THIRD NEPHI

An Incomparable Scripture

THIRD NEPHI

An Incomparable Scripture

EDITED BY
ANDREW C. SKINNER
GAYE STRATHEARN



NEAL A. MAXWELL INSTITUTE
FOR RELIGIOUS SCHOLARSHIP

PROVO, UTAH



SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

© 2012 The Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Brigham Young University

All rights reserved. Any uses of this material beyond those allowed by the exemptions in U.S. copyright law, such as section 107, "Fair Use," and section 108, "Library Copying," require the written permission of the publisher, Neal A. Maxwell Institute of Religious Scholarship, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah 84602. The views expressed herein are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the position of Brigham Young University or the Neal A. Maxwell Institute of Religious Scholarship.

Deseret Book is a registered trademark of Deseret Book Company.

Visit us at DeseretBook.com

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Third Nephi : an incomparable scripture / Andrew C. Skinner and Gaye Strathearn, editors.
pages cm
Proceedings of a conference held at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, September 26–27, 2008, hosted by the Laura F. Willes Center for Book of Mormon Studies.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-1-60908-907-8 (hardbound : alk. paper)
1. Book of Mormon. Nephi, 3rd—Congresses. 2. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—Doctrines. I. Skinner, Andrew C., 1951– editor. II. Strathearn, Gaye, editor.
BX8627.T45 2011
289.3'22—dc23 2011037519

Printed in the United States of America
Publishers Printing, Salt Lake City, UT

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents

Introduction vii

1. Seeing 3 Nephi as the Holy of Holies of the Book of Mormon
   John W. Welch 1
2. 3 Nephi 9:19–20: The Offering of a Broken Heart
   Dana M. Pike 35
3. "How Oft Would I Have Gathered You as a Hen Gathereth Her Chickens": The Power of the Hen Metaphor in 3 Nephi 10:4–7
   Jane Allis-Pike 57
4. "There Arose a Mist of Darkness": The Narrative of Lehi's Dream in Christ's Theophany
   Daniel Belnap 75
5. "They Came Forth and Fell Down and Partook of the Fruit of the Tree": Proskynesis in 3 Nephi 11:12–19 and 17:9–10 and Its Significance
   Matthew L. Bowen 107
6. The Praying Savior: Insights from the Gospel of 3 Nephi
   Robert L. Millet 131
7. The Father's Covenant People Sermon: 3 Nephi 20:10–23:5
   Victor L. Ludlow 147

8. Christ's Interpretation of Isaiah 52's "My Servant" in 3 Nephi
Gaye Strathearn and Jacob Moody 175

9. The Social Model of the Trinity in 3 Nephi
David L. Paulsen and Ari D. Bruening 191

10. "So Great and Marvelous Things": The Literary Portrait of Jesus as Divine Lord in 3 Nephi
Charles Swift 235

11. The Writings of Malachi in 3 Nephi: A Foundation for Zion in the Past and Present
Aaron P. Schade and David R. Seely 261

12. Jesus's Gospel-Defining Discourse in 3 Nephi 27:13–21: Doctrinal Apex of His New World Visit
Andrew C. Skinner 281

13. Children of Light: How the Nephites Sustained Two Centuries of Peace
Robert A. Rees 309

14. Manifestations of the Powers of Godliness and the Establishment of Zion
Ron Bartholomew 329

15. The End from the Beginning in 3 Nephi and Beyond: The Words of Christ as Musical Architecture
Jerry L. Jaccard 353

16. 3 Nephi Conference Panel Discussion 373

Index 392

Introduction

Since the late 1980s, the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship (originally FARMS) has had a tradition of hosting academic conferences on important aspects of the Book of Mormon and publishing their proceedings: *Warfare in the Book of Mormon* (1990); *The Allegory of the Olive Tree: The Olive, The Bible, and Jacob 5* (1994); *King Benjamin's Speech: "That Ye May Learn Wisdom"* (1999); *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem* (2004); and most recently *The Tree of Life* (2011). This volume on 3 Nephi continues that tradition.

We entitled the conference and this volume *Third Nephi: An Incomparable Scripture*. Third Nephi has been variously described as the pinnacle or the crown jewel of the Book of Mormon.[1] It is certainly the culmination of everything that precedes it in the Book of Mormon. As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland has so eloquently taught, "[Christ's appearance in 3 Nephi] constituted the focal point, the supreme moment, in the entire history of the Book of Mormon. It was the manifestation and the decree that had informed and inspired every Nephite prophet for the previous six hundred years, to say nothing of their Israelite and Jaredite forefathers for thousands of years before that. Everyone had talked of him, sung of him, dreamed of him, and prayed for his appearance—but here he actually was. The day of days! The God who turns every dark night

1. John W. Welch, "Seeing 3 Nephi as the Holy of Holies of the Book of Mormon," in this volume, 1; and Gaye Strathearn, "Nephi, third book of," in *The Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, ed. Dennis L. Largey (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 597.

into morning light had arrived."[2] The importance of the events of 3 Nephi is further emphasized by the fact that four hundred years after they occurred, as the Nephite civilization crumbled, Mormon looked back and lamented, "O ye fair ones, how could ye have rejected that Jesus, who stood with open arms to receive you!" (Mormon 6:17).

Third Nephi is sometimes called the "fifth gospel."[3] This title appropriately emphasizes the importance of 3 Nephi in relationship with the canonical gospels in the New Testament. All five Gospels testify that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. They are Gospels because they all declare the "good news" that the atonement of Jesus Christ makes salvation available to all who come unto him with faith, repentance, baptism, the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost, and by enduring to the end (3 Nephi 27:13–21). Although 3 Nephi contains many miraculous teachings similar to those found in the New Testament Gospels, it nevertheless stands apart from them. It is not the account of the mortal Christ but the account of the resurrected, glorified Christ. In 3 Nephi we see the Messiah in his perfected state and station, one who has attained a fulness of all aspects of godliness. Whereas the Matthean Sermon on the Mount records Jesus's teachings to "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48), in 3 Nephi he declares, "Therefore I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect" (3 Nephi 12:48). Again, although in Matthew's sermon Jesus reinterprets the law to make it applicable to the Jews living in the first century, in 3 Nephi Jesus has replaced the law as the focus of salvation, and he

2. Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 250–51.

3. B. H. Roberts, Conference Report, April 1904, 97; and "The Fifth Gospel," in *Defense of the Faith and the Saints*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1907–12), 1:373–99. See Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary*, 4 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 4:307; Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, "One by One: The Fifth Gospel's Model of Service," in *3 Nephi 9–30: This Is My Gospel*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1993), 185.

repeatedly extends the invitation to "come unto me" (see 3 Nephi 12:3, 17–19, 21–24).[4]

This volume includes chapters that address issues in 3 Nephi from textual, literary, and theological perspectives. The opening chapter is the keynote address given by John W. Welch. Thereafter they are arranged, as best as possible, in the order that their subjects come up in 3 Nephi. The final chapter is a transcript of the panel discussion from the concluding session of the conference. Our hope is that students will be able to read this volume in conjunction with their study of 3 Nephi.

As editors of this volume, we express our appreciation to each of those who contributed papers to this collection. We are most grateful to our colleagues at Brigham Young University who reviewed the chapters and offered helpful suggestions. We also wish to thank the editorial staff at the Maxwell Institute, Paula Hicken, Alison Coutts, Shirley Ricks, Jacob Rawlins, Stetson Robinson, Julie Davis, and Elin Roberts, who worked tirelessly to prepare the manuscript for publication.

Gaye Strathearn
Andrew C. Skinner

4. Krister Stendahl, "The Sermon on the Mount and Third Nephi," in *Reflections on Mormonism: Judaeo-Christian Parallels*, ed. Truman G. Madsen (Salt Lake City: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1978), 139–54.

Seeing 3 Nephi as the Holy of Holies of the Book of Mormon

John W. Welch

Worthy of highest celebration are the words and events recorded in the sacred book of 3 Nephi, the pinnacle of the Book of Mormon.[1] This text truly documents one of the most glorious and crowning moments in all of history. The more I study the book of 3 Nephi, the more I come to see it as the Holy of Holies of the Book of Mormon and to appreciate it metaphorically as the most sacred inner chamber of the Nephite record. Opening to view the most sublime public experiences ever enjoyed by Lehi's branch of the house of Israel, the book of 3 Nephi allows attentive readers to glimpse the radiant appearance, at the Temple in Bountiful, of the resurrected Savior and Redeemer, the creator of all things from the beginning. Indeed, it would seem that everything in 3 Nephi, as I shall argue here, has been composed to echo and to call to mind the solemnity of the presence of the Lord, which was traditionally

1. This is an expanded version of the speech delivered at the opening plenary session of the conference "Third Nephi: New Perspectives on an Incomparable Scripture," September 26-27, 2008, organized by the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship at Brigham Young University. In that keynote speech, I was asked to address scholarly and general listeners and also to draw upon my publications on the Sermon at the Temple in 3 Nephi, as well as to update that previous work. At the outset, I pause to acknowledge my indebtedness to many presenters at that conference and to remember the patron-mentor of the Maxwell Institute, Elder Neal A. Maxwell. He has taught us, in so many ways, that the unvarnished truth of the scriptures and the gospel of Jesus Christ is truer than we have yet imagined. Grātefully, his influence encourages us still to strive to comprehend the soul-satisfying truths in this book of Nephi, the son of Nephi.

associated in ancient Israel with Jehovah's appearance in the inner sanctum of the temple, his holy house.

The Book of a Great High Priest

The abundance of holiness in 3 Nephi should not come as a surprise to readers, for this book bears the name of Nephi, the son of Nephi, the son of Helaman, the son of Helaman (the leader of the stripling warriors), the eldest son of Alma the Younger, who was the High Priest over the Church of God in the city of Zarahemla. This book was shaped mainly by the life and work of a high priest, and it should be read with his experiences and perspectives in mind. The sacred plates and leadership of the church in that city had been handed down to this Nephi, the inheritor of the premier line of Nephite high priests, called and ordained after the holy order of the Son of God. This Nephi officiated in the same temple-city as had such holy men as King Benjamin, King Mosiah, and Alma the Elder. While it is unknown exactly what uses the Nephite high priests made of their temples, one can easily understand why the records of this Nephi would have so much to do with holiness and with the temple. He knew the practices and blessings of this priesthood personally and intimately.[2]

The book of 3 Nephi begins, not with information about the writer's childhood and education, but with a very sacred revelation. It came at a critical time when Nephi cried mightily to the Lord for an entire day on behalf of his people, who were about to be killed because they believed the words of Samuel the Lamanite. I envision the word of the Lord coming to Nephi in his temple or some other holy place where a high priest would likely go to make such

2. This background may serve modern readers in seeking out likely or implicit meanings in the connections discussed below, even if one cannot know for sure if they were intended by the author or abridger of 3 Nephi. The cumulative confluence of these temple elements in 3 Nephi provides, in my opinion, substantial circumstantial support for the suggestion that Nephi intentionally selected and emphasized in his record these temple points in order to communicate most powerfully the sacredness of the events that he reports.

an earnest and urgent intercessory prayer.[3] There, Nephi heard the holy voice of the Lord saying, "Be of good cheer; . . . on the morrow come I into the world" (3 Nephi 1:13).

While righteous Nephites knew that the sacrifices and performances under the law of Moses pointed exclusively to the coming atonement of Jesus Christ, they still kept the law of Moses with strictness—in whatever ways they understood that law.[4] Indeed, as soon as the sign of the birth of Christ was given, people began to argue with Nephi, claiming that it was no longer necessary for them to observe the law of Moses (3 Nephi 1:24). It fell upon Nephi, as the new High Priest, to convince the people that all of the law "was not yet fulfilled, and that it must be fulfilled in every whit" (1:25).

The fact that Nephi kept the law of Moses says something important about Nephi's temple. It is hard to imagine him keeping every whit of the law of Moses without a temple patterned after the tabernacle constructed by Moses in the wilderness or the Temple of Solomon of Jerusalem. That ancient temple had been used by the first Nephi, six centuries before the birth of Christ, as the model in building his temple shortly after his arrival in the promised land (2 Nephi 5:16). The Temple of Solomon had an altar of sacrifice; the brasen sea, a large basin used for washings and purification immersions; a rectangular hall (the *hekal*), which represented four of the days (days 3-6) during which the world was created[5] and held the

3. Although the text gives no indication of where Nephi was when this manifestation was given to him, it is plausible that he was in some very sacred place, for several reasons: his supplications must have been extremely poignant at this point, for he and the other believers stood to be executed the next day if the promised sign did not materialize; as the High Priest, Nephi would have appealed to God for guidance with every sacred means available to him; and he was apparently alone when the voice of the Lord came to him.

4. John W. Welch, *The Legal Cases in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: BYU Press, 2008), 33-47.

5. Margaret Barker, *Temple Theology: An Introduction* (London: SPCK, 2004), 18-19. While the received text of the Bible does not always provide clear evidence of some of Barker's claims, she often is able to argue successfully that older versions of the biblical texts reflect an early temple theology of which Lehi and others in preexilic Israel may well have been aware.

menorahs and tables of the shewbread; and a veil (day 2) that kept the inner sanctum (*debir*, the Holy of Holies, day 1) most sacred.[6]

Having begun by announcing the birth of Jesus Christ—himself the new and eternal High Priest,[7] who would come "to do the will, both of the Father and of the Son" (3 Nephi 1:14), by performing his sacrificial mission "to bring redemption unto the world, to save the world from sin" (9:21)—the book of 3 Nephi devotes its next six chapters to the chronicling of some of the most awful wickedness imaginable (3 Nephi 2-7). These years witnessed gross errors, robbers, secret oaths, anti-establishment rituals, taunting, slaughter, fear, blood, execution, iniquity, murder, conspiracy, and assassination, even to the point of stoning the prophets and casting them out from among them. Lachoneus's answer was to leave the temple-city of Zarahemla and gather his people together for seven years in order to starve the robbers out. And to an extent this desperate scorched-earth strategy worked. Uprooting and relocating would have been difficult enough for the righteous Nephites, but perhaps the hardest thing would have been the abandonment of their temple, a central pillar of strength for them.

During these extremely vile and temple-less years, Satan was on a rampage. Indeed, the name *Satan* appears in greater concentration in these chapters than anywhere else in the Book of Mormon. Satan knew that Jesus had been born, and in response he did everything he could to reign with horror and bloodshed upon this world. But the great wickedness of these years leading up to the coming of Jesus only heightens and intensifies the contrast between Satan's darkness and the gleaming brightness of the light and goodness that Jesus would usher in.

---

6. For further publications on the Temple of Solomon, see generally Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1985); William J. Hamblin and David Rolph Seely, *Solomon's Temple: Myth and History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007), 23-27; and John M. Lundquist, *The Temple of Jerusalem: Past, Present, and Future* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008).

7. On Jesus as the Great High Priest, see Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest: The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (London: Clark, 2003), 10, 34-41, 113, 225.

That contrast is somewhat foreshadowed in 3 Nephi 7, when Nephi was "visited by angels," heard "the voice of the Lord," saw as an "eye-witness," and "had power given unto him that he might know concerning the ministry of Christ" (7:15). From these sacred ministrations, Nephi knew vividly the contrast between the power of Christ unto salvation and the tendency of backsliding people to return quickly "from righteousness unto their wickedness and abominations" (7:15). He then went forth with power and authority, casting out evil and unclean spirits, raising his brother from the dead after he had been stoned by the people, healing people, showing signs, and baptizing by ritual immersion unto the remission of sins (7:19-25).

In spite of all the good that Nephi did, in 3 Nephi 8-9 the darkness reached its uttermost abyss, when all the elements—earth, air, fire, and water—rose up in grief and revulsion at the suffering and death of the God of nature. At least sixteen cities were destroyed: they were covered with earth, swept away in the whirlwind, burned with fire, or swallowed up in the depths of the sea as the waters of the deep came up upon them. All this happened, as Jesus explained when he spoke out of the darkness of that cataclysmic destruction, in order that the iniquities, wickedness, sins, and abominations of these people could be hid "from before my face" (3 Nephi 9:5, 7, 9, 11). The holy presence of the Lord could not and cannot countenance sin (3 Nephi 27:19), not even with the "least degree of allowance" (Alma 45:16; D&C 1:31).

Interestingly, to the ancient mind, one of the main functions of righteous temples was to ensure the maintenance of the natural order in the cosmos. The Temple of Jerusalem itself was built on or near a prominent rock, "the great rock of the threshing floor," on which today the Dome of the Rock stands.[8] The idea of "the rock" holding

8. See David's purchase of the threshing floor in 2 Samuel 24:18-24. Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem* (London: SPCK, 1991), 18. A vestige of the temple as a place of threshing may be latent in Jesus's poignant warning that Satan still desires "to have you, that he may sift you as wheat" (3 Nephi 18:18).

back waters occurs at key junctures in the Old Testament: When Moses struck "the rock," much water poured forth (Exodus 17:6). In the millennium, waters will issue forth from the Temple Mount, according to Ezekiel 47:1. According to some explanations, the Holy of Holies sat atop the foundation stone of the cosmos, called the Shetiyya stone. That rock, representing the rock of salvation, acted like a plug that held at bay the destructive waters of the deep and the torrents from above.[9] Without the temple, chaos would break loose and reign, as is reflected in the psalms: "The floods have lifted up, O Lord. . . . The floods lift up their roaring." But "mightier than the thunders of many waters, . . . the Lord on high is mighty! . . . Holiness befits thy house [the temple], O Lord, for evermore" (Psalm 93:1-5 RSV). In this light, one can appreciate even more fully that, when Lachoneus and Nephi had to abandon their temple in Zarahemla, it was a very desperate move indeed. And sure enough, without the Lord in his temple, extreme evil and cataclysmic destruction prevailed in those first twenty pages of 3 Nephi.

Jesus's Appearance at the Temple

With the coming of Jesus to Bountiful, Satan was cast out, and the rock of salvation once again held sway. Building upon and giving new meaning to this traditional temple imagery, Jesus said at the outset of his sermon to the gathered Nephites, "Ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child. . . . This is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them" (3 Nephi 11:38-39). Jesus also concluded his sermon with the comparison of the foolish man who built his house upon the sand and the wise man who built upon the rock, evoking images of the temple and its eternal stability when the rain and floods come. How poignantly relieving these words would have been to those who had just

9. Discussed in John W. Welch, *The Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple* (London: Ashgate, 2009), 179-82. For further developments, see, for example, Barker, *Gate of Heaven*, 18-19, citing *b. Sukkah* 53b, which in turn is based on Psalm 93 and ancient views of cosmology.

recently witnessed the floods and destructions of cities all around them! How grateful they would have been for the eternal stability of the temple and its doctrines of Christ that open the doors into his eternal house!

Third Nephi 11 begins with a momentous but unassuming statement: "And now it came to pass that there were a great multitude gathered together of the people of Nephi" (11:1). Indeed, there were 2,500 of them—men, women, and children (17:25). Because so many things happened on that day, these people must have gathered early on some appointed morning. They were not there by happenstance.[10]

Most of all, the text continues, they had gathered "round about the temple which was in the land of Bountiful." This would have been the natural place for them to be gathered together to seek to learn what they should do next.

But they had no warning of what was about to happen. They knew from a prophecy of Alma that Jesus would "manifest himself unto them" (Alma 45:10), but they do not seem to have known when, where, or even how that manifestation would take place. And they had heard the voice of Jesus say out of the darkness: "Ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood; yea, your sacrifices and your burnt offerings shall be done away" (3 Nephi 9:19), but they do not seem to have known much about what they should begin doing differently. It is true that they had heard that an old temple teaching, found in Psalm 51:17, namely the law of the sacrifice of "a broken heart and a contrite spirit" (3 Nephi 9:20), was to be given greater prominence as the essence of the new law of sacrifice.[11] And they may have understood that the fire of the old

10. This may or may not have been on the occasion of a festival day of some kind. I tend to prefer to see this gathering as a convocation at the temple on the feast of Shavuot, the day of Pentecost, but one cannot know for sure. See John W. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 36–42.

11. See Dana M. Pike, "3 Nephi 9:19–20: The Offering of a Broken Heart," in this volume. He meticulously unfolds the essence of this aspect of the law of obedience and sacrifice, which was known under the law of Moses (see Psalm 51:17). Now the offering of the broken heart became the key to this law, as the law of sacrifice by the

burnt offering was done away, being fulfilled in the baptism "with fire and with the Holy Ghost" (9:20). But beyond these words from heaven ending an important part of Nephite temple practices, no further directions had been given to the Nephites about what they should now commence doing at their temple instead.

As they were talking, wondering at the changes that had occurred or would yet occur physically and spiritually with the death of Christ, a voice came out of heaven. Three times it spoke, and the third time they understood the words, "Behold, my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name—hear ye him" (3 Nephi 11:7). These words of divine acknowledgment are similar to special words used in the Temple of Jerusalem to mark the installation of a new king or to raise a new high priest to become sons of God, "I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion [the temple]; I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son" (Psalm 2:6-7).[12]

The Temple Setting of the Lord's Ministrations in 3 Nephi

Jesus, of course, could have chosen to appear at some other time, at the city gate, out in an open field, or any number of places. But he did not. He came precisely to the Temple in Bountiful. And for three consecutive days, he met them at or near that holy place (3 Nephi 11:1; 17:3; 19:3; 26:13). Several years ago, while working particularly on the words of Jesus in 3 Nephi 12-14, I was struck forcefully by the importance of the temple setting for the Sermon on the Mount, a version of which appears in those chapters in 3 Nephi. Jesus spoke on that occasion *at the temple*. This locational clue is a plain and precious detail restored by the Book of Mormon, leading to a captivating contextual perspective within which to understand the otherwise perplexing nature of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. The idea of a temple reading of the Sermon on the

---

shedding of blood was done away. The law of sacrifice is not so obvious in Matthew's version of the sermon, but it is unmistakable in 3 Nephi 12:19.

