe and Mnemosyne, the writing upon the plates, and the white cypress tree all differ from their counterparts in Egyptian sources) scholars note that the paths, tree, springs, and dialogue with divine beings argue for an original relationship with independent development in the Greek texts. The differences in the Book of Mormon are likewise not sufficient to disprove the Egyptian connection and are in no way incompatible with the ancient world home claimed by the Book of Mormon.

The second narration of the dream, given by Lehi’s son, Nephi, displays an even greater affinity with the Greek and Egyptian sources than does Lehi’s earlier abbreviated account. In the expanded version, there is much that at first appears extraneous to the symbols of the dream, particularly the prophetic history of Jesus, the Christian tradition, and some aspects of world history as they relate to the family of Lehi. One observes that the dream symbols are very much like the elements of a ritual drama, functioning as vehicles for transmitting the history of man and for conveying redemptive knowledge to the participant. The common Near Eastern elements of the Tree of Life, springs or rivers of water, etc., which are part of the Egyptian redemption ritual for the dead, and which are adopted and adapted on the Greek plates for an Orphic or Pythagorean mystery drama, are also found in the Book of Mormon Tree of Life dream. These elements of the vision or dream assist in the prophetic and visionary portrayal of the Christian message of the redemption of humanity. This often-repeated aspect of the redemption drama in the Book of Mormon must be reserved for another study, since the dream symbols as they relate to the Ancient Near East are the focus of the present paper.

⁹⁵Nibley, *Approach to the Book of Mormon*, p. 211ff., cites evidence which would suggest that the great building may have come from the Arab world, which in turn was an imitation of earlier Babylonian architecture. The height, sometimes ten to twelve stories, is even described as making the building appear to stand in the air, high above the earth. He further notes that in Arab tradition, spaciousness is the index of elegance and comfort. There is some possibility that the rod of iron also came from the Jewish world of Lehi, especially in relation to the temple, but that must be dealt with properly within its own cultural context.

In a manner which has been recognized only recently as typically apocalyptic,⁹⁶ Nephi is transported to a high mountain where the vision given earlier to his father is opened to his view and understanding (1 Nephi 11:1). Before he is permitted to see the vision of the tree, however, Nephi is asked two questions by his angelic guide, and only satisfactory answers to these questions allow him to proceed (1 Nephi 11:2–6). The dialogue pattern of preparing Nephi for further visionary insights continues throughout the account, including a series of questions from his angelic guide: “What desireth thou?” (1 Nephi 11:10), “What beholdest thou?” (1 Nephi 13:2), “Knowest thou . . . ?” (1 Nephi 11:16, 21), and “Rememberest thou . . . ?” (Nephi 14:8).

As the vision opens, Nephi first sees the tree, which he describes as being white (1 Nephi 11:8).⁹⁷ As the vision continues, he sees all that his father had seen, but in many instances gives new details not recounted in the earlier version. The unidentified river of water in the first version of the dream is a “fountain of filthy water” in the second account and is further identified as “the depths of hell” (1 Nephi 12:16). Especially noteworthy is the mention of a second spring in the longer version, “the fountain of living waters,” which flows beside the Tree of Life (1 Nephi 11:25). The other symbols from Lehi’s vision, such as the rod of iron, the great building, and the dark mists, are repeated and explained in Nephi’s account.

The symbols under consideration in the present essay are reminiscent of those studied by Goodenough in his extensive work, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*. Goodenough argues that symbols in the ancient world could be transferred from one religion or culture to another and not lose their usefulness in a new setting.⁹⁸ He refers specifically to the Tree and Water of Life when stating that such symbols had a constant religious value, although they “could be used with gods whose mythologies were utterly dissimilar.”⁹⁹ It is the constant religious value behind the symbols which permits their use in divergent traditions. The Tree and Water of Life may signify refreshment and life-giving power in one instance and the bestowal of memory (the essence of life) in another. The river of filthy water can be

⁹⁶The author has given a brief treatment of this theme elsewhere (for example, “Manichaeism, Mormonism, and Apocalypticism,” *Sperry Lecture Series*, Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1973, pp. 18–25), and the volume of recent literature on the subject attests to its new-found importance in the study of ancient religious history and literature.

⁹⁷In the earlier account only the fruit was mentioned as white (1 Nephi 8:11), perhaps because of the emphasis on partaking of the fruit. The tree receives greater emphasis in Nephi’s experience.

⁹⁸E. R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, 13 vols. (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1954), especially vol. 4.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 7:116.

hell, Forgetfulness, or the water of the evil-doer in different mythologies, but the *value* of the symbols remains constant.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this type of literature, the need is expressed for a personal or a textual guide to aid the traveler and initiate as he journeys along the divine path. The mists of darkness in the dream of the Tree of Life prevent many from seeing their way or from finding such a guide, and they are thus prevented from traveling the *one* path which will lead to the tree. The purpose of burying plates with the sacred and necessary message for the heavenly traveler is to ensure that he has the means and assistance to traverse the dark path successfully despite any threatening and destructive obstacles he may encounter. Just as the Egyptian and Greek texts—against which the Book of Mormon can be tested for historical compatibility—claim to have been written as guides for adherents of their respective traditions, so also the Book of Mormon states that it is a guide for those who wish to be redeemed by Christ and find the path to the Tree of Life (1 Nephi 13:33–37; 14:18–20). There can be no question but that the Book of Mormon has a demonstrable compatibility with the Ancient Near Eastern origin which it claims. Its message and challenge give it significance in a modern setting, and they cannot be ignored nor taken lightly.

Pre-Visions of the Restoration: The Poetry of Henry Vaughan

Michael R. Collings

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have become increasingly aware that the restoration of the gospel did not occur in a vacuum inhabited only by Joseph Smith. Numerous individuals were involved, both as forerunners and as disseminators of newly restored or revealed principles. And not all of those involved were members of the Church. Many enlightened theologians, reformers, philosophers, and poets participated in the restoration which culminated in the reestablishment of the church of Jesus Christ in 1830.

A literary contribution that is well known to members of the Church is the following stanza from William Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood." It is a beautiful evocation of the doctrine of premortal existence.

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar;
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home.¹

[58-65]

Another example is Milton's grand defense of man's free agency in *Paradise Lost* as well as his other (then heretical) views, though largely unknown and unrealized until after the restoration of the Church.²

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¹Jack Stillinger, ed., *William Wordsworth, Selected Poems and Prefaces* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), p. 187. All references are to lines from this edition; italics in all quoted material are in original.

²For a thorough discussion of Milton's claims to inspiration, from a Latter-day Saint viewpoint, see Marilyn Arnold, "John Milton: An Inspired Man," *The New Era* 6 (January 1976): 42-47. Milton's concern for the absolute free agency of man is developed in Michael Collings, "The Boundaries of Choice: Moral Freedom in Milton's Poetic University" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Riverside, 1977).

It is not necessary, however, to rely exclusively on the “great minds,” the strongest voices, to find elements in strong parallel with LDS doctrine. Other poets, often less well known, less widely accepted critically, were equally convinced of such doctrinal points as a preexistence and of an apostasy and the need for a restoration. One of the most fascinating is the “minor” poet Henry Vaughan.

Vaughan (ca. 1621–95), a contemporary of Milton, was a private person whose poetry attracted little notice in his own time or in the centuries following his death. A recent editor of Vaughan’s poetry notes that the “critical attention directed to the poetry of Henry Vaughan over the past twenty-five years far exceeds that of the preceding three hundred.”³ This is not because Vaughan was unworthy of attention, but rather because of his historical context. A royalist during the English Civil War (the losing side), he abandoned the larger circle of English literature and letters in 1642, leaving London to return to Wales. At a time when the English temperament enjoyed the wit and unpredictable brilliance of men like Donne and Jonson, Vaughan was too conventional, too meditative, withdrawing from the world into “an inner realm of peace and light and unity.”⁴

However, the lack of critical attention in his own time does not lessen his poetic excellence. Vaughan, says literary critic French Fogle, “now seems to be firmly established as one of the finest of the pure lyric voices of the seventeenth century.”⁵ Neither does the lack of critical acclaim obscure the fact that Vaughan’s attitudes toward man and religion closely resemble Joseph Smith’s teachings more than a century and a half later. This is not, of course, to argue that Vaughan had any direct influence on Joseph Smith’s thinking, an influence highly unlikely in light of Vaughan’s obscurity—he is rarely even mentioned in English criticism until 1848 when his poetry was reedited. It is, however, to suggest that Vaughan’s voice was among the many voices alluded to by Elder Mark E. Petersen in *The Great Prologue* as contributing to the creation of an atmosphere conducive to the Restoration in the early nineteenth century. Elder Petersen notes that the forerunners of the Restoration had been working several hundred years before the birth of Joseph Smith, subtly altering political, social, philosophical, and theological attitudes, and deepening the sense of individual worth and liberty essential for any attempt at restoration. Vaughan contributed to that movement by

³French Fogle, ed., *The Complete Poetry of Henry Vaughan* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1965), p. xi.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. xii.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. xi.

expressing ideas which, however narrow their audience, closely paralleled those later developed more fully and authoritatively by the early leaders of the Church. His poetry helped in at least some degree to create an atmosphere for men to accept Joseph Smith's proclamation of a general apostasy and need for a restoration.

For me, there is no better introduction to Vaughan's mystical vision or his concern with the state of man and of the visible church than in his most famous poem "The World,"⁶ a poem I first encountered in a freshman literature course. We had dutifully plodded through the high points of English poetry from Chaucer to Donne and Milton, pragmatically memorizing authors and titles for an objective test; we memorized an occasional line or two from each poet for the same end. Many of the poems were interesting; some even invited a second or third reading. But "The World" echoed in me, both as a young man enlarging his awareness of other, greater minds and as an LDS student who too often felt estranged from the interests and purposes of much of the literature. "The World" belonged to me. Its opening lines captured the essence of immortality, as we understand the word in the Church, more than any other poem I had read:

I saw Eternity the other night
Like a great *Ring* of pure and endless light,
All calm as it was bright.

[1-2]

At the time, though I was unaware of Joseph Smith's ring metaphor for eternity,⁷ Vaughan's lines struck me forcefully. There was something oddly, stirringly familiar in the imagery: the Ring, the "pure and endless light," the unearthly, ethereal calmness.

The rest of the poem descends rapidly from the heights evoked in those opening lines, both spatially and spiritually, to define the world. The realms of light are displaced by darkness:

And round beneath it, Time in hours, days, years
Driv'n by the spheres,
Like a vast shadow mov'd, in which the world
And all her train were hurl'd.

[4-7]

In the darkened world, Vaughan defines the mortal state of the "doting lover," the "darksome States-man," the "fearful miser,"

⁶Citations are from Fogle's edition of Vaughan's poetry.

⁷Joseph Fielding Smith, ed. and comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1973), p. 181.

those souls whose interests center too much on the things of this world and who are caught in the corruption and apostasy of the historical churches:

Yet dig'd the Mole, and lest his ways be found
Workt underground,
Where he did Clutch his prey, but one did see
That policie,
Churches and altars fed him, Perjuries
Were gnats and flies,
It rain'd about him bloud and tears, but he
Drank them as free.

[23–30]

Despite temptations that strive to pinion man's interests—and his spirit—to the earth,

Yet some, who all this while did weep and sing,
And sing, and weep, soar'd up into the *Ring*,
But most would use no wing.

[46–48]

A few can see beyond mortal barriers, but most refuse even to look.

Vaughan's awareness of an apostasy and his vision of the reality of eternity unite to create an intensely moving poem, urging men to listen to their inner convictions rather than to the empty preachings of others. The individual willing to trust the workings of the spirit within him returns to that visionary eternity of the opening lines:

O fools (said I,) thus to prefer dark night
Before true light,
To live in grots, and caves, and hate the day
Because it shews the way,
The way which from this dead and dark abode
Leads up to God,
A way where you might tread the Sun, and be
More bright than he.
But as I did their madnes so discusse,
One whisper'd thus,
*This Ring the Bride-groome did for none provide
But for his bride.*

[49–60]

Vaughan's references to an apostasy become even more overt in other poems. In "Religion" he defines the loss of authority in the historical churches by concentrating on the lack of miracles among his contemporaries. After several initial stanzas which refer to biblical revelations—Jacob's dream, Elias and the ravens—he continues:

In *Abr'ham's* Tent the winged guests
 (O how familiar then was heaven!)
 Eate, drinke, discourse, sit downe, and rest
 Untill the Coole, and shady *Even*;

Nay thou thy selfe, my God, in *fire*,
Whirle-winds, and *Clouds*, and that *soft voice*
 Speak'st there so much, that I admire⁸
 We have no Conf'rence in these daies.

[13-20]

Since God's voice is conspicuously absent in Vaughan's world, the remainder of "Religion" is devoted to defining the need for continual revelation, which revelation had ceased not because God no longer wished to commune with man but because man had divorced himself from God:

But in her [religion's] long, and hidden Course
 Passing through the Earths darke veines,
 Growes still from better unto worse, . . .

So poison'd, breaks forth in some Clime,
 And at first sight doth many please,
 But drunk, is puddle, or meere slime
 And 'stead of Phisick, a disease;

Just such a tainted sink we have
 Like that *Samaritans* dead *Well*,
 Nor must we for the Kernell crave
 Because most voices like the *shell*.

Heale then these waters, Lord; or bring thy flock,
 Since these are troubled, to the springing rock,
 Looke downe great Master of the feast; O shine,
 And turn once more our *Water* into *Wine*!

[33-35, 41-52]

The churches of his day,⁹ Vaughan felt, had transformed wine into poison, bringing not salvation but eternal sickness and, ultimately,

⁸*Admire* is here used in its older sense of "to be amazed" rather than in the modern sense of "to look at approvingly."

⁹"The Brittish Church" clearly restates the theme of apostasy:

Ah! he is fled!
 And while these here their *mists*, and *shadows* hatch,
 My glorious head
 Doth on those hills of *Mirrhe*, and *Incense* watch.
 Haste, haste my dear
 The souldiers here
 Cast in their lots again,
 The seamlesse coat [the church]
 The Jews touch'd not,
 These dare divide, and stain.

[1-10]

eternal death.¹⁰ Vaughan, like Joseph Smith, realized the confusion of churches around him; unlike Joseph Smith, he did not receive the revelations he apparently desired. Instead, he perceived only the sickness and watched the symptoms grow and spread while he could only hope and pray.

Vaughan does not concentrate exclusively on the sorrows and sins occasioned by man's loss of Christ's true church. His finest poems are, in contrast, uplifting and constructive. They concentrate not so much on man's loss through apostasy as on man's essential nature, on the innocence man once knew—the state he no longer clearly perceives but might once again attain.

Critics frequently have difficulty explaining precisely what Vaughan means when he refers to a preexistence. L. C. Martin, perhaps the best twentieth-century editor of Vaughan's poetry, says in relation to Vaughan's use of the preexistence metaphor that it was very easy for Vaughan "to proceed from thoughts of immortality to thoughts of pre-existence, to hold acquaintance with a transcendent world."¹¹ Of the poems which define Vaughan's conception of a preexistence, the most direct is "The Retreate":

Happy those early dayes! when I
Shin'd in my Angell-infancy.
Before I understood this place
Appointed for my second race,
Or taught my soul to fancy ought
But a white, Celestiall thought,
When yet I had not walkt above
A mile, or two, from my first love,
And looking back (at that short space,)
Could see a glimpse of his bright-face;
When on some *gilded Cloud*, or *flowre*
My gazing soul would dwell an houre,
And in those weaker glories spy
Some shadows of eternity;
Before I taught my tongue to wound
My Conscience with a sinfull sound,
Or had the black art to dispence
A sev'rall sin to every sence,
But felt through all this fleshly dresse
Bright *shootes* of everlastingnesse.
O how I long to travell back
And tread again that ancient track!

¹⁰Vaughan's attitude toward the British church might usefully be compared with Milton's in *Lycidas* and, much later, with Swift's in *A Tale of a Tub*.

¹¹L. C. Martin, ed., *Henry Vaughan Poetry and Selected Prose* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. xvii.

That I might once more reach that plaine,
 Where first I left my glorious traine,
 From whence th'Inlighted spirit sees
 That shady City of Palme trees;
 But (ah!) my soul with too much stay
 Is drunk, and staggers in the way.
 Some men a forward motion love,
 But I by backward steps would move,
 And when this dust falls to the urn
 In that state I came return.

[1-32]

In addition to references closely resembling LDS doctrines—this life as a “second estate” (“second race”) and the implicit sense the child is somehow closer to God—Vaughan’s poem is strongly reminiscent of Wordsworth’s vision of man’s progressing from a preexistence through mortality and into eternity. Like Wordsworth, Vaughan intuitively rather than perceives a preexistence, thus suggesting that only the child, untainted by this earth, can fully respond to such intuition. For Vaughan, childhood is a time of closeness to God—in every earth image the child may see beyond shadows to the solid reality of eternity. But as the child grows and learns (unfortunately through the mediation of false teachers and flawed guides), he loses this sense of otherness and alienates himself from the heaven he *knows* exists but cannot see.

This loss of awareness is coupled in another of Vaughan’s poems with the Apostasy itself. Because man is separated from God, even through the teachings of the church (or, perhaps, *because* of the teachings of the church), he quickly loses his innate ability to see spiritual things through a child’s eyes. In “Corruption,” Vaughan consciously connects these two losses. Speaking initially of Eden, he says:

Sure, It was so. Man in those early days
 Was not all stone, and Earth,
 He shin’d a little, and by those weak Rays
 Had some glimpse of his birth.
 He saw Heaven o’r his head, and knew from whence
 He came (condemned,) hither,
 And, as first Love draws strongest, so from hence
 His mind sure progress’d thither.

[1-8]

Unfortunately, the Fall dissipates this early link with the heavens: “He sigh’d for *Eden*, and would often say / *Ah! what bright days were those?*” [19-20]. But, the poem adds, even then man is not

entirely cut off from heavenly influence. Thrust out of the Garden, man in his infancy could at least perceive an occasional evidence for the eternal in the scenes of daily life:

Nor was Heav'n cold unto him; for each day
The vally, or the Mountain
Afforded visits, and still *Paradise* lay
In some green shade, or fountain.
Angels lay *Leiger*¹² here; Each Bush, and Cel,
Each Oke, and high-way knew them,
Walk but the fields, or sit down at some wel,
And he was sure to view them.

[21–28]

By Vaughan's time, however, the process of loss has progressed until there is little light, little hope, "and man is sunk below / The Center, and his shrowd" [35–36]. Much of the bitterness and despair so evident in the poems relating to the Apostasy is here linked with loss of that innocent vision of preexistence. Yet Vaughan does not remain in despair. Human life might be dark, sunk from its destined heights, divorced from heaven and heaven's light (significantly, however, through man's own choices), but man will not remain in darkness. In a final burst of affirmation, Vaughan looks forward to a renewal of that intimate intercourse between man and God which characterized human existence in Eden. Eventually—and soon—he proclaims the heavens will open again and darkness will vanish:

All's in deep sleep, and night; Thick darknes lyes
And hatcheth o'r thy people;
But hark! what trumpets that? what Angel cries
Arise! Thrust in thy sickle.

[37–40]

It seems appropriate to conclude an investigation into Vaughan's vision of man with a short passage from the poem titled simply "Man." After briefly considering the "steadfastness and state" of many of earth's creatures—the bird in its flight, the bee in its unending activity—Vaughan continues:

I would (said I) my God would give
The staidness of these things to man! for these
To his divine appointments ever cleave,
And no new business breaks their peace.

[8–11]

¹²*Leiger*: resident as ambassador.

In the natural world—where everything develops and acts according to the measure of its creation—Vaughan sees an analogy for the ideal relationship between man and God. Yet man and his interests are conspicuous more for their restlessness and irregularity than for their steadfastness. In all he does, man incessantly works against his better nature rather than with it. The reason is quite simple: Man recognizes, at some level below consciousness, that he is part of a larger process beyond mortality:

He knows he hath a home, but scarce knows where,
He says it is so far
That he hath quite forgot how to go there.

[19–21]

It is an essential part of man's purpose to divine the pathway he must follow to return to that home:

He knocks at all doors, strays and roams,
Nay hath not so much wit as some stones have
Which in the darkest nights point to their homes,
By some hid sense their Maker gave;
Man is the shuttle, to whose winding quest
And passage through these looms
God order'd motion, but ordain'd no rest.

[22–28]

In Vaughan's poetry is an insistence that man inherently belongs to the sphere of God but, largely through his own volition, is cut off from it. The Fall initiated man's sense of loneliness but was at least ameliorated by Adam's unconscious awareness of eternity around him, of angels resident in every "Bush and Cel." Through the ages, however, even that intuitive awareness has been stifled and deadened until finally only the child retains any sense at all of being the literal offspring of God, or of having come from God to this earth, or of eventually returning to God. The struggle to maintain spiritual intuition is compounded because the single entity—the church—whose sole purpose is to guide man toward the pathway the child alone remembers has become corrupted and "lost." Man, for Vaughan, is thus alone. He has no true guide through the darkness surrounding him, only hesitant and partial memories of his own "intimations of immortality from recollections of early childhood."

Yet Vaughan is a poet of assurance and hope. A time will come when heaven will open itself again to man or, rather, when man will open himself fully to heaven. Vaughan himself did not see that time, but it did come. Through the restoration of the gospel, it is

now possible for all to see clearly those dim, shadowy truths that Vaughan struggled to express, that Milton worked into nearly every line of *Paradise Lost*, that Wordsworth molded to his purpose in the Immortality Ode. Poets often use the metaphor of divine inspiration to support their individual visions of man and man's destiny, but just as often that metaphor ultimately reveals more truth than the poets themselves ever realize.

Early Mormon Exploration and Missionary Activities in Mexico

F. LaMond Tullis

In 1875, a few days before the first missionaries to Mexico were to depart, Brigham Young changed his mind: rather than have them travel to California where they would take a steamer down the coast and then go by foot or horseback inland to Mexico City, Brigham asked if they would mind making the trip by horseback, going neither to California nor Mexico City, but through Arizona to the northern Mexican state of Sonora—a round trip of 3,000 miles! He instructed them to look along the way for places to settle and to determine whether the Lamanites were ready to receive the gospel.

But Brigham Young had other things in mind: the Saints might need another place of refuge, and advanced exploration was a logical course to pursue, should that need ever arise. The most promising site for such a refuge lay to the south, perhaps Mexico. Orson Pratt seemed to be aware of this possibility when he set apart the missionaries for their new labors: “I wish you to look out for places,” he told them, “where our brethren could go and be safe from harm in the event that persecution should make it necessary for them to get out of the way for a season.”¹

Daniel W. Jones led the group, which included his teenage son, Wiley, Anthony W. Ivins, James Z. Stewart, and Helaman Pratt.² For ten months, the missionaries traveled on foot and on horseback, exploring the area and preaching the gospel to the Lamanites and all others along the way who would listen. The missionaries were received both with kindness and hostility. Through it all they made copious notes for Brigham Young on possible colonization sites. The

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¹“Mexican Mission,” pp. 1–2 [report by James Z. Stewart], Manuscript History of the Mexican Mission, Library–Archives of the Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah; hereafter cited as Church Archives.

²Robert H. Smith and Ammon M. Tenney associated themselves with the affair until the travelers reached El Paso del Norte (Ciudad Juárez), where their difficulties with Daniel W. Jones occasioned their leaving the group and returning home.

most promising, they concluded, was the area around Casas Grandes in the Mexican state of Chihuahua.

Brigham was sufficiently pleased with the report from Elder Jones and his companions that within a month of their return, he called Jones to go back to the Casas Grandes region of Mexico with a colonizing company to found a settlement. When asked who should be called to accompany him, Daniel W. Jones said, "Give me men with large families and small means, so that when we get there they will be too poor to come back, and we will have to stay."³ When the arrangements were completed, Brigham's instructions were to go to the "Southern Country" and settle "where we felt impressed to stop."⁴ The group decided to make their first settlement in the Salt River Valley of southern Arizona, an area Jones had explored the year before as he and his missionary companions were en route to Mexico. Although they stopped short of Mexico, the new colonists clearly intended to push on later.

Along the Salt River, at a place the settlers designated Camp Utah, they built their cabins and attempted to set up a mission among the Maricopa Indians. In due time, some of the Indians, heeding Jones's missionary overtures, asked to live among the colonists in their settlements. However, the thought of cross-cultural contact was too shocking for some of the white families, Book of Mormon prophecies notwithstanding. Apparently only Jones could tolerate close proximity to the Indians. The colony split up over the issue before it could generate enough strength to push on into Mexico. Indeed, one faction actually petitioned the territorial authorities to drive the Indians out of the area. "It was not long until it became manifest," Jones said, "that I would have to either give up the Indians or lose my standing with the white brethren. I chose the natives."⁵

Despite the failures and inherent difficulties in the southern expansion, Brigham continued to call other colonists to settle in Arizona.⁶ Yet simultaneously with the southern colonizing, he continued to send missionaries/explorers into Mexico. For although he had been pleased with Jones's 1876 report, Brigham Young apparently still felt a need for more extensive information, especially about Sonora. Because of the Yaqui wars, the first missionaries to Mexico

³Daniel W. Jones, *Forty Years among the Indians: A True Yet Thrilling Narrative of the Author's Experience among the Natives* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1890), p. 304.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 308.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 314.

⁶Blaine C. Hardy, "The Mormon Colonies of Northern Mexico: A History, 1885-1912" (Ph.D. diss., Wayne State University, Detroit, 1963), pp. 32-34.



THE FIRST EXPEDITION INTO MEXICO

Wiley C. Jones
Heleman Pratt

D. W. Jones

A. W. Ivins
Jas. Z. Stewart



THE SECOND PARTY SENT TO MEXICO

1—Jas. Z. Stewart 2—Meliton G. Trejo
3—George Terry 4—Isaac J. Stewart 5—Heleman Pratt

Reprinted from James H. McClintock, *Mormon Settlement in Arizona* (Phoenix: Manufacturing Stationers, 1921), facing p. 205.

had not been able to enter Sonora, so they had moved eastward to the Mexican state of Chihuahua. Yet only in the western Chihuahua mountains bordering the state of Sonora had the missionaries been received with open arms by the Indians who predominated in the area. But because there were also large numbers of Indians in most of Sonora, another excursion into Mexico would have to be made before Brigham could settle his mind about the country and the nature of Indians within it. In addition, Sonora had been on Brigham's mind for some time as a possible colonizing site from which missionary labors among the Indians could go forth. Lingerings reports filtering down from members of the Mormon battalion who had been in Sonora during the 1846–48 Mexican–American War⁷ apparently continued to intrigue him. And, in 1872, when Colonel Thomas L. Kane again visited Utah, he and Brigham discussed Sonora once more as an area for missionary and colonization activity,⁸ with later correspondence emphasizing colonization.⁹

For several years President Young's "southern thrust" had given rise to speculation in the local and eastern press as to Mormon designs on Mexico. Indeed, virtually on the heels of Jones's 1874 call to Mexico, rumors began flying.¹⁰ The gentiles in Utah Territory continued to badger the Saints on the matter. On one occasion, in a vibrant sermon at a general conference of the Church held in St. George, Utah, on 6 April 1877, an exasperated Brigham responded:

It has been the cry of late, through the columns of the newspapers, that the "Mormons" are going to Mexico! That is quite right, we calculate to go there. Are we going back to Jackson County? Yes. When? As soon as the way opens up. . . . We intend to hold our own here and also penetrate the north and the south, the east and the west . . . and to raise the ensign of truth. This is the work of God, who saw it in its incipency, as a stone cut out of the mountains without hands, but which rolled and gathered strength and magnitude until it filled the whole earth. We will continue to grow, to increase and spread abroad, and the powers of earth and hell combined cannot hinder it.¹¹

The emphasis on missionary and colonizing activity in the South continued. Jones's colonization company had just left. Others would follow, as would additional companies of missionaries/explorers.

⁷Sgt. Daniel Tyler, *A Concise History of the Mormon Battalion in the Mexican War, 1846–48* (1881; reprint ed., Glorieta, N.Mex.: The Rio Grande Press, 1964).

⁸Gordon Irving, "'An Opening Wedge': LDS Proselyting in Mexico 1870–1890," Andrew Jenson Lecture (4 June 1976), p. 3.

⁹Irving, "Questions Needing Further Attention," addendum to above, point no. 2.

¹⁰See, for example, "Mexico: Reported Intentions of Mormons to Migrate to Mexico," *New York Times*, 22 December 1874, p. 1, col. 5; "A Threat from Mormondom," *New York Times*, 22 June 1875, p. 6, col. 4.

¹¹Discourse by Brigham Young, 6 April 1877, *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1855–1886), 18:355–56.

Indeed, by September 1876, Brigham had another group of missionaries ready for the exploration of Mexico.¹² The new party, which included two members of the original missionaries to Chihuahua, waited until after the October general conference of the Church to begin the long journey. From the original Chihuahua missionaries were James Z. Stewart and his companion Helaman Pratt. Accompanying them were Stewart's brother Isaac, George Terry, Louis Garff, and Melitón G. Trejo (Trejo having translated selected portions of the Book of Mormon for the first missionaries to take to Mexico in 1876). After reaching Tucson, they split into two groups, Elders Pratt and Trejo proceeding south to Hermosillo, the capital of Sonora, where they proselyted for a time and baptized the first five members of the Church in Mexico. Apparently Brigham was now interested in proselyting as well as making friendly contacts and getting information. Elders Pratt and Trejo thereafter returned to their homes.

For their part, the Stewart brothers and Elders Terry and Garff entered the mountains of Sonora and attempted to proselyte the Yaqui Indians. Success among the clannish Yaquis could perhaps open the door to other Lamanites in Sonora. Proud, stalwart, and indomitable in defense of their families and territory, the Yaquis had never been conquered by the Spaniards, the French, or the Mexicans. They had permanent homes, lived in cities, and worked a rich placer gold mine, the product of which they traded for guns at Douglas, Arizona, to fight the Mexicans.¹³ The missionary party entered Sonora with full knowledge that Yaqui guns were again engaged in war. But the missionaries' commitment to spreading the gospel among the Indians overcame their anxieties of the potential dangers. Surely, they reasoned, the Lord would extend his protecting hand.

The Yaquis detained and bound the missionaries and were about to kill them when their chief intervened. He told the elders he would spare their lives but they should leave Yaqui territory at once and not return. From the Yaqui perspective all the aliens had ever done for more than a century was despoil their women, kill and enslave their men, and leave their children homeless and parentless, while all the time robbing Yaquis everywhere of their property. No amount of talk about Book of Mormon prophecies or the redemption of the Lamanites could break through such barriers.

The missionaries were fortunate to exit Yaqui country alive. Yet the experience demonstrates the Church's enormous commitment to

¹²*Deseret Weekly*, 13 September 1876, p. 521.

¹³Personal interview with W. Ernest Young, 22 February 1977, Provo, Utah.

take the gospel to the Indians, a commitment which constituted one of the principal reasons for the southern expansion.

With immediate dangers indelibly in mind, James Z. Stewart and his company left Yaqui country and quickly returned to the United States, moving along the border from the Tucson area to El Paso del Norte, where Stewart had been the year before with Jones.

When they got to El Paso they contacted a Mr. J. W. Campbell, who was a miller and owned a store at San Elizario, which is down the Rio Grande from El Paso a little ways. They had apparently met him the year before. Campbell was interested both in Mormonism and in colonization in Mexico. He proposed at this point, 1877, to buy a large tract of land in the eastern part of the state of Coahuila, somewhere near the Texas border. So Stewart wrote to Brigham Young making this proposition to him, but Brigham wrote back that he would prefer a site somewhat closer to the already established settlements in Arizona. Brigham died shortly thereafter, Stewart and company returned to Utah, and the matter was dropped, leaving the initiative for Mexican colonization with the Jones settlement back in Arizona.¹⁴

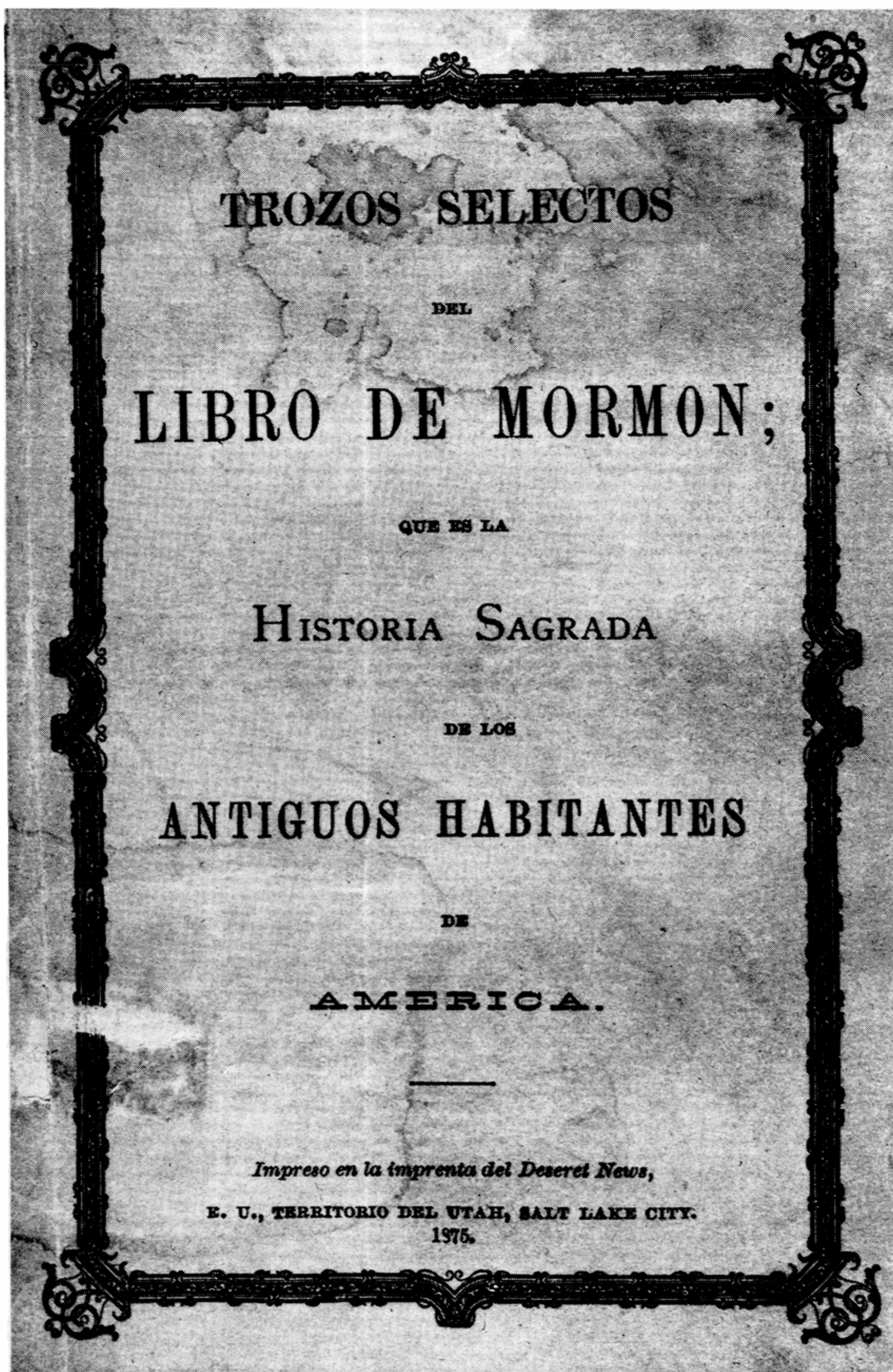
THE 1879 EXPEDITION TO MEXICO CITY

While all these "thrusts" into northern Mexico were occurring, news of the restored gospel was creating commentary in Mexico City. Two of the Book of Mormon pamphlets the Jones party had mailed in 1876 when they were in Chihuahua fell into the hands of influential people in Mexico City who were sufficiently provoked to respond. One was the Master of Letters of nineteenth-century Mexico, Ignacio Manuel Altamirano. An Indian who had learned Spanish at age sixteen and thereafter mastered it, he was highly receptive not only to the rhetoric of the Liberals regarding the place of the Indian in Mexico's future but was also highly impressed with the Mormons' interpretation of the Indians' place in Mexico's past. Mormon eschatology regarding the future of the Indian did not go unnoticed either. Altamirano wrote a letter to Salt Lake City thanking the authorities for the book and indicating his desire to know more about the Mormon message.¹⁵

Later, whether following up Altamirano's letter or operating independently, Dr. Plotino Rhodakanaty (considered by some Mexicans to be a father of their country's socialist ideas and its agrarian and syndicalist movements as well as the generator of ideas on freedom and liberty that were direct intellectual precursors to the Mexican revolution of 1910) also began a correspondence with Mormons.

¹⁴Irving, " 'An Opening Wedge,' " p. 8.

¹⁵Personal interview with Agricol Lozano Herrera, 31 May 1975, Mexico City.



Courtesy of LDS Church Historical Department

Title page of selections from the Book of Mormon, translated by Melitón Trejo, published in 1875. It was this pamphlet that attracted Dr. Rhodakanaty to the Church.

Rhodakanaty, too, had received one of the Book of Mormon pamphlets. Somehow he learned of Melitón Trejo, who at the time was living in Tres Alamos in southeastern Arizona with some of the dissident settlers from Camp Utah who had moved on when they could not accept Jones's decisions on how and where to include the Indians in their original Salt River Valley settlement. Early in 1878, while at Tres Alamos, Melitón Trejo received letters from Rhodakanaty from Mexico City¹⁶ saying Rhodakanaty wanted to learn more about the Church. For a time he engaged Trejo in a series of letters over the matter. Finally, Trejo wrote to President John Taylor, who had succeeded to the Presidency of the Church after Brigham Young's death in 1877, and included some of Rhodakanaty's letters written in Spanish¹⁷

John Taylor corresponded with Rhodakanaty and as early as autumn of 1878 sent him several publications.¹⁸ Soon the authorities in Salt Lake became aware that their Mexican correspondent had gained the interest of a number of his fellow citizens regarding Mormonism. He said that between fifteen and twenty had come to believe the truths of the gospel. Rhodakanaty first requested, then virtually demanded, that he and his friends be included in the Kingdom. "We've found the gospel," he said, "and we want you to give us the Aaronic priesthood so we can begin proselyting in Mexico."¹⁹ (See the letter to President John Taylor and other Church leaders from Rhodakanaty, 15 December 1878, on pp. 307-10.) A return letter from Salt Lake City informed him that such could occur only if missionaries were sent to Mexico City. Thereafter, in 1879, Rhodakanaty sent a lengthy series of letters asking for missionaries and promising a great response when they were sent.

Sending missionaries to Mexico City—an idea Brigham Young had first entertained when he called the original missionaries to Mexico—now seemed a proper response to the events of the time. Thinking highly of James Z. Stewart, who by then was a veteran in the Mexican connection and who had learned Spanish well, President Taylor called him to head south and asked Melitón Trejo to accompany him.

Whether Trejo was pleased with this new call we do not know, but his long delay in getting from southern Arizona to Salt Lake City

¹⁶This information, which I have not come across elsewhere, is reported by Irving, " 'An Opening Wedge,' " p. 10.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Andrew Jenson, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson History Co., 1901-36), 1:131.

¹⁹Irving, " 'An Opening Wedge,' " p. 10.

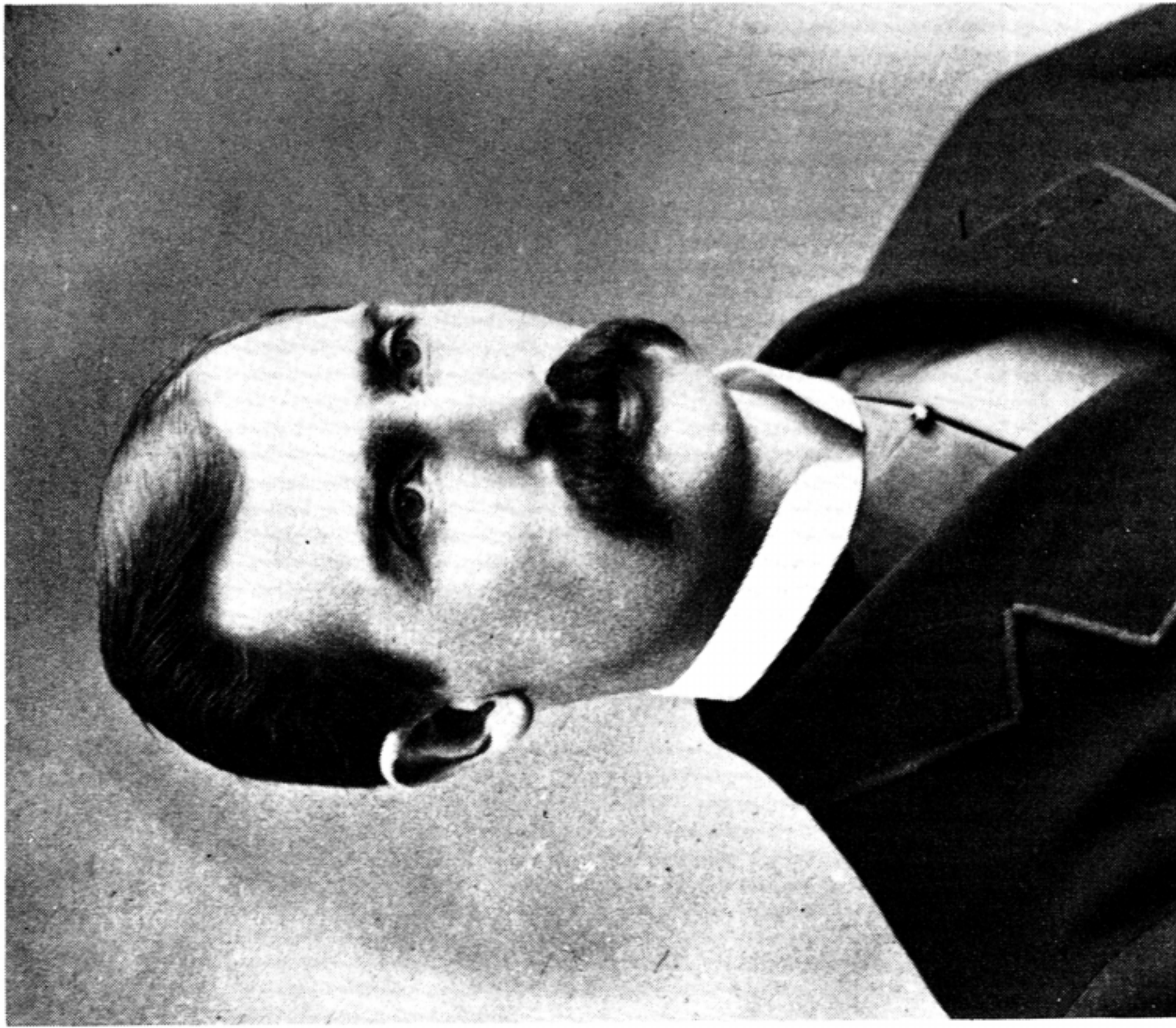
and President Taylor's withdrawing from the scene at the time to go underground to avoid the federal marshals gave the governing Quorum of Twelve Apostles ample opportunity to rethink the matter of a new mission to Mexico. Such an important mission as this, they concluded, given the dramatic interest demonstrated in Mexico City, needed higher authority than either Stewart or Trejo held. Indeed, perhaps now the Church was on the brink of making a major breakthrough in Mexico.

Accordingly, the Quorum decided to send newly called Apostle Moses Thatcher to preside over this proselyting venture. In company with James Z. Stewart, who joined him at Chicago, and Melitón Trejo, who joined him at New Orleans, Elder Thatcher took a steamer, crossed the Gulf of Mexico, and reached Vera Cruz on 14 November 1879. Two days later they arrived in Mexico City and, being complete strangers, lodged in the principal hotel, the Iturbide. Thereafter, not only would the missionaries meet with Rhodakanaty, baptize numerous Mexicans, and begin a branch of the Church in Mexico City, but they would also make important contacts with Mexican officials. In the troublesome years ahead, several of these would help protect the Saints in Mexico.

It took the missionaries only four days to become convinced Rhodakanaty and one of his friends should be baptized. Accordingly, on 20 November 1879 Elder Moses Thatcher baptized and confirmed Plotino C. Rhodakanaty and Silviano Arteaga members of the Church. Three days later Elder Trejo baptized six others, and the elders confirmed them members of the Church. Four local brethren were given the priesthood, three being made elders. A branch of the Church was organized and Rhodakanaty was called to preside over it, with Silviano Arteaga and José Ybarola as his counselors.

At the meeting in which these ordinances were performed, Elder Thatcher earnestly invoked blessings upon Porfirio Díaz (who had taken over the presidency of Mexico as the era of *La Reforma* came to a close in 1876), upon all the legislative, judicial, and administrative personnel of the government, and upon all the inhabitants of the land that the gospel might flourish among the honest in heart throughout Mexico, Central America, and South America.

The missionaries intensified their efforts in Mexico City. By the end of 1879 they had baptized sixteen persons. Elders Trejo and Stewart made further translations of Mormon literature. Then, during January of 1880, they completed the Spanish translation of Parley P. Pratt's *A Voice of Warning* and readied it for the printer. They also wrote numerous articles for the local newspapers.



Courtesy of LDS Church Historical Department

Moses Thatcher



Reprinted from the Improvement Era

Melitón Trejo

The eastern press in the United States continued its interest in the southern movements of the Mormons, speculating about the Church's ultimate intentions in Mexico. Thus the New York City *Sun* published an article about this mission to Mexico. Numerous papers in Mexico City excerpted portions from that article and made comments regarding it, most of them quite favorable. But the newspaper *Two Republics*, under the headlines "Yankee Diplomacy," "Filibusterism," and "The Spread of Mormonism," vigorously attacked the Mormon people in general and specifically the new implant in Mexico City. Through *El Tribuna*, Elder Thatcher attempted to refute the slanderous accusations made in the *Two Republics*.

The exchange through the newspapers created some interest among upper-class Mexicans and foreigners residing in Mexico City as to the mission's intent and opened doors for further interviews between Moses Thatcher and higher Mexican authorities. As a direct consequence, interviews were secured with Foreign Minister Zarate, Minister of Public Works and Colonization Fernández Leal, and Minister of War Carlos Pacheco. They all had been either casually or intimately acquainted with some aspect of Mormonism and cordially encouraged Elder Thatcher to bring his people to Mexico to settle. Leal, who had been a visitor to Utah and greatly admired the ingenuity of the Mormons and their prosperous communities, said Mexico would gladly welcome those choosing to make homes in the Republic.²⁰

Because of the many interviews resulting principally from newspaper exchanges, Elder Thatcher and his companions were introduced to Emelio Biebuyck, an influential Belgian in Mexico who had been in Utah Territory three times. Personally acquainted with Brigham Young, he had enjoyed several interviews with the Church leader. Furthermore, Biebuyck had a colonization contract with the Mexican government in which the government conceded free public lands for colonization in any Mexican state. Elder Thatcher, still interested in the colonization question, soon made friends with Biebuyck, who became a warm advocate of Mormon colonization in Mexico.

Biebuyck told Thatcher that "with the Mormons in Mexico will come stable government and consequent peace and prosperity and, therefore, success to my business, and that is all I ask."²¹ The offer seemed exciting enough. Biebuyck's colonization contract with the Mexican government not only included the concession of free public

²⁰Jenson, *Biographical Encyclopedia*, 1:132-33.

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 133.

lands but also an \$80 subsidy for adults, \$40 each for children, twenty years' exemption from military duty and taxation, and free entry from tariff duty on teams, wagons, agricultural implements, building materials and provisions pending the establishment of the colony, as well as numerous other privileges.

While these stimulating conversations about colonization were occurring, the missionary efforts in Mexico City were deteriorating. Among other things, the elders were becoming disillusioned with Rhodakanaty, who was attempting to incorporate Mormons in Mexico into his brand of communal living. Before long Elder Thatcher began to agree with Daniel W. Jones's earlier conclusions that the success of missionary efforts in Mexico would ultimately depend on Mormon colonization there and the careful and judicious gathering into the colonies of native Saints for care and instruction. Quite understandably, Biebuyck's colonization offer was therefore too appealing to lose. Accordingly, scarcely two months since organizing the first branch in Mexico, Moses Thatcher determined to lay the whole matter regarding this exciting proposition before President Taylor and the Council of the Twelve Apostles and then abide by their decision.

Leaving Elder Stewart in charge, Moses Thatcher departed for Salt Lake City on 4 February 1880, arriving on 22 February. Ten days later Biebuyck, as agreed, arrived; and he and Elder Thatcher detailed to the authorities the nature and advantage of the concessions embodied in Biebuyck's contract with the Mexican government. After a lengthy discussion and with due respect to the enormous efforts expended by both Biebuyck and Apostle Thatcher to bring the matter to the attention of the Council of the Twelve, the Council nevertheless rejected Biebuyck's offer. Perhaps they remembered the cautionary note Governor Ochoa had given the Jones party four years earlier: "Be careful about offers for public lands."

Although the idea of refuge had been on many people's minds, it seems that even in 1880 the principal idea associated with colonizing in Mexico and sending out missionaries to that land was to preach the gospel to the Lamanites. Colonization was a mere vehicle to that end. Elder Thatcher wanted to create a Church environment for Mexican Saints, thereby aiding the Lord's plan. Nevertheless, President Taylor departed somewhat from the earlier considerations advanced by Brigham Young, considering colonization in Mexico for this purpose premature.

Perhaps by then the plan was of little moment in contrast to the greater anxieties confronting the Saints in Zion. The anti-polygamy crusade threatened homes and entire communities. Many Saints were

fleeing to obscure retreats in Montana, Colorado, Nevada, and Arizona. While a "place of refuge" more than crossed the mind of Brigham in earlier years, that thought apparently did not occur to his successors. With pressures building up everywhere, it seemed the idea of colonization in Mexico would have to wait for a resolution of the crisis at home.²² The crisis was severe: George Q. Cannon, Utah's territorial delegate to Washington, was quoted in an interview with the *New York City Sun* as saying that Mormons "cannot move to any part of the territory of the United States, and they may be compelled either to abandon one feature of their religion or to fight."²³

While Moses Thatcher was in Salt Lake City presenting a case with firm offers of land for colonization in Mexico, Elders Trejo and Stewart remained in Mexico City and continued their missionary labors. They completed a more extensive translation of the Book of Mormon and also began to move their proselying activities to the villages surrounding Mexico City. In particular they focused their attention on Ozumba, where they met with some success in their missionary endeavors. Nevertheless, the results in general were very discouraging. Perhaps it was for this reason that Melitón Trejo departed from Mexico City in May of 1880 for his home in Arizona, leaving Elder Stewart as the sole missionary from the Mormon settlements in Utah and Arizona. His plan rejected by the Council of the Twelve, Moses Thatcher returned to his labors in Mexico in December 1880, accompanied by Feramorz L. Young.

If the idea of colonization for spreading the gospel were not to be implemented, then other means would have to be employed. Yet there was no hiding the fact that Moses Thatcher was pessimistic about the prospects. No doubt one reason for his pessimism was that Rhodakanaty, having been educated in the philosophy of nineteenth-century Utopian socialists, was intent on setting up a Mormon "united order." Indeed, communitarianism was one aspect of Mormonism that had so attracted him to the Church.²⁴ In Rhodakanaty's mind it seemed apparent that the gospel was to serve communitarianism, not communitarianism the ends of the gospel. When he could not persuade Elder Thatcher to his point of view, Rhodakanaty dropped out of the Church. For the same reasons, most of the converts the elders had already baptized dropped out. But Moses

²²Blaine Carmon Hardy, "Cultural 'Encystment' as a Cause of the Mormon Exodus from Mexico in 1912," *Pacific Historical Review* 34 (November 1965): 441.

²³*New York City Sun*, 13 August 1879.

²⁴Irving, "'An Opening Wedge,'" pp. 12-14.

Thatcher would not be swayed, and by 1881 Rhodakanaty was writing articles in socialist newspapers in Mexico City against the Church.²⁵

Seeing their original flock dwindle away over the issue of communitarianism, Elders Thatcher, Stewart, and Young turned their attention to proselyting other Mexicans. But the era of *La Reforma* had ended and with it the period of turmoil during the closing months of 1876, which had been rather advantageous for the missionaries. The entrance of the rebel army of Porfirio Díaz into Mexico City had established order, albeit order by the gun and the sword, but the kind of order that encouraged a revival of tradition in Mexico. Thus the Catholic church, in the large cities at least, began to enjoy an ascendancy.