12. The connection between priest and king goes back to Melchizedek in Genesis 14:18; Melchizedek is used as an archetype of the Nephite priesthood in Alma 13:16-17.

Mount was soon advanced in a FARMS Update, which coined the name for the Nephite discourse of "Sermon at the Temple."[13] The intervening years of steady research into this topic have only enriched that insight for me, especially while preparing for the publication in 2009 of a book entitled *The Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple.*[14]

That work emphasizes the idea that the Sermon on *"the Mount"* recalls the fact that the temple in Israel was equated with "the mountain of the Lord." Matthew begins chapter 5 in his gospel with these words: "And Jesus went up into *the* mountain (*anebē eis to oros*)" (my translation). It does not say, "And Jesus went out on a gentle hillside." Significantly, these words in Matthew are precisely the same as the words in the Septuagint text of Exodus 19:3 and 24:12, when Moses and the elders went up into Mount Sinai (*anebē eis to oros*). In the mountain, the seventy elders "saw God" and received the law. In the sermon, Jesus similarly promised his disciples that if they are pure in heart, "they [too] shall see God," and he likewise gave them a new dispensation of the law. As some recent biblical scholars have said, these points of parallelism "clearly cannot be ignored."[15] Moreover, when Psalm 24 asks, "Who shall ascend into the hill [or mountain] of the Lord" (*anabēsetai eis to oros*—the same words again), the psalm is asking, who is worthy to enter the temple? The

13. "The Sermon at the Temple," in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 253–56.

14. See Welch, *Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*, which builds on Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount* and its earlier edition, John W. Welch, *The Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990). Among the new points recently added by the present article are (1) seeing the implications of Nephi being the Nephite High Priest, (2) expanding the detection of temple elements in 3 Nephi beyond chapters 11–18 to embrace the entirety of that book, (3) showing the pervasive influence of the psalms on the Sermon at the Temple and Sermon on the Mount, (4) seeing the Sermon on the Mount as a text of sacred ascent, and (5) noticing the characteristics of the Holy of Holies that fill this record with elements whose connections with supreme sacredness have usually been overlooked.

15. W. D. Dumbrell, "The Logic of the Role of the Law in Matthew 5:1–20," *Novum Testamentum* 23/1 (1981): 5, cited in Dan Lioy, *The Decalogue in the Sermon on the Mount* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 91.

precise verbal similarity between the Greek texts of these passages in Exodus, Matthew 5, and Psalm 24 comes as further confirmation of the temple setting for the Sermon on the Mount.

Mountains, of course, were the prototype of the temple in Israelite religion as well as in ancient Near Eastern thought generally. One always went up to the temple, climbing step by step, up to Jerusalem, onto the Temple Mount and into the outer courts, up into the court of the law, through the degrees of glory or holiness, past the altar, up through the vestibule, into the *hekal* (the room representing the physical creation of the world), and finally through the veil, into the Holy of Holies (representing God's dwelling place and heaven).

Thanks to the work of Margaret Barker and many others in recent years, one can now better identify numerous elements in the scriptures as reflecting "temple themes."[16] Because modern readers have not experienced firsthand the sights and sounds of the things that transpired in the ancient Temple of Jerusalem, their ears are not attuned to verbal allusions to things that went on there. By way of comparison, in Latter-day Saint culture, all a person needs to say are words like *recommend, garments,* or *holiness to the Lord,* and Latter-day Saints know that the subject has something to do with the temple. By the same token, modern scripture readers need to be on the lookout for possible temple themes whenever they encounter concentrations of words such as *light, salt, washing, anointing, the name of God, throne, sonship, garments, bread, forgiveness, commandments, covenants, oaths, treasures, wisdom, judgment, seeing God, eternity, rock,* and *peacemaking*—ordinary words though these may be in other contexts. Indeed, over 120 such elements can be identified as potential temple themes in the Sermon on the Mount alone.[17]

---

16. See, for example, Margaret Barker, *Temple Themes in Christian Worship* (London: Clark, 2007); see also her *Temple Theology* and *Gate of Heaven*.

17. A lengthy list of Old Testament temple-related texts drawn upon by the Sermon on the Mount can be found in table 1 in Welch, *Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple,* 184–87.

Many of these temple themes relate to covenant-making, and it is clear that the Sermon at the Temple in 3 Nephi is clearly presented in a covenant-making context, explicitly connected with baptism (for example, 11:21-28; 19:11-13; 26:17), commandments (12:19-20; 15:10; 18:10, 14; 20:10), and covenantal promises of rewards or consequences (12:1-14; 18:11-14; 20:11-25:6). Because of this clue, one can see that Matthew's Sermon on the Mount can also be associated with covenant-making, and perhaps for this reason the Didache, which contains an early Christian instruction given to converts before they could be baptized, draws extensively on the Sermon on the Mount. Likewise, if a person wanted to convert to Judaism, the Talmud required the proselyte to be interviewed and told, first, to expect to be persecuted: "Do you not know that Israel at the present time is persecuted and oppressed, despised, harassed and overcome by afflictions?"[18] Likewise, the sermon warns would-be disciples that they will be reviled, reproached, cursed, and persecuted (12:10-12). Next, the proselyte was "given instruction in some of the minor and some of the major commandments."[19] The Sermon on the Mount also gives instructions in the least and greatest laws of the kingdom (12:21-48). Next, the Jewish inductee was informed not to neglect the poor and to observe the law of gleanings and the rule of the poor man's tithe; and similarly the sermon turns its attention to almsgiving (13:3), laying up treasures, and consecrating property with an eye single to serving God (13:19-24). The Talmudic procedure then warned the candidate "of the punishment for the transgression of the commandments" but then concluded with the promise of great rewards for righteousness.[20] The sermon does the same (14:21-27).

---

18. Babylonian Talmud, *Yebamoth* 47a.

19. Babylonian Talmud, *Yebamoth* 47a.

20. Babylonian Talmud, *Yebamoth* 47a. See further, A. Sagi and Z. Zohar, "The Halakhic Ritual of Giyyur and Its Symbolic Meaning," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 9/1 (1995): 1-13, and David Daube, "A Baptismal Catechism," in *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: University of London, 1956), 106-40, reprinted in *New Testament Judaism*, vol. 2 in the Collected Works of David Daube (Berkeley: Robbins Collection, University of California, 2000), 501-27, and discussion in Welch, *Sermon on the Mount*

More Than Proverbial Wisdom

Clearly, more is going on in Matthew 5-7, in 3 Nephi 12-14, and throughout 3 Nephi than the dispensing of ordinary folk wisdom. The genre of the Sermon on the Mount is not one of broad moral platitudes or proverbs, as is often thought. Since the first step in interpreting any text is to identify what kind of text it is, and since the genre of a text is best detected by its dominant rhetorical register, I have recently catalogued a large number of Greek words and phrases in Matthew's Sermon on the Mount that come straight from the ancient Greek version of the psalms.[21]

And why might this be significant? Because the temple is the dominant factor in the psalms. As people ascended to the temple, they sang the psalms of joy, penitence, prayer, and praise. The psalms were chanted in the temple by Levitical cantors, sung by dispersed Jews yearning for the temple, and by families giving thanks for the blessings of the temple.[22] These words from the psalms would have given the sermon a clear temple register for those with ears to hear.

Thus each allusion to the psalms in the Sermon on the Mount adds corroboration to its temple genre and thus supports its temple setting in 3 Nephi. For example, the word *makarioi*, "blessed will be" in Matthew 5, is also the very first word in Psalm 1:1, and it goes on to appear twenty-five more times in the psalms.

Psalm 37 unmistakably conjoins the words *meek* and *inheriting*, as in Matthew 5:5.

---

in the Light of the Temple, 194-95. Although the Nephites would not have known of this early Jewish ritual, the precedent that instruction must be given before a person can enter into the covenant is at least as old as Exodus 19-24.

21. These can be found in table 1 in Welch, *Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*, 184-87.

22. Georg P. Braulik, "Psalms and Liturgy: Their Reception and Contextualization," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 24/2 (2003): 309-32; George S. Gunn, *Singers of Israel: The Book of Psalms* (New York: Abingdon, 1963), 18; Raymond J. Tournay, *Seeing and Hearing God with the Psalms: The Prophetic Liturgy of the Second Temple in Jerusalem* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1991), 27; Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 2 vols. (New York: Abingdon, 1962), 1:2, 4; 2:89-90; and Barker, *Gate of Heaven*, 45.

The words *filled* and *righteousness* stand together in Psalm 17:15, as they do in Matthew 5:6.

Psalm 32:11 issues a double call: "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice (*agalliasthe*)!" A double call, rejoice and be exceeding glad, also can be heard in Matthew 5:12, using the same word that appears often in the psalms, *agalliasthe*, meaning "hallelujah."

The warning in Matthew 7:6, "lest they trample [your pearls] under their feet, and turn again and rend you," echoes Psalm 50:22 (RSV), "lest I rend, and there be none to deliver."

The two diverging ways in Matthew 7:13-14, namely the wide "way" (*hodos*) and the narrow "way" (*hodos*), emerge right from Psalm 1:6, which reads, "For the Lord knoweth the way (*hodos*) of righteousness: but the way (*hodos*) of the ungodly will perish."

Verse 8 of Psalm 94 contrasts the wise man and the foolish man, using the same root words, *phronimos* and *mōros,* found in Matthew 7:24-26.

Words as distinctive as the Greek *anomia*, used in Matthew 7:23, "depart from me, ye that work iniquity (*hoi ergazomenoi tēn anomian*)," come straight from Psalm 6:8, "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity (*hoi ergazomenoi tēn anomian*)." But most of these significant parallels usually go completely unnoticed.

Moreover, many other Greek words in the Sermon on the Mount appear multiple times in other Old Testament temple texts, such as the dedicatory prayer for the Temple of Solomon in 1 Kings 8, or the futuristic vision of the ideal temple in Ezekiel 40-48.

It is interesting to me that when the sermon talks about putting your lamp on a candlestick/lampstand, the Greek word there is *luchnia,* which happens to be the word for the menorah. This word is unforgettably concentrated nine times inside of only six verses in the instruction in Exodus 25 about the construction of the tabernacle.

Being "perfect," *teleios*, recalls not only the technical use of this term to describe complete initiation into the mysteries, but also the

word *teleiosis*, which is the temple-significant word for "consecration" in Exodus and Leviticus.[23]

Readers may well be surprised by the number of phrases in the Sermon on the Mount that repeat or allude to temple texts. Of the 383 words in the total vocabulary of the Sermon on the Mount, one-third of them cast a long temple shadow. While the individual significance of each may be small, the cumulative effect of all these verbal echoes only increases the likelihood that attuned listeners would have deeply appreciated the temple register of the Sermon on the Mount as it shed light on the nature of the new covenants they were making. And significantly, Jesus typically spoke in two registers: one at an obvious, ethical level, and the other at a more veiled level. Indeed, it is possible that the Sermon on the Mount might have served in a temple-like way to lead people upward into the presence of God.

These temple connections carry over into our reading of 3 Nephi. In the temple setting expressly supplied by 3 Nephi, it is easy to identify here laws regarding evil speaking (12:22), adultery (12:27–30), gospel love (12:39–44), and consecration (13:19–24). It is also easy to imagine people covenanting to keep those laws by answering simply "Yea, yea," or "Nay, nay," as instructed in the sermon (12:37), or to think of a group prayer being offered (13:9–13), or of people being anointed (13:17) or clothed in garments more glorious than Solomon's (13:28–30), as mentioned in the Sermon at the Temple or Sermon on the Mount.

Moreover, new research now allows one to appreciate the overall structure of the sermon as a marvelous ascension text. It begins by placing its hearers in a lowly state and then, step by step, guides them to its climactic end, being welcomed into the presence of God. Through twenty-five stages, it builds in an overall crescendo. Rituals of ascent were common enough in antiquity, from Enoch's ascent into the tenth heaven in the book of *1 Enoch* to Paul's being taken up into the third heaven (2 Corinthians 12:2). Roots of the heavenly ascent motif reach deeply into Akkadian mythology, Greek mystery

23. For further discussion and sources on this point, see Welch, *Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*, 116–20.

religions, and Gnostic literature, and these rituals were of a piece with the temple.[24]

In particular, individual thematic escalations accentuate the sermon's overall path of ascent.[25] Often these steps build in three stages, from an initial concern about one's obligations toward (1) others (mainly in Matthew 5 or 3 Nephi 12), to a second concern about (2) personal and secret virtues (mainly in Matthew 6 or 3 Nephi 13), and finally culminating in (3) qualities of God and holiness (in Matthew 7 or 3 Nephi 14). The threefold pattern here reflects the three elements in the two great commandments: Loving (1) others as (2) ourselves, and serving (3) God, our master, with all our hearts, might, minds, and strength.

Similarly, prayer is mentioned three times in the sermon. At first, we are told to pray for *other* people, particularly our enemies (Matthew 5; 3 Nephi 12). Second, we are told to pray for ourselves, "forgive us our *own* trespasses" (Matthew 6; 3 Nephi 13). Finally, in the third stage, our prayers ask for gifts from our *Father in Heaven*, and those who put up a threefold petition (ask, seek, and knock) are told that it shall be opened to them (Matthew 7; 3 Nephi 14).

Concerning generosity, first, one is told in Matthew 5 and 3 Nephi 12 to give generously to *others* if people ask for clothing or assistance. Second, in Matthew 6 and 3 Nephi 13, one is told to give of his own accord and in secret for his *own* eternal benefit. Finally, in Matthew 7 and 3 Nephi 14 one becomes able to give good gifts even as *God the Father* does, doing all things unto others as he would have done to himself.

Likewise, punishments are mentioned three times: socially, the salt that is cast out is trodden underfoot by men because it has become useless to *other* people. Second, when a person jeopardizes his *own* eternal well-being, it is better for him to cut off his own hand than to lose his entire soul. And third, those who cast the holy

24. Brent J. Schmidt, *Utopian Communities of the Ancient World* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellon, 2009), 52-70.

25. For further exploration of this idea, see Welch, *Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*, 198-207.

thing before swine will find themselves torn by dogs and trampled by pigs, seemingly seen here as instruments of *divine* punishment.

Other examples of escalation could be given, showing that in the experience of this ascent a fundamental unity of the sermon is found. Just as the Sermon on the Mount begins on a mountain, it ends by talking about the wise man who builds upon that mountain, by not only hearing but actually patterning his house of righteousness after God's holy house. Progressively, through these stages of ascent, there comes first fulfillment of the law amidst the people of Israel, next perfection of each individual, and finally hearing the Lord himself say, "Enter," not "Depart" (3 Nephi 14:21-23).

Third Nephi and the Holy of Holies

If entrance into the presence of the God is the end to which the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon at the Temple both lead, readers should consider the profound connections between the heart of 3 Nephi and the inner sanctum of the temple. For example, under the old law, entrance into the Holy of Holies and into the presence of the Lord was the unique privilege of the High Priest.[26] His privilege of entering into the presence of God foreshadowed or typified the same honor that will come to all of God's righteous children, and as Jesus fulfilled and expanded the former law when he delivered the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon at the Temple, he extended the covenantal promise of this sacred privilege to all worthy men and women, who will stand someday in the literal presence of God. For this reason, I wish to suggest that knowing as much as possible about the symbolic aspects of the Holy of Holies and its connected holy places opens to view many ways in which aspects of the Holy of Holies symbolized the coming of the Lord in holiness to his people in general and the wondrous mysteries of the glorious things that happened in 3 Nephi 11-28 during Jesus's three days at the Temple in Bountiful in particular.

---

26. Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service*, 226-27.

From several rather sacred, and thus appropriately cryptic, texts in the Bible, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Enoch literature, it is possible with great caution to reconstruct basic things that were present or occurred in the Holy of Holies.[27] Knowing things as they did from the plates of brass and from their own temple tradition, which dated back to Lehi and Nephi, who had seen "the things of the Jews" in Jerusalem with their own eyes (2 Nephi 25:5), the Nephite high priests may well have understood some of these characteristic features of things closely associated with the Holy of Holies—all of which bring to mind details reported throughout 3 Nephi. The following discussion, which proceeds mainly in scriptural order from 3 Nephi 11 to 3 Nephi 28, focuses primarily on unique features of the Holy of Holies; however several of these elements may pertain also or more directly to the adjacent and integrally connected *hekal*, for as Menahem Haran has said, "neither of [these chambers] ha[d] any significance without the other."[28] Consider the following:

Presence. The Holy of Holies was strongly associated with God's Presence.[29] In the Holy of Holies, the High Priest was said to stand in the presence of God, as Moses and the twenty-four elders had stood in the presence of God on the holy Mount, Mount Sinai (Exodus 24:10). As God then guided Israel in the wilderness in a cloud, so the cloud of incense in the Holy of Holies marked his presence there.[30] Likewise, in 3 Nephi, the people of Bountiful were privileged to stand in the very presence of God: "He came down and stood in the midst of them" (3 Nephi 11:8). It is as if they had been admitted into the Holy of Holies.

---

27. For information about the Holy of Holies mentioned in the following discussion, I draw mainly on Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service*, as well as on Barker, *Temple Theology* and *Gate of Heaven*.

28. Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service*, 220.

29. Barker, *Temple Theology*, 20; Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service*, 11 n. 11, and 220.

30. Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service*, 178, based on Leviticus 16:12–13. The cloud of the Lord finds a parallel in 3 Nephi when Jesus departed at the end of the first day at Bountiful as "there came a cloud and overshadowed the multitude" (18:38).

Silence. The holy place in the Temple of Jerusalem is spoken of as "the sanctuary of silence,"[31] based on Habakkuk 2:20, "The Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him." The greater the holiness, the more profound the silence. Then and now, temple experiences begin with awe and unfold in silence. As Jesus descended to the Temple in Bountiful, the people looked up, focused on him, and "durst not open their mouths, even one to another" (11:8). Such reverence befits the holiest of places.

Timelessness. In the Holy of Holies, it was as if time stood still, inasmuch as the temporal world was transcended there.[32] Perhaps symbolizing this, the signs of great lights at the time of Jesus's birth made it appear as if the sun had stood still, for it was "one day and a night and a day, as if it were one day" (Helaman 14:3; 3 Nephi 1:15). Indeed it seems that the place where the visit of Christ happened is more important to Nephi than the date when it happened. Neither Nephi nor Mormon give the date of this appearance. Indeed, as one moves further into Nephi's book, time references fade into the background and eventually disappear entirely. Jesus will teach there for three days, after which he returned "oft" (3 Nephi 26:13) to instruct the people further, but Nephi's record does not say whether those visits occurred once a week, once a month, regularly, or at unexpected moments. These record keepers do not seem to want their readers to be thinking about time, for it is characteristic of sacred experiences that time is left behind and the broader vistas of eternity are opened to spiritual eyes. As a result, 3 Nephi has no usual storyline, no heroic action scenes, and no sensational narrative attractions. These chapters blend into one great whole, as supernal truths and texts usually do.

The Word of the Lord. From the presence of the Lord in the temple, says Psalm 17:2, the word of the Lord comes forth as his "oracle."[33] It was in the Holy of Holies that Isaiah saw the Lord

---

31. Yehezkel Kaufmann, *A History of the Religion of Israel* (Jerusalem: Ktav, 1960), 2:476-77.

32. On the Holy of Holies as a place symbolically outside of time, see Barker, *Gate of Heaven*, 59 ("an existence *without* time"), 111 ("in the world beyond time"), 127-28.

33. Barker, *Temple Theology*, 19.

"sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple" (Isaiah 6:1), and there the word of the Lord was given to him. Throughout 3 Nephi, one hears in abundance the word of the Lord. He himself spoke. He identified himself: "He stretched forth his hand and spake unto the people saying: Behold I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world" (3 Nephi 11:9-10). He delivered the very words of God the Father, with whom he was "one" (3 Nephi 28:10).

High Priesthood. While all the inner courts of the temple were the realm of the priests, the Holy of Holies was the special domain of the high priesthood, "the preserve of the high priesthood,"[34] where all the angelic hosts were "dressed as the high priests."[35] In 3 Nephi, dispensations of priesthood authority are prominent. In 3 Nephi 11, twelve disciples were called and given the power and instruction on how to function in the baptismal ordinance of the Aaronic Priesthood, and the people were then told to give strict heed to the words of these teachers and servants: "Blessed are ye if ye shall give heed unto the words of these twelve whom I have chosen from among you to minister unto you, and to be your servants" (12:1). Then in 3 Nephi 18, at the end of that first day, these twelve were ordained to a higher priesthood, which gave them the power to bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost (18:37; Moroni 2:1-3).

Covenant. In the Holy of Holies was placed the ark of the covenant,[36] containing the Ten Commandments and perhaps other parts of the books of the law that together formed the law of the covenant. Over the ark of the covenant was a covering of solid gold, called the mercy seat, made up of two cherubim whose wings overshadowed the tablets of law (1 Kings 8:6-7), symbolizing the heavenly throne,[37] this all being the evidence of "a contract between" God and his people.[38] Later in 3 Nephi, the Lord will interpret and

34. Barker, *Temple Theology*, 21.
35. At least according to later Jewish sources; see Barker, *Temple Theology*, 25.
36. Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service*, 78 n. 28, 248; Barker, *Gate of Heaven*, 27.
37. Barker, *Great High Priest*, 165; Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service*, 257.
38. Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service*, 255, citing Deuteronomy 31:26.

explain the meaning of several of the Ten Commandments, and he will give commandments that the people will oblige themselves, by way of covenant,[39] to obey as they partake of the emblems of his flesh and blood (3 Nephi 18:10). In return for their covenantal commitment, the mercy of the Lord will be extended to them before the throne and judgment seat of God.[40]

Commandments. Next, in 3 Nephi 12–14, Jesus gave the people a series of instructions that relate closely to temple laws and commandments. These involve the inward observance of the Ten Commandments, which were kept in the Holy of Holies in the ark of the covenant (1 Kings 8:9; Hebrews 9:4) and were read daily in the courts of the Temple of Jerusalem.[41] The people were instructed to fast, wash, and anoint their faces and heads (3 Nephi 13:17); and they were told that if they brought their sacrifice to the altar and there remembered that their brother had aught against them, they had to leave the altar and first reconcile and eliminate all contention or disputation "with full purpose of heart" (3 Nephi 12:24), preparing them to proceed further.

Shewbread. The daily shewbread was a sacred presence just outside the Holy of Holies, reminiscent of the manna given by God to

---

39. Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 409 n. 55, draws particular attention to the importance of the Sermon at the Temple "to covenant making people."

40. In the symbols of the ark of the law and the seat of mercy one can find the companion principles of justice and mercy, about which the High Priest Alma spoke powerfully in Alma 42. The close linkage of these two qualities in the Holy of Holies may have enhanced Alma's testimony that God would cease to be God without uniting both of these divine attributes. Compare Israel Knohl's argument in his *Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 151, that the location of the tablets of the commandments near the cover above the ark, "near the place of God's Presence and his revelation[,] expresses the aim to unite the two poles of holiness and commandment," two terms comparable to such pairs as mercy and justice, equity and justice, justice and righteousness.

41. Moshe Weinfeld, "The Decalogue: Its Significance, Uniqueness, and Place in Israel's Tradition," in *Religion and Law: Biblical-Judaic and Islamic Perspectives*, ed. Edwin B. Firmage, Bernard G. Weiss, and John W. Welch (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 34.

his people in the wilderness[42] and "eaten by the priests 'in a holy place.'"[43] Now these Nephites ate the sanctified bread in remembrance, not of the broken body or of the suffering of the Lord, but of the unforgettably glorified physical body, "which I have shown unto you" (3 Nephi 18:7). Their sacrament was, quite literally, a sacrament of "shew" bread, of the bread of life that had been shown to them, the bread of a resurrected being whom they had not only seen but also touched and whose hands had touched them.

The Divine Name. The holy name of Jehovah played an important role in the Holy of Holies. The High Priest wore a gold plate on his forehead with "Holiness to the Lord" inscribed upon it (Exodus 28:36).[44] In 3 Nephi 18, all the people took upon themselves the name of Jesus as he ministered the bread and wine to the multitude. It had been promised in the tabernacle of Moses: "They shall put my name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them" (Numbers 6:27).

Purity. The Holy of Holies was a place of supreme purity, even more than elsewhere in the temple. After administering the sacrament of "the wine of the cup" (3 Nephi 18:8), and following stern warnings about the need to pray, especially in families, Jesus gave the Nephites explicit instructions about the need for purity and worthiness to participate in these sacred ordinances (18:28-29), just as worthiness to enter the temple had always been required: "Who shall ascend into the mountain [temple] of the Lord? . . . He who hath clean hands, and a pure heart" (Psalm 24:3-4, my translation).

Prayer. Prayer and supplication permeated every part and purpose of the holy temple (1 Kings 8:28-53). Jesus's second day with the Nephites began as the people assembled again at the temple (3 Nephi 19:3), having spent the night rushing around telling everyone who had missed the first day to be sure to drop whatever they were doing and not to miss what might come next.

---

42. Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service*, 348 n. 48.

43. Barker, *Gate of Heaven*, 29, citing Leviticus 24:5-9.

44. Barker, *Gate of Heaven*, 112. "Writers in the late second temple period understood that the seal was engraved only with the four letters of the sacred name" of Jehovah. Barker, *Temple Theology*, 58, citing the *Letter of Aristeas* 98, and Philo, *Life of Moses* 2.114.

The twelve disciples began by repeating to the company the "same words which Jesus had spoken—nothing varying from the words which Jesus had spoken"—the day before (3 Nephi 19:8). Verbatim repetition was beneficial not only for those who were hearing for the first time but for those who had already heard. The disciples then led the people in profound prayer.

After they prayed, they were all baptized, and they received the blessing of the Holy Ghost; and as angels ministered to them, the Lord came into their midst. He asked them to pray again, as he prayed, giving thanks to God, asking for faith and that their hearts be set upon righteous desires, unity, and purity.[45]

Unity. The Holy of Holies can be seen as representing Day One of the Creation inasmuch as all things emanate from its primordial state,[46] in which things were undifferentiated and the opposites that characterize this world had not been separated. All that happened in the Holy of Holies derived its truth, power, and goodness from the One, so that all might once again become one with God and with each other.[47] In John 17, in what is called by New Testament scholars his great high priestly prayer, Jesus prayed for unity between himself, the Father, his twelve apostles, and all those who would believe their words. A salient point encountered in 3 Nephi highlights this same element of unity. In 3 Nephi 19, Jesus first offered another exquisite high priestly prayer to the Father "for all those who shall believe on [his disciples] words, that they may believe in me, that I may be in them as thou, Father, art in me, that we may be one" (19:23), so that "I may be glorified in them" (19:29). In the end, Jesus "expounded all the scriptures in one" (23:14) and declared "the Father and I are one" (28:10). The mystery of unity was one of the greatest revelations and blessings of the Holy of Holies, and this theme is certainly prevalent in 3 Nephi.

---

45. On aspects of the prayers of Jesus, see Robert L. Millet, "The Praying Savior: Insights from the Gospel of 3 Nephi," in this volume.

46. Barker, *Great High Priest*, 155-59.

47. Barker, *Temple Theology*, 24-25.

Perfect Order. This holiest of all chambers was thought of as a place of supreme order and perfection, and this was represented by the fact that the Holy of Holies was a "perfect cube,"[48] 10 cubits by 10 cubits by 10 cubits, a perfect number[49] in all three dimensions. Here, in an architectural sense, eternal oneness became three-dimensional, and thus in this place heaven and earth could meet. Although there may also be other factors at work here, it is worth noting in this connection that many things happen in threes in 3 Nephi: the destruction and tempest lasted three hours (8:19), the darkness lasted three days (8:3), the voice of the Father spoke from heaven three times (11:5), Jesus prayed three times (19:19; 19:27; 19:31), and he appeared at the temple on three consecutive days (26:13).[50]

Blessing. The entire temple was a house of blessing, and so it was in 3 Nephi as well. In the Temple of Jerusalem a beautiful prayer was offered twice each day at the time of the daily sacrificial services known as the Tamid. This priestly blessing, found in Numbers 6, took place at the altar in the court outside the Holy Place. It reads, "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace" (Numbers 6:24-26). What could be a more explicit bestowal and fulfillment of that famous priestly blessing than these words coming next from 3 Nephi 19:25? "And it came to pass that Jesus blessed them; . . . and his countenance did smile upon them, and the light of his countenance did shine upon them."[51] Quoting Isaiah, the resurrected Lord additionally covenanted and promised the people, "Great shall be the peace of thy children" (3 Nephi 22:13).

---

48. Barker, *Temple Theology*, 19; *Gate of Heaven*, 22; Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service*, 152-53.

49. Barker, *Temple Theology*, 25. See generally, John W. Welch, "Counting to Ten," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12/2 (2003): 42-57. The dimensions of the Holy of Holies of the Temple of Solomon were 20 x 20 x 20 cubits.

50. See the threefold ascent developments of the sermon discussed above in note 25.

51. Note the reference following "countenance" in 3 Nephi 19:25 in the 1981 LDS edition of the Book of Mormon to Numbers 6:25 (23-27).

Whiteness of the Garments. The seraphim and cherubim were also there in the Holy of Holies (one knows little about these beings except that they were apparently burning-bright), along with concourses of angels (as seen by Lehi in 1 Nephi 1:8), who were the hosts of heaven or ministers in "flaming fire" (Psalm 104:4),[52] all in "garments of glory."[53] It was "a place of fire."[54] Similarly, angels abound in 3 Nephi (17:24; 19:14-15; 27:30). The burning whiteness of the robes of Jesus and of others attract special attention in 3 Nephi. Jesus initially appeared "clothed in a white robe" (11:8). On the second day, he came in even greater glory, in radiant "garments" (19:25). After the people prayed, they were "encircled about as if it were by fire" (19:14), reminiscent of the seraphim (Isaiah 6:2, 6) or the radiance of the glorious presence of God; and as Jesus blessed the people, they became "as white as the countenance and also the garments of Jesus; and behold the whiteness did exceed all the whiteness, yea even there could be nothing upon earth so white as the whiteness thereof" (19:25). His disciples became even as white "as Jesus" (19:30). The day before, Jesus had promised his twelve disciples that they would be given garments even more glorious than Solomon: "I say unto you, that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these, . . . even so will he clothe (endow) you, if ye are not of little faith" (13:29-30). Garments of such whiteness and glory belong first and foremost, not on earth, but in the temple, a model of heaven on earth.

Joy. In the "presence" of the Lord, sings Psalm 16:11, is the "fullness of joy." The entire temple was a place of peace and joy, culminating in the Holy of Holies, which enshrined divine joy. Indeed, the word *joy* appears three times in 3 Nephi 17: in verse 17, "no one can conceive of the joy which filled our souls at the time we heard him pray for us unto the Father"; in verse 18, "so great was the joy of the multitude that they were overcome"; and in verse 20, when

52. Barker sees them as angelic priests, in *Temple Theology*, 2, 25.

53. Compare Aaron's high priestly garments of "glory" and "beauty" (Exodus 28:2). See also Barker, *Temple Theology*, 57, based on *2 Enoch* 22:8.

54. Barker, *Temple Theology*, 19. Compare Revelation 4:5; D&C 133:41.

Jesus himself exclaimed, "Behold my joy is full." On day two, Jesus quoted from Isaiah 52, "Then shall they break forth into joy" (20:34), and at the end of day three, Jesus exclaimed, "Behold, my joy is great, even unto fullness," and declared that "even the Father rejoiceth" (27:30).

Awe. The Holy of Holies was a place of amazement and wonder.[55] Things that occurred in 3 Nephi caused the people of Nephi to marvel and wonder about many things. They were "marveling and wondering" when the theophany of the resurrected Lord commenced (11:1). When they "marveled, and wondered" (15:2) about how all things had become new, to allay their concerns, Jesus gave direct assurances in 3 Nephi 15 that he was Jehovah, the Giver of the Law and the Light of the World, who could therefore fulfill the law and give eternal life. As they touched and recognized the prints in his hands, "they did fall down at the feet of Jesus, and did worship him" (11:17). All of these "marvelous things" (17:16, 17; 26:14, 16) and "marvelous . . . words" (19:34) are important disclosures, fully at home among the mysteries of the temple.

House of Israel's God. Following his initial sermon on his first day in Bountiful and extending into the second day, Jesus spoke of the covenant of the Father with the house of Israel. He first explained that other sheep would not be so privileged to hear his voice in person, whereas the righteous Nephites had "both heard my voice, and seen me" (3 Nephi 15:24). Only members of the house of Israel were permitted to enter into the inner precincts of the temple, going beyond the outer court (or the Court of the Gentiles as it was later called in the Temple of Herod), where those "other sheep" previously had to stop. Now, however, in 3 Nephi 16, as Jesus went on to explain, if the Gentiles would repent and be numbered among the house of Israel, the words of Isaiah would be fulfilled that "the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem; . . . and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God" and shall see God "eye to eye when the Lord shall bring

55. Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service*, 203; see also Psalms 4:4; 33:8; 119:161.

again Zion" (3 Nephi 16:18-20). Nothing was more central to the holy temple than redemption, salvation, and seeing God.

Jesus subsequently turned his attention next to the sacred promises made by the Father and the Son to their covenant people. Just as he had given the Sermon at the Temple on the first day (3 Nephi 12-14) instructing the people concerning their obligations in their covenant relationship with God, on the second day he gave another uninterrupted sermon of close to the same length (3 Nephi 20-22, appropriately called the "Father's Covenant People Sermon"[56]) detailing the irrevocable commitments that God makes as his part of this two-way covenant relationship. Indeed, in these three chapters the dominant words are *the Father* (39 times), *covenant* (16 times), and *people* (35 times). The Father and the Son can be counted on, absolutely, to keep their side of the covenant, sworn in the temple that day. They will never forget. They will "lay thy stones with fair colors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires, . . . and all thy children shall be taught of the Lord" (3 Nephi 22:11-13; compare Isaiah 54:11-13). Temple themes abound in this covenant sermon, which mentions a new ark of the covenant, which, like Noah's ark, will carry his people when they might be tossed with tempests (3 Nephi 22:9, 11). It assures that, as God has sworn, "the covenant of my peace" shall not be removed (3 Nephi 22:10). He will deliver his people from their adversaries (especially the great adversary). He will bring in the New Jerusalem, with its new millennial temple, to bless all the kindred of the earth in fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant. And when these words, from the Holy of Holies of the Book of Mormon, come forth into the world, this shall be a sign to all the world "that the work of the Father hath already commenced unto the fulfilling of the covenant which he hath made unto the people who are of the house of Israel" (3 Nephi 21:7). That work has everything to do with the work of the temple.

---

56. Victor L. Ludlow, "The Father's Covenant People Sermon: 3 Nephi 20:10-23:5," in this volume.

Hidden Things. In the Holy of Holies, one learned the hidden or secret things and how everything lives.[57] There one could in some unknown way "gaze on the mystery"[58] of the plan of existence and could see things that cannot be spoken but must remain "hidden from public gaze."[59] In 3 Nephi 15-16 and 20-22, the Nephites learned of God's great plan of happiness, of his covenants with the house of Israel, and how he will bless all the nations of the earth. On each of the three days, Jesus spoke words that could not be written (3 Nephi 17:15; 19:32, 34; 26:6), perhaps not only because he said so many things or because language was inadequate, but also because the things they saw and heard were too sacred to be shared openly. Jesus had told the people that they must not cast pearls before swine or "that which is holy" before the dogs (3 Nephi 14:6); and since they had covenanted not to do so, he could teach them things that were not to be written.

Prophecy. In the Holy of Holies, prophetic words were received (see Isaiah 6:8-13) and heavenly books of remembrance were kept (Revelation 5:1), and in 3 Nephi, prophetic records next play a prominent role. In 3 Nephi 23, the Lord affirmed the gifts of prophecy. He also commanded the people to search diligently the words of the prophet Isaiah (3 Nephi 23:1). He took time to correct the Nephite record so that it would include the fulfillment of the prophecy by Samuel the Lamanite about many saints arising from the dead at the time of the death of the Savior (3 Nephi 23:13). This event showed the reality of the afterlife, given to ordinary mortals because of the resurrection of the Savior. Jesus then quoted the last two chapters of Malachi, in which that prophet spoke of the coming of "a messenger of the covenant" to the temple (Malachi 3:1), making pure consecration of tithes and offerings (3:3-10), keeping a book of remembrance (3:16), the appearance of the Son of Righteousness "with healing in his wings" (Malachi 4:2), and the return of Elijah

57. Barker, *Temple Theology*, 21-22.

58. Barker, *Temple Theology*, 25, based on 4Q418.

59. Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service*, 206. On the secret tradition in general, see Barker, *Great High Priest*, 1-33.

to turn the hearts of parents and children to each other (4:5-6). Each of Malachi's prophetic points quoted in 3 Nephi 24-25 deals with temple themes pertinent to the events in 3 Nephi.[60]

Healing. The temple was dedicated as a place for the healing of "whatsoever sickness there be" (1 Kings 8:37), and in many ways the great atonement of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement was a "rite of healing," healing wounds and restoring life to all creation.[61] The Holy of Holies furnishes the great example of wholeness, wellness, and the complete absence of evil or illness. The Son of Righteousness indeed came to the Nephites "with healing in his wings," throughout his ministry there. As Jesus was about to leave, toward the end of his first day with the Nephites, recognizing that he had just about worn the people out, he was deeply touched by their tears and steadfast faith and fixed gazes. Filled with compassion, he called for any and all of their sick and afflicted to be brought forward, and he healed them one by one. Ancient temples often functioned as shrines of healing. The house of the Lord mitigated the results of the fall of Adam, which so often involves sickness, injury, corruption, and sorrow. It is interesting to wonder—even if this cannot be known for sure—if any of the lame, halt, or maimed whom Jesus healed at this time had been injured in the great destructions that had recently occurred at the time of the death of Jesus himself. If so, one may well imagine that his compassion was intensified by his commiseration, knowing that they all had suffered at the same time as he had in consequence of the destructions that accompanied his atoning sacrifice.

---

60. See Aaron P. Schade and David R. Seely, "The Writings of Malachi in 3 Nephi: A Foundation for Zion in the Past and Present," in this volume, which extensively covers the role of Malachi's prophesies in 3 Nephi 24-25 about the coming of the Lord to his temple with the powers and temple covenants of Elijah. As D. Marshall Goodrich of Portland, Oregon, has pointed out in personal e-mail correspondence, February 23, 2009, temple themes dominate the book of Malachi: for example, the law of obedience (1:6); not polluting the bread on the table of the Lord (1:7); making an acceptable sacrifice and vows to God (1:8, 10, 14); not dealing treacherously with a brother or profaning the holy (2:10-11); keeping the law of chastity and fidelity to spouse and God (2:14-16); making pure consecration of tithes and offerings (3:3-10); bringing parents and children, ancestors and posterity, together (4:5-6).

61. Barker, *Great High Priest*, 50-55.

The healing blessings of the Lord continued on the second day as well, when he "healed all their sick, . . . raised a man from the dead, and had shown forth his power unto them" (3 Nephi 26:15).

Children. In the Holy of Holies, the High Priest became a holy child or "son of God"[62] among all the children of Israel, in the sense of qualifying to enter into God's most heavenly kingdom. Perhaps with this symbolism and other exalting powers in mind, Jesus gave blessings and paid special attention to the children on all three days reported in 3 Nephi. On the first day, he asked that the children be brought to him. He stood in the middle, children in a circle around him, parents in an outer circle around them. He spoke words that could not be written; things happened that they both saw and heard (17:11-17). Jesus also prayed for the parents (17:17), wept for joy, blessed the children one by one, and, turning to the parents, said, "Behold your little ones" (17:23). As these extraordinary blessings were given, angels descended and encircled the little ones, and the multitude did bear witness (17:24-25). This event occurred in the presence of God (Jesus), angels, and a host of witnesses.[63] On day two, the hearts of the parents were then turned to their children as Jesus loosed the tongues of the children, "and they did speak unto their fathers great and marvelous things" (26:14). On day three, the multitude gathered themselves together once again. This time "they both saw and heard these children, yea, even babes did open their mouths and utter marvelous things," which the people "were forbidden" to write (26:16).

Sending Forth. Just as the Nephite disciples were sent forth immediately to preach the gospel and establish the Church of Jesus Christ and build Zion in 3 Nephi 27, prophets of old had been sent out from the Holy of Holies, called and sent forth into the world, symbolically

---

62. Barker, *Temple Theology*, 57. Barker derives this idea primarily from Psalm 2:7 ("thou art my son") and 110:4 ("thou art a priest for ever").

63. While the full nature of this blessing is unstated, and while it may well not have constituted a completed sealing of individual parents to their children, this moving group experience may very well have foreshadowed and securely revealed those ultimate ordinances yet to come.

returning back into the created world on the other side of the veil. In Isaiah 6, when Isaiah was called in the Holy of Holies to cry repentance to the people, God asked, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Isaiah said, "Here am I; send me" (6:8). He was then told what to say and what not to say to the people at large.

Consecration. The Nephites began living the law of consecration,[64] having all things in common (3 Nephi 26:19; 4 Nephi 1:3). They called themselves the Church of Christ, built up the church, and did all things in the name of Christ. When Jesus asked, "What is it that ye desire of me, after that I am gone to the Father?" (3 Nephi 28:1), nine of the disciples yearned for nothing more than to come speedily unto Christ to enter into his kingdom, while three desired nothing more than to stay to assist in building up the kingdom of God on this earth. These are the two ultimate desires with which all are blessed by the holy temple of God.

Transfiguration. There was also an oil of anointment used to anoint the ark of the covenant as well as the entire tabernacle (Exodus 30:23-25). It is spoken of, in *2 Enoch* 22:9, as being "like sweet dew," making initiates "like one of the glorious ones," lifted up into a higher state, allowing them to become sons of God, children of light, like angels, lifted up, transformed into an angelic state, transfigured as translated beings,[65] obtaining "resurrection, life, vision, knowledge."[66] In yet a concluding triad,[67] three of these Nephites were so blessed as to never taste death but to be transformed, to be "changed in the twinkling of an eye" and blessed in the kingdom of the Father (3 Nephi 28:7-8). Their eternal mission was to "bring the souls of men" unto Christ (28:9). Without arguing that the transfiguration of

64. On consecration and the temple in biblical times, see Welch, *Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple*, 143-47.

65. Barker, *Temple Theology*, 57, 92.

66. Barker, *Temple Theology*, 92.

67. On triadic structures in the Sermon on the Mount, see notes 25 and 50 above. See also Dale C. Allison Jr., "The Structure of the Sermon on the Mount," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106/3 (1987): 423-45; and Glen H. Stassen, "The Fourteen Triads of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:2-7:12)," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 122/2 (2003): 267-308. See, for example, fast, wash, anoint; ask, seek, knock.

these three Nephites somehow involved the use of that oil of anointment, it is possible to see that the book of 3 Nephi ends with an actual transformation, just as the Holy of Holies aimed ultimately to raise and transform mortal souls into immortal, celestial beings.

Other points linking 3 Nephi with the Holy of Holies and its closely connected temple courts and chambers could be mentioned, but enough has been said to appreciate the holy context, character, and qualities of this book of sacred scripture. All of these holy elements can be seen in the book 3 Nephi. This timeless book abounds with temple themes. It calls us to repent, to come unto Jesus, to take upon ourselves the name of Christ, to become his purified covenant people, showing us the way to enter through the narrow gate into his sublime and exalting presence (3 Nephi 27:9-33).