In 1880 Moses Thatcher became increasingly convinced the city people of Mexico were so firmly in the grasp of socio-religious aspects of traditional Mexico that it would be virtually useless for the elders to attempt to make headway among them. The people, he concluded, were certainly held if not in the grip of the Catholic church, then in the web of the culture's social relations associated with Catholic tradition. Only the Protestant missionaries seemed to have any success,²⁶ and that only because they were buying their converts with perquisites and stipends. The Mormon missionaries were not about to do that. Also, the Protestant missionaries even gave their tracts away. Not surprisingly, therefore, the Mormon elders could hardly sell their translated literature for enough to cover publishing costs, although in some way they did distribute thousands of copies.²⁷ Responding to a complaint on this matter, President Taylor wrote to the missionaries instructing them to keep trying to sell their literature for whatever few pennies they might bring in.

Faced with such discouraging events, the elders more and more began to think about the "Indians" and peasants in the small

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶The not-so-subtle feelings of superiority and the spirit of condescension that characterized Protestant North American missionaries of the nineteenth century were usually subdued, although almost always present, among Mormon North American missionaries. If the Protestant religions' self-proclaimed responsibility of a "white man's burden" was to take his civilization and faith to the rest of the world, the Mormons' burden was to bring to pass the fulfillment of scripture regarding their Lamanite brethren. Adoption of North American ways of living seemed inexorably intertwined with that redemption. Useful background materials from the vantage point of a Cuban theologian may be found in Justo E. González, *Historia de las Misiones* (Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 1970), chap. 9. A contemporary view of mainline Protestantism is the published doctoral dissertation of O. E. Costas, *Theology of the Crossroads in Contemporary Latin America* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1976).

²⁷Elders Stewart and Trejo had finished their translation of Parley P. Pratt's *The Voice of Warning* and had managed to circulate a large number of copies. They translated, published, and distributed 4,000 copies of John Nicholson's "Means of Escape." The missionaries also published several thousand copies of Elder Stewart's "Coming of the Messiah" and widely distributed them. Numerous other exchanges occurred through the newspapers and were later published in *The Contributor*. (See Jenson, *Biographical Encyclopedia*, 4:134.)

villages surrounding Mexico City. Elder Jones and his companions had found the honest in heart in Guerrero and environs, not in Chihuahua City or El Paso del Norte. The Protestant missionaries seemed to have concluded as much, for they had moved into the outskirts of Mexico City. So the elders renewed their efforts in nearby quiet agricultural villages such as Ozumba. In Ozumba, members of lasting significance to the Church were converted (for example, the Páez family). But Elder Thatcher continued to be somewhat pessimistic about the whole enterprise. More and more he became convinced that Daniel W. Jones must have been correct—that the only hope for a mission in Mexico lay in having a group of Anglo-Saxon Saints nearby to help uplift the Mexicans.²⁸

Mormons, frantically almost, had pursued the expansion of their faith into the Indian lands of the southern territories and Mexico. But their cross-cultural contacts seemed to be mostly negative. Frustration and anxiety resulted. The Church and its missionaries carried an enormous commitment to the Lamanites. However, everywhere the missionaries met with failure. Daniel W. Jones, somewhat self-righteously, would later remind the Church that it could have sent missionaries back to Guerrero, a place where scores of Mexicans had waited in vain for baptism.²⁹

Four months following Elder Thatcher's return to Mexico, the missionaries and a handful of Saints (some of whom had survived the falling away of the original Rhodakanaty group) left Mexico City in April of 1881 to ascend the great volcano Popocateptl, which lies about fifty miles southeast of the city. Because of the volcano's poetic and historical significance in the lives of the most numerous of Mexico's Indian peoples, the ascent to the summit of Popocatepetl to hold a conference and dedicate the land for preaching the gospel held enormous symbolic significance. There was no question in the missionaries' minds as to whom the gospel message was to be taken. In attendance at this first conference of the Church held in Mexico were the missionaries from Salt Lake City (Moses Thatcher, Feramorz Young, and James Z. Stewart) and several members from Mexico (Silviano Arteaga, Fernando A. Lara, Ventura Páez, Lino Zarate, and two other Mexican brothers whose names were not recorded).³⁰ On

²⁸Hardy, "Cultural 'Encystment,'" pp. 440–41. Hardy cites vol. 3, pp. 43–44 of Thatcher's journals, which led him to conclude that motivation for colonization in Mexico was to give Mexican converts a new environment away from the distracting effects of Mexico's non-Mormon society. All these considerations had led Moses Thatcher to subscribe to the conclusion drawn by Daniel W. Jones before him, who had said, "We were united in one idea, and that was before any great work could be done in this country it would be necessary to colonize among the people" (Jones, *Forty Years among the Indians*, p. 283).

²⁹Ibid., pp. 282–87.

³⁰Rey L. Pratt, "History of the Mexican Mission," *The Improvement Era* 15 (1911–12): 487.

6 April 1881, just fifty-one years after the Church had been organized, the group raised prayers to God and invoked his blessings on the Mexican mission.

Slowly all these efforts bore additional results. Other Saints arrived from Zion. August H. F. Wilcken, a European immigrant schooled in the Spanish language, helped translate additional tracts and then went to Ozumba with Fernando A. Lara to proselyte there and in surrounding villages. In quick succession other changes in personnel occurred. In June, Elder Stewart was released, returning home to Utah; in August, Elder Thatcher was released and Elder Wilcken replaced him; and Feramorz L. Young (who would die of typhoid fever within days) and Fernando A. Lara left for Utah with Moses Thatcher. Lara had been one of the most dedicated and successful missionaries of the Mexican converts. Going to Zion was his reward. But sixty-one other Mexican members remained, enough to organize the second formal branch of the Church in Mexico at the base of Popocatepetl in Ozumba. There Elders Wilcken, Arteaga, Páez, Zarate, and a few others carried on the work.

Within a few months, however, the Saints in Mexico were pleased to receive word of the imminent arrival of new missionaries from Zion. Anthony W. Ivins, who had been with the Jones missionary contingent that had explored Chihuahua in 1876, was accompanied by Nielson R. Pratt, one more in the long line of Pratt family descendants who have served the Church in Mexico. Both Mexican and American missionaries, in the coming months, added fifty-one new members to Church records.

In due time, when August Wilcken left for home, Anthony W. Ivins was made president of the mission. Rey Pratt, a later missionary to Mexico, says that during Ivins's administration "quite a number of native elders were pressed into service and the work of preaching the gospel and spreading the truth was vigorously pushed."³¹ Among those missionaries were Lino Zarate, Julián Rojas, and an Elder Candanosa. Additional members joined.

The work extended into numerous small villages in the central Mexican plateau—Toluca, Ixtacalco, Tecaloe, and Chimal, all in Mexico; Cuautla and San Andrés de la Cal, in Morelos; and Napola, in Hidalgo. In this endeavor, Isaac J. Stewart, who had accompanied his brother on the ill-fated visit to the Yaquis several years before, soon joined the group. So also did Helaman Pratt, another of the original missionaries to Mexico.

³¹Ibid., p. 489.

It was clear that interest and a few skills in the Spanish language were giving some of the brethren double-duty in the work of the Kingdom. But so it had to be. If the Church authorities in Salt Lake City would not approve colonization as a means of spreading the gospel, then other, more conventional, means would of necessity have to be employed.

Soon Helaman Pratt was heading the mission (March 1884). He extended the work to San Marcos, Hidalgo, a community that later would figure prominently in the expansion of the faith in Mexico. Little by little the work did expand. But soon Elder Pratt came to the same conclusion reached by Jones and Thatcher before him: the Saints joining the fold in Mexico needed *their* Zion if they were to flourish—a place of retreat into the solidarity of a closely-knit Mormon community until they could gain sufficient strength to stand alone in a hostile environment. Just as the first Mormons had organized themselves into corporate communities to help institutionalize the faith, so also should the Mexican members. That the Anglo-American observers may have been less charitable in their observations of the Mexican social and cultural environment than with their own does not depreciate their insights into the community needs of new faith. Indeed, it suggests an ability to see beyond cultural barriers in striving to best accommodate the needs of the members.

Therefore Helaman Pratt, scarcely in the mission a few months, raised a question on the colonization issue that would have to be considered. If Mormons from Utah could not come to Mexico to colonize, why then not send Mormons from Mexico into Arizona where Mormon colonies already existed so that the new Mormons could also enjoy the homogenizing effect of a Mormon cultural environment? Elder Pratt proposed that one hundred to one hundred and fifty Mexican converts (virtually the entire Church in Mexico City and environs at the time) gather either in the Arizona settlements or in some new ones in northern Mexico where they would have close contact with the social, cultural, and economic aspects of Mormon community living. But President John Taylor thought that so many converts could not be handled in Arizona and suggested sending perhaps ten families. When Elder Pratt relayed the President's response to the Mexican members, they chose to wait for an opportunity to all go together when a settlement could be established in northern Mexico. That opportunity would come three years later in consequence of a massive colonizing effort by Anglo-Americans into northern Mexico.

In the meantime, between bouts with federal marshals, Mormon interest in taking the gospel to the Indians remained at an all-time

high. Numerous spectacular heavenly visitations to the Indians had been reported,³² and many of the brethren considered these visitations sure evidence of the imminence of the Second Coming.³³ In 1881 Wilford Woodruff had reported, "We as the Quorum of the Twelve have been commanded of the Lord to now turn our attention to the Lamanites and preach the gospel to them, which we are now endeavoring to do."³⁴ Indeed, that was one of the reasons a high-level delegation headed by Apostle Thatcher had been sent to Mexico in the first place to examine the Rhodakanaty matter. But nearly simultaneously, Apostles Brigham Young, Jr., and Heber J. Grant had been sent to Arizona and New Mexico to delve further into the Indian question; Apostle George Teasdale was making rounds in Indian Territory; Apostle Francis M. Lyman was traveling the Uinta Reservation to the east; and Apostles Lorenzo Snow and Franklin D. Richards were attending to the northern tribes.³⁵ Nevertheless, in 1885 all the excitement and anticipation regarding the Lamanites would fade into insignificance as the Saints struggled to resist the onslaught of the U.S. federal marshals. Some Anglo-American Mormons would flee to Mexico for safety. From their colonies in Chihuahua, the gospel message would eventually spread to all of Latin America.

³²There was general excitement among Mormon leaders and members alike between 1877 and 1892 with the reported visions of an Indian named Moroni and also the visions of Chief Shivitts, Wovoka, Sitting Bull, and others. From the tribes of the Great Plains to the Rocky Mountains, Indians began first to have an interest in Mormons and then to develop their own "Ghost Dance" (associated with their belief that a Messiah would soon return to the earth and save them from their plight by annihilating the whites and restoring the buffalo). This terrified many non-Mormon whites and alarmed the U.S. federal government, who combined to precipitate the now infamous 1890 massacre of Indians at Wounded Knee. (See Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West* [New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971]; and James Mooney, *The Ghost-Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890*, part two of the Fourteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institute, 1892-93 [Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1896].)

³³Mormons were reinforced in their eschatology and increased their missionary efforts among the Indians. They were convinced that Indian prophets had finally risen, that perhaps the Savior had actually visited them, or that one or more of the three Nephites was among them again. Surely the beginning of the end was at hand. Indeed, for this reason accusations were hurled that the Mormons were actually behind the Ghost Dance craze, using it as a device to rid their territory of gentile settlers.

³⁴Wilford Woodruff, letter to a "Brother Johnson" in the Salt River Valley, Arizona, 7 December 1882, p. 2, Church Archives.

³⁵Ibid.

se nos confiera prontas y eficazmente con
 dispensa de tramites ^{promptly & efficaciously} el sacerdocio menor
 al cual nos creemos con derecho ^{deserving} sino de
 nacimiento como ha sido declarado feliz-
 mente nuestro maestro e iniciador en la
 nueva fe el Dr. Rhodak Kanaty, ^{initiated} su por-
 vocacion ^{vocation} para el desempeño y practica
 de tan sagrado ^{sacred} ministerio ^{ministry} para obtener la
 competente ^{competent} autorizacion ^{authorization} de preside-
 en nuestra nacion ^{in our nation} la plenitud del Evan-
 gelio y la continuacion ^{continuation} de la divina re-
 velacion ^{revelation} para ^{for} alcanzar ^{to reach} la reforma radi-
 cal y la salvacion ^{salvation} no solo de nuestro
 pais ^{country} sino del mundo entero ^{of the whole world} nuestra pa-
 tria ^{our nation} por que ^{because} somos ^{we are} cosmopolitas ^{cosmopolites} confor-
 me al ^{in conformity with} espíritu de Cristo ^{of Christ} nuestro Señor
 y nuestro Dios. ^{our Lord}

Sirvanse Vbb. dignísimos Hermanos ac-
 ceder a nuestra ^{your most worthy} justa y humilde ^{humble} petición
 en lo que recibirá el universo entero una
 prueba mas de que ^{improving to the whole family} nuestra Santa Profe-
 gion es la verdadera por que no desecha ^{will not reject}
 las suplicas de sus fervientes proselitos,
 impartiendo así la caridad en la gracia que
 concede a sus siervos en la fe ^{and will}
 + allowing us your servants in the faith

Ciudad de México, Diciembre 15 de 1878.
 City of Mexico Dec. 15

Como Propagador Perente de la Iglesia.
 Dr. Plutarco C. Rhodak Kanaty

Domingo Mejia

an. J. Canandj

Miguel Enriquez

José Cleofaz G. y Sanchez

Felix Rodriguez Luis S. Rubio
y Luis

Appendix

Following is a translation of the 15 December 1878 letter from Dr. Plotino Rhodakanaty and others to LDS church leaders urging missionaries be sent to Mexico. The translator, Eduardo Balderas, is a translator for the Translation Division of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Most illustrious and revered President and Apostles of “the Christian Church of the Latter-day Saints”

Most respected Brethren in our Lord Jesus Christ:

We the undersigned, residents of the capital of Mexico, before the most worthy Theocratical Government of that Holy Church and with the deepest respect declare:

That having been convoked to a private meeting in the home belonging to Dr. Plotino Constantino Rhodakanaty, managing promoter of the same Church, for the purpose of organizing a small circle or congregation of religious and social persuasion in this capital city, said gentleman read to us for such purpose a work entitled Choice Selections from the Book of Mormon, translated into Spanish by the reverend Elder Melitón G. Trejo and Daniel W. Jones, the mystical and highly transcendent meaning of which was later elucidated to us by the same Doctor, who proved unto us and fully convinced us of the evidence of the divine origin of such a precious book, and of the lofty mission that its doctrine has to accomplish in the world, causing through its entirely providential and divine influence a complete humanitarian pal-ingensis or transformation in the religious as well as in the moral, social, and political orders.

Such a beautiful perspective of a radical reform in our beloved country (to whom that Holy Church is issuing a direct invitation to adopt the true belief that it professes), as well as the one that its moral influence will perform, can do no less than captivate the minds and soften the hearts of those of us who dream of the beautiful ideal of a patriarchal life, those of us who thirst for charity and justice, and at the same time for that happiness which, without doubt, resides only in the bosom of that holy and mysterious Institution, the absolute depositary and legitimate successor of that primitive Church of Jerusalem which is the most beautiful and sublime paradigm of charity, of love, and of universal fraternity.

Therefore, these and various other considerations which we have deeply meditated in our souls have impelled us, through divine inspiration, not only to embrace that doctrine theoretically but also to practice it, and even more importantly, to turn ourselves, in spite of our humble social standing, into honest and laborious workers, into worthy Ministers or Pastors of your Holy Religion, for which purpose we today respectfully desire to contact that holy and wise Apostleship of the Church to urgently request our ordination to the *lesser priesthood*, which we have no doubt will be conferred upon us not through wisdom or instruction of worldly knowledge that we lack, but through our faith which we possess, and our intense desires to fulfill our mission as providential instruments of the Divine Will for the salvation of so many poor souls that today in this country are the victims of error and of the impositions of the false and pretended churches that claim to be Christians, and which unfortunately sprout among us deviating consciences, tearing apart the social unity, and lacerating sensitive hearts with their selfishness and continual offenses which they

commit against charity, thus denying the Holy Ghost, which is the Spirit of all truth, and the most solid foundation of all solidarity, both in heaven and on earth.

Persevering in our good purpose to constitute ourselves into champions of religious truth, our only object being to attack error to its last entrenchments and to punish the rebellious nations for their iniquity, perfidies and selfishness with which they extort and kill the poor and the chosen of the Lord, we today humbly approach the worthy Apostleship of that Holy Church, officially requesting, by means of the eminent and indefatigable promoter of the faith, our respected and beloved Brother Melitón G. Trejo, Elder of the Church, that promptly and efficaciously, dispensing with procedures, the *lesser priesthood* be conferred upon us, priesthood to which we have a right, if not by birth, as happily declared by our teacher and initiator in the new faith, Dr. Rhodakanaty, then by vocation for the performance and practice of such a sacred ministry to obtain the competent authorization to preach in our nation the fulness of the Gospel and the continuation of divine revelation in order to accomplish the radical reformation and salvation not only of our own country, but of the entire world—our country because we are cosmopolitans according to the Spirit of Christ, our Lord and our God.

Will you please, our most worthy Brethren, accede to our just and humble request, through which the entire universe will receive one more proof that our Holy Religion is true because it does not reject the pleadings of its fervent proselytes, imparting thus the charity in the grace that it grants to its servants in the faith.

Mexico City, December 15, 1878

As Managing Promoter of the Church

Dr. Plotino C. Rhodakanaty

Domingo Mejía

Darío F. Fernández

Miguel Enríquez

José Cleofas G. y Sánchez

Félix Rodríguez y Luís

Luis G. Rabíe

The Narrative of Zosimus and the Book of Mormon

John W. Welch

This article demonstrates certain similarities existing between texts in 1 Nephi in the Book of Mormon and a little-known document entitled “The Narrative of Zosimus.”¹ The Narrative’s core material was written originally in Hebrew and appears to be at least as old as the time of Christ, and perhaps much older.² There is no evidence that any knowledge about the Narrative of Zosimus existed in any English-speaking land prior to the publication of the Book of Mormon.

Accounting for these similarities is complicated. In a religious context, the parallels between the two writings may be explained as deriving from a common source of extensive revelation. Examined academically, the parallels are an intellectual challenge with no definite resolution. Even though I cannot account for these parallels in all respects, their mere existence tends to support claims of an Ancient Near Eastern origin for the Book of Mormon.

This article describes the textual history and the contents of the Narrative of Zosimus and then shows certain similarities between the Book of Mormon and the Narrative. I recognize that the approach followed here is not exhaustive. For example, the Narrative of Zosimus contains rich Tree of Life imagery; it is also a good example of Judeo-Christian apocalyptic literature. On points such as these, the Book of Mormon and the Narrative of Zosimus should be further compared to each other, as well as with the vast bodies of symbolic and apocalyptic literatures. Those further studies, however, will have to wait until much more research has been done. For the present, less ambitious undertakings will have to suffice.

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¹English translation appears in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, 24 vols. (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1867–72), supp. vol. 10, pp. 220–24.

²James H. Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press for the Society of Biblical Literature, 1976), pp. 223–28.

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

While no one knows who, if anyone, Zosimus was, or even what the name *Zosimus* means or where it may have come from,³ the ancient narrative which bears this name records traditions about a righteous people who left Jerusalem at the time of the Prophet Jeremiah. They were led by God to an ideal land across the ocean. The text is of obvious interest to students of the Book of Mormon, which relates a similar history.

Dr. James H. Charlesworth, professor of Christian Origins at Duke University, Durham, N.C., has compiled the most complete published bibliography and has made a thorough study of this long-neglected narrative.⁴ He concludes that its most ancient portion was written somewhere in Judea, that it was originally written in Hebrew, and that “it would be unwise to ignore the possibility that this oldest section is a Jewish work that predates the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.”⁵ How long before A.D. 70 this early material was actually written down is difficult to tell. The traditions underlying many sections in the Narrative of Zosimus undoubtedly go back even further.

Not only are the sources behind this intriguing composition very ancient, but judging by the number of copies of it which have now been located in some of Europe’s oldest museums and libraries,⁶ the work must have been fairly well known in the early centuries of Christianity, at least in certain areas away from the main control centers. Texts of the Narrative have survived in Slavonic, Syriac, Ethiopic, Karshuni, Arabic, and Greek.⁷

A comparison of these texts makes it apparent that over the years the basic Hebrew core suffered many editorial changes and additions. In the later Ethiopic materials, for example, Zosimus is linked with Alexander the Great (who was said to have conquered all the world and thus must have visited these people across the sea).⁸ Such variations from text to text require us to separate carefully the earlier original materials from the subsequent accretions.

³The name *Zosimus* itself does not appear in the earliest manuscripts. Later, Zosimus also was the name given to a revered Christian monk, who—according to one Armenian tradition—lived on a mountain on Schizia, an island in the Ionian Sea.

⁴Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research*, pp. 223–28.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 225.

⁶Professor Charlesworth reports having examined in Paris, Oxford, London, and Manchester manuscripts of this document written in Greek, Syriac, Ethiopic, and Karshuni. His English translation of Zosimus will appear in Doubleday’s forthcoming publication of the *Pseudepigrapha*, and soon a new edition of the Greek, Syriac, and Ethiopic texts will be available in the SBL Pseudepigrapha Series.

⁷English translations exist from the Greek (see note 1); from Syriac, which is yet unpublished by Dr. Charlesworth; and from the Ethiopic, which appears in E. A. W. Budge, *The Life and Exploits of Alexander the Great* (London: Clay, 1896), 2:555–84.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 560.

Perhaps due as much to these changes as to a failure to recognize the significance of its basic core, the Narrative was unjustifiably rejected in later orthodox Christian circles. In the Canon of Nicephorous (dated around A.D. 850), the Narrative of Zosimus was placed among certain apocryphal works which were to be discarded. Soon afterwards, the small book fell into disuse.

The first known reappearance in modern times of the Narrative of Zosimus was its translation into Russian from an Old Church Slavonic text in the 1870s, almost fifty years after the translation of the Book of Mormon into English. The first critical Greek text of the Narrative was published in England in the late nineteenth century by J. R. Robinson, followed shortly by its first translation into English, which appeared in volume 10 (supplemental volume) of M. R. James's series entitled the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. That translation will be used in this article.

General and particular elements of the Narrative are similar to the early sections of the Book of Mormon. Consider the following overview.

According to the Narrative of Zosimus, a righteous man named Zosimus, dwelling in a cave in a desert, prays to the Lord and obtains spiritual passage to a land of blessedness. In order to arrive at this land of promise, Zosimus must wander in the wilderness without knowing where he is being led. He is pushed to the point of exhaustion but attains his destination by constant prayer and divine intervention. Zosimus at length arrives at the bank of an unfathomable river of water covered by an impenetrable cloud of darkness. Catching the branches of a tree, Zosimus is transported across the water where he sits beneath a beautiful tree, eating its fruit and drinking of the life-sustaining water which flows from its root. Zosimus is then met by an angelic escort, who asks him what he wants, shows him a vision in which he thinks he beholds the Son of God, and ultimately introduces him to a group of righteous sons of God. These elders tell Zosimus of their history and instruct him in their ways of righteousness. Their history is engraved upon soft stone plates.⁹ It explains how the group, led by their father, escaped the destruction of Jerusalem at the time of Jeremiah and how as a nation they survived the scattering of Israel. They were allowed to occupy their other-worldly land of paradise and abundance only because of their righteousness. Their religion is based upon prayer and chastity, and they

⁹I read *lithinoi* (literally "stone-like") as embracing soft plates, since the Narrative indicates that these people wrote on these tablets by inscribing them with their fingernails (see Narrative of Zosimus, chap. 7).

receive knowledge of the wickedness of the outside world by revelation. Notwithstanding the wickedness of the people at Jerusalem, Zosimus rejoices when he is shown a book in which he learns that mercy will be extended to the inhabitants there.

The many parallels between the early chapters of the Book of Mormon and this Narrative require little elaboration: dwelling in the desert (1 Nephi 2:4), being led by prayer and faith (1:5, 11:3, 16:29), wandering through a dark and dreary waste (8:7), being caught away to the bank of a river (8:13), crossing to the other side of a river or abyss and passing through a great mist (8:32), coming to a tree whose fruit is most sweet above all (8:11), eating and drinking from the tree which was also a fountain of living waters (11:25), being greeted by an escort (11:2–3), being interrogated as to desires (11:2), beholding a vision of the Son of God (1:6, 11:29), keeping records on soft metal plates (3:24), recording the history of a group of people who escaped the destruction of Jerusalem at the time of Jeremiah (1:4, 7:14), being led to a land of promise and of great abundance due to righteousness (18:25), practicing constant prayer (Alma 34:21–27), living in chastity (Jacob 2:25–28), receiving revelations concerning the wickedness of the people of Jerusalem (1 Nephi 10:11), and yet obtaining assurances of the mercy to be extended to the inhabitants of Jerusalem (1 Nephi 1:14, 10:3).

For a reader to appreciate and evaluate the similar characteristics of these two writings, a detailed examination of both is required. The extensive parallels which exist between them may substantiate the great antiquity of both.

DETAILED COMPARISON

In the following comparative study, the full text of Zosimus is shown in the left-hand columns, and passages from the Book of Mormon that suggest possible parallels are arranged on the right. Not all proposed parallels are equally meritorious but are included for completeness. Likewise, the passages from the Book of Mormon are not always found in the same order as their parallels in the Narrative of Zosimus, and in those cases the strength of the noncontextual parallels must be reduced.

The translation of the Narrative of Zosimus used here is that appearing in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* and follows the Greek text. Although the Narrative was not originally written in Greek, that text

appears to be a close translation of early materials and is representative of the overall tradition.¹⁰ Sections of the Narrative identifiable as later additions are set off in brackets ([]) or have been deleted as indicated.