Concluding Thoughts

I find it hard to say enough in praise of 3 Nephi. It has been called a "fifth gospel,"[68] "a resplendent portrait,"[69] "a crowning jewel,"[70] "the pinnacle,"[71] "the climax, the apex,"[72] and even the "first gospel,"[73] "the focal point, the supreme moment, in the entire history of the Book of Mormon."[74] To that may we now add: it is

68. B. H. Roberts, "The Fifth Gospel," in *Defense of the Faith and the Saints*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1907-12), cited in Strathearn, "Nephi, third book of," 597-601; N. Eldon Tanner, "Christ in America," *Ensign*, May 1975, 34; Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, "One by One: The Fifth Gospel's Model of Service," in *A Book of Mormon Treasury: Gospel Insights from General Authorities and Religious Educators* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 379.

69. Ed J. Pinegar and Richard J. Allen, *Commentaries and Insights on the Book of Mormon: Alma 30-Moroni* (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2003), 433.

70. See Strathearn, "Nephi, third book of," 597.

71. See Strathearn, "Nephi, third book of," 597.

72. Joseph Fielding McConkie, Robert L. Millet, and Brent L. Top, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon,* vol. 4, *Third Nephi through Moroni* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992), 1.

73. Monte Nyman, *Divine Ministry—The First Gospel: Jesus among the Nephites* (Orem, UT: Granite, 2003), 2-3.

74. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant*, 250. For an exquisite media portrayal of the transcendent words and experiences embodied in 3 Nephi, see Mark Mabry, *Another Testament of Christ: Reflections of Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2009),

"the inner sanctum" of the Book of Mormon, a sacred and infinite template uniting time and all eternity. As President Ezra Taft Benson has said, "It is clear that 3 Nephi contains some of the most moving and powerful passages in all scripture. It testifies of Christ, his prophets, and the doctrines of salvation." He went on to encourage people, especially families, to read 3 Nephi together at Easter time and to "discuss its sacred contents."[75]

It leaves a powerful impression with me to think that Joseph Smith translated this record in 1829, before he knew—or at least had said anything—about building temples or began revealing any of the ordinances of the house of the Lord. Joseph Smith was inspired by an incessant determination to rebuild Zion by restoring the ordinances of the temple. The roots of that prophetic ideal may well have begun as early as with what he learned or sensed from his translation of the Book of Mormon and especially the translation of 3 Nephi.[76] Soon, those things would be revealed to him, and likewise to us, line upon line, through the book of 3 Nephi and in other divine manifestations.

Today, the temple helps readers to understand what is going on in 3 Nephi, and at the same time, 3 Nephi can help worshippers to understand the temple. While one cannot go back in time two thousand years to experience all that the people of Nephi saw and heard at their temple in Bountiful, each time a Latter-day Saint goes to the temple, it can be an opportunity to relate very closely to those unspeakably holy days. Joseph Smith said of the Book of Mormon that a person can "get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book."[77] One of its precepts is clearly the centrality of the

---

and its companion DVD with the same title, which was filmed in Honduras and produced by Cameron Trejo.

75. Ezra Taft Benson, "The Savior's Visit to America," *Ensign*, May 1987, 6.

76. For an extended analysis of temples in the Book of Mormon, see John W. Welch, "The Temple in the Book of Mormon: The Temples at the Cities of Nephi, Zarahemla, and Bountiful," in *The Temple in Antiquity*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 297–387.

77. *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 194.

temple. The book of 3 Nephi lays forth a holy template for how one may dwell forever in the house of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the great and eternal High Priest of all mankind.

Of course, biblical critics have long thought of the Sermon on the Mount in 3 Nephi as its "Achilles heel," but what we now know indicates otherwise. When I first noticed the temple pattern in the overall structure of the Sermon at the Temple in January 1988, it was an overwhelming, all-consuming experience; time stood still for several hours as its pieces fell in place. That evening I shared the main outlines of the Sermon at the Temple with Elder Neal A. Maxwell. After reflecting for a few moments, he said (with Ether 12:27 clearly in mind): "Isn't it interesting how the Lord can turn what people have seen as the Book of Mormon's greatest weakness into one of its greatest strengths."

In sum, we are blessed to know, even more clearly than ever before, that the Book of Mormon restores plain and precious parts, covenants, and things (1 Nephi 13:26, 29) that had become lost. The sacred temple setting of the Sermon at the Temple and of the ministry of the Lord among these Nephites may well be seen as one of those restorations. Temple themes can be seen in the puzzling Sermon on the Mount precisely because of the picture on the box given by the Sermon at the Temple and throughout 3 Nephi. The book of 3 Nephi should not be underestimated. It is a true account of the Savior Jesus Christ coming to his people at his temple, the house of the Lord, where resides the power to overcome chaos, Satan, and death. This powerful hope in Christ, who reigns eternally upon the whole face of creation, is indeed the pervasive theme of the book of 3 Nephi, as well as of the entire Book of Mormon.

John W. Welch is the Robert K. Thomas Professor of Law at the J. Reuben Clark Law School, Brigham Young University. He received his JD from Duke University.

3 Nephi 9:19-20: The Offering of a Broken Heart

Dana M. Pike

As recorded in the Book of Mormon (3 Nephi 8), the atoning death of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem brought prophesied destruction and darkness in the Americas. Following approximately three hours of terrible devastation (8:19), a "thick darkness" engulfed the land for three days (8:20, 23; 10:9). During this period of darkness the voice of Jesus was "heard among all the inhabitants of the earth, upon all the face of this land" (9:1).

Third Nephi 9 recounts Christ's first comments to the survivors. A dominant theme in this chapter is the repeated occurrence of the personal pronoun *I*—thirty-one times in the twenty-one verses of reported speech. Speaking in first person, Jesus powerfully indicated to them that *he* had caused the devastating destruction (9:3-12). He overviewed the tragic events (which none of the survivors could then have completely known firsthand) and explained that "great destructions have *I* caused to come upon this land, and upon this people, because of their wickedness and their abominations" (9:12; emphasis added).

At this point Christ specifically addressed the survivors, explaining that they were "more righteous" than those who had died

I express gratitude to my colleagues Kent P. Jackson and John W. Welch for their helpful feedback to an earlier draft of this article. I also thank two reviewers, whose identities are unknown to me, for their beneficial suggestions. Any faults that remain in this article are, of course, my responsibility. I wrote the first draft of this study in mid-2007 and then revised and presented it at the Maxwell Institute's 3 Nephi Conference on September 26, 2008. I appreciate the opportunity of having it published in the compilation of the proceedings of that conference.

and inviting them to come to him, that he might heal and save them (3 Nephi 9:13-14). He then fully testified of his identity: "Behold, I am Jesus Christ the Son of God. I created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are. I was with the Father from the beginning . . . and in me hath the Father glorified his name. I came unto my own, and my own received me not. And the scriptures concerning my coming are fulfilled" (9:15-17). (There is intense irony in this passage since Jesus testified that he is the creator [9:15] in the context of the massive destruction he caused, and he testified that he is "the light and the life of the world" [9:18] to survivors sitting in darkness, surrounded by corpses.)

As the Lord continued his discourse in the darkness, he announced the instructions that are the focus of this study: "And ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood; yea, your sacrifices and your burnt offerings shall be done away, for I will accept none of your sacrifices and your burnt offerings. And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost" (3 Nephi 9:19-20).

Questions about 3 Nephi 9:19-20

As straightforward as the command in 3 Nephi 9:19-20 sounds, it invites several questions and has produced various interpretations and applications. One question that arises is, since the first phrase of 9:19 instructs that there should be "no more the shedding of blood," does this mean that "your sacrifices and your burnt offerings" in the next phrase only refers to animal offerings? Or were grain offerings and wine libations to be terminated as well (for example, Leviticus 23:13)? The scriptures are emphatic that Jesus's mission and sacrifice fulfilled the law, prophecies, and typologies of previous dispensations, including every aspect of the law of Moses, suggesting that all types of previously authorized sacrificial offerings were concluded

now that he had offered his infinite, atoning sacrifice.[1] And Christian practice reported in the New Testament and the Book of Mormon demonstrates that animal, grain, wine, and other sacrificially symbolic substances were no longer offered at altars.[2]

Another question that arises in reading 3 Nephi 9:19–20 is whether the instruction to offer "a broken heart and a contrite spirit" is something new or not. Many members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints assume that Jesus began requesting the offering of a "broken heart and a contrite spirit" *after* his atoning sacrifice fulfilled the practice of offering sacrifice at altars, as if Christ had said, you *used* to offer animals, *but now* I want you to stop animal sacrifices and

1. The Savior himself declared to his disciples in Israel: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matthew 5:17). And he reminded those in the Americas that "by me redemption cometh, and in me is the law of Moses fulfilled" (3 Nephi 9:17). Christ's emphasis on fulfilling the law of Moses in these statements is understandable since his sacrifice and resurrection concluded the dispensation that began with Moses. Additionally, see 2 Nephi 25:27; Alma 34:13; 3 Nephi 12:17–19, 46; 15:4–5, 8.

2. Support for this assertion comes not only from the passage under consideration (3 Nephi 19:19) and Jesus's teaching that he fulfilled the law and its requirements (see the previous note), but from a variety of other scriptures that contrast sacrifices in the previous era with that made by Jesus. For example, Jesus "needeth not daily, as those [earlier Aaronic] high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself" (Hebrews 7:27; see 10:1–12). Historically, Jewish sacrificial offerings ended with the Roman destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in AD 70. Prior to this early Christians in Jerusalem did go to the temple, but only to pray and to teach (for example, Acts 2:46; 3:1; 5:42); they generally did not offer sacrifice (but see Acts 21:18–26). Likewise, early Christians were expected not to offer sacrifices to Greek and Roman gods (for example, 1 Corinthians 10:18–20). Interestingly, several New Testament authors used sacrificial terminology and symbolism from the previous era to teach early Christians about the "spiritual sacrifice" they could and should make in their own lives (1 Peter 2:5; see also Romans 12:1; Hebrews 13:15–16), again highlighting the Christian avoidance of actually offering animal or other types of sacrifices as non-Christians around them continued to do. The Book of Mormon only contains a few passages indicating that the true worshippers of Jehovah offered legitimate sacrifices prior to Jesus's atoning sacrifice (for example, 1 Nephi 7:22; Mosiah 2:3), but it also emphasizes that such activity should cease following Jesus's offering: "It is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice, and then shall there be . . . a stop to the shedding of blood; then shall the law of Moses be fulfilled; yea, it shall be all fulfilled" (Alma 34:13; emphasis added).

start offering a broken heart and contrite spirit as your sacrifice. The following two quotations illustrate this point.

> After promising eternal life to all who would repent and follow him, Jesus declared his divinity and announced that the preparatory law of Moses was now "fulfilled" (3 Nephi 9:14-17; 15:5). *The new requirement* of a broken heart and a contrite spirit was declared (3 Nephi 9:20).[3]

> The practice of sacrifice that was fulfilled in Christ was one of rites and rituals, whereas the *new practice* commanded of the Lord involved inner attitudes that would bring about outward obedience to commandments and ordinances. . . . Among the few things done away by the Savior was the offering of animal sacrifice. The Lord *now required* a personal offering which consisted of a broken heart and a contrite spirit (see 3 Nephi 9:20).[4]

On the one hand, the common approach demonstrated by these quotations—of understanding the Lord's request for a "broken heart and a contrite spirit" as something new and innovative—is curious since the words *new* and *now* do not occur in Jesus's instructions on this offering.[5] But on the other hand, Jesus's death and resurrection

3. Gary Lee Walker, "The Downfall of the Nephite Nation: Lessons for Our Time (3 Nephi 6-10)," in *Alma 30—Moroni*, Studies in Scriptures, vol. 8 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 144; emphasis added.

4. Joseph Fielding McConkie, Robert L. Millet, and Brent L. Top, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 4, *Third Nephi through Moroni* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992), 44 and 72; emphasis added. In the following note I present some scriptures that I think argue against the ritual-without-heart view of the Mosaic dispensation that seems to be presented in this quotation, as well as in many others.

5. In addition to the quotations just cited, other published examples of this before/after interpretation include Ed J. Pinegar and Richard J. Allen, *Commentaries and Insights on the Book of Mormon: Alma 30-Moroni 1* (American Fork, UT: Covenant, 2008), 301: "The law of Moses has been fulfilled and the Lord requires of us a *new* sacrifice" (emphasis added). This perspective is also reflected in a statement by J. Reuben Clark: "It is difficult for us today to realize the tremendous revolution involved in altering the ritualism of the Law of Moses into the humble and lowly concept of worship, not with the sacrificial blood of animals, but with this broken heart and contrite spirit of

inaugurated a new gospel dispensation (the Mosaic one was over) with new practices. My position is that interpreting the content of these verses in a before/after, old-way/new-way dichotomy violates the original sense of 3 Nephi 9:19-20 and represents a misunderstanding of the Lord's expectations for his covenant people in the Mosaic dispensation. Rather than this new dispensation bringing a *new* expectation—that disciples begin offering a broken heart and contrite spirit—this new dispensation brought a *renewed* earlier expectation, now minus the ritual evidence of physically offering sacrifice at an altar.

A third question that arises about 3 Nephi 9:19-20 is, does Jesus's instruction to offer a broken heart refer to a onetime act, to an ongoing activity of offering (as Israelites had done with animals) that represents a condition or status of brokenheartedness, or to both of these options? Latter-day Saint leaders and authors have often employed the content of 3 Nephi 9:19-20 to highlight various doctrinal points, including applying the ongoing *condition of having* a

---

the worshiper. . . . The sinner [under the Mosaic law] seemingly, in general, took on no obligation and considered himself under no obligation to abandon his sins, but took on only the obligation to offer sacrifice therefore. But under the new covenant that came in with Christ, the sinner must offer the sacrifice out of his own life, not by offering the blood of some other creature; he must give up his sins, he must repent, he himself must make the sacrifice." *Behold the Lamb of God: Selections from the Sermons and Writings, Published and Unpublished, of J. Reuben Clark, Jr. on the Life of the Savior* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1991), 107; see similarly George Q. Cannon, *Journal of Discourses*, 20:289 (July 27, 1879), who does not employ Clark's "seemingly, in general" qualification. Unfortunately, Clark (as Cannon previously) seems to perpetuate a general misunderstanding of the Mosaic law. No one in that or any other dispensation could repent just by offering an animal in sacrifice. Jehovah condemned this very attitude in Isaiah 1:11-15 (quoted below). A number of other scripture passages from the Mosaic dispensation further counter this standard misconception, including: "return unto the Lord thy God, and . . . obey his voice . . . with all thine heart, and with all thy soul" (Deuteronomy 30:2); "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13); and "whosoever transgresseth against me, . . . if he confess his sins before thee and me, and repenteth in the sincerity of his heart, him shall ye forgive, and I will forgive him also" (Mosiah 26:29).

broken heart to our need to be submissive to God's will.[6] My intent in this study, however, is to "go behind" these uses of this passage to explore what the *initial act* of offering a broken heart meant in its ancient context.

This study aims, therefore, to demonstrate that the divine requirement to offer a broken heart to God did *not* begin when Christ fulfilled the law of Moses through his atoning sacrifice and resurrection from the dead. The requirement that true disciples offer a broken heart is attested in the Old Testament and 2 Nephi—scriptures that date to the Mosaic dispensation—and was thus understood by disciples living before Jesus's mortal ministry. Additionally, since the phrase "broken heart and a contrite spirit" occurs in the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament), this study also aims to explain what this phrase originally meant, based on an examination of the available biblical Hebrew texts.

This second aim is important since the English word *broken* is used in a variety of ways; for example, a broken dish is one in many pieces, a broken heart in emotional matters is one that is hurt deeply, a broken horse is one that will follow a rider's direction, broken sleep is disrupted sleep, and a broken switch is one that does not function. To accurately understand what the Lord intended when he asked for

6. For example, Bruce D. Porter suggests understanding "broken heart and contrite spirit" in a number of ongoing dimensions, including, "When we have received a forgiveness of sins, a broken heart serves as a divine shield against temptation" (Porter, "A Broken Heart and a Contrite Spirit," *Ensign*, November 2007, 31-32). As noted in my text, I am focusing on the *act* of breaking our hearts, not on applying this concept to the necessary, ongoing status of being submissive and obedient (*maintaining* a broken heart); however, I very much appreciate Porter's comments and the insights he shares. Porter also teaches that even Jesus had a broken heart: "though Jesus of Nazareth was utterly without sin, He walked through life with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, as manifested by His submission to the will of the Father." For another suggestion of how Jesus had a "broken heart," see Bruce C. Hafen, *The Broken Heart: Applying the Atonement to Life's Experiences* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 27, p. 29 in the 2008 expanded edition. This volume also provides a number of insights that are worth considering, even though they have a different focus than the dimension that I am emphasizing herein.

the sacrifice of a broken heart, it is vital to know what the English word *broken* means in the phrase *broken heart.*

Doctrinal Orientation

Before reviewing early scripture passages mentioning the offering of a "broken heart," an essential concept for understanding the content of 3 Nephi 9:19-20 will first be treated. Traditional Christians typically believe that the gospel of Jesus Christ first arrived on earth with Jesus and his mortal ministry. Because of the restoration of the gospel, however, Latter-day Saints understand that Christ's gospel was taught to Adam and Eve and their posterity and that the principles and ordinances of the gospel were similar before and after Christ's ministry and sacrifice.[7] Enoch, for example, reported that God taught Adam:

> If thou wilt turn unto me, and hearken unto my voice, and believe, and repent of all thy transgressions, and be baptized, even in water, in the name of mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth, which is Jesus Christ, the only name which shall be given under heaven, whereby salvation shall come unto the children of men, ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. . . . All men, everywhere, must repent, or they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God, for no unclean thing can dwell there. . . . Even so ye must be born again into the kingdom of heaven, of water, and of the Spirit, and be cleansed by blood, even the blood of mine Only Begotten; that ye might be sanctified from all sin. (Moses 6:52-59; see also 5:7-15)

Many centuries later, in the Mosaic dispensation, Nephi similarly taught: "I know that if ye shall follow the Son [of God], with

7. The scriptures attest that there were times of apostasy and restoration between Adam and Eve's era and Jesus's ministry, and that as history progressed the percentage of the earth's population who accepted and lived the gospel became smaller and smaller. Nevertheless, restoration scriptures, such as Moses 5-7 and the Book of Abraham, make clear that the gospel was on the earth long before Jesus's ministry.

full purpose of heart, . . . with real intent, repenting of your sins, witnessing unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you the name of Christ, by baptism . . . , behold, then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost; yea, then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost" (2 Nephi 31:13). Thus, God's expectations for those who desire salvation did not suddenly appear with Christ's earthly ministry, but were taught by prophets from the very beginning.

Just as the doctrines of faith in Christ, repentance, and baptism by water and by the Spirit were taught from the time humans first lived on the earth, so likewise the law of sacrifice was introduced to Adam and Eve at their expulsion from Eden (Moses 4:27).[8] The angelic explanation to scripture's first human couple that animal sacrifice symbolized "the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father" (Moses 5:7) came to them sometime later, following their initial obedience to this law (5:6–8). These early animal sacrifices were intended to be "instructive as well as worshipful. They were accompanied by prayer, devotion, and dedication, and represented an acknowledgment on the part of the individual of his [or her] duty toward God, and also a thankfulness to the Lord for his [or her] life and blessings upon the earth (see Gen. 4:3–7; Gen. 8:20; Gen. 22:1–17; Ex. 5:3; Ex. 20:24)."[9] Thus, when disciples faithfully offered a legitimate animal sacrifice in dispensations prior to Jesus's atoning sacrifice, they understood that the animal symbolized the infinite sacrifice the Son of God would make, and the act of their offering represented their heartfelt devotion as they gave something of personal value that they could not thereafter retrieve (the animal), with confidence in obtaining something greater (the Lord's blessing).

This view, that animal sacrifice was intended to be a manifestation of faith and devotion, not just the offering of an animal, is

8. Whether one accepts that Moses 4:27 ("Unto Adam, and also unto his wife, did I, the Lord God, make coats of skins, and clothed them") is connected to the initiation of the law of sacrifice or not, Moses 5:6 specifically indicates that Adam has been offering animal sacrifice for some time *before his angelic tutor arrived.*

9. The Bible Dictionary in the Latter-day Saint edition of the King James Version of the Bible, s.v. "sacrifices."

emphasized by Jehovah's words in Isaiah: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, . . . and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. . . . Bring no more vain oblations. . . . And when . . . ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood" (Isaiah 1:11-15). Similar divine pronouncements are found in Hosea 6:6, Amos 5:21-24, and elsewhere in the Old Testament. Clearly, such statements did not announce the termination of animal sacrifice seven centuries before Jesus's ministry and sacrifice. They represent divine displeasure toward Israelites whose hearts were far from the intent of the law as they hypocritically went through the external motions of the law of sacrifice (such as offering an animal).

Latter-day Saints therefore accept that just as faith, repentance, obedience, and other gospel requirements were necessary to qualify for the salvation *prior* to Jesus's mortal ministry, the requirement that premeridian disciples of the Lord participate in all aspects of the law of sacrifice with heartfelt devotion was also expected by the Lord throughout those earlier millennia; it was not something originally announced to Nephite survivors when the Son of God concluded his saving mission. Specific passages in the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon evidencing this will now be reviewed.

Early Occurrences of the Phrase *Broken Heart and Contrite Spirit*

Chronologically speaking, the phrases *broken heart* and *contrite spirit* do not first appear in scripture in Jesus's instructions recorded in 3 Nephi 9:19-20. The two individual phrases appear in Old Testament texts that date to before Lehi's departure from Jerusalem (about 600 BC), as well as in 2 Nephi, where the combined form, "a broken heart and a contrite spirit," also occurs. An accurate interpretation of 3 Nephi 9:19-20 must, therefore, take these earlier attestations into account.

Psalm 51:16-17 provides the best evidence of this teaching in the Old Testament.

> For thou [God] desirest not [animal] sacrifice; else would I give it:
> thou delightest not in burnt offering [*ʿōlâ*].
> The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit [*rûaḥ nišbārâ*]:
> a broken and a contrite heart [*lēb-nišbār wĕnidkeh*], O God, thou wilt not despise.[10]

Animal sacrifice is clearly referenced in verse 16. The Hebrew noun *ʿōlâ* is the standard biblical term for the whole "burnt offering" on an altar of sacrifice. However, verse 17 emphasizes that "a broken and a contrite heart"—not just an animal—is the real, meaningful sacrifice of a true disciple.[11] The format of this verse, with "a broken spirit" paralleled by "a broken and a contrite heart," serves to reinforce the essential nature of what God expects, as well as highlighting the analogous sense of these expressions.[12]

There are passages in the Old Testament that combine the same Hebrew noun—*lēb*, "heart"—and verb—*šbr*, "to break"—found in Psalm 51:17, but in a somewhat different context. Two examples will suffice to illustrate this.

---

10. The passage is Psalm 51:18-19 in the traditional Hebrew Bible, the Masoretic Text (hereafter MT). I have formatted the four main phrases (stichs) of this verse on separate lines to represent the parallelism inherent in the content. Curiously, Psalm 51:17 is paraphrased, with no scripture citation, in George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, amplified and arranged by Philip C. Reynolds (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1972), 7:119, as part of a surprisingly brief commentary on 3 Nephi 9:19-20.

11. This is also emphasized in commentary from New English Translation (NET) Notes, Psalm 51:16, note 42: "This is not a categorical denial of the sacrificial system in general or of the importance of such offerings. . . . God requires something more fundamental, a repentant and humble attitude (see v. 17), before these offerings can have real meaning."

12. In case it is not clear, the phrase *the sacrifices of God* at the beginning of verse 17 means sacrifices acceptable to God, not sacrifices that God makes.

"The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart [*nišbĕrê-lēb*]; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit [*dakkĕ'ê rûaḥ*]." (Psalm 34:18)[13]

"The Lord hath . . . sent me to bind up the brokenhearted [*lĕnišbĕrê-lēb*]." (Isaiah 61:1; quoted by Jesus in Luke 4:18)[14]

The phrases *broken heart(ed)* and *contrite spirit* in such passages refer to those who are downtrodden or worn out as the result of their sins or by other painful circumstances of mortal life, as opposed to those who act to give to the Lord a voluntary offering of a broken heart.[15]

Significantly, while the vocabulary in such passages is similar to Psalm 51:17, the Hebrew word order is reversed in these passages addressing those who are broken in heart, with the noun following, rather than preceding, the adjectives or verbs (participles). The Hebrew of Psalm 51:17 can be literally translated "a spirit, a broken one; a heart, a broken and contrite one." However, a literal rendition of the pertinent phrases in Psalm 34:18 is "the ones who are broken of heart . . such as be contrite of spirit."[16] This literary

13. The citation in the Hebrew MT is Psalm 34:19.

14. See similarly, Psalm 109:16: "Because that he [a wicked person] remembered not to shew mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart [*nik'ēh lēbāb*];" and Psalm 147:3: "He [God] healeth the broken in heart [*lišbûrê lēb*], and bindeth up their wounds." See also Isaiah 57:15. Other passages in the Old Testament, such as Proverbs 15:13 and 17:22, Jeremiah 23:9, and Ezekiel 6:9, include *broken* and *heart* but have a different sense than the one investigated in this study.

15. This observation is neatly summarized in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), s.v. "brokenness": "Brokenness is most commonly employed in the Bible as an image for people overwhelmed by troubles. In the OT this is commonly expressed by saying that the heart or spirit is 'broken.' The image represents feelings of anguish and despair, and a loss of hope or a sense of well-being. A broken heart or spirit can result from suffering, persecution and sorrow (Job 17:1; Ps 34:18; 69:20; 109:16; 147:3; Prov 15:18; Is 61:1; 65:14). It can also result from a recognition of the devastation of God's judgment on the sins of others (Jer 23:9; Ezek 21:6) or one's own sin (Ps 51:17)."

16. Modern English translations more accurately render this distinction. For example, the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of Psalm 34:18 reads, "The Lord is

distinction underscores the difference in the messages expressed in Psalms 51:17 and 34:18.

While the Lord has the power to comfort and heal those who are broken in heart and spirit, as Psalm 34:18 testifies, being bruised and broken in heart by life in this fallen world does not automatically mean a person has offered his or her broken heart to God. While it is true that challenging life circumstances often incline people toward divine help, the act of offering a broken heart must be initiated by the individual, whatever his or her circumstances are (consider Alma 32:1-15 in this regard). This is the sense expressed in Psalm 51:16-17 and in 2 Nephi 2:7.

In the Book of Mormon, the prophet Nephi quotes his father Lehi as teaching, "Behold, he [God the Son] offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered" (2 Nephi 2:7). Lehi taught that Christ's sacrifice "answer[s] the ends of the law," but only for those who break their hearts. In other words, the atonement allows us to meet the demands of the law of justice against us when our faith in Christ leads to our repentance and on to our sanctification. This correlates with the content of Psalm 51:17, in that disciples must voluntarily break their heart to offer it to God.

Nephi's own plea, "May the gates of hell be shut continually before me, because that my heart is broken and my spirit is contrite!" (2 Nephi 4:32), can be understood in the same manner, although it reads more like a statement of the ongoing condition of Nephi's heart—submissive, "broken"—than his initial act of breaking and offering his heart.[17] Nephi implies that he has broken his own heart as an offering to the Lord, and thus prays for divine assistance against hellish powers.

In Jacob 2:10, Jacob declares, "I must . . . tell you concerning your wickedness and abominations, in the presence of the pure in

---

near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit."

17. This latter interpretation seems to be what is taught by Porter, "Broken Heart," 32.

heart, and the broken heart, and under the glance of the piercing eye of the Almighty God." It is not clear how his words should be interpreted, whether to understand "pure in heart" as parallel to "broken heart" (the ones who have broken their hearts) or whether Jacob used the phrase *the broken heart* to designate the suffering of Nephite wives and children—those who were broken in heart and spirit—because of the "wickedness" of their men (2:6-7; Psalm 34:18, discussed above).

While passages in the Old Testament and the early portion of the Book of Mormon that convincingly mention the offering of a broken heart as a sacrifice to God are relatively few in number, they do exist. And they are sufficiently clear to indicate that this concept was taught and understood among God's covenant people during the Mosaic dispensation, prior to the mortal mission of Jesus Christ. The need for a disciple of the Lord to offer a broken heart and contrite spirit was presumably part of the law of sacrifice from the very beginning. It was not initially instituted by Jesus in 3 Nephi 9:19-20.

Indeed, a few Latter-day Saint authors have expressed this view. For example, Ellis Rasmussen correctly observed in connection with 3 Nephi 9:15-22 that the "sacrifice of animals culminated in Jesus' ultimate sacrifice, of which they were mere types, but the sacrifice of 'a broken heart and contrite spirit' *continues*,"[18] indicating that the offerer's faith and broken heart had always been required *along with* the animal for it to be a true and effective sacrifice. Likewise, M. Catherine Thomas explained that "under the law of Moses, the broken heart was to accompany the animal sacrifice (cf. Ps 51:17-19); the Lord did away with the animal sacrifice after the law of Moses was fulfilled (3 Nephi 9:17-20), but the broken heart and contrite spirit *remained* as a requirement from the Lord's people."[19] These statements affirm the same perspective present-

18. Ellis T. Rasmussen, "Old Testament (Temporary and Eternal Laws)," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 3:1028; emphasis added.

19. M. Catherine Thomas, "Broken heart and contrite spirit," in *The Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, ed. Dennis L. Largey (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003),

ed herein, that the faith-based law and principle of sacrifice was in effect before Jesus's mortal mission and continued on after his atonement. Only the practice of offering animals and agricultural products at an altar was discontinued.

Re-reading 3 Nephi 9:19-20

With an understanding that the gospel of Christ was on the earth from the beginning, and that the offering of a broken heart constituted a premeridian dimension of the law of sacrifice, how does one accurately read 3 Nephi 9:19-20? Based on the perspective I am presenting here, the Lord seems to really be saying: Beginning today you will no longer offer animal or any other sacrifice at an altar, because the saving act they symbolized has been accomplished by me. Therefore, I will no longer accept them as legitimate expressions of your faith and symbols of salvation (9:19). You will continue to live the law of sacrifice and will demonstrate this as you voluntarily offer to me your broken heart. Only with such an offering (as was also true before my redeeming mission) can you be sanctified (9:20). Thus, the first sentence in 3 Nephi 9:20 is understood to mean "and ye shall [continue to] offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit," *not* "and ye shall [begin to] offer for a [new] sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit."

172; emphasis added. See similarly, Eric Huntsman, "Broken heart and contrite spirit," in *Doctrine and Covenants Reference Companion*, ed. Dennis L. Largey, to be published in 2012. I thank Eric for sharing a prepublication draft of his entry with me. Jeffrey R. Holland has taught, "A 'new' sacrifice, *the spirit of which was always to have been the motivating force behind the earlier symbolic sacrifices*, is that of 'a broken heart and a contrite spirit,'" in *Christ and the New Covenant* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 257; emphasis added. Although he uses the word *new* in his statement, the fact that he places it in quotes suggests to me that he understands that the offering of a broken heart is not an entirely new command, but rather a newly emphasized older precept. McConkie, Millet, and Top, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 4:44, correctly observe that by doing away with animal sacrifice, "the Savior was not rescinding the eternal law of sacrifice but rather was declaring that the specific practice or instructional methodology employed earlier was no longer in effect." Unfortunately, in their next several lines of text (quoted in note 4, above), these authors sound like they engage in the before-after interpretation I argue against in this study.

Thus, with the elimination of the strong, visual, external evidence of commitment to God provided by an animal offering, the Lord gave extra and *renewed* emphasis in 3 Nephi 9:20 to the offering of a broken heart as another gospel dispensation was beginning. But the offering of a broken heart had always been required of the Lord's covenant people as an indication of their sincere willingness to sacrifice whatever Jehovah requested.

Jesus actually twice instructed his surviving Nephite disciples to offer their hearts to him, although the second occurrence is only briefly mentioned in this study. Third Nephi 11 recounts that Jesus eventually appeared as a glorified, resurrected being to the Nephites near the Temple in Bountiful. His instructions to them included a modified version of the (so-called) Sermon on the Mount from his mortal ministry in the land of Israel (Matthew 5-7 / 3 Nephi 12-14). He included therein one command, similar to 3 Nephi 9:20, which is not found in Matthew 5: "ye shall believe in me, and . . . repent of your sins, and come unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit" (3 Nephi 12:19). This important charge also occurs later in the Book of Mormon (Ether 4:15, the Lord's words to Moroni), as well as in the Doctrine and Covenants (20:37; 59:8; 97:8). Such repetition serves to affirm the significance the Lord places on this gospel principle in every dispensation.

The Meaning of the Hebrew Words Translated "Broken Heart and Contrite Spirit"

The other major question examined in this study is, what is a "broken" heart? As quoted above, Psalm 51:17 reads: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit [*rûaḥ nišbārâ*]: a broken and a contrite heart [*lēb-nišbār wĕnidkeh*], O God, thou wilt not despise."[20]

In the Bible, the Hebrew word meaning "heart"—*lēb* (and the related *lēbāb*)—designates a person's actual, physical heart, but also a person's intentions, will, perceptions, inner emotions, and conscience. The Hebrew noun *rûaḥ* is often translated "spirit" but can

20. As noted above, this is Psalm 51:18 in the MT.

also denote wind, breath, and internal orientation. Thus, both of these terms—*lēb* ("heart") and *rûaḥ* ("spirit")—are used in a variety of literal and figurative ways in scripture.

The Hebrew verb translated "broken" in both occurrences in Psalm 51:17, from the lexical root *šbr*, means "to break, smash, shatter." It occurs here as a participle in the *Niphal* stem (or conjugation) and has an essentially adjectival function. In addition to hearts, the *Niphal* stem of *šbr* in the Hebrew Bible designates the brokenness of, for example, a human neck (1 Samuel 4:18) and other body parts (Isaiah 8:15), a pottery vessel (Leviticus 6:28), a staff (Jeremiah 48:17), wrecked ships (1 Kings 22:48; v. 49 in the Hebrew Bible), and enemies, such as Moab (Jeremiah 48:4) and Babylon (Jeremiah 51:8). Not surprisingly, therefore, the early Greek translation of Hebrew scripture, known as the Septuagint, rendered this Hebrew verb with *suntribō*, "to crush, break."[21]

The Hebrew term translated "contrite" in Psalm 51:17 is the *Niphal* participle of the lexical root *dkh*, which means "to crush" (as does the related *dkʾ*). Another example of this usage occurs in Psalm 38:8: "I am feeble and sore broken" [literally, "very crushed"; *nidkêtî ʿad-mĕʾōd*]). The English word *contrite*, which has come to mean "penitent, remorseful," originally derives from the Latin term *contrītus*, which means, "crushed, ground down." There is, thus, a similar, parallel sense between the two phrases, *broken heart* and *contrite spirit*. Although more could be said here about *contrite spirit*, the focus of this study is on *broken heart*. However, it is important to reiterate that the two phrases originally designated a similar condition, not two separate phenomena. A literal translation of Psalm 51:17 thus reads, "The sacrifices of God are a spirit, a broken one; a heart, a broken and crushed one, O God, you will not despise."

21. The Septuagint, abbreviated LXX, is the early Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures, produced in Alexandria, Egypt, in the last few centuries BC. This affirming evidence of the LXX in understanding the meaning of Hebrew *šbr*, "to break, smash," is cited by Thomas, "Broken heart and contrite spirit," 172. Huntsman, "Broken heart and contrite spirit," likewise cites the Greek translation of the "broken heart" passages in the Hebrew Bible and provides further discussion.

Therefore, a broken or contrite heart or spirit is one that is crushed, smashed, broken to pieces.

Since nineteenth-century English is the oldest language in which the Book of Mormon is available to us, we cannot be sure what the Nephite words were that were rendered "broken" and "contrite." However, given the biblically oriented, Jerusalem-based origins of Nephite culture and the presence of certain Hebrew features in the English text of the Book of Mormon,[22] the Hebrew of the biblical expression "a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart" (Psalm 51:17) provides the most plausible understanding of what Lehi (2 Nephi 2:7) and Jesus (3 Nephi 9:20) *originally* meant by the phrase "broken heart and a contrite spirit."

When Latter-day Saint commentators discuss the meaning of the word *broken* in 3 Nephi 9:20 (and many do not), they sometimes refer to the metaphor of breaking a horse, in which the horse's will becomes the rider's will. According to this explanation, someone with a broken heart submits to the will of and follows the directions given by his or her Master.[23] This and other interpretations of the English word *broken* can provide important insights into our relationship with the Lord. However, they do not draw upon the meaning of the biblical Hebrew and thus can be viewed as conveying alternative, additional applications of the passage, not what I think the Lord originally intended when he instructed disciples in the Mosaic and later dispensations to offer a *broken heart* to him.

Application of This Understanding

What, then, was Jesus asking from those he commanded to offer the sacrifice of "a broken heart and a contrite spirit" (3 Nephi 9:20)? Much has already been written to answer this question. For example, to help church members apply Jesus's instruction, some have taught that a broken heart "is, as Paul taught, a 'godly sorrow'

22. For example, M. Deloy Pack, "Hebraisms," in *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, 321–25, with further bibliography.

23. For example, Monte S. Nyman, *Divine Ministry—The First Gospel: Jesus among the Nephites* (Orem, UT: Granite, 2003), 110.

which 'worketh repentance to salvation' (2 Corinthians 7:10). It is much more than just a repentant attitude; it includes a recognition of total dependence upon the Lord for salvation and a willing submission to him and his law (see Mosiah 3:19)."[24]

While such teachings emphasize important truths connected with the *condition* of having a broken heart—including faith, humility, obedience, and repentance—they bypass the original, underlying sense and symbolism of the act of breaking or smashing one's heart and then offering it to God.[25] I conclude this study by briefly emphasizing a few ideas that are in harmony with this imagery.

We must break, smash, crush our heart to pieces to make it an acceptable offering to the Lord because, as the scriptures teach, even though we are God's children, each of us lives in a fallen world and has a fallen nature (see Mosiah 3:19). We all develop, to one degree or another, hearts that are "hard." A hard heart is one that is sinful in orientation and lacks faith in Christ, one that is not readily penetrated by the Holy Spirit. A hard-hearted person resists the love and the will of God. This is evident in several passages of scripture. For example, the Lord instructed Enoch: "Prophesy unto this people, . . . Repent, for thus saith the Lord: I am angry with this people, and my fierce anger is kindled against them; for their hearts have waxed hard" (Moses 6:27). Zedekiah, king of Judah, was described as one who "stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the Lord God of Israel" (2 Chronicles 36:13). And Mormon observed that shortly before Christ's birth the Nephites

24. McConkie, Millet, and Top, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 4:44.

25. Conceptually closer to the point I am making about breaking our hearts as an offering to God are Amaleki's statement in Omni 1:26 ("I would that ye should come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption. Yea, come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him, and continue in fasting and praying, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth ye will be saved") and Paul's exhortation in Romans 12:1 ("present your bodies [as] a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God"). Bruce R. McConkie observed concerning this latter verse that, "to present one's body as a living sacrifice is to come forth with a broken heart and a contrite spirit through obedience." McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1970), 2:292.

"began to be hard in their hearts, and blind in their minds, and began to disbelieve all which they had heard and seen [and] . . . began to wax strong in wickedness and abominations" (3 Nephi 2:1-3).[26]

Such passages indicate that a hard heart is a proud and sinful heart, one that puts the things of self before the things of God, one that worships "other gods." Thus, by extension, a proud, hard heart can be viewed as an idolatrous heart. In this regard, Edward Meadors emphasizes "the biblical axiom that worshipers *become like that which they worship*. Idolaters, those who worship created things, suffer hardening and sensory depletion as they assimilate to the inanimate objects of their faith."[27] He bases his assessment on the teaching found twice in the book of Psalms that "their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: They have ears, but they hear not. . . . They that make them [idols] are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them" (Psalm 115:4-8; see similarly 135:15-18). These observations by the Psalmist and by Meadors correlate the creation and worship of lifeless objects with the development of (figuratively) lifeless, hard hearts. Thus, idol worship—whether the "idol" was an ancient image or is a modern, worldly possession or power—leads to a hardening of hearts. And hard-hearted people make and worship idols of various sorts.

Moses instructed the Israelites who would enter the land of Canaan to "overthrow their altars, and break their pillars [*šibbartem ʾet-maṣṣēbōtām*], and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods" (Deuteronomy 12:3; see also Exodus 23:24; 34:13; Deuteronomy 7:5; 2 Kings 18:4; 23:14). The verb

26. For further citations and discussion, see Thomas, "Hard-heartedness," in *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, 319.

27. Edward P. Meadors, *Idolatry and the Hardening of the Human Heart* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 2; emphasis in the original. N. T. Wright makes a similar observation: "When human beings give their heartfelt allegiance to and worship that which is not God, they progressively cease to reflect the image of God. One of the primary laws of human life is that you become like what you worship; what's more, you reflect what you worship not only back to the object itself but also outward to the world around." Wright, *Surprised by Hope* (New York: HarperOne, 2008), 182.

break in this passage derives from the same lexical root, *šbr*, found in Psalm 51:17: "a broken spirit [*rûaḥ nišbārâ*]: a broken and a contrite heart [*lēb-nišbār wĕnidkeh*]."[28] Israelites "breaking" or smashing to pieces hard, stone pillars [*maṣṣēbōt*] employed in illegitimate worship provides a striking analogy to "breaking" a heart that has become hard and idolatrous.[29]

In this dispensation, Spencer W. Kimball taught, "Whatever thing a man sets his heart and his trust in most is his god; and if his god doesn't also happen to be the true and living God of Israel, that man is laboring in idolatry."[30] President Kimball's statement correlates well with biblical warnings on idolatry. We exist in the image of what we worship. To have "the image of God engraven upon [our] countenances" (Alma 5:19), we must first break our hard hearts as a worshipful act of faith in and repentance through Jesus Christ.

---

28. Psalm 51:18 in the Hebrew Bible.

29. There are several words in the Hebrew Bible that designate idols and images that were condemned by the prophets, and several verbs that describe how these images were destroyed. Interestingly, the *Piel* stem of the lexical root *šbr* is used several times to indicate the destruction of *maṣṣēbōt*. These were typically unhewn or roughhewn stones erected to commemorate deity or divine activity. The King James Version of the Bible usually translates this term as "pillars" (as most modern translations do), but sometimes renders it less accurately as "images." Biblical attestations of the term *maṣṣēbâ*, and the plural *maṣṣēbōt*, however, present a more complicated situation than can be discussed here. As an example, Genesis recounts several times that Jacob erected a *maṣṣēbâ* (Genesis 28:18, 22; 35:14), and Moses set up *maṣṣēbōt* at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 24:4). But biblical texts reporting Israelite activity in the land of Canaan regularly denounce Canaanite *maṣṣēbōt*.

30. Spencer W. Kimball, "The False Gods We Worship," *Ensign*, June 1976, 4. He provides an interesting overview of modern examples of idols in *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1971), 40-41: "Modern idols or false gods can take such forms as clothes, homes, businesses, machines, automobiles, pleasure boats, and numerous other material deflectors from the path to godhood. What difference does it make that the item concerned is not shaped like an idol? . . . Intangible things make just as ready gods. . . . Many worship the hunt, the fishing trip, the vacation, the weekend picnics and outings. Others have as their idols the games of sport, baseball, football, the bullfight, or golf. These pursuits more often than not interfere with the worship of the Lord and with giving service to the building up of the kingdom of God. To the participants this emphasis may not seem serious, yet it indicates where their allegiance and loyalty are. Still another image men worship is that of power and prestige."