From the Book of Mormon, most of the passages involved come from chapters 1, 8, and 11 of 1 Nephi because here Lehi's influence is strongest.¹¹ Among the Nephite writers, Lehi most closely typifies the world of Judea within which milieu the Narrative of Zosimus was produced. Lehi's visions also relate in genre to the visionary styles and motifs of the Narrative of Zosimus. No effort has been made to separate the writings of Lehi in these chapters from the writings of Nephi, since no direct connection is made between any Book of Mormon individual and the person who wrote the Narrative of Zosimus. After each section are brief comments. General conclusions follow. Book of Mormon references to verses other than those found in 1 Nephi are so noted.

Zosimus

1 Nephi

Ch. 1. About that time there was

1:4. . . . in that same year [the first year of the reign of Zedekiah] there came many prophets . . .

in the desert a certain man named Zosimus, [who for forty years ate no bread, and drank no wine, and saw not the face of man.]

2:4. . . . and he [Lehi] departed *into the wilderness*. . . .

This man *was entreating God* that he might see the way of life of the blessed,

1:5. . . . Lehi, as he went forth *prayed unto the Lord*, yea, even with all his heart, in behalf of his people.

11:3. And I said: I desire to behold the things which my father saw.

and behold an *angel* of the Lord was sent saying to him, Zosimus,

8:5. And he [an *angel*] came and stood before me.

man of God, behold I am sent by *the Most High, the God of all*, to tell thee that thou *shalt journey* to the blessed, but shalt not dwell with them.

11:6. . . . the Spirit cried with a loud voice, saying: Hosanna to the Lord, the *most high God; for he is God over all the earth, yea, even above all*. . . . because thou believest . . . *thou shalt behold* the things which thou hast desired.

¹⁰The Syriac version, for example, is substantially the same as the Greek. The Ethiopic text, on the other hand, is later and diverges from the basic tradition in many respects.

¹¹Chapters 1 and 8 derive directly from Lehi's account. Nephi and Lehi had received the same vision (see 1 Nephi 14:29). Chapter 11 is part of Nephi's account of that vision.

[But exalt not thy heart, saying, For forty years I have not eaten bread, for the word of God is more than bread, and the spirit of God is more than wine. And as for thy saying, I have not seen the face of man, behold the face of the great king is nigh thee.]

Zosimus said, *I know that the Lord can do whatsoever he will*. The angel said to him, Know this also, that thou art not worthy of one of their delights, but arise and set out.

11:1. . . . and believing *that the Lord was able* to make them known unto me . . .

3:7. I, Nephi, said . . . *I know that the Lord* giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may *accomplish the thing* which he commandeth them.

The vision of Zosimus begins as he prays that he might be shown the way of life of blessedness. An angel appears and announces that his prayer will be answered. This is similar to Nephi's prayer that he might be shown the things which his father Lehi had seen, a prayer also answered by an angel who appears and announces that Nephi's request will be answered (1 Nephi 11:6) because of Nephi's belief in the Son of the most high God. Zosimus also confirms his faith in the Lord before his vision can commence. Particularly noteworthy is the nearly identical name which the angel in each account uses for the Lord: "The Most High God of All." This is unusual and distinctive. There may also be meaningful analogs between the desert setting of the history of Lehi and that of the Narrative. Lehi and Nephi could have seen their own departure into the wilderness as a symbol of righteousness, just as the Narrative employs dwelling in the desert to show the unworldliness of Zosimus (cf. 1 Nephi 17:23–44). The initial time reference in Zosimus is too obscure to be of consequence.

2. And I, Zosimus, issuing from my cave with God *leading* me, set out *not knowing* which way I went,

and after I had *travelled* forty days

8:7. . . . as I *followed* him I beheld myself that I was in a *dark and dreary waste*.

8:8. And after I had *traveled* for the space of many hours in darkness . . .

my *spirit* grew faint and my body failed, and *being exhausted*

I sat down, and continued *praying* in that place for three days.

[And, behold, there came a beast from the desert, whose name is the camel, and placing its knees on the ground, it received me upon its neck and went into the desert and set me down. There there was much howling of wild beasts, and gnashing of teeth, and deadly poison. And becoming afraid, I prayed to the Lord]

and there came in that place a great earthquake with a noise, and a storm of wind blew and *lifted me* from the earth, and *exalted* me on its wing,

and I was *praying* and journeying

till it set me upon a *place*

beside a *river*, and the name of the river is Eumeles. And behold when I desired to cross the river, some one cried as if from the water, saying, Zosimus, man of God, *thou canst not pass through* me, for no man can divide *my waters*: but look up from the waters to heaven.

And looking up I saw a *wall of cloud* stretching from the waters to the heaven, and the cloud said, Zosimus, man of God, through me no bird *passes out of this world*, not breath of wind, nor the sun itself,

nor can the *tempter* in this world pass through me [the wall of cloud].

1:7. . . . he cast himself upon his bed, *being overcome with the Spirit*. . . .

8:8. I began to *pray* unto the Lord that he would have mercy on me. . . .

11:1. . . . as I sat pondering in mine heart I was *caught away* in the Spirit of the Lord, yea, into an *exceedingly high* mountain, which I never had before seen, and upon which I never had before set my foot.

8:9. And . . . after I had *prayed* unto the Lord

I beheld a *large and spacious field*.

8:13. And as I cast my eyes round about . . . I beheld a *river of water*. . . .

8:32. And . . . *many were drowned* in the *depths* of the fountain. . . .

8:23. And it came to pass that there arose a *mist of darkness*; yea, even an exceeding great *mist of darkness*, in-somuch that they who had commenced in the path *did lose their way*, that they wandered off and were lost.

12:17. And the mists of darkness are the *temptations of the devil*, which blindeth the eyes, and hardeneth the hearts of the children of men. . . .

In chapter 2, Zosimus' vision progresses as he follows God's direction, not knowing where he is being led, until he is exhausted from travel. After extended prayer, he is caught away to a place beside a river, which turns out to be a cloudy and watery barrier between this world and Paradise, or the land of blessedness. This parallels the visions and pre-visions of Lehi. Lehi, too, follows his divine escort but soon finds himself lost in darkness (1 Nephi 8:7-8). He, too, is apparently disoriented and weary from his many hours of travel when he pleads for mercy. He then finds himself in a large field beside a river, which also constitutes a cloudy, watery barrier between the proud and wicked world and those who partake of the fruit of the Tree of Life, the most conspicuous item in the paradisiacal landscape.

Two differences between the accounts are noteworthy. First, for Zosimus the wall of cloud is not associated with the tempter; rather, it is a barrier keeping even him from the paradise beyond. For Nephi, the mists over the river are the temptations themselves created by the devil to keep the children of men outside that paradise. The principle in both cases is the same: no evil may enter Paradise. But in Lehi's merciful and open-minded perspective, multitudes press toward the Tree of Life (1 Nephi 8:30) and many reach that goal. Thus, for Lehi the mists are not as impenetrable as the wall of cloud is for Zosimus, whose account is esoteric. In his account, Zosimus alone reaches the other bank. Second, Lehi is already on the Paradise side of the river when he first notices the river, while Zosimus still must get there. How Lehi reaches Paradise is not explained, except to note that he arrives because of the Lord's mercies (1 Nephi 8:8). This is consistent with Lehi's passing through in darkness (1 Nephi 8:8), wherein he would not have observed anything along the way.

Zosimus

3. And I was astonished at these words, and at the voice that spake these things to me.

And as I prayed, behold two *trees* sprang up out of the earth,

fair and beautiful, laden with fragrant *fruits*.

1 Nephi

8:10. And it came to pass that I beheld a *tree*, whose fruit was desirable to make one happy.

8:11. [The fruit thereof] was *most sweet, above all* that I had ever before tasted . . . [and] *white*, to exceed all the whiteness that I had ever seen.

And the tree on this side bent down and received me on its top, and was lifted up exceedingly above the middle of the river, and the other tree *met me and received me in its branches* and bending down set me on the ground; and both trees were lifted up and set me away from the river on the other side. [In that place I rested three days, and arising again]

I went forward, whither I knew not, and that place was filled with much fragrance, and there was *no mountain* on either hand, but the *place was level* and flowery, all crowned with garlands, and all the land was beautiful.

8:19, 24. And I beheld a rod of iron, and it extended along the bank of the river, and led [from the head of the fountain] to the tree by which I stood. . . . I beheld others pressing forward, and they came forth and caught *hold of the end of the rod of iron*; and they did press forward through the mist of darkness, clinging to the rod of iron, even until they did come forth and partake of the fruit of the tree.

8:9, 20. And it came to pass after I had prayed unto the Lord I beheld a *large and spacious field* . . . as if it had been a world.

In chapter 3, Zosimus crosses the river and passes through the wall of cloud by being lifted up in the branches of one tree and handed over to the tree on the opposite bank. In 1 Nephi, those who were not members of Lehi's family hold onto the rod of iron which enables them to avoid the hazards of the mists of darkness and of the river and to arrive safely at the Tree of Life. In both cases, man cannot make this passage without help.

For Zosimus, beholding the fruit of the tree epitomizes his arrival at the land of the blessed. For Lehi the fruit is desirable to make one happy (blessed), symbolizing the love of God. The fruit is fair (white) and fragrant (sweet) in both accounts respectively.

Once at the tree, both Lehi and Zosimus describe the paradise around them as large and flat, emphasizing the all-important presence of the Tree of Life.

4. And I saw there a *naked man* sitting, and said in myself, *surely this is not the tempter*. And I remembered the voice of the cloud that it said to me, Not even the tempter in this world passes through me. And thus taking courage I said to him, *Hail, brother*. And *he answering* said to me, The grace of my God be with thee.

11:11. . . . I spake unto him as a man speaketh; for I beheld that he was in the *form of a man*; yet nevertheless, *I knew that it was the Spirit of the Lord*; and he spake unto me *as a man speaketh* with another.

Again I said to him, Tell me, man of God, who thou art? He answered and said to me, *Who art thou* rather? And I answered and told him all concerning myself, and that I had prayed to God and he had brought me into that place.

He answered and said to me, I also know that *thou art a man of God, for if not, thou couldst not have passed* through the cloud and the river and the air. For the breadth of the river is about thirty thousand paces, and the cloud reaches to heaven, and the *depth of the river to the abyss*.

11:2–3. And the Spirit said unto me: Behold, *what desirest thou?* And I said: I desire to behold the things which my father saw.

15:27–29. . . . the water . . . was filthiness; . . . it was an *awful gulf, which separated the wicked* from the tree of life, and also *from the saints of God*. . . . it was a representation of that awful *hell*. . . .

In this chapter, Zosimus next discovers a man, apparently naked, sitting beside him. Later Zosimus will learn that this exalted being only appears naked to mortals because of the purity of his garments. After assuring himself that the man is not the tempter, Zosimus engages him in polite conversation. This is somewhat comparable to Nephi's account where he also directly encounters a being in the form of a man. After assuring himself that this is the Spirit of the Lord, Nephi and the messenger converse with one another as men normally do, as did Zosimus and his escort. In addition, Lehi mentions the white robe of the personage who leads him into the dark and dreary waste (1 Nephi 8:5), relating to Zosimus' emphasis on the purity of his escort's garments.

In both records, the attendant questions the traveler. In the Narrative of Zosimus, the question initially asked is *who* Zosimus is, perhaps again reflecting the esoteric character of the Narrative. The initial question to Nephi is simply, *What* do you want? Nephi manifests no hesitancy about his own worthiness or who he is as Zosimus does here and in the sixth chapter. Rather, Nephi approaches the visionary experience directly as a matter of firmly knowing and diligently seeking what one wants (1 Nephi 10:19).

Finally, in the Narrative of Zosimus are further descriptions of the cloudy and watery barrier. The barrier is wide and an abyss, and the cloud reaches heaven. Although the Book of Mormon does not indicate the height of the mist of darkness, it is called "an exceeding great mist" (1 Nephi 8:23). Likewise, although in Lehi's vision the

river does not always appear wide (especially where the people on the other side can be seen), Nephi describes it as “a great and terrible gulf” (1 Nephi 12:18, 15:28). In both reports the river functions as a demarcation between the righteous saints and the worldly sinners, and the Book of Mormon explicitly associates this abyss with the underworld.

Zosimus

5. And having ended this discourse the man spoke again, Hast thou come hither out of the *vanity of the world*?

I said to him, Wherefore art thou naked? He said, How knowest thou that I am naked? Thou wearest skins of the cattle of the earth, that decay together with thy body, but look up to the height of heaven and behold of what nature my clothing is.

And looking up into heaven I saw his face as the face of an angel,

and his *clothing* as *lightning*, which passes from the east to the west,

and I was greatly afraid, thinking that it was the *son of God*,

and *trembled, falling upon the ground*.

And giving me his hand he raised me up, saying, Arise, I also am one of the blessed. Come with me, *that I may lead thee to the elders*.

1 Nephi

8:26. . . . on the other side of the river of water . . .

11:36. . . . was the *pride of the world*. . . .

11:14. And it came to pass that I saw the *heavens* open; and an *angel* came down and stood before me. . . .

8:5. . . . I saw a man, and he was *dressed* in a *white* robe. . . .

1:9. . . . and he beheld that his *luster* was above that of the *sun* at noon-day.

11:7. . . . [And] behold a man descending out of heaven, and him shall ye witness; and after ye have witnessed him ye shall bear record that it is the *Son of God*.

1:6–7. . . . and because of the things which he saw and heard he did quake and *tremble* exceedingly . . . and he *cast himself upon his bed*. . . .

1:10. And he also saw *twelve others* following him [the Son of God], and their brightness did exceed that of the stars in the firmament.

And laying hold of my hand he walked about with me and led me toward a certain crowd, and there were in that crowd elders *like sons of God*, and young men were standing beside the elders.

And as I came near to them, they said, This man has come hither out of the vanity of the world; come, let us beseech the Lord and he will reveal to us this mystery.

Surely the end is not at hand, that the man of vanity is come hither? Then they arose and besought the Lord with one accord, and behold two angels came down from heaven and said, Fear not the man, for God has sent him, that he may remain seven days and learn your ways of life, and then he shall go forth and depart to his own place. The angels of God having said this *ascended into heaven before our eyes*.

11:36. . . . [And] the *pride* of the world . . . fell, and the fall thereof was exceedingly great. . . . Thus shall be the *destruction* of [the wicked].

11:12. . . . And I looked as if to look upon him, and I saw him not; for he had *gone from before my presence*.

In both accounts, clothing readily distinguishes the righteous from the wicked. In Zosimus, the attendant points out how vain the world is, wearing clothes of skins which decay with the body, whereas the blessed wear the radiant garments as bright as lightning. In 1 Nephi, the pride of the people in the great and spacious building is specifically associated with their exceeding fine but foolish dress.

Zosimus is next asked by his new-found escort to look up into the sky to observe the elements from which his clothes were made. Seeing his face as angelic and his clothes as lightning, Zosimus becomes afraid, thinking he is in the presence of the Son of God. The escort, however, assures Zosimus that he is just one of the blessed and leads Zosimus to the elders, who also resemble sons of God. The elders are at first skeptical, but they receive Zosimus when two angels vouch for him. Parallels between this transitional section in the Narrative of Zosimus and passages in the Book of Mormon are of only moderate importance. Visions of the divine usually come in brightness and with trembling, so the similar accounts of Lehi's and Nephi's visions are not singular in this regard. It is somewhat more remarkable that Lehi beholds a group of followers like the Son of God and that he

even receives a book from one of them (1 Nephi 1:11), just as Zosimus will receive a book from the elders also said to be like sons of God to whom he has been introduced. The twelve of Lehi, however, do not require angelic attestation before presenting Lehi with the book of Jerusalem's calamities. In Nephi's case, however, the Spirit departs after introducing Nephi to an angel who will continue the instruction.

Zosimus

6. Then the elders of the blessed gave me over to one of the attendants, saying, Keep him for seven days. So the attendant receiving me led me to his cave, and we sat under a *tree partaking of food*. For from the sixth hour even to the sixth, then we ate, and the *water came out from the root of the tree* sweeter than honey, and we drank our fill, and again the water sank down into its place.

And all the country of those there heard of me, that there had come thither a man out of the vanity of the world, and all the country was stirred up, and they came to see me because it seemed strange to them. Therefore they were asking me all things and I was answering them, and *I became faint in spirit and in body*, and besought me the man of God that served me, and said, I beseech thee, brother, if any come to see me, tell them He is not here, so that I may rest a little.

And the man of God cried out saying, Woe is me, that the *story of Adam* is summed up in me, for *Satan deceived him through Eve*, and this man by his flattery desires to make me a *liar* while he is here. Take me away from hence, for *I shall flee* from the place. For behold he wishes to sow in me seeds of the world of vanity. And all the multitude and the elders rose up against me, and said, *Depart from us, man*; we know not whence thou art come to us.

1 Nephi

8:11. And it came to pass that I did go forth and *partake* of the fruit thereof. . . .

11:25. . . . I beheld . . . the *fountain of living waters, or the tree of life*; which waters are a representation of the love of God; and I also beheld that the tree of life was a representation of the love of God.

8:25. And after they had partaken of the fruit of the tree they did cast their eyes about *as if they were ashamed*.

[2 Ne 2:18. . . . Wherefore, he (Satan) said unto Eve, yea, even that old serpent, who is the devil, who is the father of all *lies*. . . .]

[2 Ne 2:19. And after *Adam and Eve* had partaken of the forbidden fruit they were driven out. . . .]

But I *lamented* with great lamentation, and my senses left me, and I cried out to the elders, saying, *Forgive me, my lords*, and the elders stilled them and made quietness. Then I related to them all from the beginning till that time, and said, I besought the Lord to come to you, and he *deemed me worthy*.

And the elders said, And now *what wilt thou we should do to thee?* I said to them, *I desire to learn of you your way of life*.

8:36–37. [And Lehi] *exceedingly feared* for Laman and Lemuel . . . and he did exhort them then with all the feeling of a tender parent . . . that perhaps the Lord would be *merciful* to them, and not cast them off. . . .

11:2–3. And the Spirit said unto me: Behold, *what desirest thou?* And I said: *I desire* to behold the things which my father saw.

At this point Zosimus goes with his attendants to a garden-paradise where he eats and drinks from one of the trees for seven days. It is significant that this tree provides *both* food and drink, all the nourishment the blessed need. Although the Book of Mormon text is ambiguous, it appears that Nephi also identifies the Tree of Life with both a fruit-bearing and a water-giving function. Both functions are mentioned together and both are equated with the love of God (1 Nephi 11:25). It would be remarkable if the two texts contained this unusual tree-fountain combination, where the root of the tree itself is also a fountain, not just a tree growing beside a body of water, since this imagery is rare.

A multitude gathers to inspect the newcomer and question him. In Zosimus, this righteous multitude wearies the traveler so that he wishes they would not bother him. In 1 Nephi, the wicked multitude in the great and spacious building fulfills a similar role, making those who come to the tree feel uncomfortable and prone to fall away. In Zosimus, the sin committed is perpetrating a lie. In Lehi, the sin is committed by those who become ashamed and fall into forbidden paths.

Both accounts refer to the story of Adam and both emphasize the role of lies and flattery in the Garden of Eden encounter with Satan. But this point cannot be of much consequence, even though it is one of the few Old Testament motifs receiving substantial theological attention in statements attributable to Lehi, since Lehi's remarks about Adam arise in a completely different context and are not far removed from the Genesis account known also to the writer of Zosimus.

For his sin, Zosimus is almost expelled from the land of blessedness. He laments and quickly seeks and receives pardon from the elders however and reviews with them all that had happened up to that time. Lehi also is keenly sensitive to the consequences of sin. Although he does not lament any of his own sins nor fear his own expulsion, he fears deeply for his two eldest sons and desperately hopes they will receive forgiveness.

Having thus established his worthiness and his identity, Zosimus is now ready to answer the question, "What do you want?" Like Nephi, he says he desires to learn the way of life.

Zosimus

7. And they *rejoiced with great joy*.

And taking up *tables of stone* they wrote on them with their nails, thus, Hear, ye sons of men, hear ye us who are become blessed, that we also are of you;

for when the prophet *Jeremiah* proclaimed that the *city of Jerusalem* should be delivered into the hands of the *destroyers*,

he rent his garments, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and sprinkled dust upon his head, and he took earth upon his bed, and told all *people to turn from their wicked way*.

And our *father* Rechab, the son of Aminadab, heard him and said to us, Ye sons and daughters of Rechab, hearken to your father, and put off

1 Nephi

11:6. . . . the Spirit cried with a *loud voice*, saying, Hosanna to the Lord. . . .

1:11. And they came down, . . . and the first came and stood before my father, and gave unto him a *book*, and bade him that he should read.

19:1. . . . I did make *plates of ore* that I might engraven upon them the record of my people. . . .

1:4. . . . many prophets [*Jeremiah*], prophesying unto the people that they must repent, or the great *city Jerusalem must be destroyed*.

[Cf. 7:14, 5:13.]

1:13. . . . that it should be destroyed, and the inhabitants thereof; many should perish by the sword, and many should be *carried away captive into Babylon*.

1:4. . . . prophesying unto the *people* that they must *repent*. . . .

2:2-4. . . . the Lord commanded my *father*, even in a dream, that he should take his family and depart into the wilderness. . . . And he left his

your garments from your body, and drink no vessel of wine, and eat no bread from the fire, and drink not strong drink and honey until the Lord hear your entreaty.

And we said, All that he has *commanded* us we shall *do and hearken*.

So we cast away our clothing from our bodies, and we ate no bread from the fire, and drank no vessel of wine nor honey nor strong drink, and *we lamented* with a great lamentation and *besought the Lord*, and he heard our prayer and turned away his anger from the city of Jerusalem, *and there came to the city of Jerusalem mercy from the Lord, and he pitied its people, and turned away his deadly anger.*

8. And after these things the king of the city of Jerusalem died, and there arose another king. And *all the people gathered to him and informed him concerning us*, and said, There are certain of thy people, who have changed their way from us. Therefore the king summoned them, and asked them wherefore they had done this; and he sent for us and asked, Who are ye and of what worship and of what country? And we said to him, We are the sons of thy servant, and our father is Rechab the son of Jonadab, and when Jeremiah the prophet preached in the days of thy father the king, he proclaimed death to the city of Jerusalem, saying, Yet three days and all of the city shall be put to death. And the king thy father hearing this repented of his sins, and issued a command to all to turn aside from their wicked way. And our father thy servant hearing it charged us, saying, Drink no vessel of

house, and the land of his inheritance, and his gold, and his silver, and his precious things. . . .

3:7. . . . I, Nephi, said unto my father: I will *go and do* the things which the Lord hath *commanded*. . . .

1:5-6, 14. [And he] *prayed* unto the Lord, yea, *even with all his heart*, in behalf of his people . . . and he saw and *heard* much; and . . . he did exclaim . . . : Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty! Thy throne is high in the heavens, *and thy power, and goodness, and mercy are over all the inhabitants* of the earth; and, because thou *art merciful, thou wilt not suffer those who come unto thee that they shall perish!*

1:20. *And when the Jews heard these things they were angry* with him . . . and they also sought his life. . . .

wine, and eat no bread from the fire, until the Lord shall hear your entreaty. And we hearkened to the commandment of our father, and made naked our bodies, we drank no wine and ate no bread, and we prayed to the Lord for the city of Jerusalem, and the Lord pitied his people and turned away his anger, and we saw it and our soul was rejoiced, and we said, It is good for us to be so.

9. And the king said to us, Ye have done well. Now therefore mingle with my people, and eat bread and drink wine, and glorify your Lord, and ye shall be serving God and the king. But we said, We shall not *disobey God*.

Then the king was enraged and *set us in prison*, and we passed that night there.

And behold a light shone in the building, and an angel uncovered the prison and laid hold of the crowns of our heads, and took us out of the prison, and *set us beside the water of the river*,

and said to us, *Whithersoever the water goes, go ye also*.

And we travelled with the water and with the angel. When therefore he had brought us to this *place*, the river was dried up and the water was swallowed up by the abyss, and *he made a wall round this country*, and there came a wall of cloud, and *shadowed above the water*;

2:3. . . . he was *obedient* unto the word of the Lord, wherefore he did as the Lord commanded him.

7:14. . . . and Jeremiah have they cast into *prison*. . . .

2:6. . . . when he had traveled three days in the wilderness, he pitched his tent in a valley *by the side of a river of water*.

17:8. And . . . the Lord spake unto me, saying . . . *across these waters*.

18:8. . . . we did put forth into the sea and were *driven forth before the wind* towards the *promised land*.

[Jacob 7:26. . . . our lives passed away like as it were unto us a dream, we being a *lonesome* and a solemn people, wanderers, *cast out* from Jerusalem . . .]

[2 Ne 3:5. . . . a *branch which was to be broken off*. . . .]

and he did not scatter us all over the earth, but gave to us this country.

10:13. Wherefore, he said it must needs be that we should be led with one accord into the *land of promise*, unto the fulfilling of the word of the Lord, that we should be *scattered upon all the face of the earth*.

[Cf. 1 Ne 18:23 and 3 Ne 15:15.]

Chapters 7 through 9 of Zosimus contain the story of a small group of people who were saved from the ravages of an unrepentant king and of Babylon during the ministry of the Prophet Jeremiah (see Jeremiah 35:1–19). The account of Zosimus is remarkably similar to the overall story of 1 Nephi, so little comment is likely required.

Notice in particular the use of soft plates in both records and the references to impending destruction, to the need for repentance, to the father who leads the group away, to the obedience and sacrifice of the righteous followers, to the deliverance by an angel (cf. 1 Nephi 3:29), and to the journey across the sea to the land of promise in relation to the scattering of Israel, each common to both accounts. The parallels here are more circumstantial than literary, whereas they were more literary in previous chapters.

Chapters 7 through 9 of the Narrative constitute its centerpiece. This section is stylistically and probably historically prior to the rest of the Narrative,¹² and so it is not unreasonable to believe that the historical roots of the traditions preserved here are very ancient indeed.

[Included here are some weaker parallels from assorted sections from Nephi, Jacob, Enos, Alma, and Mormon.]

10. Hear, ye sons of men, hear the way of life of the life of the blessed. For God placed us in this *land*, for we are holy but not immortal. For the *earth produces most fragrant fruit*, and *out of the trunks of the trees comes water sweeter than honey*, and these are our food and drink.

18:24–25. . . . we did put all our seeds into the *earth* . . . that they did *grow exceedingly*; wherefore, we were blessed in abundance.

8:11. . . . the fruit thereof . . . was *most sweet, above all* that I ever before tasted. . . .

17:4–5. And we did sojourn for the space of many years, yea, even eight in

¹²Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research*, pp. 223–28.

We are also *praying night and day*, and this is all our occupation.

Hear, ye sons of men; with us there is no vine, nor ploughed field, nor works of wood or iron, nor have we any house or building, nor fire nor sword, nor *iron* wrought or unwrought, *nor silver nor gold*, nor air too heavy or too keen.

Neither do any of us take to themselves *wives*, except for so long as to beget two children, and after they have produced two children they withdraw from each other and continue *in chastity*, not knowing that they were ever in the intercourse of marriage, but being in virginity as from the beginning. And the one child remains for marriage, and the other for virginity.

11. And there is no count of *time*, neither weeks nor months nor years, for *all* our day is *one day*.

In our caves lie the leaves of trees, and this is our couch under the trees.

But we are not naked of body, as ye wrongly imagine, for we have the *garment of immortality* and are not ashamed of each other.

the wilderness. And we did come to the land which we called Bountiful, because of its much *fruit* and also *wild honey*. . . .

[Alma 34:21. Cry unto him in your houses, yea, over all your household, both *morning, mid-day, and evening*.]

18:25. . . . we did find upon the land of promise, as we journeyed in the wilderness, that there were beasts in the forests of every kind, both the cow and the ox, and the ass and the horse, and the goat and the wild goat, and all manner of wild animals, which were for the use of men. And we did find all manner of *ore*, both of *gold*, and of *silver*, and of copper.

[Jacob 2:25–28. Wherefore, thus saith the Lord, I have led this people forth out of the land of Jerusalem, by the power of mine arm, that I might raise up unto me a righteous branch from the fruit of the loins of Joseph. Wherefore, I the Lord God will not suffer that this people shall do like unto them of old. . . . For there shall not any man among you have save it be one *wife*; and concubines he shall have none; For I, the Lord God, delight in the *chastity* of women. . . .]

[Alma 40:8. . . . *all is as one day* with God, and *time* only is measured unto men.]

12:11. And the angel said unto me: Look! And I looked, and beheld three generations pass away in righteousness; and their *garments were white* even like unto the Lamb of God. And the angel said unto me: These are made white in the blood of the Lamb, because of their faith in him.

At the sixth hour of every day we eat, for the fruit of the tree falls of itself at the sixth hour, and we eat and drink our fill, and again the water sinks into its place. *We also know you who are there in the world, and who are in sins, and your works,*

for every day the *angels of the Lord come and tell them to us*, and the number of your years.

But *we pray for you to the Lord*, because we also are of you and of your race, except that God has chosen us, and has set us in this place without sin.

And the *angels of God* dwell with us every day, and tell us *all things concerning you*,

and we rejoice with the angels over the works of the just, but over the works of sinners we mourn and lament, *praying to the Lord that he may cease from his anger and spare your offences.*

[Mormon 8:35–36. Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not . . . and *I know your doing* . . . yea, even every one, have become *polluted*. . . .]

[Mormon 8:35. . . . But behold, *Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me*. . . .]

1:5. . . . Lehi, as he went forth *prayed unto the Lord*, yea, even with all his heart, *in behalf of his people*.

11:8, 12–13. . . . the *Spirit* said unto me: Look! And . . . I looked and beheld the great city of Jerusalem, and also other cities. . . .

[2 Ne 1:4. For, behold, said he, I have seen a vision, in which I know that Jerusalem is destroyed. . . .]

[Enos 9, 11. . . . I began to feel a desire *for the welfare of my brethren*, . . . wherefore, I did pour out my whole soul unto God for them.]

Zosimus is instructed here, and in subsequent chapters, concerning life among these blessed ones. He first learns about the world in which they live. As is the case in the promised land of the Nephites, the land of the blessed in the Narrative of Zosimus is described as an ideal land which almost effortlessly produces fruit and all the necessities of life. The material things of life are richly abundant for the righteous.

He is next instructed in two aspects of the righteous life: prayer and chastity. In most versions of the Narrative, these principles have been cast in terms of an ascetic or monastic life, allowing only minimal divergence from constant prayer and sexual abstinence to

attend to the necessities of life and perpetuate the race. While this is consistent with the probability that these Narrative sections were subject to extensive interpolation by later writers, it is worth noting that chastity and prayer are among the practical religious teachings found on the small plates of Nephi.

Zosimus then learns that the people of the land of blessedness keep no track of time, since all their life is as one day. Being timeless, they approach immortality. In a later section of the Book of Mormon, Alma also states that time or the length of life is measured only to mortals.

As in chapter 5 above, the Narrative refers particularly to the garments of immortality worn by the righteous. This “clothing” refers to the immortal powers these people possess.

Finally, Zosimus is told of the great concern the blessed have for those still in the world. Each day the angels tell the blessed about the sins and works of people in the world; and the blessed pray for these people, especially that the Lord might turn away his anger from them. This shows a high degree of correspondence to Book of Mormon texts which indicate that the Nephites retained deep concerns for those remaining in the old world. They too received revelation concerning the lives of those they had left behind, and a major concern of the prophets in the Book of Mormon is praying for those who they know are in danger of God’s wrath.

There are no specific similarities between the Book of Mormon and the Narrative in the small remaining portion of the Narrative. In chapters 13 through 15, Zosimus is told how the souls of the blessed are taken up to God when they are called. This only very generally parallels King Benjamin’s statements in Mosiah 2:26–28 anticipating his own return to God. In chapters 16 through 17, the Narrative retraces Zosimus’ steps from the land of blessedness back to the worldly wilderness where he began. It may be significant, in evaluating the meaning this Narrative might have had for the early Christians, that Zosimus is said to have brought back the tablets upon which had been inscribed the history of these people and the instructions he had been given. Upon returning to his cave, Zosimus sets up this knowledge as a covenant (or testament).

Certain manuscripts of Zosimus’ Narrative contain a postscript in which the devil and 1,360 demons tempt and torment Zosimus after his return to the world. Through prayer and the knowledge he has acquired, Zosimus vanquishes the devil, who agrees to tempt men no longer. Zosimus uses the knowledge and covenant received during his journey as a great shield against the devil’s powers. Perhaps a final

point of contact can be discerned here, inasmuch as the Book of Mormon also promises that the knowledge of those who have been scattered will return again and that the forces of evil will thereby be ultimately vanquished (see, for example, 1 Nephi 13–14).

CONCLUSION

Despite the many similarities set forth in this article between the Book of Mormon and the Narrative of Zosimus, it is difficult to draw any specific conclusions regarding possible direct relationships or, on the other hand, the independence of these documents with respect to each other. We simply know too little about the authorship and transmission of the Narrative of Zosimus to venture any judgment about the kind of spiritual experiences its author had as compared with the visions and revelations of Lehi. Similarly, we cannot know precisely what influence general literary or cultural backgrounds may have had upon those responsible for composing and transmitting the Narrative of Zosimus or, for that matter, upon Nephi as he recounted his own and his father's inspirations. Perhaps someday we will have greater knowledge to assess what connections, if any, stand between these two intriguing ancient accounts.¹³

In the meantime, however, it seems both reasonable and productive that one continue to study these two texts together. Both deserve greater attention, and neither should be erroneously judged amiss against valid ancient Judeo-Christianity. Before the recognition of similarities such as those between the Book of Mormon and the Narrative of Zosimus, it was possible to reserve interest in the Book of Mormon by wondering why no other Ancient Near Eastern books existed which closely resembled it. On that score, one need wonder no longer.

¹³For example, some day we may know more about the teachings of the mysterious Rechabites, a seminomadic religious group located in the deserts of southern Israel about the time of Lehi (2 Kings 10:15–17). This might prove relevant, since Rechab is specifically mentioned in the Narrative of Zosimus and since Lehi may have had some contact with this group. Second, perhaps it might also be that some ritual known to both Lehi and the author of the Narrative of Zosimus stands as a common backdrop behind these texts. The Narrative may be viewed as a veiled account of a ceremony in which the initiate passes out of the world, through a garden paradise, beyond a conflict with a wicked king, and into a setting where he receives instructions which are finally set up as a covenant. (Cf. Hugh W. Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1975], esp. pp. 255–83.)

Joseph Smith and the Manchester (New York) Library

Robert Paul

In a recent work on Mormon origins, it was again suggested that Joseph Smith may have derived some of his religious and theological ideas from the old Manchester Rental Library, a circulating library located within five miles of the Smith family farm.¹ This claim has received wide circulation, but it has never really received the serious critical consideration it merits. This paper attempts to assess the Manchester Library—its origin, content, current disposition, and possible usefulness to Joseph Smith and others prior to the organization of the Church in 1830.

The Manchester Library was organized around 1812 and was originally called the "Farmington Library," since at this early time the village of Manchester, as an unincorporated entity, had not been formed. (Thus, in 1820 the Smith farm was located in Farmington Township, not Manchester, a minor point which occasionally still causes some confusion.) The actual date of the library's formation, however, has been obscured by conflicting information. In 1964 Vivian Pratt, wife of Dr. John H. Pratt, the last private owner of the library, believed that the library had been formed "about 1812." Much earlier, in 1911, Dr. Pratt had written that the library was started in 1814. However, in an interview with Brigham Young University Professor M. Wilford Poulson in August 1932, Dr. Pratt indicated that the founding date was 1815. Surviving court records of Ontario County establish that the formal organization occurred in January 1817. The earliest entry in the "Secretary's Record Book" of the library for the year 1817 suggests an even earlier formation date. Subsequent entries substantiate this view. Most likely, therefore, the

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¹See, for example, Robert N. Hullinger, *Mormon Answer to Skepticism* (St. Louis: Clayton Publishing House, 1980).

Manchester Library was organized—at least loosely—as a lending institution no earlier than 1812, but more probably around 1815 or 1816.²

As initially conceived, the Manchester Library was intended to be a self-sustaining enterprise: a thousand shares of stock were authorized to be issued at two dollars each, allowing full membership in one of the region's first circulating libraries.³ In addition, yearly membership dues of twenty-five cents and fines for damaged or overdue books provided revenues from which additional books were purchased. The Manchester Library eventually gained a wide reputation as a good circulating library. In 1832, for instance, nearly twenty years after its founding, a separate "Librarian's Record Book" was started for those patrons who lived in Canandaigua, the county seat, eight miles south of Manchester.

As stated in the Preamble of the "Constitution of the Farmington Library kept in Manchester," the purpose of the library was strictly literary.⁴ The constitution stipulated the nature of the society, election of officers, qualifications for membership, convening of meetings to conduct business (annually on the second Tuesday in January), and book lending practices and fines. The articles were followed by a list of names, which eventually grew to include seventy-six members, many of whom were prominent in the development of Ontario County.⁵ The most important institutional member of the society was the librarian, whose duty it was to insure the regular and orderly use of the library, collect fines, and supervise the de facto purchasing of books. Except for the first years of the library's existence, when Addison N. Buck was installed by ballot as librarian, John Pratt from 1818 until his death in 1865 served continuously as the society's librarian. The library itself was kept in Pratt's Manchester home, and it remained in the hands of the Pratt family for four generations. In

²A brief description of the Farmington and Manchester townships may be found in Charles F. Milliken, *A History of Ontario County, New York and Its People*, 2 vols. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1911), 1:406–7; and Milton V. Backman, Jr., *Joseph Smith's First Vision*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), pp. 10–17. For the origin of the Manchester Library, see, respectively, Mrs. M. R. Broman (Vivian Pratt) to Richard L. Anderson, 16 December 1964, Manchester Library Collection, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter cited as BYU Special Collections); Milliken, *History of Ontario County*, p. 414; Statement by John H. Pratt, box 6, folder 4, [p. 36], M. Wilford Poulson Collection, BYU Special Collections; and Miscellaneous Records, Book C, 178, Ontario County Court House, Canandaigua, N.Y.; and "Secretary's Record Book, 1817–1854," [p. 1], Manchester Library Collection File, Ontario County Historical Society (hereafter cited as OCHS Collections).

³In contrast, the earliest circulating library in Rochester, a town about five times larger than the village of Manchester, was Marshall's Circulating Library, in operation from 1823 to 1825. For information on the development of such libraries in America, see David Kaser, *A Book for a Sixpence: The Circulating Library in America* (Pittsburgh: Beta Phi Mu, 1980).

⁴"Secretary's Record Book, 1817–1854," [p. 1], OCHS Collections.

⁵Compare "Secretary's Record Book, 1817–1854," [pp. 5–7], OCHS Collections, with Milliken, *History of Ontario County*, pp. 407–14.

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THE PROPERTY OF
Manchester Library.

REGULATIONS.

1—Every second Tuesday in each month are general issuing and returning days—the returning to end at 4 o'clock, P. M. and the drawing to commence.

2—Every stockholder shall be entitled to take out two volumes at a time for each right held by him.

3—The annual meeting for choosing Trustees is on the second Tuesday of January in each year.

4—The quarterly meetings of the trustees are on the second Tuesdays of January, April, July, and October, in each year.

5—Each stockholder is to pay \$ cents to the Treasurer on the second Tuesday of January in each year.

FINES.

1—For detention of every volume over the time fixed, three cents per day.

2—If a book is lost or spoiled, the stockholder is to pay for the same and set, together with an addition of 20 per cent.

3—For injuring or defacing a volume, by turning down a leaf, dropping grease or other filthy matter thereon, soiling the outside or otherwise, such sum as shall be assessed by the Librarian—having regard to the injury and value of the book.

Courtesy of BYU Special Collections

Bookplate from accession no. 36, William Jay's *Short Discourses to Be Read in Families*, at one time owned by M. Wilford Poulson. This volume is now in BYU Special Collections.

1943–44, upon the death of John H. Pratt, M.D., 222 of the original Manchester Library books were donated by his widow to the Ontario County Historical Society in Canandaigua, New York.⁶

Eventually the library grew to at least 421 books, of which 275 were actually purchased in, or before, 1830. An examination of these reveals much concerning the kinds of books available to the expanding region of western New York as well as those which were found to be particularly popular and useful among library patrons. The library contained a wide range of books readily available in the area: literature (58), history (42), religion (33), biography (24), adventure and exploration (16), science (natural philosophy and natural history) (15), philosophy (moral and political) (11), reference (“how-to” books and advice) (11), military events (10), anthropology (9), and geography (7).⁷

While most of the books were not directly relevant to emerging themes within either the new church or its growing literature, it has been suggested that several of the books dealt with material which directly, or at the least implicitly, formed the intellectual material from which Joseph borrowed his doctrines.⁸ Themes discussed in some of these books and those developed by Joseph Smith (which eventually were expressed in the religion and theology of the new church) include American antiquities, the Hebraic origin of the Indians, the plurality of worlds, South American geography, missionary efforts among the American Indians, and early Christian developments.

For example, Josiah Priest’s *The Wonders of Nature and Providence Displayed* (1825) contains a potpourri of topics ranging from natural history and philosophy to religion and literature. This work includes a verbatim extract of all the salient arguments of Ethan Smith’s thesis of the Hebraic origin of the American Indians

⁶Included also in this gift were 86 volumes from Dr. John H. Pratt’s personal medical history library (“Accession Records,” OCHS Collections). Secondary records indicate that the Manchester Library at one time held in excess of 600 volumes (see Milliken, *History of Ontario County*, p. 414).

⁷Assuming that the “accession” numbers were assigned in sequence as books were added to the library, by 1830 there appear to have been 275 books, since book no. 276 was published the year following. All books with accession numbers 1 through 275 have publication dates of 1830 or earlier. For purposes of this discussion, therefore, we will restrict ourselves to the first 275 books. Numbers in parentheses indicate how many items of each subject were represented.

⁸To document this assertion fully, would, of course, be to provide a history of anti-Mormonism, a subject fraught with emotion and polemics. Some useful sources which may be consulted, however, include Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), passim; H. Hougey, “A Parallel”—*The Basis of the Book of Mormon* (Concord, Calif.: Pacific Publishing Co., 1963), pp. 3–6, 48–55; R. N. Hullinger, “The Lost Tribes of Israel and the Book of Mormon,” *The Lutheran Quarterly* 22 (August 1970): 327–28; L. S. Jonas, *Mormon Claims Examined* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1961), pp. 39, 42–44; W. M. Jones, *A Critical Study of Book of Mormon Sources* (Detroit: Harlo Press, 1964), pp. 12–14, et passim; and Sidney B. Sperry, *Problems of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1964), pp. 172–79.

presented in the first edition of his *View of the Hebrews* (1823).⁹ The Priest volume had already begun to circulate among Manchester Library patrons by late 1826.

The concept of multiple world systems and of inhabitants in celestial orbs, in both time and space, was thoroughly discussed in two Manchester Library volumes by Thomas Dick, one of the most prolific advocates of the pluralist doctrine. His *Philosophy of a Future State* (1829) and *The Christian Philosopher* (1823) deal extensively with the notion that the universe is fully peopled both for the glory of God and for the pleasure of man. These volumes did not begin to circulate, however, until early 1830. Brief extracts from Dick's *Future State* later appeared in the *Latter-day Saint Messenger and Advocate* of December 1836.

The geography of South America was first chronicled in full detail for European and American readers by the naturalist Alexander von Humboldt in his *Personal Narrative of Travels to the . . . New Continent* (1815). This (and later editions) became one of the two most popular and widely read accounts of the New World in the nineteenth century. (The other account which readers found captivating was *The Voyage of the Beagle* [1839] by Charles Darwin.) The Humboldt volume began circulation among Manchester Library patrons in January 1827. American archaeological evidences were discussed briefly in Humboldt but were extensively examined in Josiah Priest's *American Antiquities*, which the Manchester Library held in the third edition. This edition, however, was not published until 1833, becoming a widely discussed book in various editions. Again brief extracts from *American Antiquities* eventually were reprinted in the Church publication *The Latter-day Saints Millennial Star* of 1846 as evidence of Book of Mormon archaeology. One is left with the distinct impression, though, that the Priest book, even at this relatively late date in early Church developments, was considered novel among Church members.¹⁰

Other books found in the Manchester Library dealing with significant themes reminiscent of a variety of Book of Mormon and Church

⁹Ethan Smith's principal evidences for the Hebraic thesis are presented in his chapter 3 and are reproduced as pages 290 to 325 in Priest. Smith's considerably expanded 1825 edition, however, contained material unavailable to Priest. It was the second edition which B. H. Roberts used in his 1920s studies on Book of Mormon origins. For recent discussion of Roberts's analysis, see M. U. Sowell, "Defending the Keystone: The Comparative Method Reexamined," pp. 44, 50-54; and G. D. Smith, "Defending the Keystone: Book of Mormon Difficulties," pp. 45-50, both in *Sunstone* 6 (May-June 1981).

¹⁰See, for instance, *The Latter-day Saints Millennial Star* 7 (1846): 60, 67-71, 85-88; and 12 (1850): 265.

occurrences include John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* (1811), giving accounts of Christian heroes and martyrs and appearing in numerous editions as perhaps one of the most widely displayed, if not read, volumes on the American frontier; John Heckewelder's *Narrative of the Mission of the United Brethren among the . . . Indians* (1820); and David Hudson's *History of Jemima Wilkinson, a Preacheress of the Eighteenth Century* (1821), a biography of one of the three lasting religious innovators to appear in eighteenth century America.¹¹

The first serious, sustained treatment of the question whether the Manchester Library might have provided significant literary material to Joseph Smith was made by M. Wilford Poulson, professor of psychology at Brigham Young University from 1910 to 1966 and a major Mormon and Western Americana book and manuscript collector and dealer.¹² Poulson's own interest in Mormon Americana was stimulated by a variety of factors, but particularly by the publication of a psychological study of Joseph Smith and the origins of the Book of Mormon undertaken by Dr. Walter F. Prince, executive research officer of the Psychic Research Society in Boston.¹³ Beginning about 1929, Poulson embarked upon a tireless search for published and unpublished materials relating to Mormon origins. Except for a very small circle of confidants, few knew at the time what Poulson had undertaken, and still fewer realized that by 1942 Poulson had managed to reconstruct the entire Manchester Library as it probably existed in the first half of the nineteenth century.¹⁴ Among his many prized possessions were two of the original Manchester Library volumes, William Jay's *Short Discourses* (1812) and the *Memoirs of*

¹¹Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* has been one of the most influential books of both religious and literary history. Originally written in Elizabethan times, the mid-Victorian edition ran to eight bulky volumes. Numerous abridgments and popular versions of Foxe have been published in order to give it greater currency.

¹²After Poulson's death in 1969, his extensive collection, including 7,420 books, was donated to Brigham Young University (see *BYU Alumnus* 24 [June 1970]: [1]; and M. Wilford Poulson Collection Register, BYU Special Collections).

¹³See Walter F. Prince to M. Wilford Poulson, 15 December 1929, and M. Wilford Poulson to Walter F. Prince, 13 November 1932, box 1, folder 7, and additional documents and letters in this location and in box 5, folder 4, M. Wilford Poulson Collection, BYU Special Collections; Walter F. Prince, "Psychological Tests for the Authorship of the Book of Mormon," *American Journal of Psychology* 28 (1917): 373-95; and "A Footnote: Authorship of the Book of Mormon," *American Journal of Psychology* 30 (1919): 427-28.

¹⁴Poulson's only public announcements concerning his work on Mormon literary sources appeared through the Utah Academy. See his "Library Resources for the Scientific Study of Mormonism," *Proceedings, Utah Academy of Sciences* 7 (15 July 1930): 37-38; and "Manchester (New York) Library, 1812-1830," *Utah Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters* 19-20 (1941-42): 13. For an easily accessible account of Poulson's work, see Sam Taylor, "The Secret Quest of the BYU Bogyman," in *Rocky Mountain Empire: The Latter-day Saints Today* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1978), pp. 224-37.

Stephen Burroughs (1811), both of which he acquired from Dr. John Pratt during a 1932 trip to eastern libraries and Church sites.¹⁵

Poulson's interest was to use his collection eventually as a basis from which he might examine critically the influences of secular sources on the origins of the Church. "As a student of the psychology of religion," he wrote to Walter Prince in 1933, "I am interested in whatever sheds light on the origin of Mormonism." Poulson hoped to "make a real contribution in relation to our thinking on early Mormonism and its background."¹⁶ Unfortunately, he did not live to complete this work and left no critical assessment of the Manchester Library or any hint of its possible usefulness to the rise of Mormonism.

Poulson's work on the Manchester Library and Mormon origins generally, however, did not go unnoticed. It eventually provided materials used by other scholars to examine the contents of the library. In May 1966, the J. Reuben Clark, Jr., Library (since renamed the Harold B. Lee Library) at Brigham Young University obtained photocopies from the Ontario County Historical Society of most of the reproducible materials relating to the Manchester Library.¹⁷

Recently it has been intimated by various writers that the Manchester Library provided useful, if not substantive, material from which Joseph Smith borrowed to develop a variety of themes important to the Restoration. Samuel Taylor, for instance, following his intellectual mentor Professor Poulson, has suggested that "Joseph Smith had had access [to the Manchester Library] during the prophet's formative years."¹⁸ Although it is likely that Taylor is only *suggesting* the possibility rather than making the stronger claim of actual use, his assertion, even in the weaker sense, should be explored. Did Joseph, in fact, have access to the Manchester Library? If so, did he explore its resources? If he did, to what extent did he make use of the available materials? Affirmative responses to some of these

¹⁵Of the 421 duplicated Manchester Library volumes which Poulson had collected, only twenty-two, including one of the two original volumes (Jay's *Short Discourses*), remain intact, namely accession numbers 36, 49, 52-55, 64, 70, 72, 97, 115, 118, 122, 131, 140, 158, 167, 180, 193-95, and 208. They are currently housed in BYU Special Collections. Concerning his eastern jaunts, see box 1, folder 7, M. Wilford Poulson Collection, BYU Special Collections. Thanks are expressed to Wesley P. Walters for bringing to my attention that Poulson once owned the original Manchester Library volume on Stephen Burroughs (accession no. 122).

¹⁶M. Wilford Poulson to Walter F. Prince, 4 August 1933 and 10 June 1934, M. Wilford Poulson Collection, BYU Special Collections.

¹⁷A brief description of the library is given in Backman, *First Vision*, pp. 32, 48. Also, see Mrs. M. R. Broman to Richard L. Anderson, 16 December 1964, Manchester Library Collection, BYU Special Collections. The Manchester Library Collection at BYU, however, does not presently contain the first "Manchester Rental Library Withdrawal Record Book, 1826-1837" available at the Ontario County Historical Society.

¹⁸Taylor, *Rocky Mountain Empire*, p. 231.

queries, especially with respect to the Manchester Library, have recently been advanced by Robert N. Hullinger.¹⁹

Even though Joseph Smith and others involved in the early years of the Restoration could have had access to the Manchester Library (insofar as anyone who paid the necessary membership fees could participate fully in the activities of the library), none of the principal individuals—including Joseph—became a member nor made direct use of its resources. None of the library's secretary books, of which there are three extant at the Ontario County Historical Society, lists any patron who affiliated himself with the new church.²⁰ Moreover, if Joseph had wished to explore the literary materials of the day, it would have been unnecessary to travel the five miles to Manchester when in Palmyra, only two miles distant, there were several bookstores and at least one library, the contents of which he would have been free to peruse.

Timothy C. Strong, owner and editor of the *Palmyra Register* (1817–21), announced the opening of a bookstore in December 1817 located in his Palmyra printing office. In May 1818, he announced he had received a new selection of books. And in September 1818, about 250 volumes were advertised by title in his weekly.²¹ (Numerous books included in this last shipment were later to be found in the Manchester Library, suggesting that the Manchester Library Society may have acquired many of its early volumes from Strong's Palmyra Bookstore.)

In December 1820, and later in October 1822, other bookstores were opened in Palmyra, one by Leonard Wescott and another by E. F. Marshall, respectively, offering works on science, history, religion, philosophy, medicine, and travel.²² After Pomeroy Tucker and E. B. Grandin purchased Strong's newspaper in 1823, changing its name to the *Wayne Sentinel*, they opened the Wayne County Bookstore, stocking "a general and well selected assortment of books."²³ (Tucker and Grandin changed the name of their bookstore back to Palmyra Bookstore in 1826.) Shipments of a wide variety of

¹⁹See Hullinger, *Mormon Answer to Skepticism*, pp. 36, 39, 44–47, 57, et passim.