The symbolism of our smashing or breaking or crushing our hard, willful heart into pieces and offering the result to God is significant, because a smashed heart no longer exists in a recognizable or retrievable form. Just as an animal given over to God through sacrifice on an altar was no longer retrievable, so our broken hearts must be offered fully, irretrievably (we cannot break them and then fix them ourselves). It is at this point that the Lord can replace our now broken, offered heart with a new one. As he encouraged the Israelites in Ezekiel's day, "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit" (Ezekiel 18:31). Clarifying how one gets this new heart, the Lord further taught, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26; see similarly 11:19; of course, it is possible to corrupt and harden this new heart through subsequent sin).[31] As used in this passage, "flesh" (Hebrew *bāśār*) emphasizes the aliveness of the heart, not its fallen nature (as "flesh" is often used elsewhere in scripture).

Conclusion

From the time of Adam and Eve onward, the Lord's disciples have always needed to willingly break or smash their own hearts and to faithfully offer them to the Lord, so that their own will and pride were not obstacles to realizing perfection through Christ. When we break our hard, stony heart and turn all the pieces over to the Lord as a dedicated offering, he is able to give us a new, soft, living heart, one that is susceptible to the impressions of the Holy Spirit.[32] This allows

31. In Jeremiah 31:31-33, God's writing of his new covenant law "in their hearts" is contrasted with the previous law given at Sinai. Paul draws on the contrast inherent in this imagery, and that of the stone Sinai tablets, when he wrote to the Corinthians, "Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart" (2 Corinthians 3:3). Such language serves to emphasize the faithful internalization of God's word and power in one's soul.

32. This "new" heart is essentially theologically equivalent to living life with a submissive and obedient "broken heart" that many latter-day church leaders emphasize (see examples in note 6, above).

the penetrating, sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit to transform us (see 3 Nephi 9:20; 27:20): "I will give them an heart to know me" (Jeremiah 24:7). As Bruce D. Porter has observed, "When our hearts are broken, we are completely open to the Spirit of God and recognize our dependence on Him for all that we have and all that we are. The sacrifice so entailed is a sacrifice of pride in all its forms."[33] This process is integrally connected with and a stepping-stone to fulfilling the great command to "love the Lord thy God with all thine heart" (Deuteronomy 6:5; see Matthew 22:37).

Ultimately, offering our hard-but-now-broken heart to the Lord and receiving a new, soft heart demonstrates our loyal devotion to him and our declared willingness to live within the gospel covenant, allowing the Father to reconcile us to himself through the power of his Son's sacrifice. "It is the gift of yourself—what you are and what you are becoming" through Christ Jesus's atoning power.[34] Following the offering of our fallen, hard, worthless but now-broken heart and the creation of a new heart within us, our ongoing faith, repentance, obedience, and submissiveness to the Lord's will—sometimes referred to as *having* a broken heart—attests that the act of offering of our broken heart was a righteous offering to the Lord.

Dana M. Pike is professor of ancient scripture and coordinator of ancient Near Eastern studies at Brigham Young University. He earned a PhD in Hebrew Bible and ancient Near Eastern studies from the University of Pennsylvania.

---

33. Porter, "Broken Heart," 31–32. Porter goes on to say, "Like malleable clay in the hands of a skilled potter, the brokenhearted can be molded and shaped in the hands of the Master." While the Lord can and does do this as a result of our ongoing submission and obedience, I think the broken-heart metaphor in the scriptures more specifically teaches, as outlined above, that God will *replace* our heart, figuratively speaking, not remodel it. Again, I am emphasizing what I consider to be the original sense of this passage, understanding it as a command to act by offering our broken heart, not to continue living in a condition of submissiveness (which of course is expected by the Lord, but not explicitly addressed in this passage, according to my way of thinking).

34. D. Todd Christofferson, "When Thou Art Converted," *Ensign*, May 2004, 12.

"How Oft Would I Have Gathered You as a Hen Gathereth Her Chickens": The Power of the Hen Metaphor in 3 Nephi 10:4-7

Jane Allis-Pike

In 3 Nephi 8-10 Mormon records the events that unfold in the Americas immediately following Christ's crucifixion in Jerusalem. Chapter 8 describes three days of widespread destruction and death. In chapter 9 the voice of Christ is "heard among all the inhabitants of the earth, upon all the face of th[e] land" (v. 1). He bemoans the loss of life, names the cities he has destroyed, and calls the survivors to repentance. In chapter 10, after there is "silence in the land for the space of many hours" (v. 1), Christ speaks again:

> O ye people of these great cities which have fallen, who are descendants of Jacob, yea, who are of the house of Israel, how oft have I gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and have nourished you.
>
> And again, how oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, yea, O ye people of the house of Israel, who have fallen; yea, O ye people of the house of Israel, ye that dwell at Jerusalem, as ye that have fallen; yea, how oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens, and ye would not.
>
> O ye house of Israel whom I have spared, how oft will I gather you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, if ye will repent and return unto me with full purpose of heart.

> But if not, O house of Israel, the places of your dwellings shall become desolate until the time of the fulfilling of the covenant to your fathers. (3 Nephi 10:4-7)

In these verses Christ describes himself as a hen that gathers her chickens[1] under her wings. This metaphor portrays Christ's desire to protect his people but underscores the fact that they must want his protection. A close, textual reading of 3 Nephi 10:4-7 demonstrates that Christ uses the hen metaphor to remind and teach the people of the true nature and conditions of their covenant relationship with him.

Metaphor

When Christ speaks to the people in 3 Nephi 10:4-7, his message is couched in a metaphor. A metaphor is "an analogy identifying one object with another and ascribing to the first object one or more of the qualities of the second."[2] The comparison of similarities and sometimes differences between two objects or between an object and a concept creates meaning. Considering the great value placed on Christ's recorded words, the speech in 3 Nephi 10:4-7, comprised exclusively of one metaphor, demonstrates the importance of understanding this literary form and the meanings created by it.

Christ's use of a metaphor in 3 Nephi 10:4-7 is consistent with his teaching style in the Bible, where he commonly employs them.[3] In the Gospel of John, Christ is described or describes himself using several metaphors. Among other things he is light, bread, water, and a shepherd (see John 1:5; 6:35; 7:37-38; and 10:11). More

---

1. In 3 Nephi 10:4-6 Christ refers to the hen and her "chickens." In present-day English young chickens are called "chicks," which is how they will be referred to throughout this article except when in quotations.

2. C. Hugh Holman and William Harmon, *A Handbook to Literature*, 6th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 287.

3. For a discussion of the extensive use of metaphor in the Bible especially noting the abundance of metaphors in Psalms, see John B. Gabel, Charles B. Wheeler, and Anthony D. York, *The Bible as Literature: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 25-27.

specifically, he uses the hen metaphor found in 3 Nephi 10 in his teaching recorded in Matthew 23:37-38 and in Luke 13:34.

Richard Dilworth Rust analyzes the use of metaphor in the Book of Mormon and states that "both Nephi and Christ poetically use metaphors to communicate most effectively."[4] This is clearly seen in Christ's sermons in 3 Nephi where he calls himself "the light and the life of the world" (9:18) and compares his suffering to drinking out of a "bitter cup" (11:11). He refers to the bread and wine of the sacrament as his "flesh and blood" (18:28). The gathering of his people is like "a man gather[ing] his sheaves into the floor" (20:18). Metaphors are clearly an important teaching tool employed by the Savior.

For a metaphor to be meaningful, the reader must have a familiarity with the objects used for comparison. As one biblical scholar observes, "One notices . . . again and again an abstract idea is replaced by something specific and concrete and how the everyday experience of the audience furnishes the source from which meaning is drawn. Who in Palestine had never seen a rock? Who would not have appreciated the force of this favorite metaphor of the psalmist, one that expresses the massive dependability of God in a world otherwise beset by uncertainty and danger?"[5] The more familiar an object is, as with the "rock" just mentioned, the more likely people are to understand the comparisons that the creator of the metaphor is trying to bring to mind.

For the hen metaphor to be effective, the New World survivors had to have had a familiarity with chickens. Discussion of when

---

4. Richard Dilworth Rust, *Feasting on the Word: The Literary Testimony of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 245. For another discussion on metaphor in the Book of Mormon, see M. Catherine Thomas, "Types and Shadows of Deliverance in the Book of Mormon," in *Doctrines of the Book of Mormon*, ed. Bruce A. Van Orden and Brent L. Top (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 192-93. She sees the theme of deliverance as an overarching metaphor in the Book of Mormon. She suggests that, "because *deliverance* is a major function of the Savior's atoning sacrifice, the illustrations of *deliverance* serve as metaphors for such other synonyms of *atonement* as *redemption* and *salvation*" (emphasis in the original).

5. Gabel, Wheeler, and York, *Bible as Literature*, 26-27.

chickens first appeared on the American continents is ongoing.[6] However, many ground-feeding birds—quail, chickens, pheasants, turkeys—gather their offspring under their wings, and since the Book of Mormon is a translated work, the words *hen* and *chicken* may simply be the English signifiers of a bird that did exist among the Lehites. Regardless of the actual bird the New World survivors knew, we can assume they would have been familiar with a bird that gathered its offspring under its wings.

Christ's use of a metaphor in speaking to the survivors is an act of benevolent consideration and kindness as well as an effective teaching tool. When Christ delivers his speech, he is addressing a traumatized audience. In 3 Nephi 8, Mormon records that these people survived storms, tempests, whirlwinds, deafening earth-shaking thunder, lightning, cities afire, and land sinking into the sea and rising up into mountains. Untold numbers of people have died. In the midst of this destruction and in its aftermath, the survivors are left in a darkness so thick they can "feel the vapor" of it (8:20). Not a "glimmer" of light has been seen for three days (8:22–23). It is nearly impossible to imagine the terror, fear, and distraught feelings of those living through this cataclysmic disaster.

Thus, when Christ talks to these survivors he must reach listeners who are disoriented, anxious, and effectively blind because

---

6. For example, Alice Storey and her colleagues posit that Polynesians brought chickens to Chile between AD 1321 and 1407. Although much later in time than Christ's appearance in the New World, this suggests a much earlier date for chickens in the Americas than previously thought. See Alice A. Storey et al., "Radiocarbon and DNA Evidence for a Pre-Columbian Introduction of Polynesian Chickens to Chile," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 104/25 (2007): 10335–39. However, Jaime Gongora and his colleagues have not found Storey's evidence convincing, as indicated in Jaime Gongora et al., "Indo-European and Asian Origins for Chilean and Pacific Chickens Revealed by mtDNA," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 105/30 (2008): 10308–13. And see further Alice A. Storey et al., "Pre-Columbian Chickens, Dates, Isotopes, and mtDNA," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 105/48 (2008): E99; and Jaime Gongora et al., "Reply to Storey et al.: More DNA and Dating Studies Needed for Ancient El Arenal-1 Chickens," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 105/48 (2008): E100.

of the "mist of darkness" in which they are enshrouded. Using the hen/chick metaphor, Christ can draw people's attention away from the wildly unfamiliar happenings by which they are engulfed and orient their minds toward objects of common everyday life. While they cannot negotiate their now foreign surroundings, Christ's metaphor takes them to familiar ground. Even in the midst of chaotic upheaval and absolute darkness, the metaphor helps the survivors to "see," to focus their minds on something tangible—a hen and her chicks.

Attestations of the Hen Metaphor

The hen metaphor occurs five times in the standard works of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints besides its occurrence in 3 Nephi 10:4-7. It is also found in Matthew 23:37-38, Luke 13:34-35, and Doctrine and Covenants 10:65, 29:2, and 43:24. The passages in the Doctrine and Covenants relate to the time period of the latter-day restoration and last days.[7]

Both Matthew 23:37 and Luke 13:34 record Christ employing the hen metaphor during his mortal ministry. In Luke's account Christ speaks the metaphor sometime before his final week in Jerusalem. Matthew's account situates Christ on the Temple Mount just days before his crucifixion. Christ foresees the destruction of Jerusalem that will occur in AD 70 when the Romans sack the city, kill many of the inhabitants, and destroy the temple. Matthew records that Christ says, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the

7. Doctrine and Covenants 10 is received in the summer of 1828 at the time the Book of Mormon manuscript pages are lost. There is considerable contention among the Saints, and in verse 65 the Savior reminds them that he "will gather them as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, if they will not harden their hearts." Section 29 is received in September 1830 and speaks about the millennium and events before the second coming of the Savior. In verse 2 Christ says he will gather the Saints "under [his] wings" if they "will hearken to [his] voice and humble themselves before [him], and call upon [him] in mighty prayer." Section 43 is received in February 1831 and deals with issues of authority and events of the latter days. In verse 24 the Savior laments the loss of those in the last days who will not accept him: "O, ye nations of the earth, how often would I have gathered you together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not!"

prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" In terms of content, differences between the Matthew and Luke accounts are minimal and do not add significantly to our understanding of the hen metaphor in 3 Nephi. However, when Christ speaks this metaphor in Jerusalem, the destruction of the city and many of its wicked inhabitants is yet to come, almost four decades in the future. When Christ next speaks this hen metaphor to the survivors of the New World destruction, the wicked people in the Americas have already been destroyed.

The Hen Metaphor

To understand the meaning of the hen metaphor, it is important to analyze the major elements of the metaphor—the hen and her chicks—and to compare them to their counterparts, Christ and the people of the house of Israel.

The Hen. Christ's choice of a hen as the central image of his metaphor suggests that for this particular teaching opportunity he values ideals unlike those traditionally thought of as impressive, such as mental prowess, physical strength, or powerful position.[8] Instead, he provides the survivors with a very different kind of image—a relatively weak, even pedestrian sort of creature. It is the common hen. Yet the hen in this metaphor has a defining quality that is valuable for the New World survivors to appreciate. It is the hen's selfless devotion to her chicks. In fact, the hen represents one of the most powerful, timeless, and universal of all archetypes: the image of mother. Although the actual word *mother* does not appear in the text, the concept of mother that is found there connotes the most profound kind of tenderness, loyalty, and love, as well as the fiercest protectiveness.

---

8. Barbara Brown Taylor's essay "As a Hen Gathers Her Brood," *The Christian Century* 115/6 (1998): 201, caused me to analyze what qualities of a hen prompted Christ to choose it for his metaphor as opposed to animals more commonly thought of as impressive.

The metaphor focuses on the hen's behavior of protecting her young. This desire to protect her young stems from the fact that the hen has first created them. The basic and defining quality that denotes a female as a mother is that she produces offspring. All her resources are dedicated to reproduction and continuation of her species. The hen's resources include her body that she uses to bear eggs and then warm them until they hatch into chicks. She is their creator, and instinct causes her to prize her creations.

The value the hen places on her creations—her chicks—is what makes the hen metaphor especially powerful. They are more important to her than her own life. Because chickens are ground feeders and nesters, their offspring are exposed to many dangers not faced by birds that nest in trees out of reach of two- and four-footed predators. When an enemy approaches, a hen's best defense is to gather her chicks "under her wings," close to her body beneath her feathers. And since chickens are considerably far down the food chain, chicks can be a predator's next meal. The mother hen is often protecting her chicks from a danger of no less magnitude than imminent death.

Barbara Taylor Brown describes the hen's unswerving devotion to her chicks this way: "A mother hen . . . stands between the chicks and those who mean to do them harm. She has no fangs, no claws, no rippling muscles. All she has is her willingness to shield her babies with her own body. If the fox wants them, he will have to kill her first."[9] It may appear that a hen's wings offer little protection, but her willingness to fight for her chicks is limitless. There is no danger so compelling that the hen will desert her offspring. She will literally use her own body as a "shield" to protect them.

Further, the hen is a proactive creature. She "gather[s]" her chicks under her wings whenever the circumstances warrant it. She is vigilant and recognizes the dangers. As an adult, the mother hen uses her knowledge, power, and capacity to safely rear her chicks.

9. Taylor, "As a Hen Gathers Her Brood," 201.

Nature endows her with the determination to reproduce and nurture her young until they become self-sufficient.

The Chicks. The chicks are the objects of their mother's concern, and as her creations they hold great value. They exist as potential adult chickens through which the species will carry on. Because the chicks are young and small, they are vulnerable and need protection. They do not have the knowledge or the physical capacity to survive unaided.

Perhaps the most important point about the chicks in the hen metaphor is what is assumed. These chicks obey instinct; they come to their mother. When Christ says, "How oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens," there is no question about real-life chicks coming. They are "gathered." Nature has given the chicks an instinct to live; they implicitly trust their mother. This means that when the hen calls they will, without equivocation or delay, run to the safety that is found only beneath their mother's wings.

Christ as a Hen. It may seem paradoxical that Christ would choose to compare himself to a hen, since he is neither a female nor a mother. However, Christ, as a god, is the only "man" who can be compared with a woman, at least in her capacity to give birth. J. C. L. Gibson, in studying imagery in the Old Testament, lists several passages that describe Jehovah (the premortal Christ, from a Latter-day Saint perspective) as a mother, noting metaphors that have him "travail with, give birth to, carry his folk from the womb, [and] dandle them at the breast."[10] As is true with the hen metaphor, each of these Old Testament images is figurative but describes something about Jehovah that is literal. He has specific qualities found only in the purview of women and mothers.

As the creator of this earth, under the direction of Heavenly Father, Christ is, like the hen, in some senses the creator of "children." While we know heavenly parents created our spirit bodies,

10. J. C. L. Gibson, *Language and Imagery in the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 134.

and our mortal parents created our physical bodies, it is arguable that in creating the physical world, Christ set in place all the necessary, earthly elements or raw materials from which has sprung the whole human family. Further, in creating the world on which we live and thrive, Christ, in chicken terms, has created an "incubator" that allows us to "hatch." In this sense Christ is a creator of "children" as is the hen of chicks.

One of the attitudes Christ shares in common with the hen is his desire to protect his young. Just as the chicks are threatened by predators, Christ's brood is threatened by Satan. He is their predator, and the danger to them is spiritual death and hell. Although in the case of the New World inhabitants it is Christ who commands nature to unleash the fearsome power that destroys the wicked, it is Satan who promotes the evil that causes death and carnage. He desires to destroy Christ's "children."

However, Christ is intent on saving his "children" from Satan. Just as the mother hen literally uses her body to protect her chicks' lives, Christ literally uses his body to protect his "children" from both physical and spiritual destruction. In the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross at Calvary, he subjects his spirit and body to pain more intense than any mortal could endure. He literally uses his body to shield his beloved "children" from endless death and hell. The atonement is the wing beneath which they find protection.

In using his body to save his "children" from death and hell, Christ has "given birth" to those who commit to and follow him. He is their parent spiritually. In the Book of Mormon, King Benjamin describes how Christ becomes a type of the mother of children saying, "This day he hath spiritually begotten you; . . . ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters" (Mosiah 5:7; see Moroni 7:19). Like the mother hen who brings forth her young, Christ has "begotten" the spiritual lives of our Father's children; they are "born of him." Because Christ is male, it is difficult and awkward—using language as it is available to us today—to call him a mother. Gibson handles this well by saying that Jehovah (Christ)

is a "motherly father."[11] The beauty of the hen metaphor is that it goes beyond language, allowing the reader to simply feel Christ's motherliness.

As the mother hen in the metaphor, Christ is proactive in the care and nurture of his "children." He emphasizes to the New World survivors the timeless and timely nature of his protecting power when he repeats the hen metaphor using different time frames: "How oft have I gathered you" (3 Nephi 10:4, past); "How oft would I have gathered you" (10:5, repeated twice, past conditional); and "How oft will I gather you" (10:6, future). And in the very moment of speaking the metaphor, he is acting in the present. Like the hen that watches vigilantly over her chicks, Christ is always available and ready to act.

Beyond being available, Christ is also anxiously and actively working to protect his "children." Like the ground-feeding chicks who are exposed to multiple predators, Christ's young are exposed to the dangers of an earthly existence separated from their Heavenly Father. In the four verses of the metaphor in 3 Nephi 10:4-7, Christ's desire and power to save is underscored when he uses the word *gather* eight times. Gathering is an active process. Like the hen that hurries her chicks together, Christ focuses on "gather[ing]" his "children." This gathering comes in the form of teaching them to follow him, to accept the gospel, to learn the plan of salvation, and receive the saving priesthood ordinances.

In the hen metaphor, Christ adds one element of his care that is not mentioned with regard to the hen's care of her chicks. In 3 Nephi 10:4, Christ asks, "How oft have I gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and have nourished you." Christ not only gathers his chicks to protect them, he also "nourishe[s]" them (10:4). The word *nourish* often refers to food, a life-sustaining need. Beyond that it can refer to any needs that enrich life. Christ reminds his audience that he provides for his "children" in all aspects of life.

11. Gibson, *Language and Imagery*, 134.

The House of Israel as Chicks. In 3 Nephi 10, Christ identifies the chicks in the metaphor as "ye people of these great cities which have fallen, who are descendants of Jacob" (v. 4); "ye people of the house of Israel, who have fallen" (v. 5); "ye people of the house of Israel, ye that dwell at Jerusalem" (v. 5); and "ye house of Israel whom I have spared" (v. 6). Christ's "children" are all those who belong to the house of Israel. In fact, Christ identifies them as such six times in the four verses of the metaphor. While Christ loves all people—in fact, he says in 3 Nephi 9:22, "Come unto me ye ends of the earth, and be saved"—in this particular metaphor it is specifically the people of the house of Israel who are the chicks. The Book of Mormon peoples are one branch of the house of Israel. They have a long-standing history and covenant relationship with the Savior and his gospel. They know the Savior as the chicks know their mother.

Just as the chicks are important to the hen, the people of the house of Israel have great value to their "parent," Jesus Christ. His love for them is based in his sacrifice for them. He has a vested interest in them. The entire plan of salvation is set up to save God's children. As literal children of heavenly parents, each child has the potential to become like God. In this sense, each of Christ's "children" is of infinite worth.

Like the chicks that need protection to grow to adulthood, the people of the house of Israel need help negotiating their life experiences. In their embryonic and immature state, they have not developed sufficiently to meet either their physical or spiritual needs. They need the care of a loving parent to survive.