²⁰The three books are (1) "Secretary's Record Book, 1817–1854," (2) "Manchester Rental Library Withdrawal Record Book, 1826–1837," and (3) "Manchester Rental Library Withdrawal Record Book, 1838–1857."

²¹See *Palmyra Register*, 10 December 1817, 24 December 1817, 15 September 1818, and 27 October 1819. For a brief description of the contents of the September 1818 purchase, see Backman, *First Vision*, pp. 48–49. (Backman inadvertently misidentified the purchase date as October 1818).

²²*Palmyra Register*, 27 December 1820 and 2 October 1822.

²³*Wayne Sentinel*, 12 May 1824, 14 July 1824, and 1 December 1826.

books seemed to arrive regularly about every year or so from 1818 on.²⁴

Bookstores were also located in Canandaigua, eight miles south of the Smith farm. Here J. D. Bemis, owner and editor of the *Ontario Repository* as well as local book printer and publisher, operated the Canandaigua Bookstore, while a rival, H. Tyler, operated the Ontario Bookstore.²⁵

As early as 1819, and occasionally thereafter, book auctions were held in Palmyra. In one case, "scores" of books were received from New York City "comprising history, divinity, medicine, law, travels."²⁶ During the winter of 1822–23, a library was established in Palmyra. Later, in 1828, E. B. Grandin, publisher of the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon, established a circulating library for the public in Palmyra.²⁷ The availability of bookstores and libraries in Palmyra, together with the fact that the Smith family regularly obtained the *Palmyra Register* and later the *Wayne Sentinel* from the newspaper office which doubled as a bookstore, would have mitigated the need to travel nearly three times the distance to acquire literary materials from the Manchester area.²⁸

Clearly Joseph Smith had access to a wide range of books in that he lived in proximity to libraries and bookstores. The larger question as to whether he actually made use of these materials, either from libraries and bookstores or from privately owned sources, remains an issue which continues to elude definitive treatment. We can be reasonably certain, however, that young Joseph did not exploit the resources of the Manchester Library. It may be that Joseph's own educational training, both formal and informal, had not prepared him at this early age to deal with libraries and bookstores generally. It is known, for instance, that Joseph briefly attended schools in Palmyra in 1818 and that he used several elementary textbooks in arithmetic and reading.²⁹ There is little direct evidence that his literary skills extended much beyond a cursory acquaintance with a few books. As Joseph's mother, Lucy Mack Smith, wrote in her biography of the

²⁴*Palmyra Register*, 12 May 1818, 15 September 1818, and 27 October 1819; *Palmyra Herald*, 2 October 1822; *Wayne Sentinel*, 12 May 1824, 1 December 1826, 25 January 1828, 19 December 1828, and 11 December 1829.

²⁵*Palmyra Register*, 24 December 1817 and 30 October 1822; *Wayne Sentinel*, 14 July 1824, 20 October 1824, and 1 December 1826.

²⁶*Palmyra Register*, 16 June 1819; *Wayne Sentinel*, 30 August 1825.

²⁷*Wayne Sentinel*, 3 December 1823, 27 June 1828, 23 January 1829, and 10 September 1829.

²⁸See Milton V. Backman, Jr., "Awakenings in the Burned-over District: New Light on the Historical Setting of the First Vision," *Brigham Young University Studies* 9 (Spring 1969): 316; Joseph Smith, Jr., regularly purchased the *Wayne Sentinel*; see *Wayne Sentinel*, 11 October 1825 and 6 October 1826.

²⁹See John H. Evans, *Joseph Smith: An American Prophet* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1933), pp. 35, 94.

Prophet, Joseph was a “remarkably quiet, well-disposed child.” He “seemed much less inclined to the perusal of books than any of the rest of our children, but far more given to meditation and deep study.”³⁰

Joseph Smith eventually did acquire a modest personal library and supported the formation of the Nauvoo Library and Literary Institute, to which he donated many of his own books in 1844. Given his unlettered background, however, it is likely that during the 1820s he simply was not a part of the literary culture, that portion of the population for which books provided a substantial part of its intellectual experiences.³¹ If Joseph in fact did not avail himself of published books at this early date, however, there still remains a wide range of literary sources to which he may have had access, such as newspapers, lectures and tracts (both religious and political), and almanacs. Such sources would certainly be more in keeping with his informal educational background, and that of his frontier neighbors. The existence of these other sources may, in fact, account more directly for Joseph’s probable noninvolvement with the Manchester Library and perhaps most other libraries and bookstores of his region.

³⁰Lucy Mack Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet* (Liverpool: S. W. Richards, 1853), pp. 73, 84. For a brief overview of educational practices and opportunities in western New York and Palmyra specifically, see Backman, *First Vision*, pp. 49–52.

³¹See Kenneth W. Godfrey, “A Note on the Nauvoo Library and Literary Institute,” *BYU Studies* 14 (Spring 1974): 386–89.

Appendix: The Manchester (New York) Library Holdings, 1812–45

The number scheme employed in the following list corresponds to the accession numbers originally assigned to the Manchester Library books as they were purchased and made available to library patrons. Those volumes marked with an asterisk (*), of which there are 222, are currently in the Rare Book Collection of the Ontario County Historical Society (OCHS), Canandaigua, New York. By 1830, 275 books had been purchased (accession number 275), while the collection stood at around 421 volumes by 1845.³²

Two complementary listings of the Manchester holdings are available. One identifies each of the 421 volumes with one or two words and occasionally the author's last name; the other list, compiled when the library was donated to the OCHS in 1943–44, lists reasonably complete bibliographic information on about half of these volumes.³³ Since numerous entries in these lists are either incomplete or missing altogether, a careful perusal of the extant volumes at the OCHS itself was needed to supply much of the missing bibliographic information.³⁴ In some cases, of course, it is nearly impossible to identify unambiguously the bibliographic data. For instance, in the case where books are missing from the collection altogether (nearly half of the volumes), often only the scantiest of information is available from either of the lists, such as a single word from the book's title. Also some of the entries are not sufficiently precise to identify which book is meant. Where data is thus altogether lacking from primary sources or these secondary listings, no editorial note is provided; rather the entry is left as it appears on these lists.

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Don Muller, director of the Ontario County Historical Society, for his help in using the Society's resources.

- *1 De Voltaire, Marie Francois. *The History of Charles XII, King of Sweden*. Otsego, N.Y.: H. & E. Phinney, Jr., 1811.
- *2 [Nares, Edward.] *I says, says I: a novel by Thinks-I-to-Myself*. Boston: Bradford and Read, 1812.
- *3 Gass, Patrick. *Journal of the voyages and travels of Capt. Lewis and Capt. Clarke, of the Army of the United States from the mouth of the river Missouri through the interior parts of North America to the Pacific Ocean during the years 1804, 1805, and 1806*. Philadelphia: M. Carey, 1811.
- *4–5 Cowper, William. *Poems*. 2 vols. New York: Whiting and Watson, 1812.
- *6–7 Silliman, Benjamin. *A journal of travels in England, Holland, and Scotland, and of two passages over the Atlantic, in the years 1805 and 1806*. 2 vols. 2d ed. Boston: T. B. Wait and Co., 1812.

³²Although only 420 accession numbers were originally assigned, number 297 is a duplicate. There are some indications that the library eventually contained about 600 volumes, although there exists no catalogue record for this view. See Milliken, *History of Ontario County*, 1:414. When the Manchester Library was donated to the Historical Society in 1943, it contained, in addition to the 222 original volumes, 86 additional volumes from Dr. John Pratt's own medical history library.

³³See "Numbers of the Volumes in the Manchester Library" and "Books from the old Manchester Library," Manchester Library Collection File, Ontario County Historical Society. A copy of these partial listings is available also in BYU Special Collections.

³⁴Additional bibliographic information was obtained from *The National Union Catalog*, the *British Museum General Catalogue of Printed Books*, the *Catalogue of the Library of Thomas Jefferson*, and the OCLC computer-based library system.

- *8 Junius [pseud.]. *Letters*. 2d Am. ed. Philadelphia: M. Carey, 1807.
- *9 Jefferson, Thomas. *Notes on the State of Virginia*. Philadelphia: M. Carey, 1803.
- 10 Weld, H. H. *Life of Benjamin Franklin*. Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1786.
- 11-12 Knickerbocker, Diedrich. *A history of New York, from the beginning of the world to the end of the Dutch dynasty*. 2 vols. 2d ed. New York, 1812.
- *13-14 Ramsay, David. *The history of the American Revolution*. 2 vols. Trenton: J. J. Wilson, 1811.
- 15 Goldsmith, Oliver. *History of Greece* [abridged]. London, 1787.
- *16 ———. *An abridgement of the history of England; from the invasion of Julius Caesar to the death of George the Second*. From the 12th ed. Philadelphia: M. Carey, 1808.
- 17 ———. *A history of Rome from the earliest times* [abridged]. London, 1772.
- *18 Morse, Jedidiah, and Parish, Elijah. *A compendious history of New England*. 2d ed. Newburyport: Thomas and Whipple, 1809.
- *19 Ramsay, David. *The Life of George Washington*. New York: Hopkins and Seymour, 1807.
- 20 Mackenzie, Sir Alexander. *Voyages from Montreal, through the Continent of North America*. London: T. Cadell, Jr., and W. Davies, 1802.
- 21 *Natural History*.
- *22 More, Hannah. *Practical piety; or, the influence of the religion of the heart on the conduct of the life*. Baltimore: J. Kingston, 1812.
- 23-24 Roche, Regina M. D. *Children of the Abbey; a tale*. 2 vols. London: W. Mason, 182?.
- 25 [Anon.] *Laughable budget of wit; a selection of choice bon mots, repartees, anecdotes, etc.* Kilmarnock, Scotland: H. Crawford, 1820.
- *26-33 Addison et al. *The Spectator*. 8 vols. Philadelphia: Johnson and Warner, 1810. [Only volumes 6, 7, and 8 are found at OCHS.]
- *34 Foxe, John. *The book of martyrs, an abridgement*. New York: S. Wood, 1811.
- 35-36 Jay, William. *Short discourses to be read in families*. 2 vols. Hartford, 1812.
- *37 Smellie, William. *The philosophy of natural history*. Dover, N.H.: Thomas and Tappan, and S. Bragg, Jr., 1808.
- *38 Fessenden, Thomas Green. *Original Poems*. Philadelphia: L. Press, 1806.
- 39-40 Johnson, Samuel. *The Idler*. 2 vols. Philadelphia: Tesson and Lee, 1803.
- *41 Goldsmith, Oliver. *The Vicar of Wakefield, a tale*. Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1823.
- *42-43 Morse, Jedidiah. *The American Universal Geography; or a view of the present state of all the kingdoms, states, and colonies in the known world*. 2 vols. 6th ed. Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1812.

- *44 Arrowsmith, Aaron. *A new and elegant general atlas, comprising all the new discoveries, to the present time*. Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1812.
- 45 Baldwin, Edward [William Godwin]. *Fables ancient and modern*. 5th ed. London: Thomas Hodgkins, 1812.
- 46 Baker, Charles. *Manual*. London: Varty, 1800.
- *47 Fuller, Andrew. *The gospel its own witness: or, the Holy Nature, and Divine Harmony of the Christian religion, contrasted with the immorality and absurdity of deism*. Boston: Manning and Loring, 1803.
- *48 Arndt, Rev. Johann. *True Christianity; or, the whole economy of God towards man, and the whole duty of man towards God*. Translated by A. W. Boehm. 2 vols. Boston: Lincoln and Edmands, 1809. [Only one volume is found at OCHS.]
- *49 Bunyan, John. *The pilgrim's progress from this world to that which is to come*. New York: John Tiebout and L. Nichols, 1804.
- *50 Butler, Frederick. *Sketches of universal history, sacred and profane, from the creation of the world to the year 1818 of the Christian era*. Hartford: O. D. Cooke, 1822.
- *51 [Anon.] *The guide to domestic happiness*. 2d Am. ed. New Haven: Sidney, 1807.
- *52-59 Rollin, Charles. *The ancient history of the Egyptians, Carthaginians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Medes and Persians, Macedonians and Grecians*. 8 vols. New York: E. Duyokinck, and M. and W. Ward, 1812.
- 60 No title listed.
- *61 Murray, Lindley. *Sequel to the English reader: or, elegant selections in prose and poetry*. From the 3d English ed. New York: Collins and Perkins, 1810.
- *62 ———. *The power of religion on the mind, in retirement, affliction, and at the approach of death*. 10th ed. New York: I. Collins and Son, 1802.
- *63 Backus, Charles. *The scripture doctrine of regeneration considered, in six discourses*. Hartford: Hudson and Goodwin, 1800.
- *64 Baxter, Richard. *The Saints' Everlasting Rest; or, a treatise on the blessed state of the saints in their enjoyment of God in Glory*. Portsmouth, N.H.: C. Peirce and W. Treadwell and Co., 1802.
- *65 Mason, John. *Self knowledge: A treatise, shewing the nature and benefit of that important science, and the way to attain it*. Boston: I. Thomas and E. T. Andrews, 1793.
- 66-69 No titles listed.
- 70 L'Estrange, Sir Roger. *Seneca's Morals; by way of abstract to which is added, a discourse under the title of An after thought*. 3d Am. ed. Boston: J. Bumstead, 1800.
- *71 Park, Munge. *Travels in the interior districts of Africa*. New York: E. Duyokinck, 1813.
- *72 Spafford, Horatio G. *A gazetteer of the State of New York*. Albany: H. C. Southwick, 1813.
- 73 Felton, Cornelius C. *Life of William Eaton*. Brookfield, 1813.

- *74-79 Pope, Alexander. *Works, with his last corrections, additions, and improvements; with the life of the author.* 6 vols. London: D. Buchanan, 1804.
- *80-81 Curran, John P. *Speeches of John Philpot Curran, esq. with a brief sketch of the history of Ireland, and a biographical account of Mr. Curran.* 2 vols. New York: I. Riley, 1811. [Only volume 1 is found at OCHS.]
- 82 Temple, John. *The Irish Rebellion.* London: R. Wilks, 1812.
- *83-84 Cook, James. *A voyage towards the South Pole, and round the world.* 2 vols. Dublin: J. Williams et al., 1784.
- *85 Goldsmith, Oliver. *Goldsmith's Natural History: abridged, for the use of schools.* Philadelphia: Johnson and Warner, 1810.
- *86 de Laverne, Leger M. P. T. *The life of Field Marshal Souvarof.* Baltimore: E. J. Coule, 1814.
- *87 Svin'in, Pavel P. *Some details concerning General Moreau, and his last moments.* Baltimore: E. J. Coule and Harrod and Buel, 1814.
- *88-89 Clark, Edward D. *Travels in various countries of Europe, Asia and Africa.* 2 vols. New York: Fay and Co., 1813-14. [Only volume 2 is found at OCHS.]
- *90 Porter, Sir Robert K. *A narrative of the campaign in Russia, during the year 1812.* Hartford: G. Sheldon and Co., 1814.
- *91-92 Locke, John. *An essay concerning human understanding. With a life of the author.* 2 vols. Boston: Cummings and Hilliard and J. T. Buckingham, 1813.
- *93 Clark, Thomas. *Sketches of the naval history of the United States.* Philadelphia: M. Carey, 1813.
- *94 Ramsay, Andrew M. *The travels of Cyrus: to which is annexed, a discourse upon the theology and mythology of the pagans.* Albany: Pratt and Doubleday, 1814.
- *95 Clarke, Hewson. *The history of the war.* London: T. Kinnersley, 1817.
- *96-97 Clarkson, Thomas. *Memoirs of the private and public life of William Penn.* 2 vols. Philadelphia: Bradford and Inskeep, 1814.
- *98-100 ———. *Portraiture of Quakerism; taken from a view of the education and discipline, social manners, civil and political economy, religious principles and character of the Society of Friends.* 3 vols. New York: S. Stansbury, 1806.
- *101 Foster, John. *Essays in a series of letters to a friend.* 1st Am. ed. From 3d English ed. Hartford: Lincoln and Gleason, 1807.
- *102 Low, Samuel. *Poems.* Vol. 2 of 2 vols. New York: T. and J. Swords, 1800.
- 103 Honeywood, St. John. *Poems.* New York: T. and J. Swords, 1801.
- *104 Duncan, William. *The elements of logic.* Albany: Whiting, Backus, Whiting, 1804.
- *105 Taylor, Samuel. *An essay intended to establish a standard for an universal system of stenography.* Albany: Websters and Skinner, 1810.
- *106 Hofland, Barbara W. H. *The Son of a genius; a tale for the use of youth.* New York: Eastburn, Kirk and Co., 1814.
- *107 Scott, Sir Walter. *The Lay of the Last Minstrel, a Poem.* Savannah: Seymour and Williams, 1811.

- 108–109 Porter, Jane. *Thaddeus of Warsaw; a historical novel*. 2 vols. 2d Am. ed. New York: I. Riley, 1810.
- 110 Montolieu, Isabelle. *Caroline of Lichtfield*. Translated by T. Holcroft. New York: R. Scott, 1815.
- 111 Westerhouse, Benjamin. *A journal of a young man of Massachusetts, late a surgeon on board an American privateer, who was captured at sea by the British*. Boston: Rowe and Hooper, 1816.
- *112–113 *History of Montalbert*. 2 vols. [Only volume 1 is found at OCHS.]
- 114 Riley, James. *An authentic narrative of the loss of the American brig Commerce*. Hartford, 1817.
- *115 Hall, Basil. *Extracts from a journal*. Vol. 1 of 2 vols. 2d ed. Edinburgh, 1824.
- *116 Labaume, Eugene. *A Circumstantial Narrative of the campaign in Russia, embellished with plans of the battles of the Moskwa and Malo-Jaroslavits*. Hartford: S. Andrus and P. Peck and Co., 1817.
- *117–118 Porter, Jane. *The Scottish Chiefs, a Romance*. 5 vols. 3d ed. London, 1816.
- *119 von Humboldt, Alexander. *The travels and researches of Alexander von Humboldt, being a condensed narrative of his journeys in the equinoctial regions of America, and in Asiatic Russia*. New York: J. and J. Harper, 1833. [This is a later edition than the original Manchester Library holding.]
- 120 Adams, John. *Flowers of Ancient History*. 3d ed. London: G. Kearsley, 1796.
- *121 Kimball, Horace. *The Naval Temple: containing a complete history of the battles fought by the navy of the United States, from its establishment in 1794 to the present time*. Boston: B. Badger, 1816.
- 122 Burroughs, Stephen. *Memoirs of Stephen Burroughs*. Albany: B. C. Packard, 1811.
- 123 Brown, Samuel R. *The Western Gazetteer; or, emigrant's directory*. n.p., 1817.
- *124 Morse, Jedidiah. *The history of America*. Philadelphia: J. Webster, 1819.
- 125 Robinson.
- *126 Salzmann, Christian G. *Elements of Morality*. Baltimore: J. Robinson, 1811.
- *127–128 [Anon.] *Sketches of modern life*. 2 vols. London: W. Miller, 1799.
- *129 Fletcher, Rev. Dr. *Reflections on the Spirit, etc., of religious controversy*. New York: B. Dornin, 1808.
- *130 Riley, James. *An authentic narrative of the loss of the American brig Commerce*. Hartford, 1817.
- 131 Adams, Hannah. *Dictionary of all religions*. Boston, 1817.
- 132 Haddock's Narratives.
- 133 Took, Andrew. *The Pantheon, representing the fabulous histories of the heathen gods*. 31st ed. London: J. Johnson, 1803.
- 134 Boyle's Voyages.
- *135 Ezekiel, Terry, comp. *Narrative of the adventures and sufferings of Samuel Patterson*. Palmer, Mass., 1817.

- 136 Radcliffe, Ann Ward. *Romance of the Forest*. Walpole, N.H.: Thomas and Thomas, 1806.
- *137-138 Woodworth, Samuel. *The Champions of freedom, or the mysterious chief*. 2 vols. New York: C. N. Baldwin, 1816. [Only volume 2 is found at OCHS.]
- 139 [Anon.] *Beauty of Poetry*. Albany: Churchill and M'Glashan, 1814.
- 140 Sampson, Ezra. *The brief remarks on the ways of man: or, compendious dissertations, respecting social and domestic relations and concerns*. 2d ed. Canandaigua, N.Y.: J. D. Bemis, 1823.
- *141 Nelson, Robert. *The practice of true devotion, in relation to the end, as well as the means, of religion*. Boston: B. Watt and Co., 1812.
- *142 Tuke, Henry. *Memoirs of the life of George Foxe*. Philadelphia: B. and T. Kite, 1815.
- *143 Savage, Richard. *Poetical Works, with the life of the author*. New York: Wm. A. Davis, 1805.
- 144 Montgomery, James. *The wanderer of Switzerland, and other poems*. London: Vesnor and Hood, 1806.
- 145 Bennett, John. *Letters to a young lady*. Philadelphia: J. Grigs, 1829.
- 146 Montolieu, Isabelle. *Caroline of Lichtfield*. Translated by T. Holcroft. New York: R. Scott, 1815.
- 147 Johnson, Samuel. *Rasselas, the Prince of Abyssinia*. 10th ed. London, 1798.
- *148 Sampson, Ezra. *The youth's companion, or an historical dictionary: consisting of articles chiefly selected from natural and civil history, geography, astronomy, zoology, botany, and mineralogy*. Hudson: N. Elliott, and Websters and Skinners, 1816.
- *149 Woods, Leonard. *A sermon, preached at Haverhill (Mass.) in remembrance of Mrs. Harriet Newell*. Utica, N.Y.: Wm. Williams, 1818.
- 150 *Other Poems*.
- *151 [Anon.] *The Christian companion in his field and garden*. Harrisonburg, Va.: Davidson and Bourne, 1814.
- 152 Meikle, James. *Solitude Sweetened; or, miscellaneous meditations*. Edinburgh, 1803.
- *153 Wright, Paul. *A complete life of our Blessed Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ*. Windham: S. Webb, 1814.
- *154 Campbell, John. *Travels in South America*. Andover, Mass.: Flagg and Gould, 1816.
- 155 *Anecdotes of Peter the Great*.
- *156 von Zimmermann, Johann Georg. *Solitude considered with respect to its influence on the mind and the heart*. Boston: J. Bumstead, 1804.
- *157 Woodbury, Fanny. *Writings of Miss Fanny Woodbury*. 3d ed. n.p.: S. T. Armstrong, n.d.
- *158 Baxter, Richard. *A call to the unconverted*. Canandaigua: J. D. Bemis, 1818.
- *159-165 *The Literary and Philosophical Repertory*. 7 vols. Middlebury, Vt.: T. C. Strong, 1814-1815. [Only volume 7 is found at OCHS.]
- 166-167 Goldsmith, Rev. J. [Sir Richard Phillips]. *A general view of the manners, customs and curiosities of nations; including a geographical*

- description of the earth*. 2 vols. New Haven: J. Babcock and Son, 1822.
- 168 *Ray's Poems*.
- *169 Marcet, Jane. *Conversations on natural philosophy*. Philadelphia: J. Y. Humphreys, 1821.
- *170 Goodrich, Charles A. *A history of the United States*. 3d ed. Hartford: Barber and Robinson, 1824.
- *171 Mead, Matthew. *The almost Christian discovered; or, the false professor tried and cast*. Poughkeepsie, N.Y.: P. Potter, 1815.
- 172 Sedgwick, Catharine M. *A New-England Tale*. New York: E. Bliss, 1822.
- *173 Young, Edward. *The complaint; or, night thoughts on life, death, and immortality*. Brookfield: E. Merriam and Co., 1818.
- *174 Butler, Frederick. *Sketches of universal history, sacred and profane, from the creation of the world to the year 1818 of the Christian era*. Hartford: O. D. Cooke, 1822.
- 175-176 Cooper, James Fenimore. *The Spy; a tale of the neutral ground; referring to some particular occurrences during the American war*. 2 vols. n.p.: 1822.
- 177 Morse, Jedidiah. *The American Gazetteer*. New York: M. Carey, 1797.
- 178 Harvey, James. *Meditations and contemplations*. Brattleborough, Vt.: Wm. Fessenden, 1814.
- 179 Lothrop, Jason. *Juvenile philosopher; or youth's manual of philosophy, natural, experimental, and analytic*. 2d ed. Geneva, N.Y.: J. Bogert, 1823.
- *180 Horry, P., and Weems, M. L. *The life of General Francis Marion*. 9th ed. Philadelphia, 1823.
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The Historians Corner

Edited by James B. Allen

The first item in this issue of "The Historians Corner" provides some fascinating insight not only into the relationship between Utah and the nation in 1850 but also into the tensions involved in certain national debates, as viewed by a Mormon in Congress. In this interesting letter, John M. Bernhisel gave some of his observations on the debates leading to the famous Compromise of 1850. The outcome of these debates was all-important to the Mormons, for it would determine their political relationship to the United States. Utah was part of the territory acquired in the war with Mexico, and one of the issues in the debates of 1850 was what to do, politically, with that territory. The Mormons were attempting to achieve statehood as the State of Deseret, and John M. Bernhisel was their representative in Congress working toward this goal. In the end, Congress admitted California as a free state, while the rest of the Mexican cession was organized as New Mexico and Utah territories. The Mormons thus lost their bid for self-government and did not achieve statehood for Utah until 1896. Bernhisel's 1850 letter has been edited by James F. Cartwright, assistant archivist, Weber State College.

The second document provides an interesting and important sequel to the story of this early quest for statehood. Among other things, it took Wilford Woodruff's "Manifesto" of 1890, announcing the Church's abandonment of the practice of polygamy, to pave the way for the admission of Utah to the Union in 1896. In a personal reminiscence, Brigham H. Roberts expresses his immediate reaction to that momentous announcement, as well as the reaction of a few other General Authorities. The way his initial disappointment is finally turned to full acceptance and support of the "Manifesto" is a very significant commentary on the problems and feelings of his day.

The B. H. Roberts letter has been edited by Ronald W. Walker, senior research historian with the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute of Church History. It is particularly appropriate that Dr. Walker's piece be included in this issue of *BYU Studies* for, beginning with the next issue, Dr. Walker will become the editor of "The Historians Corner."