Like the chicks that instinctively run to the hen for protection, the people of the house of Israel have a parent/creator to turn to for guidance and protection. In this particular element of comparison, the hen/chick metaphor highlights not a similarity but a very distinct and tragic difference between the chicks and Christ's "children." In verse 5 Christ says that his "children" who were destroyed "would not" be gathered. They do not simply wander away or become inattentive at a crucial moment. They make the deliberate choice to reject and rebel against Christ.

When Christ's wayward young spurn the safety of his protective wings, they are in a state of apostasy. The English word *apostasy* derives from the Greek word *apostasia*, a late form of *apostasis*, which means "rebellion, defection,"[12] standing away from. If real-life chicks were to stand away from under their mother's protecting wings, they would not survive. Christ's "children" who defect or stand away from him do not survive. In fact, as Christ is speaking this metaphor to the survivors of the devastation, many of his "children's" dead bodies are scattered in the streets, crushed under the debris of what were once their homes, drowned in the sea, buried under mountains, and blown away in whirlwinds. These people had spurned the protective wings of the Savior.[13]

Meaning in the Metaphor: Covenant, Agency, Accountability

Covenant. The message of the hen metaphor is first and foremost that the relationship between hen and chick or mother and child is a type of the covenant relationship Christ has with his creations. They are his "children." He loves them. His entire mission is to raise them in righteousness. He has dedicated everything—his body, his energies, his spirit, his heart—to saving them. The children of Israel, for their part, must accept, trust, and obey him. The essence of the covenant expressed in terms of the metaphor is this: If the chicks (house of Israel) will run to their mother (accept Christ), she (Christ) will gather them under her wings (shelter them through his atonement), but if the chicks (or people of the house of Israel) run away from her (reject and disobey Christ), she (Christ) cannot save them (the rebellious people of the house of Israel) from devouring predators (Satan, death, and hell).

---

12. Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed., rev. Henry Stuart Jones et al. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), s.v. ἀποστασία, 218.

13. The story of Ruth, who became a faithful follower of Jehovah, offers a refreshing contrast to those rebellious "children" who were destroyed in the New World upheaval. In Ruth 2:12 Boaz says to Ruth, "The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings [Heb. *kĕnāpāyw*] thou art come to trust."

Agency. Perhaps one of the most profound lessons of the hen metaphor is that the covenant relationship between Christ and his "children" can only exist because they have agency. Unlike chicks that are driven by instinct to seek their mother's protection, Christ's "children" make the choice to accept or reject his protective power. Christ will not subvert their agency even when he knows the pain their wrong choices will cause them. He warns, rebukes, and allows natural consequences to impact people when they sin. He teaches, guides, and allows blessings to flow when they do right. They are allowed to perish or prosper as they choose.

The hen metaphor reveals the depth of Christ's love by vividly portraying the tremendous pain he experiences when his "children" use their agency to reject or stand apart from him and his plan of happiness. Suffering the loss of so many of his offspring, he prefaces each address to his children with the exclamation "O." In the four verses of the metaphor (3 Nephi 10:4-7), he calls out, "O ye people of these great cities," then twice "O ye people of the house of Israel," then "O ye house of Israel," and finally, "O house of Israel." The "O" construction here is vocative; Christ is calling for or invoking the attention of the survivors who are his audience and those who have fallen (perhaps they could even hear him in the spirit world). This is Christ's lament—"how oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens, and ye would not." Ye would not! The all-powerful Savior suffers because many of his "children" have chosen destruction. Christ's frustration and pain are palpable.

The aching sadness of this lament becomes even more pronounced when it is realized that sometime during the previous week, prior to his crucifixion, Christ had uttered this same pathos-filled cry to another faithless group of people when he exclaimed: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matthew 23:37). The repetition "Jerusalem, Jerusalem" expresses Christ's longing to save the people of that city and the sadness he felt as he acknowledged that they "would not" be gathered. Not only had they rejected and stoned

the prophets, but he knew when he uttered this cry that shortly they would crucify the loving "parent" who wanted to save them—himself. This is the price of their agency.

Accountability—Covenant Lawsuit. The members of the house of Israel in the New World are under covenant with the Savior. That relationship grounded in agency requires accountability, and this accountability is embedded in the hen metaphor in the form of a "covenant lawsuit." A covenant lawsuit is a scriptural formulation in which the Savior, acting as plantiff/prosecutor, judge, and executor of the judgment tries those who have broken their covenants. Covenant lawsuits are found in the Old Testament, including Isaiah 1, Micah 6, and Jeremiah 2.[14] The survivors of the New World destruction, "all the people [who] did hear, and did witness of" Christ's words (3 Nephi 10:3), are both the audience and participants in the trial.

Christ makes his case using four rhetorical questions. "The principle supporting the use of the rhetorical question is that, because its answer is obvious and usually the only one possible, a deeper impression will be made by raising the question than by the speaker's making a direct statement."[15] The central element of each rhetorical question is the same. Christ asks, "How oft [have, would, will] I gather you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings" (3 Nephi 10:4-6). The obvious answer is "always." A hen always gathers her chicks when they need her. Christ always gathers his "children" when they will come. As the hearers recognize and internalize the obvious answer, they receive a "deeper impression" of the justice of Christ's assertions.

The first rhetorical question is in verse 4 and is directed to the survivors. Christ says, "Ye people of these great cities which have fallen, who are descendants of Jacob, yea, who are of the house of Israel, how oft have I gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens

14. Herbert B. Huffmon, "The Covenant Lawsuit in the Prophets," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 78/4 (1959): 285-95.

15. Holman and Harmon, *Handbook to Literature*, 407.

under her wings, and have nourished you." The first point Christ is making is that these people are alive despite the fact that the "great cities" in which they lived are "fallen."[16] Christ had earlier reminded these people that they were "spared because [they] were more righteous" than those who were destroyed (3 Nephi 9:13). The listeners see that Christ has been just to them. Second, he calls them "descendants of Jacob" who are "of the house of Israel." They are reminded of their covenant obligation and relationship to the Savior. Third, he asks, "How oft have I gathered" and "nourished" you? Here their answer is, just like a hen always gathers her chicks, Christ always gathers and nourishes them. He always fulfills his part of the covenant. As prosecutor he shows the survivors that his judgments of them are just.

In verse 5 Christ addresses two different groups of people. First he questions "ye people of the house of Israel, who have fallen" and then "ye people of the house of Israel, ye that dwell at Jerusalem." The Savior speaks to those who cannot answer for themselves because they are either dead or absent. In fact, the question is clearly not meant for them to answer, but for the living to do so. As a prosecutor Christ places before the living the evidence against the dead.

When the Savior asks twice of those not present "how oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings," the survivors are invited to reflect on the nature and behavior of these two groups of people. While it is unclear how much the survivors knew about the people in Jerusalem, it is clear they knew well those who just died in the New World. Mormon described them as the survivors' "kindred and friends" (3 Nephi 10:8). The charge brought against the two absent groups is the same. Both groups were of the house of Israel and under covenant with the Lord. Both groups were offered the Lord's protection. But, as Christ points out to the survivors, no matter "how oft" he would "have

16. I understand the phrase in 3 Nephi 10:4, "which have fallen," to refer to the cities, not to the people. Whichever way the verse is interpreted, the audience is still those who are alive to hear the Savior's words.

gathered" either group, they "would not." The survivors' knowledge of Christ's justice toward themselves and their knowledge of the characters of their "kindred and friends" require them to acknowledge the guilt of those whom Christ has condemned.

In verse 6 Christ addresses his last question again to the survivors. As the prosecutor, he reminds them once more that they are and will be judged based on their covenant relationship with him, that they are the house of Israel. He reminds them that beyond being the prosecutor he is also the judge who decrees and enforces their sentence. It is he who has spared them. Turning their attention to the future, he asks, "How oft will I gather you . . . if ye will repent and return unto me with full purpose of heart" (3 Nephi 10:6). The audience is familiar with the question, and they know the answer. Christ will always gather them if they will allow him to. They are reminded that to be gathered they must be continually repenting or making course corrections that will head them toward the Savior, and they must do so with full purpose of heart.

Through this covenant lawsuit, Christ reminds the survivors of the destruction that he has been just to them. They know that those who were destroyed violated their contract with the Savior and broke their covenants. Now they are reminded by the Savior what will happen to them in the future if they forget their covenant contract and its terms. If they will not turn to the Savior, then the "places of [their] dwellings shall become desolate" (10:7). As the survivors sit in the dark surrounded by broken buildings, bodies, and earth, they have evidence that the Savior is true to his word.

Christ also reminds the New World survivors that if *they* will not keep their covenants, *others* will in future days—specifically, in "the time of the fulfilling of the covenant to your fathers" (3 Nephi 10:7). The covenant made "to your fathers" is that the house of Israel will be gathered in the last days and possess their promised lands and ultimately obtain eternal salvation (1 Nephi 21 / Isaiah 49). The message to these New World survivors is that Christ's work will go forward with or without them.

The covenant lawsuit functions as an immediate reminder to the survivors that they are bound in covenant, given agency, and will be held accountable for their choices. The rhetorical questions that make up the covenant lawsuit in 3 Nephi 10:4-7 allow the New World survivors to participate in the proceedings. They are reminded of the lengths to which Christ goes to convince his "children" to come to him. They witness his incredible forbearance and desire to be merciful. At this point, the witnesses must acknowledge that according to the hen metaphor those who were destroyed were "unnatural" chicks—they would not run to their "mother" for protection. They must also acknowledge that they live under the same covenant as those who have died and that the same laws apply to them. They will face the same Judge.

Conclusion

Mormon records that after Christ speaks the hen metaphor the people begin "to weep and howl again because of the loss of their kindred and friends" (3 Nephi 10:8). The survivors are weeping not because of terrible destruction or because of their own suffering, but because their "kindred" and "friends," those whom they have loved, are lost. They see clearly that by their rebelliousness the dead have brought about their own demise.

When Christ speaks to the survivors out of the blackness, the hen metaphor is a beacon of light in a literally dark world. Christ affirms to his suffering people that like the ever faithful mother hen, he is always there, ever watchful, ever loving. He also urges them to be like the hen's chicks, always ready to run to him at the first sign of danger. Through the covenant lawsuit he warns them to never forget that "unnatural chicks" or rebellious "children" are doomed to destruction.

Sadly, in every generation there are those who will be faithless and rebellious, who will not keep the covenants they have made. Christ prophesies in Doctrine and Covenants 43:24 that at the end of days he will utter a similar lament: "O, ye nations of the earth,

how often would I have gathered you together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not!"

This recognition, that many will yet be lost, underscores the importance the hen metaphor holds for another audience—each person who reads it. Modern, covenant Israelites learn or are reminded that they live under the same obligations, have the same agency, and receive the same blessings or cursings with regard to their covenant with Christ as have the people of every other dispensation. Each reader can glean from this metaphor a knowledge of Christ's goodness, kindness, power, justice, mercy, and long-suffering. As one of Christ's "chicks," each Latter-day Saint can see vividly portrayed in the hen metaphor the fate of those whose choices lead them away from Christ's ever-protecting "wings."

Jane Allis-Pike earned a bachelor's degree in humanities and a master's degree in English from Brigham Young University. She is currently a part-time faculty member in Brigham Young University's Department of Ancient Scripture. She teaches courses on the Book of Mormon.

"There Arose a Mist of Darkness": The Narrative of Lehi's Dream in Christ's Theophany

Daniel Belnap

The events surrounding Christ's theophany as recounted in 3 Nephi describe the creation of a new world, both physically and socially. In particular, chapters 8–18 depict a series of events that are reminiscent of the creation of the earth as described in Genesis and elsewhere. From the all-pervasive darkness experienced during the cataclysmic destruction to the glorious, light-filled arrival of Christ and the institution of new laws and ordinances delivered during his first day among the people, the Book of Mormon text reflects this biblical narrative. Yet the manner in which it is presented echoes a creation narrative unique to the Book of Mormon that provided meaning and context to the entire Nephite experience—the narrative of Lehi's dream. Though Lehi received his iconic dream six hundred years before Christ's arrival, the images and symbols of that dream appear to have impacted later generations of Nephites, providing meaning to the events and experiences of their lives and societies, in particular, the manner in which they experienced and comprehended Christ's theophany.

The Creation Narrative

All societies and cultures have some narrative by which they define themselves and their place in the greater cosmos.[1] What

1. Paul G. Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 67: "[Narratives] tell people about the community to which they belong, their place in it, and the moral order of the society. To be a part of a people is to be a part of their story."

makes up these narratives of course depends upon the values and understanding of the given culture. Sometimes the narratives may be fictive, containing principles or ethics that reflect the unique nature of the community, and sometimes they include actual historical events. Often these narratives are accompanied with ritual behavior reinforcing the narrative, allowing participants to become a part of the narrative themselves and thereby creating solidarity among the community.[2]

In many cultures of the ancient Near East, the creation narrative was used as a foundation to their own specific cultural narratives. In brief, the creation narrative describes the process by which God, or the Gods, took preexisting elements, or chaos, and organized it into a cosmos, or a state of order and organization. The precosmic state was conceptualized as an ocean of primal water, dark and fathomless. It was from this "sea" that God established the world in Genesis 1:2: "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Throughout the ancient Near East, a common variation on this narrative was to personify the precosmic ocean, characterizing it as a serpent or monster, transforming the creation process into a battle between God, the creator, and chaos,

2. For more on narrative as a form of social identity, see Stephen Cornell, "That's the Story of Our Life," in *We Are a People: Narrative and Multiplicity in Constructing Ethnic Identity*, ed. Paul Spickard and W. Jeffrey Burroughs (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), 42: "When people take on, create, or assign an ethnic identity, part of what they do—intentionally or not—is to take on, create, or assign a story, a narrative of some sort that captures central understandings about what it means to be a member of the group." For a study on the U.S. narrative as reflected in its art, see Michael Kammen, *Meadows of Memory: Images of Time and Tradition in American Art and Culture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), xx, quoting Joshua Taylor: "The emphatic protestation [by artists] of being purely American is the proclamation of a social attitude, not a description of style. That the artist wished to feel himself different from his European colleagues is of sociological importance." Taylor, "The Historical Problem of American Art," *American Art Review* 1 (September 1973): 29-30; brackets in original. Finally, see also *From Generation to Generation: Maintaining Cultural Identity Over Time*, ed. Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton, 2006), which describes ways in which different cultures have sought to maintain their identity through their native narratives while integrating into the greater U.S. narrative.

the monster.[3] Following the "death" of the monster, the warrior deity then took the carcass and fashioned the cosmos from it, thereby imposing "order" onto chaos. Though more descriptive and vivid, the same meaning is present in the two variations—chaos is organized into the cosmos.

Because the basic theme of the creation narrative describes a transformation from a chaotic state to a cosmic one, it can be used to describe specific historical or cultural events. Concepts such as death, the enemy, and the wilderness can all be on a continuum representing chaos, while the city, your people, and your land can represent a state of cosmos, or organization, and one's emergence into a new territory then can be a creation event. In this manner, the dichotomy provided in the narrative becomes a paradigm in which not only history but also contemporary events can be understood. Thus, the Babylonian retelling of the creation story was associated with the cyclical New Year celebration while commemorating the contemporary preeminence of Babylon as the world's center.[4]

The Exodus Narrative

Another example of a specific cultural narrative established around the general creation narrative is the exodus narrative recounting the manner in which God delivered his chosen people from captivity in Egypt, demonstrated spectacularly by his splitting of the

3. In the Babylonian creation liturgy, the *Enuma Elish*, it was Tiamat, the "sweet waters," that had to be defeated for creation to continue. See Richard J. Clifford, *Creation Accounts in the Ancient Near East* (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1994), 82-93. A similar battle is described in the Ugaritic Baal cycle, though there is a question whether this text reflects a true cosmogony or is a physical creation narrative. See Clifford, *Creation Accounts*, 119-26. See also Richard J. Clifford, "Cosmogonies in the Ugaritic Texts and in the Bible," *Orientalia* 53/2 (1984): 183-201. Whether or not a physical cosmogony is described, certainly the social cosmology of the divine realm is described. As will be shown later, the creation of society is as much a part of the creative process as the physical creation.

4. For the most recent study on the Babylonian akitu festival, in which the Babylonian creation account was performed, see Julye Bidmead, *The Akitu Festival: Religious Continuity and Royal Legitimation in Mesopotamia*, 2nd ed. (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2004). See also Jean Bottéro, *Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia*, trans. Teresa Lavender Fagan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 158-64.

Red Sea.[5] Though the event is completely historical, the biblical writers saw in the event the same type of process that was performed at the creation. Thus in texts recounting the event, creation language and imagery were used.[6] For example, in Deuteronomy 32:10, the beginning of Israel's covenant relationship with God is situated in the "waste howling wilderness." The Hebrew term translated as "waste howling wilderness" is *tohu*, the same term used to describe the primeval chaos found in Genesis 1:2.[7] Thus Israel was in a state of chaos prior to their covenantal relationship with God; with the establishment of that relationship, they were now a cosmos, a state that included a unique definition of what it means to be Israel in comparison with the world around them.[8]

---

5. Bernard F. Batto, *Slaying the Dragon: Mythmaking in the Biblical Tradition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 1992), 113, 119: "In a series of spectacular battles Yahweh overwhelms and finally kills Pharaoh-Egypt in the midst of the sea. Through this same battle Israel emerges from out of the midst of the defeated enemy as God's newly fashioned people, the final 'work' of the Creator who brings forth life out of the midst of the unruly sea. . . . In the second act of creation Yahweh went on to found his people Israel as his covenanted people and establish his 'resting place'—the place from which he rules the cosmos—in their midst. The exodus, no less than the creation in Genesis, is an 'event' of cosmic proportions, a story of origins through which the cosmic order is established and actualized." The relationship between the creation account and the deliverance of Israel is also explored in Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 87-88: "The overthrow of the Egyptian host in the sea is singled out to symbolize Israel's deliverance, Yahweh's victory. Later, an equation is fully drawn between the 'drying up of the sea' and the Creator's defeat of Rahab or Yamm (Isaiah 51:9-11); the historical event is thereby given cosmic or primordial meaning; . . . it is highly likely that the role of the sea in the Exodus story was singled out and stressed precisely because of the ubiquitous motif of the cosmogonic battle between the creator god and Sea." See also Bernhard W. Anderson, *Creation versus Chaos: The Reinterpretation of Mythical Symbolism in the Bible* (New York: Association, 1967), 37: "It is not accidental that the Second Isaiah, whose message recapitulates the Exodus tradition, speaks of Yahweh as Israel's creator and recalls the time when, at the Reed Sea, he acted to create."

6. Psalms 24:2; 29:10; 74:12-16; 77:16-19; 89:9-11; 93:3; 95:3-5; 104:6-7; Job 7:12; 26:10-13; Isaiah 51:9-10; 59:19; Jeremiah 5:22; Habbakuk 3:8.

7. M. Görg, תהו, in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweek, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David E. Green (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 15:568.

8. Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews*, 67: "The exodus in the Old Testament is both history and myth. Historically it happened. Mythologically it became the story the Israelites used to interpret their history. Whenever they were in trouble, they looked back to the exodus."

But the exodus narrative departed from the more typical ancient Near East creation narrative by suggesting that this new creative act by God was really a restoration. The Israelites were not so much going to enter into a new creation as much as they were going back to their old lands of inheritance. In other words, the Israelites were not going anywhere new; they were going back home. Israel relied on God as the Divine Warrior not to create a new world but to restore them to the one they had already possessed. It is this sense of return that must be understood as one of the primary characteristics of Israel's distinctive cultural narrative and is the power behind the enduring nature of that narrative.[9]

Lehi's Dream Narrative

Like any other society, the Nephites would have possessed their own cultural narrative. Many have noted the role of the exodus narrative in the construction of certain events in Book of Mormon history, particularly in the original journey from Jerusalem to the promised land.[10] Yet the exodus narrative does not fully encompass the Nephite experience, for, unlike the Israelites in the exodus narrative, the Nephites were never going to return to their original lands of inheritance. Instead, they were to leave their home and attempt

9. See E. Theodore Mullen Jr., *Ethnic Myths and Pentateuchal Foundations: A New Approach to the Formation of the Pentateuch* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1997). The continuity of this narrative across millennia can be seen in mediums as diverse as the television show *Seinfeld* to the Passover. For an excellent example of the narrative still contributing to the way in which contemporary Jewish experience is perceived, see Liora Gubkin, *You Shall Tell Your Children: Holocaust Memory in American Passover Ritual* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007).

10. Bruce J. Boehm, "Wanderers in the Promised Land: A Study of the Exodus Motif in the Book of Mormon and Holy Bible," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3/1 (1994): 187-203; Mark J. Johnson, "The Exodus of Lehi Revisited," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3/2 (1994): 123-26; George S. Tate, "The Typology of the Exodus Pattern in the Book of Mormon," in *Literature of Belief: Sacred Scripture and Religious Experience,* ed. Neal E. Lambert (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1981), 245-62; Terrence L. Szink, "Nephi and the Exodus," in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon,* ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), 38-51; S. Kent Brown, "The Exodus: Seeing It as a Test, a Testimony, and a Type," *Ensign,* February 1990, 54-57; S. Kent Brown, "The Exodus Pattern in the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies* 30/3 (1990): 111-26; and "Nephi and the Exodus," *Ensign,* April 1987, 64-65.

to establish another somewhere else in the wilderness. This pattern was repeated over and over again in Nephite history. Some thirty to fifty years after arriving in the promised land, some of the Nephites had to leave their lands of first inheritance and travel into the unknown; approximately four hundred years later, they again had to leave their land of inheritance and journey into the wilderness, ultimately settling in the land of Zarahemla, a territory already inhabited by the Mulekites. These periodic migrations without a return differ fundamentally from the Israelite exodus narrative, which always included the return home; and therefore one must look elsewhere for a narrative that defines the Nephite experience.[11]

At first glance, Lehi's dream does not necessarily offer itself up as such a narrative. Its dreamlike qualities and the lack of historical or temporal markers within the dream demonstrate its fictive nature. The dream is received as the travelers are resting at the Red Sea and marks their transition from inhabited land to the wastes of Arabia. As such, the immediate journey was going to reflect the journey experienced in the dream itself and the creation motif would have resonated with these early Nephites embarking on a new trek, but because of the recurring nature of the Nephite experience, the symbolic significance of the dream could apply to later generations.[12]

---

11. The Book of Mormon does record at least one attempt at returning and restoring an older land of inheritance, but the experiment failed spectacularly. In the book of Mosiah, the reader is told of two attempts made by a group of Nephites to reclaim the land of Nephi. The first fails before they even get there. The second accomplishes a temporary establishment, but by the third generation the descendants are forced to return to the land of Zarahemla. Thus, it would seem that any exodus-like tradition cannot be found in the Book of Mormon.