After a decade of working with “The Historians Corner,” I wish to express great appreciation to the editors of *BYU Studies* and the officers of the Mormon History Association for the fine support they have given me. I am also most grateful to the many people who have submitted items for “The Historians Corner” and wish to express my deep appreciation for the efforts of everyone who has been so helpful. I am confident that under the fine direction of Ronald Walker “The Historians Corner” will become even better.

—James B. Allen

JOHN M. BERNHISEL LETTER TO BRIGHAM YOUNG

James F. Cartwright

As a student of Dr. Everett L. Cooley in archives and manuscripts at the University of Utah, I received the assignment of working with a letter from John M. Bernhisel¹ to Brigham Young. Dr. Bernhisel wrote this letter, now a part of the Phillip Blair Collection in the Special Collections of the Marriott Library at the University of Utah, on 23 April 1850 while serving as an appointed delegate to the U.S. Congress. The letter contains an informative account of the tensions dividing the nation over the admission of California, the organization of the remainder of the Mexican Cession territory, and, of course, the conflict concerning the extension of slavery into the western territories. John Bernhisel records a dramatic outburst of these tensions

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I appreciate Dr. Cooley's encouragement and permission to publish this letter and likewise appreciate the assistance Mrs. Della Dye, the manuscripts librarian at the Marriott Library, has given me.

¹John M. Bernhisel was born 23 June 1799 near Loysville, Cumberland Co., Pennsylvania. Probably in 1818, he left the family farm and traveled to Philadelphia to study at the University of Pennsylvania medical school. He completed the course for a certificate in 1820 and then traveled extensively, practicing for several months in various towns of the American West of that time: Trenton, Ohio; Herculaneum, Missouri; Nashville, Tennessee; Lexington, Kentucky; and Sparta, Alabama. In 1825, he reentered the University of Pennsylvania medical school, defending his thesis in March 1827. He then moved to New York City where he heard about Mormonism and joined the LDS church. After serving as the presiding authority in New York City for a few years, he moved to Nauvoo in 1843. Following the death of the Prophet Joseph, Emma Smith allowed him to make a copy of Joseph's manuscript corrections of the Bible. Early in 1849, John Bernhisel was selected by a convention meeting in Salt Lake City to carry a petition to the U.S. Congress for either statehood or territorial status. On his way to Washington, D.C., Dr. Bernhisel met Thomas L. Kane in Philadelphia, and throughout his career in Washington sought advice from Colonel Kane in representing the Mormons in Washington. Following the organization of Utah Territory, Dr. Bernhisel represented Utah in Washington, D.C., until 1863 after which he returned to Utah to practice medicine. (James Keith Melville, *Conflict and Compromise: The Mormons in Mid-Nineteenth Century American Politics* [Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1974], pp. 57–60, 65–70, 88; and Gwyn William Barrett, “John M. Bernhisel, Mormon Elder in Congress” [Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1968], pp. 1–15.)

in the Senate between Senators Thomas Hart Benton² of Missouri and Henry Stuart Foote³ of Mississippi. Bernhisel's perspective of this incident and of other events he records is that of one who, though involved in these issues, was primarily concerned with the status of Utah; therefore his pages on the progress of the various compromises making up the Compromise of 1850 provide interesting source material on Utah history.

Bernhisel's letter is written on two pieces of paper 15 3/8 inches long by 9 7/8 inches high. Each sheet of paper is folded in half vertically, creating four leaves per sheet, the first three of which are lined with blue ink while the fourth is blank, undoubtedly to be used as the cover when the letter was folded and sealed.

As the two sheets are numbered with ink of the same color as the letter itself, it seems Bernhisel did this numbering; someone later has penciled page numbers 2, 3, and 4 on the unnumbered leaves of the first sheet and 6, 7, and 8 on those of the second sheet and has crossed out the 2 written in ink at the beginning of the second sheet and written 5 above. On the last leaf, Bernhisel finished his letter on the top 2 3/4 inches and wrote a postscript on the bottom 2 3/4 inches, leaving 5 3/8 inches for the address after the letter was folded and sealed.

Bernhisel's hand is highly legible, his spelling and punctuation consistent and quite similar to twentieth-century standards. He usually wrote a superior *r* in *Mr* with a colon turned onto its side under it. He did the same in writing the *st* and *d* of ordinal numbers. Following the suggestions of the *Harvard Guide to American History*, I have omitted the colon beneath the superior letters, and have lowered the superior letters to the main line. I have followed Bernhisel's

²Thomas Hart Benton, born 14 March 1782 in North Carolina, attended the University of North Carolina briefly before moving to Tennessee to supervise a large tract of land which his father had left the family at his death several years earlier. In 1809, Thomas Benton served in the state legislature and in 1811 gained admission to the state bar. In 1815, he moved to St. Louis; there he developed an extensive law practice and became editor of the *Missouri Enquirer*. In 1820 he became one of Missouri's original senators, beginning thirty years of service in that capacity. In the Senate, Thomas Hart Benton was a moderate, being a slave owner but favoring gradual abolition of slavery in Missouri, being an expansionist but rejecting the "54° 40' or Fight" slogan and opposing the annexation of Texas as an insult to Mexico. In most situations, he was an ardent unionist; he opposed the Compromises of 1850 because he felt they conceded far too much to the Southern secessionists. (*Dictionary of American Biography*, ed. Allen Johnson [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929], s.v. "Benton, Thomas Hart," 2:210-13.)

³Henry Stuart Foote, born in Virginia 20 September 1800, graduated from Washington College (now Washington and Lee University) and passed the bar examination shortly before moving to Alabama and then, in 1826, to Mississippi. He gained a high reputation as a criminal lawyer and became active in local political affairs. By 1847, when he won election as senator from Mississippi, he was an outspoken opponent of his colleague from Mississippi, Jefferson Davis. During the debates in 1850, Jefferson Davis and all the congressmen from Mississippi condemned the compromises and advocated the expansion of slavery and the states' rights of secession; Henry Stuart Foote vehemently supported the Union, denied the rights of secession, and championed the compromises as the means of maintaining the Union. (*Dictionary of American Biography*, ed. Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931], s.v. "Foote, Henry Stuart," 6:500-1; and *Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, ed. James Grant Wilson and John Fishe [New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1888], 2:496.)

practice of omitting periods following such abbreviations as *Mr*, *Col*, and *Hon*. I have made one more major change: I have broken the letter into several paragraphs, although Bernhisel wrote the entire letter in one paragraph.

Washington City April 23, 1850

President Brigham Young,

Dear Brother

As this is probably the last opportunity I shall enjoy for a long period of addressing you, I eagerly embrace it, in order to apprize [*sic*] you of what has transpired since the date of my last, which was the 27th ultimo. The Hon John C. Calhoun, the distinguished⁴ Senator from South Carolina, died at his lodgings in this city, on the morning of the 31st of March, aged sixty eight years. Mr Calhoun was one of the brightest luminaries in the political firmament. In 1811 he was first elevated to a seat in the Congress of the United States, and since that period, as Representative, Senator, Cabinet Minister, and Vice President, he has been identified with all the great events in the political history of this country. His earthly remains were enclosed in a metallic case, and temporarily deposited in a vault in the Congressional Burying Ground, from whence they were conveyed on the 22d instant, accompanied by a Committee of the Senate, to his "adored and adoring" South Carolina.

On the 13th instant Thomas Jefferson Campbell, Clerk of the house of Representatives, "went to that bourne from whence no traveler returns," and on the following Wednesday Judge Young⁵ of Quincy, Illinois, was elected to supply the vacancy occasioned by his death.

On the 17th of April, instant, a long and animated debate took place in the Senate, which terminated in a most disgraceful row, in which Senators Benton & Foote were the principal actors. Mr Foote was discussing a question of appeal, and was preparing to administer to Col Benton another withering castigation, when the latter, brimful of wrath and indignation, rose from his seat, threw his chair violently upon the floor, rapidly approached Mr Foote, who retreated backward down the aisle to the area in front of the Vice President's chair, at the same time drawing a revolver from his bosom, and pointing it toward Col Benton. The greatest excitement and consternation now ensued. The whole Senate, as well as those in the galleries, appeared to be panic stricken.

In the mean time Benton, at the top of his voice, was heard shouting that he was unarmed, and for the "cowardly assassin" to fire, at the same time attempting to take off his coat, to expose himself to the murderous fire. Fortunately, however, Mr Foote did not fire, and after great exertion and much trouble order was sufficiently restored, to hear the voice of the Vice President whose calls to order were heard above the noise and din of the moment.

⁴Bernhisel made a slip of the pen in this word, dotting the *e* in the inflectional ending *ed*. That it was a pen slip seems obvious in that this example is the only one in the letter.

⁵Richard M. Young presided at the trial of the men accused of conspiracy in the murder of Joseph and Hyrum Smith (see Dallin H. Oaks and Marvin J. Hill, *Carthage Conspiracy: The Trial of the Accused Assassins of Joseph Smith* [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975], p. 220).

Col Benton demanded that the Senate should take cognizance of the attempt to assassinate him. Mr Clay called on both Senators to pledge themselves that nothing further should take place between them, at least, not during the session of Congress. Mr Benton rose and said that he had done nothing wrong—had committed no breach of the peace—and would rot in jail before he would give any such pledge. Though I was an eye witness of this thrilling and startling scene, yet it is impossible for me to give you an adequate idea of it. The Senate appointed a committee of seven to investigate and report the facts in the case. Col Benton has called the attention of the United States District Attorney for this District, and that of the Grand Jury, to the conduct of his adversary, though public sentiment here is rather against him. I send you the Washington Globe of the 19th which contains a report of the debate which took place on that memorable day, and a brief sketch of the beautiful *finale*. These two dignified Senators had an altercation on a previous occasion, which reflected no credit on themselves nor upon the august body of which they are members.

On the 31st of December Mr Senator Foote reported a Bill to provide for the organization of the Territorial Governments of California, Deseret, and New Mexico, and to enable the people of Jacinto, with the consent of the State of Texas, to form a Constitution and State Government, and for the admission of such State into the Union on an equal footing with the original States in all respects whatsoever. On the 25th of March, Judge Douglass, from the Committee on Territories, reported a Bill to establish the Territorial Governments of Utah and New Mexico, and for other purposes. On the 3d instant the Hon John A. McClernand of Illinois, submitted to the House of Representatives a Bill to admit the State of California into the Union, to erect the Territorial Governments of Utah and New Mexico, and for other purposes. A copy of each of these bills I have had the pleasure of forwarding to you, which I trust will have reached you ere you receive this.

On Friday last the Senate appointed a Committee of thirteen, of which Mr Clay is chairman, for compromising and adjusting the slavery, California, and Territorial questions. I am not very sanguine that any great good will result from the labors of this Committee. After the appointment of this committee, the Senate took up the bill for the admission of the state of California, and made it the special order of the day for Monday the 6th proximo. Mr Clay signified his intention of moving as an amendment to that bill, the bills to establish the Territorial Governments of Deseret alias Utah, and of New Mexico.

The exciting and distracting subject of slavery, in connection with the California and Territorial questions, has been the standing topic of discussion, with the exception of a few brief intervals, in both wings of the Capitol, during the whole of the session thus far. Now, however, there will be a short respite in the Senate, but it will continue in the popular branch of the national legislature. This protracted and exciting discussion has sometimes in both Houses, produced much noise and "confusion worse confounded"; frequent threats of dissolution of the Union, and occasional threats of, and even attempts at, personal violence. Another disreputable [*sic*] personal controversy took place on

Monday last between Col Benton and Senator Borland of Arkansas. The United States Senate has heretofore been regarded as the most dignified deliberative body in the world, but it is rapidly losing [*sic*] its exalted reputation. Formerly its proceedings were conducted with the greatest dignity and decorum, and Senators treated one another, not only with studied Senatorial courtesy, but with marked personal respect, but those glorious days of the Republic are numbered with the past, and the Lord has arisen and come forth out of his hiding place, and is vexing this nation through its representatives. On the 22d instant Col Benton in the course of some remarks which he delivered in the Senate, said, that what had hitherto taken place, was mere skirmishing, that when the California bill shall come up for discussion, the *war* would commence.

The prospect is much brighter at present than it was when I wrote you last, that California will be admitted, and that Congress will give us a territorial government before the close of the session, but still a week or two may entirely blast the present prospect, for the aspect of things here changes about as often as a camelion [*sic*] changes his color.

I should like to be in the valley "once more again," but I am somewhat apprehensive that I shall be detained here until the season is so far advanced that it will not be safe to return on account of the snow in the mountains. If a bill to establish a territorial government in our sequestered region of country⁶ should be passed into a law, which may occupy two or three months more; sometime [*sic*] will then probably elapse before the President can be induced to nominate officers, and then there will be another delay in the Senate before these nominations are confirmed.

I shall be exceedingly anxious to hear from you again, I hope therefore you will not omit writing in the fall. Direct to Washington City. If I should not be here I will endeavor to prevent your favor from being sent to the dead letter office. A company will doubtless come in next autumn; and you will please to instruct them, not to deposit [*sic*] any letters they may have for me in any post office until they reach St. Louis. If I shall be on my way to the far west I shall probably meet them.

I have made proposals to the Post office Department in behalf of brother Phenias [*sic*] Young, for carrying the mail twice a year between St. Joseph, Missouri, and Oregon City, in the Territory of Oregon, for the annual sum of nineteen thousand dollars. The decision of the Post Master General in regard to these proposals, will be known on the 14th of May.

With great respect I am
Yours very truly.
John M. Bernhisel

P.S. The enclosed notice of a lecture which Col Thomas L. Kane delivered before the Pennsylvania Historical Society on the 28th ultimo, I cut from the Philadelphia Inquirer; which he had the goodness to send me.

⁶A period in the original letter at this point is another obvious pen slip.

B. H. ROBERTS AND THE WOODRUFF MANIFESTO

Ronald W. Walker

Recent historical writing about President Wilford Woodruff's Manifesto on plural marriage has stressed its continuity with previous policy. For instance, historians have found that a year prior to its issuance the First Presidency had stopped new polygamous marriages and drafted a preliminary but uncirculated resolution stating the Church's new course of action. The latter has been labeled by a significant new Ph.D. dissertation as "the greatest concession on plural marriage" made by the Church in 1890, including the more celebrated Woodruff Manifesto.¹

However, these events lay behind the scenes. As a result, many Mormons, including leaders, were surprised by the Manifesto. In the reminiscence below, Elder B. H. Roberts records his startled reaction.² As a missionary, writer, polygamist, and for the past two years General Authority in the First Council of the Seventy, the thirty-three-year-old churchman had fiercely defended Mormonism's marriage system. To abandon his advocacy, B. H. Roberts required a spiritual striving equal to the struggles of many first-generation Mormons when the doctrine was first introduced.

While providing only a few details, the excerpt also suggests the reaction to the Manifesto of four members of the Quorum of the Twelve. Elders Francis M. Lyman and Abraham H. Cannon greeted the news with untroubled equanimity—for Elder Cannon the task was made easier by his foreknowledge of the First Presidency's new position. In contrast, Elders John Henry Smith and John W. Taylor shared some of Roberts's travail. Still unresolved many years later, Taylor's antipathy for the pronouncement eventually led him out of the Quorum and the Church itself.

It so happened that about this time I was returning from a somewhat extended tour thro southern Utah. At Milford I joined Elder[s] F[rancis] M. Lyman, J[ohn] H[enry] Smith, John W. Taylor and A[braham] H. Cannon all members of the Quorum of the 12 on their way to Salt Lake

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¹Edward Leo Lyman, "The Mormon Quest for Statehood," (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Riverside, 1981), p. 294; see also Kenneth W. Godfrey, "The Coming of the Manifesto," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 5 (Autumn 1970): 11–25.

²This passage is found in the B. H. Roberts Diary, undated but written in 1893, B. H. Roberts Papers, Manuscripts Division, Special Collections Department, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City,

City from Kanab where they had been settling difficulties. We left Milford in the eve. and was due in Salt Lake [the] next morning at 10 a.m. But the train that left Salt Lake for the south, making the trip also in the night, was wrecked a short distance above Oasis and tore up the track for half a mile or more. Consequently we found when we woke up in the morning that we had not completed half the journey. Learnin[g] that we were only a few miles from the wrecked train (no one had been hurt), Elder Taylor and myself started for the scene of the disaster. A hand car loaded with section men & tools soon overtook us and we rode with them to the wreck. It was only a number of freight cars and flat cars loaded with steel nails that had been thrown from the track. The two passenger coaches were O.K. In these cars[,] Elder Taylor who entered them while I was lingering about on the outside talking with the passengers, found the Salt Lake [news]papers containing President Woodruff's Manifesto. As soon as I entered the car he called to me and showed me the paper containing the document, the headlines of wh[ich] I read with astonishment. But no sooner had I read them, than like a flash of light all through my soul the spirit said—"That is all right," so it passed. Then I began to reflect upon the matter. I thought of all the Saints had suffered to sustain that doctrine; I remembered my own exile [to England], my own imprisonment;³ I thought of that of others. I remembered what sacrifices my wives had made for it;⁴ what others had made for it. We had preached it, sustained its divinity from the pulpit, in the press, from the lecture platform. Our community had endured every kind of reproach from the world for the sake of it—and was this to be the end? I had learned to expect that God would sustain both that principle and his Saints who carried it out, and to lay it down like this was a kind of cowardly proceeding that the more I thought of it the less I liked it. I thought of Luther, of Zwinglius [*sic*], of Malancthon [*sic*] and most other men who only having fragments of the truth risked all their fortune and lives in support of them and won the admiration and respect of all the world; while we having a fulness of the truth must needs fly from it like a skitish jade⁵ at a windmill because, forsooth, we . . . are threatened with imprisonment, disfranchisement and the confiscation of our property. Such is a specimen of the reflection which passed through my mind; Bro. Taylor seemed to share them to some extent and by the time the other brethren came up I was in quite an exasperated mood, and felt crushed and humiliated.⁶ Our information seemed to agitate Bro. J. H. Smith some what; Bro Lyman was unruffled by it; Bro Cannon took it

³To escape being convicted of unlawful cohabitation, B. H. Roberts had fled to Liverpool, England, where he edited the *Millennial Star* for two years. Upon returning to Utah, he surrendered to authorities and served a four-month sentence. (Truman G. Madsen, *Defender of the Faith: The B. H. Roberts Story* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980], pp. 160–98.)

⁴B. H. Roberts had three wives: Sarah Louisa Smith, Celia Dibble, and Margaret Curtis Shipp.

⁵The term, no longer in extensive usage, denotes "a broken-down, vicious, or worthless horse."

⁶Disgruntlement with the Manifesto was not confined to Church leaders. Upon returning to Salt Lake City, Elder Cannon found "there is considerable comment and fault-finding among some of the Saints because of . . . [the] manifesto" (Abraham H. Cannon Diary, 26 September 1890, Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah).

with easy grace.⁷ An engine was sent down from Juab and hitched to the coaches that had remained on the track in the wrecked train and we started for Salt Lake. I was in no humor for conversation, hence I left the car in which the brethren were riding and took a seat by myself and gave full freedom to reflection. Bro. Lyman hunted me up after a while and talked with me on the subject of the Manifesto, but his reasoning was vain. For every excuse he could bring up for its issuance I could bring ten reasons (sufficient to my mind) why we should have held to the principle even though it cost the very annihilation of the Church.

The matter continued to disturb me until conference approached. Bro. Woodruff had signed the paper himself and I concluded that he had determined to carry the responsibility alone, and I had begun to be reconciled to the Manifesto on that ground. But during the Conference I saw that movements were on foot to have the whole people support it[,] a proceeding I viewed with alarm. When the crisis came I felt heart-broken but remained silent. It seemed to me to be the awfulest moment in my life, my arm was like lead when the motion was put; I could not vote for it, and did not.

While, as I was saying, this matter continued a trial to me through the year 1891, and plagued me much, but I said but little about it; and by and by I began to remember the flash of light that came to me when first I heard of it, and at last my feelings became reconciled to it. Perhaps I had transgressed in pushing from me the first testimony I received in relation to it, and allowing my own prejudices, and my own short-sighted, human reason to stand against the inspiration of God and the testimony it bore that the Manifesto was alright. When this fact began to dawn on my mind I repented of my wrong and courted most earnestly the spirit of God for a testimony and gradually it came. I did not understand the purposes for which the Manifesto was issued (I do not to this day, Feb 10 1893) but sure I am that it is all right; that God has a purpose in it I feel assured, and in due time it will be manifest. The principle of plurality of wives is true I know and in connection with all other truth will eventually prevail and be established on the earth; but I do not pretend to say what God's purpose is or what is to be accomplished by it. It is a matter in which I trust the divine wisdom impl[i]citly. God must be his own interpreter and in time will make it plain.

This year for some unaccountable reason has been a year of deep sorrow to me, and peculiar temptations. The flashes of light—heavenly light—have been startlingly bright, made to appear so to me, perhaps, by the thick blackness that has gathered about my horizon. But if my sorrows have been many[,] my joys have been correspondingly keen, and there have been bright moments of joy and extacy [*sic*] such a few mortals encompass; and if these bright drops of joy can be possessed

⁷When the Quorum of the Twelve met several days later, both Elders Smith and Taylor continued with their doubts. John Henry Smith frankly admitted not knowing if “the manifesto is quite right or wrong.” John W. Taylor was more outspoken. “When I first heard of this manifesto,” he related, “I felt to say ‘Damn it,’ but on further thought I felt it was not right to be so impulsive. [However,] I do not yet feel quite right about it.” Abraham H. Cannon, as mentioned earlier, knew of the previous First Presidency discussions to halt new plural marriages (*Ibid.*, 10 July and 30 September 1890).

by drinking the draughts of ill between—then fill sorrow's cup to the brim and I'll drain it dry even to the dregs and never murmur. Give me the gleams of sunshine amid these renewing storms and I will stand uncovered to receive the latter in all their fury without a word of protestation.

Authorship of the History of Brigham Young: A Review Essay

Howard C. Searle

Leland R. Nelson, comp. *The Journal of Brigham*. Provo, Utah: Council Press, 1980. x + 223 pp. \$8.95.

Reviewed by Howard C. Searle, Church Educational System college curriculum writer and instructor, Salt Lake Institute of Religion, adjacent to the University of Utah.

It is regrettable that a compilation such as *The Journal of Brigham* could not have been reviewed and exposed before it was sold through a concerted advertising campaign to a trusting and somewhat credulous public as the official diaries of Brigham Young. Criticisms of the *Journal of Joseph*, produced by the same compiler and publisher in 1979, have not deterred them from misrepresenting additional excerpts from the early Church annals as the "personal thoughts" and "writings" of Brigham Young (promotional flier in *BYU Today*). The introduction to *The Journal of Brigham* brazenly asserts that "although many books have been written *about* Brigham Young, here at last is his own story in his own words, a compilation of his first person writings from his manuscript history."

In his foreword Nelson admits that Brigham Young lacked literary skills, and that he utilized the services of "more than 20 scribes," but the extent and implications of this practice are not pursued or explained at all. Its relevance to the book's title and contents is completely ignored in the publisher's publicity releases.

Nelson's expansive claims for his publication are apparently based on the fact that Brigham Young did write three small diaries after he joined the Church in 1832. He must have started the first diary some time after his baptism, for he apparently erred in recording this significant date; the 9 April date in the diary had to be corrected to 14 April when his history was later written for publication.

There are five extant first person diaries of Brigham Young, but only three of these are holographs. The five diaries were written as noted in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Brigham Young's First Person Diaries

Dates Covered	Pages	Handwriting	Comment:
9 [14] April 1832 to 9 Sept. 1836	68	Holograph	Description of six short missionary journeys
27 July 1837 to 1 April 1845	116	Holograph	Large gaps in the narrative.
19 Oct. 1840 to c. 28 July 1844	130	Holograph	Interrupted narrative, small faded pages.
28 Sept. 1844 to 3 Feb. 1846	124	William Clayton Evan Greene John D. Lee Willard Richards	First person account kept by others.
27 May 1857 to 21 September 1857	61	Thomas D. Brown Joseph A. Young	Started by Brown in the third person, but entries from 17 June to 21 September 1857 were written in the first person by Brigham Young's son, Joseph A.

Only 314 pages of Brigham Young's early diaries are in his own handwriting (see Table 1). These pages are quite small, faded in places, and often difficult to read. The diaries are primarily missionary journals and have frequent gaps of several months and sometimes a year or more between entries. The rather sketchy and intermittent nature of these holographic diaries is indicated in Table 2 which lists the entries by year.

TABLE 2
Brigham Young's Holograph Diary Entries by Year

Year	Approx. No. Words	Year	Approx. No. Words	Year	Approx. No. Words
1832	112	1837	280	1842	31
1833	1,960	1838	27	1843	1,575
1834	None	1839	650	1844	2,400
1835	2,275	1840	2,975	1845	1,750
1836	1,260	1841	2,100		

On 28 September 1844 President Young's secretaries and the Church clerks began keeping his diary for him—just as they had done for Joseph Smith.¹ After writing the diary in first person narrative for a little over a year, the scribes switched to a third person style, which must have been easier and more natural for them. There is a definite contrast between Brigham Young's holographic diary entries and those of his scribes. The faulty spelling, unpolished grammar, colorful New England vocabulary, straightforward style, and distinctive handwriting all help to make his personal writing recognizable. The absence of many of these characteristic elements in the writing of the scribes would suggest that they were not recording verbatim dictation. Also, there does not seem to be any contemporary documentary evidence that Brigham regularly dictated his diary entries. Soon after he assumed the heavy responsibilities of Church leadership, Brigham Young apparently followed the precedent of the Prophet Joseph Smith in having his secretaries and scribes write his diaries for him.

What is deceptive about Nelson's *The Journal of Brigham* is that it was not compiled from Brigham Young's diaries at all, but from printed versions of the "History of Brigham Young," which was written by the Church Historian and his assistants after 1856. After the completion of the "History of Joseph Smith" up to 8 August 1844, the official Church annals were continued as the "History of Brigham Young." This transition in the title of the Manuscript History of the Church apparently took place in January 1857. At this point in the history, Assistant Church Historian Wilford Woodruff, who was in charge of the project in 1856–57 during the absence in the East of the Church Historian George A. Smith, digressed from the chronological organization of the preceding narrative to include some genealogical information on President Young's family and a first person biographical narrative of the new Church leader from his birth in 1801 to 8 August 1844. Inasmuch as Brigham Young had begun his leadership of the Church as the senior officer of the Twelve Apostles, it seemed appropriate to Elder Woodruff and the other compilers of the history also to include biographical flashbacks of all of the other Apostles from the time of their births to 8 August 1844, when the Twelve were sustained to lead the Church. Wilford Woodruff, the prime motivator of the project and also secretary of the Twelve at the time, proceeded to collect the materials. Where the Apostles were available, he tried to get them to write a short autobiography and

¹See Howard C. Searle, "Authorship of the History of Joseph Smith: A Review Essay," *Brigham Young University Studies* 21 (Winter 1981): 110–22.

even offered them assistance if they wanted it. In the cases of some of the early Apostles who had died or apostatized, a biography was compiled for them—a few of them written in the first person. Church Historian George A. Smith returned to Utah in the spring of 1858 and was able to assist in the final stages of the project. When the “Histories of the Twelve,” as they were called, were completed, they were copied by the clerks into a new journal which was captioned “Book G of the Manuscript History of the Church.” Except for the biographical account of Brigham Young, which was first, the “histories” were entered in the order of the Apostles’ seniority in the quorum. Although the accounts differed in length and quality, a compilation was included for every member of the quorum prior to 8 August 1844.

After the “Histories” had been copied into “Book G of the Manuscript History,” they were read to Brigham Young and other members of the Presidency and the Twelve for approval and correction. During this process, twelve pages of notes which were to be incorporated into the published version were added at the end of the book. These “Histories” were first published serially in the *Deseret News* from 27 January to 8 September 1858 and later republished in the *Millennial Star* from 9 March 1863 to 2 September 1865. Brigham Young’s biography ran in the *Deseret News* from 27 January to 24 March 1858. The “Histories” of the other Apostles were all published as subtitles of the “History of Brigham Young.” With the printing of this series, publication of the Church annals was abruptly stopped. The “History of Brigham Young,” beyond 8 August 1844, was never published in the nineteenth century; and only excerpts have been printed in the twentieth, as is shown in Table 3.

After the digressive flashback which sketched the lives of President Young and the early Apostles, the manuscript of the “History of Brigham Young” was continued as a day-by-day narrative of Church affairs as they were conducted by President Young and the Twelve after 8 August 1844. B. H. Roberts published part of this history in 1932, bringing the narrative down to 28 February 1846. The entries from 29 February to 31 July 1847 were published for the first time in 1970 by Elden J. Watson, who obtained his material from some typescript segments of the history in the Utah State Historical Society.

The entire contents of *The Journal of Brigham* have been taken from these previously published excerpts of the “History of Brigham Young.” Not only is the book a republication of available printed material, it is also a greatly condensed version of it. The

TABLE 3
The Twentieth Century Publication of the History of Brigham Young

Dates Covered	Title as Published	Editor(s)	Abridged Version in <i>The Journal of Brigham</i>
1801 to 8 Aug. 1844	<i>Manuscript History of Brigham Young 1801-1844</i> (Salt Lake City, Utah, 1968), 202 pp. Republished from the <i>Millennial Star</i> .	Elden J. Watson	pp. 1-72
9 Aug. 1844 to 28 Feb. 1846	<i>History of the Church</i> (Salt Lake City, 1932) 7:247-603. Taken from the Manuscript History of Brigham Young, located in Church Archives.	B. H. Roberts	pp. 72-135
1 Jan. 1846 to 31 July 1847	<i>Manuscript History of Brigham Young 1846-1847</i> (Salt Lake City, 1970), 611 pp. Taken from a typescript copy of the Manuscript History of Brigham Young, located in the Utah State Historical Society.	Elden J. Watson	pp. 135-223
21 July 1847 to 29 Dec. 1867	<i>History of Brigham Young</i> (Berkeley, 1964). 374 pp. Contains Manuscript abridgment of portions of the History of Brigham Young which were sent to H. H. Bancroft during the preparation of his <i>History of Utah</i> .	William L. Knecht, Peter L. Crawley	

abridgment was made without the use of ellipses or any other means to indicate where omissions from earlier publications were made.

To what extent does this abridgment from the “History of Brigham Young” comprise a “journal” or the “personal thoughts” and “writings” of President Young? Nelson boldly asserts that Brigham Young’s first person manuscript history was “put together from his personal diaries” and that “the diaries were incorporated into the manuscript history” (p. ix). The most superficial comparison of Brigham Young’s diaries and his manuscript history would clearly show that this was not the case. There are hardly any entries in the diaries that have been used verbatim in the history. Although the same chronological organization is used, there are numerous entries in the Manuscript History for dates that do not appear in the diaries at all. In fact, there is not very much in the diaries that is even recognizable in the later history. Even when Brigham Young made significant entries in his diary—such as for 8 August 1844 when he was sustained to lead the Church—the compilers of his history did not copy the diary; they either utilized other more polished sources or composed their own narrative. An indication of the relationship between the diaries and the Manuscript History is shown by the fact that where there are approximately 17,395 words in the holographic diaries from 14 April 1832 to 1 April 1845, the history for the **same** period was amplified to about 112,668 words. If the holographic diaries had been used verbatim in their entirety—which they were not—they would represent only about fifteen percent of the completed Manuscript History for the same period. There were no holographic diaries available for Brigham Young’s history from 2 April 1845 to 31 July 1846; yet excerpts from this period comprise fifty-nine percent of Nelson’s book (pp. 90–223).

If Brigham Young’s diaries were not the major source for his later Manuscript History, then what sources were utilized by the compilers? Did President Young dictate much of the history to the writers as suggested by Mr. Nelson (p. ix)? It might be assumed that the genealogical and biographical data relating to his family and early life before he joined the Church were written or dictated by Brigham Young himself, but Wilford Woodruff also solicited information from all of President Young’s brothers and sisters.² Although President Young may have personally supplied some of the information, it was actually Wilford Woodruff and the clerks in the Historian’s office

²Wilford Woodruff to Orson Pratt, 28 February 1857, Library-Archives of the Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah; hereafter cited as Church Archives.

who compiled the account for publication.³ Several rough drafts of this early biographical account are still extant in the Church Archives, but none of them are in Brigham Young's handwriting. It is, of course, understandable that President Young could not get too involved in the daily details of writing his history in 1857–58, for this was the period when, in addition to his temporal and ecclesiastical duties as LDS Church President, he was faced with such pressing concerns as famine, the Mormon Reformation, the Mountain Meadow's Massacre, the untimely death of his counselor Jedediah Grant, the invasion of Johnston's Army, and his replacement as governor of Utah Territory.

Many firsthand reliable sources were available to the Church Historian and his staff for compiling Brigham Young's history after he joined the Church in April 1832. The "History of Joseph Smith," which was completed in January 1857, would have been helpful, but there were also such sources as the official Church minutes and Church periodicals, and the journals of Willard Richards, George A. Smith, Wilford Woodruff, John D. Lee, William Clayton, and others. Many of these men were President Young's missionary companions, fellow Apostles, or secretaries, and their lives often paralleled that of their leader. These sources, bolstered by personal recollections, were apparently utilized in compiling the history to a far greater extent than the imperfect holographic diaries of Brigham Young. Of course, a detailed study still needs to be made to determine, if possible, the original authorship of the various sources that were amalgamated into the Manuscript History.

Is the first person style an evidence that Brigham Young wrote his own history? The precedent for using scribes and ghostwriters was well established during the compilation of the "History of Joseph Smith," and the Church Historian and his staff merely continued the same methodology as they wrote the Church annals for Brigham Young's administration. A rough draft of the history which begins with the narrative of 9 August 1844 was originally started in the third person, but modifications were later made, right in the text, to convert it to a first person narrative of Brigham Young. All the other sources were similarly changed to fit the first person format which had characterized the Church annals since they were begun by Joseph Smith.

There is no evidence in the Historian's Office Journal that President Young was personally involved in the compilation of his history

³Historian's Office Journal, 16 November 1857, Church Archives.

until it reached the stage where it was read to him for approval. There is little doubt that he was responsible for much of the addenda added at this time, but this certainly does not make the entire contents his personal thoughts, dictation, or writing. If Nelson would have his readers believe that this book is a “journal” of the personal writing or dictation of Brigham Young, the burden of proof still rests upon him.

Book Review

LEFGREN, JOHN C. *April Sixth*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980. xv + 67 pp. \$5.95.

Reviewed by S. Kent Brown, professor of ancient scripture; C. Wilfred Griggs, associate professor of ancient scripture and history; and H. Kimball Hansen, professor of physics and astronomy, Brigham Young University.

John C. Lefgren's *April Sixth* purports to be a scholarly work that attempts to show that both the birth and resurrection of Jesus fell on April sixth and that the Church was organized exactly 1830 years to the day after Jesus' birth. However, if one seeks a careful summary of the "latest evidence" (p. xv) promised in the "Foreword," he has come to the wrong place. The work literally abounds in unjustified assumptions, misinformation, and misunderstandings on a number of levels.

First of all, the general methodology is unscholarly. In his "Acknowledgments" (p. vii), Lefgren describes his general method of working: "The original inspiration for this book came in Finland one evening in the early spring of 1977 when I was reading the eighth chapter of Third Nephi in the Book of Mormon. Since that evening I have searched for the chronological harmony of April sixth." To even the most casual reader, the problems attending this method are blindingly obvious. To set out to prove a point rather than examine all the evidence before drawing a conclusion is to go at it backwards. When working on a scientific or historical problem—Lefgren seemingly labors on both fronts—one neither constructs the theory before the experiments nor prior to carefully sifting the sources. To do otherwise makes the case in advance and most often proves only the investigator's preconceived notions.

But apart from the faulty general methodological approach, there are specific historical and scientific problems that make *April Sixth* an unsatisfactory book: (1) dating Jesus' birth; (2) using erroneous astronomical methods and proof; (3) making faulty historical and calendrical links; (4) dating Jesus' death and resurrection; and (5) using New World chronometry to solve Old World calendrical problems.

DATING JESUS' BIRTH

One of the most vexing problems for New Testament students is to establish the date of Jesus' birth. *April Sixth* rightly notes that the fundamental difficulty in arguing for a birth date that falls during April, 1 B.C., is the statement made by Josephus, the Jewish historian who was almost a contemporary with Jesus, that King Herod died after an eclipse of the moon and before the following Passover (most scholars point to the eclipse of 12–13 March, 4 B.C.). What is most astonishing is the fashion in which Josephus's information is simply dismissed as "writings that can be ambiguous and inconsistent" (p. 14). Quite to the contrary, recent decades have witnessed a stunning series of confirmations that Josephus is indeed a reliable historian. One has only to recall his description of the last days of Jewish resistance at Masada, the mountain fortress overlooking the Dead Sea, which finally fell to the Romans in A.D. 73.¹ Dr. Yigael Yadin, the archaeologist who oversaw the excavation of Masada between 1963 and 1965, astounded the scholarly world by showing that at every point at which the archaeologists' tools could check his record, Josephus had been perfectly accurate—even though he himself had not accompanied the Roman garrison during that siege. All of which goes to show that Josephus made painstaking efforts to be factual, whether he were an eyewitness or not.

Lefgren notes that a major problem in dating Jesus' birth is dating Herod's death. The widely accepted view that Josephus was referring to the eclipse of 12–13 March, 4 B.C., has been recently disputed by W. E. Filmer (p. 13 and note 7).² After noting the eclipses of 9–10 January and 29 December, 1 B.C., Filmer opts for a date for Herod's death between 9 January and Passover in 1 B.C., since this seems to fit best the evidence as he views it. At first glance, it appears that this is fundamental support for *April Sixth's* thesis that Jesus must have been born later than 6 or 5 B.C., the dates required if indeed Herod died in the early spring of 4 B.C. Interestingly, Lefgren departs from Filmer and by himself assigns Herod's death to the period between the eclipse of 29 December, 1 B.C., and Passover of A.D. 1 even though this eclipse was well past its zenith by the time the moon appeared above the presumably cloudless horizon of Jerusalem.

¹Josephus *Jewish War* VII. viii. 1–ix. 2 (##252–406).

²We should note that there were several lunar eclipses which not only could have been seen in Jerusalem—on a cloudless night, of course—but also would have fallen within the period which forms the focus of discussions on the date of Jesus' birth. The following are four of these lunar eclipse dates: (1) Night of 15–16 September, 5 B.C.; (2) Night of 12–13 March, 4 B.C.; (3) Night of 9–10 January, 1 B.C.; and (4) Early evening of 29 December, 1 B.C.

But even Filmer's observations have not held up under scrutiny. Lefgren cites in note seven an article by Professor Timothy D. Barnes³ which proves beyond a doubt that the Passover which followed Herod's death was the Passover of 4 B.C. Let us review that evidence.

Josephus stated that Antony declared Herod to be the King of the Jews in Rome.⁴ In another work, he said Herod reigned thirty-seven years before his death and ruled thirty-four years after the death of Antigonus I, who had ruled previously.⁵ All Roman sources agree absolutely with Josephus's chronology and leave us with the following clearly outlined picture: Antony had gone east in 41 B.C.—after the Battle of Philippi in September, 42 B.C.—to raise money for the civil wars. All sources concur both that he spent the winter of 42–41 in Egypt with Cleopatra and that during the next year Parthian forces invaded Syria. The Parthians were led by Q. Labienus, son of Julius Caesar's general of that name, and Pacorus, son of King Orodes. During 40 B.C., Pacorus was warmly received in Jerusalem, Hyrcanus the High Priest was overthrown, and Herod escaped to Rome where he was proclaimed King of Judea. Three years later, Antony sent an army under C. Sosius to drive Labienus out of Judea and to establish Herod as King (Pacorus had been killed in 38 B.C.). Although he had been declared king while absent from Judea, Herod began his rule in residence in 37 B.C. and coins struck by Sosius establish this particular date. Consequently, Josephus's statement that Herod was made king thirty-seven years before his death places his demise in 4 B.C., observing that regnal years were anciently always reckoned inclusively (i.e., if a monarch lived but part of a year his rule was reckoned as if it had included the entire annual period).

It is absolutely impossible, then, that Josephus's reference can be taken in any other way, clearly ruling out the insistence in *April Sixth* that Herod must have died three or, more likely, four years later. Further, the Roman historical sources which support Josephus cannot be dismissed with a wave of the hand as *April Sixth* does when it surprisingly claims that historians "are able to define within a tolerance of at least two years the timing of the fifteenth year" of Tiberius's reign (p. 19; mentioned in Luke 3:1). Let there be no mistake about it: There exists no "tolerance of at least two years" (implying, presumably, two years one way or the other and, thus, a slippage factor of four years). The time of death for Tiberius's predecessor,

³See Timothy D. Barnes, "The Date of Herod's Death," *Journal of Theological Studies*, New Series, 19 (April 1968): 204–9.

⁴Josephus *Jewish War* I. xiv. 3 (##284f.).

⁵Josephus *Antiquities* XVII. viii. 1 (#191).

Augustus, is known almost to the minute—the afternoon of 19 August, A.D. 14—and it is plainly established that Tiberius was proclaimed emperor four weeks later on September 17.⁶

Professor Barnes's telling observations take us one step further away from the position taken in *April Sixth*, noting that Jewish tradition assigns Herod's death to the seventh day of Chislev, the Jewish month that corresponds to portions of November and December of our calendar. In this connection, Barnes naturally noted the eclipse that occurred during the night of 15–16 September, 5 B.C. It has always been somewhat difficult to fit within a three-week period following the eclipse of 12–13 March, 4 B.C., all the events mentioned by Josephus that were connected with the closing of Herod's reign. But if, as Barnes suggests, Herod really died on 7 Chislev, 5 B.C. (that is, in early December), then the dating of Herod's death would fit not only Josephus's notation that Herod died between the eclipse and the following Passover but also the Jewish tradition which assigns the event to the month of Chislev. Consequently, although Lefgren must have been aware of this information, since he cites Barnes's article, he did not take it into account in his attempt to solve this key problem for dating Jesus' birth in terms of Old World chronology. Thus, Lefgren's solution in *April Sixth* is exposed as a house built upon sand.

ASTRONOMICAL PROBLEMS

Next, let us turn to the six particular problems of astronomical phenomena which form a major bulwark of the "scientific" proofs of *April Sixth*.

1. On pages 43–44, Lefgren maintains that two lunar calendars seem to have been in use in Jesus' day (more on this to follow). The "Galileans and Pharisees," who allegedly followed a sunrise-to-sunrise measurement of the day, would have started their lunar month "about twelve hours before the calendar commission of the Sanhedrin witnessed the crescent of the new moon" (p. 44). The chart on pages 38–39 graphically supports this notion. But this is madness. What evidence is there that any society ever began a lunar calendar month without the new moon's being sighted? Any calendrical system based on the phases of the moon has always relied on the first sighting. Moreover, observance of the sliver above the western horizon on the day expected can never be counted on as

⁶Tacitus *Annals* I. 10–13.

assured. So how, one asks incredulously, could the “Galileans and Pharisees” know at *sunrise* of a given day that that day should be the first day of a new month when the calendar commission had to wait until sunset of that evening to verify whether the first sliver of the new moon was actually visible? If it were not visible, then they had to wait until the next evening to check again for the beginning of the new month.

2. In Table 1 on pages 22–23, it is claimed the astronomical new moon occurred at 1:49 p.m. on Wednesday, 22 March, 1 B.C., and that about 28 hours later the thin lunar crescent was sighted in Jerusalem at sunset on Thursday, 23 March, thus beginning the lunar month of Nisan. But any sighting of the new crescent moon within twenty-four hours or so of the astronomical new moon is deemed so unusual by modern astronomers that such spectacles are counted among the earliest sightings ever recorded. It seems astonishing that Lefgren wants us to believe that this particular new moon was seen in near-record time.

3. In the two difficulties discussed above, it is clear that *April Sixth* assumes another thing that cannot and should not be assumed: that the sky was clear on the dates chosen (see also p. 58). Anyone acquainted with seasons in the Holy Land knows that winter and early spring constitute the rainy season of the year. Is it not too much to presume that those particular evening and night skies almost 2,000 years ago were clear just when *April Sixth* says that they were?

4. A big thing is made of distinguishing between stars and planets when discussing the appearance of the new star at Jesus’ birth (p. 17f.). But the ancients did not make that differentiation. The Greek word from which our word for planet is derived refers in the first instance to a wanderer, that is, a wandering star. As late as Copernicus, even the sun was called a planet since it, like the other planets, wandered in the heavens among the “fixed” stars.

5. Astronomical data does not prove that the triple conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter of 7 B.C. occurred “during October,” as is claimed (p. 17). A triple conjunction, a phenomenon in which two planets appear to pass very closely together three times because of our angle of sight from the moving earth, cannot possibly occur during a single month. The three conjunctions of 7 B.C., in fact, fell on 27 May, 1 October, and 5 December.

6. One always has to bear in mind that on such questions as the date of Jesus’ birth the evidence of astronomy will not and cannot be decisive. The fact that the question has been raised again in recent

months illustrates that there continues to be room for debate.⁷ In the end, it is the evidence from history based on the testimony of eyewitnesses—when it is available—which alone can resolve such problems.

CALENDRIAL PROBLEMS

One major historical difficulty derives from another calendrical concern linked to the world of the New Testament. Beginning on page 14, *April Sixth* notes that there is a question about the identity of the governor. Roman sources say that person served as governor during A.D. 6–7, several years after Jesus' birth date by any computation. But the identity of the Roman-appointed governor is of secondary importance because it draws attention away from the primary issue: the taxation requirement to which Joseph and Mary were responding when they journeyed from Nazareth to Bethlehem. For other than Luke's notation, no confirmation can be found in contemporary Roman sources of a call for an enrollment of the people of Palestine. For a possible solution, we must turn to Tertullian, an early Christian writer who died about A.D. 225 and thus who wrote some two hundred years after the fact. With obvious reference to Luke's statement, Tertullian maintains that the census was "taken in Judea by Sentius Saturninus,"⁸ governor in Syria during the years 9–6 B.C., a time period which does not match the theory of *April Sixth*. If indeed Tertullian had access to public documentation of the census, as he seems to have had, then Lefgren's position remains without any support.

JESUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION

April Sixth concludes that Jesus died on 3 April, A.D. 33, and arose from the dead on Sunday, 5 April (pp. 42–47). In his discussion, Lefgren has noted there appears to be a question whether the Last Supper was indeed a Passover meal (as in the synoptic Gospels) or fell rather on the day before Passover (as in the Gospel of John). Through the years the solution to this difficulty has been approached in a number of ways. But *April Sixth* claims—unexpectedly and without any documentation—that the problem is to be resolved by noting that "Judeans and Sadducees" differed by one day in their

⁷See John Mosley, "When Was That Christmas Star?" *Griffith Observer* 44 (December 1980): 2–9, who suggests that a series of remarkable conjunctions involving Jupiter, Mars, Venus, and the star Regulus between 12 August, 3 B.C., and 27 August, 2 B.C., may point to the astronomical phenomena seen by the Magi.

⁸*Against Marcion*, iv. 9; see discussion in J. Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1954), p. 237f.

calendrical reckoning from “Galileans and Pharisees.” It is true that the ancient Israelite reckoning that the day’s beginning came at sunrise seems to have still been known among the Jews of Jesus’ day (this can be seen in the synoptic Gospels), as opposed to the more official view that the day began at sunset (as reflected in John). Lefgren either ignored this in his calculations or did not know about it. In any event, in *April Sixth* he has invented something out of thin air to explain a discrepancy which can be and should have been solved on other grounds. Naturally, the solution makes a good deal of difference as to which year one selects to fit his idea that Jesus was resurrected on the fifth (sixth?) of April. But the year of A.D. 33 is also suspect. Any calculation that the Passover of A.D. 33 fell on 3 April, a Friday, has to be based on a study published by J. K. Fotheringham in 1934. In a more recent study, R. A. Parker and W. H. Dubberstein raise serious questions about Fotheringham’s work and all but show that the Passover of A.D. 33 fell on May second, a Saturday!⁹ Thus, *April Sixth*’s reconstruction cannot be held inviolate, to say the least.

OLD AND NEW WORLD CALENDARS

April Sixth treats three pivotal assumptions as if they were established facts. Unfortunately for the reader, the book gives no hint that the following are mere hypotheses:

1. It is possible to measure accurately, in terms of both Old World chronology and modern calendars, the length of Jesus’ life by using Book of Mormon chronometry.
2. The Mayan calendar—and, thus, the Nephite calendar—was based upon Egyptian calendrical measurements.
3. Following the sign of Jesus’ birth, Nephites reckoned time from the very day of that sign.

While these presuppositions concern calendrical matters linked primarily with the Book of Mormon and the New World, Lefgren uses them inextricably to reach his solutions of Old World chronological difficulties.

Using Book of Mormon chronology to measure the length of Jesus’ life, especially in terms of Old World calendar systems, must fail simply because we do not know what calendrical arrangements were employed by the Nephites. There exists some evidence that the people of Zarahemla and possibly the Jaredites used a lunar calendar.

⁹Richard A. Parker and Waldo H. Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C.-A.D. 75* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1942).

This observation is based on the notation of “nine moons” as the length of time during which a certain Coriantumr, lone survivor of the Jaredite people, lived with Zarahemla’s people (Omni 1:21). But whether the Nephites themselves employed a lunar or solar calendar at the time of Jesus’ birth is a question for which the Book of Mormon provides no clear answer. It is begging the question for *April Sixth* to maintain that the Nephites followed the “Egyptian civil calendar” after departing Jerusalem (pp. 49–51). There are too many puzzles which remain unresolved: (1) We do not know that Lehi followed this system in preference to the religious calendar of the Kingdom of Judah which in his day included the festivals enjoined by the law of Moses. (2) We do not know whether the Nephites used a lunar or solar calendar. (3) It remains undemonstrated that the “Egyptian civil calendar” became the basis for later Mesoamerican time calculations. (4) There is no proven link between the Nephite system of reckoning of time—whatever it may have been—and that used by Indian civilizations which flourished later. The calculation of the number of days in Nephite reckoning between the date of Jesus’ birth and the date of the sign of Jesus’ death (12,049 days [p. 52]) is based not only upon unproven assumptions related to all of these problems but also upon highly questionable data—which has been generated by considering the dates of Jesus’ birth and resurrection from Old World sources.

In this connection, there remains one further point to be made regarding Book of Mormon calendars. *April Sixth* stiffly maintains that at the sign of Jesus’ birth “the normal reckoning of time was interrupted . . . and the Nephites began a new reckoning, marking the meridian of time and the beginning of a new age” (p. 32). What it does not say is that the prevailing calendar was not altered until nine years after the appearance of the sign (3 Nephi 2:5–8). Further, there is no evidence that the beginning of the year itself was altered so that each subsequent year began on the anniversary of the sign. It seems just as possible, if not more probable, that the Nephites made the year in which the sign appeared simply the first year of their new calendrical system rather than moved the start of the year to the anniversary of the sign’s appearance. The legal, religious, and cultural difficulties caused by such a dramatic shifting of dates would have brought chaos to the Nephite society.

We cannot leave off without making one final comment. The major supporting pillar throughout *April Sixth* remains the statement found in D&C 20:1. Without exception this scripture is interpreted as a clear reference that the formal organization of the Church took place precisely 1830 years after the birth of Jesus. But, is that the only

possible way to understand this passage? Is it not just as likely that the phrase “one thousand eight hundred and thirty years since the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the flesh” constitutes a passing acknowledgment by the Lord of the date on which, according to our current calendrical system, the Church was being organized? Why should it mean more than that? No less a commentator than Elder Bruce R. McConkie has noted, “We do not believe it is possible with the present state of knowledge—including that which is known both in and out of the Church—to state with finality when the natal day of the Lord Jesus actually occurred”¹⁰ Because it cannot be proven that the passage in D&C 20 is anything more than a notation of the date of that very special and solemn organizational meeting of the Church, the entire enterprise of *April Sixth* remains at very best largely unscholarly, misleading, and clothed in doubt.

¹⁰Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary*, Book I (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979), p. 349; see also Hyrum M. Smith, *The Doctrine and Covenants Containing Revelations Given to Joseph Smith, Jr., the Prophet, with an Introduction and Historical and Exegetical Notes* (Liverpool, England: George F. Richards, 1919), p. 138.

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