12. Credit must be given to Bruce W. Jorgensen, who approached the dream as narrative from a literary perspective rather than a sociological/cultural one. See Bruce W. Jorgensen, "Reading the Book of Mormon as Typological Narrative," in *The Second Annual Church Educational System Religious Educators' Symposium on the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978), 64-70; also Bruce W. Jorgensen, "The Dark Way to the Tree: Typological Unity in the Book of Mormon," in *Literature of Belief*, 217-31. More recently, Richard Dilworth Rust has used similar literary approaches to explore themes within the Book of Mormon in his book, *Feasting on the Word: The Literary Testimony of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1997).

The dream itself is made up of two sequences, each containing three general scenes and differentiated by their emphasis on a microcosmic or macrocosmic scale. The first sequence depicts a personalized scene with a small-scale landscape. We begin with only Lehi and follow him through the dark and dreary waste where he encounters a divine guide who influences Lehi's entering into a large and spacious field dominated by a tree of light. Upon partaking of the fruit of the tree, he seeks to bring the rest of his immediate family, or at least his wife and sons, to the tree and eat of the fruit themselves. Running alongside the path leading to the tree is a river, which completes the setting of the first sequence.

The second sequence of the dream begins in 1 Nephi 8:21 with "numberless concourses of people" seeking to get to the tree. Not only have the participants expanded in scale, the large and spacious field has also done so and has become the world. According to the text, mists of darkness cover the path and are destructive to those seeking to get to the tree. An iron rod can overcome the power of the darkness and must be used to reach the tree. Though these last elements are not found in the first sequence, they do have their analogues, as the chart below demonstrates. Symbolically, the mists of darkness perform the same function as the dark and dreary wilderness/waste, and the iron rod, as will be explained later in greater detail, is analogous to the divine guide.

First Sequence	Second Sequence
Dark and dreary waste/wilderness	Mists of darkness
Angelic guide	Iron rod
Large and spacious field	World
Tree of life	Tree of life
Lehi and his family	Numberless concourses of people
River	Endless gulf

In light of the correspondence between the two sequences, Lehi's dream basically retells the same story. In both sequences,

the symbolic elements reflected the cosmological understanding of the ancient Near East in Lehi's day, particularly the tension between the elements that may represent chaos and those that represent the cosmos. Below, then, is a quick review of the cosmological nature of the symbolism in the three scenes that make up each sequence.

Scene 1: Journey through the Darkness. The first element in the first sequence is that of the dark and dreary wilderness, later described as the dark and dreary waste, which may be seen as analogous to the precosmic chaos found in the creation narrative. Though we do not have the original text of the Book of Mormon, the terms *wilderness* and *waste* describe, along with the characteristics of both as dark and dreary, something akin to the description of chaos in the Old Testament.[13] As we have seen already, both of the terms *waste* and *wilderness* were used in Deuteronomy 32:10 to translate *tohu*, the Hebrew term for chaos. The King James Version of Job 12:24-25 and Psalm 107:40 also use the term *wilderness* to designate *tohu*, or chaos, the former reference also associating darkness with the wilderness: "He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and causeth them to wander in a wilderness [*tohu*] where there is no way. They grope in the dark without light." Similarly, Jeremiah 4:23 associates the *tohu* with darkness: "I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void [*tohu*]; and the heavens, and they had no light."

This dark and dreary wasteland is experienced in the second sequence through the mists of darkness. Though the two are not exactly the same, they perform the same function with the narrative—namely, to act as an obstacle that one must face before reaching that which represents the cosmos. The description of the darkness as a mist encapsulates the chaotic nature, for, as described earlier, the primal chaos is depicted in Genesis 1 as the abyss, a

13. The English terms *wilderness* and *waste* were used to describe that which was uncultivated, outside, etc. This is reflected in Joseph Smith's translation of Genesis 1:2, "without form, and void" as "empty and desolate." *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "wilderness" and "waste."

fathomless dark sea: "And the earth was without form, and void [*tohu*]; and darkness was upon the face of the *deep*. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the *waters*" (v. 2; emphasis added).

The river, too, can be understood on this same continuum as one of the terms for the chaotic ocean. Often the terms *sea* and *river* are used interchangeably in the Old Testament to represent the chaos, such as in Psalm 24:2, which speaks of the creation in the following manner: "For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods [rivers]." As we shall see, Nephi, in his version of the dream imagery, also connects the mists of darkness to the river. Thus, in both sequences, the individuals have some type of experience with the dark chaos.

While in the darkness, Lehi meets a guide who, like the Greek *psychopomp*, leads him through the dark wilderness.[14] Like the wilderness, this symbol also fits within Lehi's cosmology. Though Lehi's dream is not the exodus narrative, there are elements that do coincide, no doubt because of the commonalities between them and the creation narrative. One such commonality is that of the divine guide who will lead them through the chaos. Again, referring back to Deuteronomy 32:10, we find a description of the exodus as one in which God found his people: "He found him [Jacob] in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him." Historically, the Israelites were led through the wilderness by a divine guide, and later Joshua also encounters his divine guide, a pattern experienced in visionary encounters as well.

The counterpart to the guide in the second sequence is the image of the iron rod. Though they differ in form, the two symbols perform the same function, specifically to aid the individual in reaching the cosmic state. We are first introduced to the iron rod in verse 19, which explains that the iron rod "extended along the bank of the river," suggesting that the rod lies horizontal to the bank, and

14. We are not told who this guide is. Similarly, we do not know who Nephi's divine mentor was either. With that said, some have suggested that it was the Holy Ghost, perhaps even Christ himself. See Sidney B. Sperry, *Answers to Book of Mormon Questions* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1967), 29–30.

thus appears as a handrail, at least to our modern senses. Yet some have suggested that the iron rod was not a handrail but a weapon like that found in the Old Testament where it is associated with kingship and power.[15] As we shall see, this latter possibility seems to lie behind its usage in the book of Helaman. If it is a weapon then this too adds to the cosmological symbolism as the creation was often described as a battle with God who battled the chaos and brought forth a cosmos.

Scene 2: Obtaining the Tree. Following Lehi's encounter with the guide, the prophet begins to pray for mercy, whereupon he is brought to a large and spacious field with a tree that is later revealed to be the tree of life. The transition from the dark and dreary wasteland into a field possessing the tree of life characterized by its fruit is ultimately a cosmic one. In Isaiah 32:15 a similar transformation is described: "Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field." The transformation of the waste into a cosmos also lies behind the powerful imagery recorded in Isaiah 51:3: "For the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make . . . her desert like the garden of the Lord." This latter reference, in particular, demonstrates the manner in which the creation narrative could be used outside of the actual creation event. Though we do not have the original text, the term *field* is used elsewhere in the Book of Mormon to designate cultivated land as opposed to the wilderness. Thus, the chaos/cosmos dichotomy includes the uncultivated/cultivated dichotomy.

The image of the tree of life itself would have been an iconic representation of the cosmos. Like the cosmic mountain, the tree of life was a symbol of the *axis mundi*, or the connection between heaven, earth, and the underworld.[16] Its presence in the field is suggestive

15. See Hugh Nibley, "Ezekiel 37:15-23 as Evidence for the Book of Mormon," in *An Approach to the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 311-28; John A. Tvedtnes, "*Rod* and *Sword* as the Word of God," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5/2 (1996): 148-55, both of whom discuss the rod as staff/weapon.

16. The tree of life as a symbol of the unified cosmos has long been recognized. See E. O. James, *The Tree of Life: An Archaeological Study* (Leiden: Brill, 1966). For a pictorial study on the universal belief of the tree of life, see Roger Cook, *The Tree of Life: Image*

of the Garden of Eden, which has been recognized as the template for a temple, which is, in turn, the architectural expression of the finished cosmic state. Like the tree in the Garden of Eden, Lehi's tree is the source of the living waters, and thus it suggests that the tree is elevated to some degree.[17] Yet, the tree is more than just a symbol of the physical cosmos; the tree also represents Jesus Christ and therefore acts as a symbol of the individual transformation into deity, the true cosmic state of which all others are merely types.

Just as the tree is symbolic of the whole cosmos, so the fruit of the tree becomes symbolic of the entirety of the tree. According to Lehi, the fruit of the tree that resides in the garden "was white, to exceed all the whiteness that [he] had ever seen" (1 Nephi 8:11). Later, in Nephi's vision, the entire tree is now described as white: "And I looked and beheld a tree; and it was like unto the tree which my father had seen; and the beauty thereof was far beyond, yea, exceeding of all beauty; and the whiteness thereof did exceed the whiteness of the driven snow" (11:8). In both versions, the brightness is as significant as the color itself, the intensity of brightness suggesting that the fruit gave off light. Thus the journey is not only from a wilderness state to the garden but also from darkness into light. In this manner, then, Lehi has experienced an abbreviated, but symbolically complete, version of the creation, with himself as the Adam type. This interpretation is only strengthened in the second sequence when one realizes that unlike other elements of the dream, the tree has no analogue but is integral to both.

Scene 3: Partaking of the Fruit and the Transformation. The final cosmic transformation is found in chapter 8, verse 12: "And as I

for the Cosmos (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1974). For more on the menorah as a symbol for the tree of life, see Carol L. Meyers, *The Tabernacle Menorah: A Synthetic Study of a Symbol from the Biblical Cult* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 133–34.

17. According to Nephi, the tree is associated with the "fountain of living waters" (1 Nephi 11:25). Contrary to the modern conception of *fountain*, the term has the primary meaning of a "source of water"; see *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "fountain." Both the tree of life and the source of living waters are found in the Garden of Eden, which, according to Ezekiel 28:13–14, is itself understood to be "the holy mountain of God."

partook of the fruit thereof it filled my soul with exceedingly great joy; wherefore, I began to be desirous that my family should partake of it also." As Lehi partakes of the fruit of the tree of life, he too is transformed, symbolically becoming one with the divine. The ritual of the meal is used universally as a social function to denote place within a given society for both the host and the guest.[18] In the Bible, the meal is an important event that binds individuals and groups together.[19] The most important, of course, are those relationships between mortals and God.[20]

---

18. E. N. Anderson, *Everyone Eats: Understanding Food and Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 124: "Food as communication finds most of its applications in the process of defining one's individuality and one's place in society." See Susan Pollock, "Feasts, Funerals, and Fast Food in Early Mesopotamian States," in *The Archaeology and Politics of Food and Feasting in Early States and Empires*, ed. Tamara L. Bray (New York: Kluwer Academic, 2003), 19: "The ways that food and drink are prepared, presented, and consumed contribute to the construction and communication of social relations, ranging from the most intimate and egalitarian to the socially distant and hierarchical." See also Michael Dietler, "Feasts and Commensal Politics in the Political Economy," in *Food and the Status Quest: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*, ed. Polly Wiessner and Wulf Schiefenhövel (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1996), 89: "Feasts are, in fact, ritualized social events in which food and drink constitute the medium of expression in the performance of what Cohen has called 'politico-symbolic drama.' As public ritual events, in contrast to daily activity, feasts provide an arena for the highly condensed symbolic representation of social relations."

19. Joan M. Gero, "Feasting and the Practice of Stately Manners," in *Archaeology and Politics of Food and Feasting*, 287: "Feasts present a unique occasion to celebrate together and experience a commonality, all the while asserting the distinctions of social identity that are increasingly dividing the commonality. Feasts provide common social experiential references in time and space for an increasingly dispersed, segmented and hierarchically arranged social body. Feasts create and intensify the microcosm of social and political and economic complexity that agriculturalists, producers, kin and neighbors must grow accustomed to under conditions of intensifying social complexity and power consolidations. One gets used to what it means to be a citizen."

20. See Hallvard Hagelia, "Meal on Mount Zion—Does Isa 25:6-8 Describe a Covenant Meal?" *Svensk exegetisk årsbok* 68 (2003): 73-95; David Elgavish, "The Encounter of Abram and Melchizedek King of Salem: A Covenant Establishing Ceremony," in *Studies in the Book of Genesis: Literature, Redaction, and History*, ed. André Wénin (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 495-508; see also Kathryn L. Roberts, "God, Prophet, and King: Eating and Drinking on the Mountain in First Kings 18:41," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 62/4 (2000): 632-44; Henrietta Lovejoy Wiley, "Gather to My Feast: YHWH as Sacrificer in the Biblical Prophets" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2004); Robert C. Stallman, "Divine Hospitality in the Pentateuch: A Metaphorical Perspective on God as Host" (PhD diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1999).

Of course, the meal is fundamental to the Garden of Eden pericope, but it was also the ritual that bound Israel to God in the wilderness. The power of meal imagery to signify the mortal/divine relationship may explain why at least one biblical reference uses it to describe the entire Sinai experience:

> He [Jehovah] made him [Israel] ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat; and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape. (Deuteronomy 32:13-14)

Earlier, in Exodus 24, the covenant-making experience is no longer metaphorical, but in fact a literal meal:

> And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do. And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord. . . . And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings. . . . And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant. . . . Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: And they saw the God of Israel . . . and did eat and drink. (Exodus 24:3-5, 8-11)

Both of these references use imagery from the peace offering, the one form of sacrifice in which the offerer literally ate of the flesh and God partook symbolically. It may come as no surprise then to realize that Lehi's dream was received following the offering of such sacrifices.

Yet more than communion is expressed in Lehi's partaking of the fruit. Just as the guest who partakes of a meal offered becomes

one of the community, so also is the one who partakes of the divine meal now accepted in the divine world. Thus, not only has Lehi become one with the divine, but he has symbolically become divine, a transformation that Alma emphasizes in his discourse on the tree of life. This transformation into the true cosmos is revealed in Lehi's desire and then subsequent actions to have others taste of the fruit and in so doing becoming a "creator" himself. This insight does not seem to be repeated in the second sequence, but that does not necessarily mean it should not be implied. The similarities between each scene and the symbols within each scene can lead us to conclude that those who got to the tree and remained in the second sequence also sought to help others reach the tree. Thus, the dream tells of a creation in an ascending series of transformations: the physical state organized from chaotic matter, civilization from wilderness, and the ultimate transformation, that of the fallen, chaotic man to a fully realized, divine being.

The One and the Many: The Dream as an Atemporal and Ahistorical Experience

Though the reception and presentation of the dream fits into a specific historical context and describes a certain worldview, the atemporal (or non-time-specific) and ahistorical (or lack of historical references) nature of the dream gives it significance beyond the immediate placement. While Lehi is the one who experiences the creation, the symbolism is such that he is completely replaceable—anyone can be put into his character's situation and reenact the scene.[21] In other words, since there is no specific time and space to the dream, the elements of the dream may be used in any space and time, unlike other narratives the Nephites may have been familiar

21. This has been recognized most thoroughly by Charles L. Swift in his dissertation, "'I Have Dreamed a Dream': Typological Images of Teaching and Learning in the Vision of the Tree of Life" (PhD diss., Brigham Young University, 2003), in which the archetypal nature of the dream's symbols are discussed. For a study that approaches the archetypal nature from Joseph Campbell's hero paradigm, see Tod R. Harris, "The Journey of the Hero: Archetypes of Earthly Adventure and Spiritual Passage in 1 Nephi," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 6/2 (1997): 43–66.

with.[22] The exodus narrative, for example, while using related imagery, is very much a historical event, bound by the space and time of the event for its power to define Israel. Though others may borrow the exodus narrative, because of its historicity it is primarily the narrative of a specific, chosen people.

Like the exodus narrative, the dream narrative creates a group identity, but because of its universal nature, the identity of the group is not necessarily one bound by genetic or cultural affinities. Instead, the group is bound by the spiritual transformation described in the dream. The group is those who have reached the tree, whoever they are; thus the dream can be used to define disparate groups bound by their journey through the dark wasteland. Moreover, the transformation, and the coinciding new identity, is greater than what any historical/temporal narrative can provide, as the individuals are not merely passive agents but creative beings who bring about cosmos, no matter what chaos they may experience.[23]

The Dream Narrative in Later Book of Mormon Writings

Using the dream narrative to define the Nephite experience begins as early as Nephi's own writings: "And it came to pass after I, Nephi, having heard all the words of my father, concerning the things which he saw in a vision, . . . I, Nephi, was desirous also that I might see, and hear, and know of these things" (1 Nephi 10:17). Though Nephi gained an understanding of his father's dream and saw the same symbols, this does not mean he experienced it in the same manner. Unlike his father's version, Nephi's vision is very much temporally oriented, relating the symbolic elements of the

22. See Charles Swift, "Lehi's Vision of the Tree of Life: Understanding the Dream as Visionary Literature," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 14/2 (2005): 52-63, for more on the atemporal, ahistorical nature of the dream; see also Mark Thomas, "Lehi's Dream: An American Apocalypse," in *Proceedings of the Symposia of the Association for Mormon Letters, 1979-82* (Salt Lake City: Association for Mormon Letters, 1983), 91-98.

23. It is possible that this dream provides a missionary opportunity among non-Israelites when the family of Lehi establish themselves in the promised land, its inclusive nature allowing for those not of Lehi's own cultural or biological upbringing to become a part of the chosen. Whether or not this is the case cannot be established firmly from the Book of Mormon.

dream to the future history of his people and their relationship with Christ—commencing with his birth, to his theophany in the promised land, to their eventual apostasy and restoration. This is accomplished by providing a two-sequence structure in which, instead of seeing one sequence followed by another sequence, as in the case of Lehi, Nephi experiences both sequences at the same time. In other words, while he interacts with the angel concerning the symbols of the first sequence, he "sees" the second sequence. For instance, while he experiences the guide in the form of the angel, he watches Christ as the iron rod in the historical parts of the vision.[24] In this manner, the dream now becomes a historical narrative concerning Nephi's future descendants until this dispensation.

Yet by the end of his writings, Nephi uses the dream narrative in its universal context as found in his father's dream rather than in his own historical context as he discusses the doctrine of Christ. In 2 Nephi 31, he writes of entering the "strait and narrow path" (v. 19), which, if followed, leads one to the Father's proclamation, "Ye shall have eternal life" (v. 20). Along the way, one must "press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope" (v. 20). The journey is a progressive one: "Wherefore [you must] press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ." In each of these stages, the dream narrative can

24. The vision itself appears to be made up of four sections. The first is a previsionary interaction, which includes his worthiness interview and the instructions, comprising verses 1-7 of chapter 11. The second section is where Nephi is shown symbolic images of the dream and given an explanation. He then is shown the history of his people and then more symbolism is explained, but this time only after the historical content has been seen. Finally, he is shown the apocalyptic vision including the last days without any overt dream symbolism explained, though dream terminology is still used. Following these four stages we can see that Nephi is repeating the dream in three successive stages of the visionary history and that by the end he is expected to find the connections between history and the symbolism. The dream as template to the sections of the vision are overt in the beginning but become successfully more subtle as the vision progresses; thus Nephi is taught how to apply the elements of the dream to the history as they are woven in. For more on the relationship between Nephi's vision and Lehi's dream, see Corbin T. Volluz, "Lehi's Dream of the Tree of Life: Springboard to Prophecy," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2/2 (1993): 14-38.

be discerned. The path reflects the journey through mortality in which one endures to the end. One encounters the mists of darkness on this path, which would require a perfect brightness to be traversed. Finally, the iron rod, or the word of Christ, will lead to eventual communion with God, who will provide eternal life, the fruit of the tree of life.

The dream narrative continues in the writings of Nephi's brother Jacob, who describes the actual, physical state of the Nephites as one like a dream, in which they, like Lehi, were "wanderers . . . in a wilderness" (Jacob 7:26). Yet the dream narrative really finds expression after five hundred years of establishing and losing lands of inheritance. Both Ammon and Alma the Younger tie the Nephite experience of lacking a true land of inheritance to dream narrative imagery. Speaking to the Ammonihahites, Alma stated: "The voice of the Lord, by the mouth of angels, doth declare it [the gospel] . . . because of our being wanderers in a strange land" (Alma 13:22-23), which is the same pattern established in the narrative with the wandering Lehi and the angelic guidance. While among the Lamanites, Ammon declares that God "is my life and my light, my joy and my salvation, and my redemption from everlasting wo. . . . Blessed be the name of my God, who has been mindful of us, wanderers in a strange land" (Alma 26:36), thereby espousing the same type of experience that Alma had iterated.[25]

By the beginning of the book of Mosiah, the dream narrative has become the primary narrative used to describe personal and social Nephite transformation. Alma the Younger, in particular, used the dream narrative to describe his personal transformation. In Mosiah 27, upon emerging from his comalike sleep, Alma speaks of being cast off and "wading through much tribulation . .

25. This declaration may also be referring to his experiences among the Lamanites. But whether he is speaking to the overall Nephite experience, like that of Alma, or his own personal journey among the Lamanites, the meaning is the same. As Ammon suggested earlier in the book, he is not planning on going home. That he and his brothers do so is beside the point, according to his own words; he was not expecting to do so, and thus his words in this particular text reflect more closely the larger Nephite theme of creation, not restoration.

in the darkest abyss" until brought to "the marvelous light of God" (vv. 28-29). Though the term *abyss* is not found in the dream narrative itself, its analogue is—specifically the river of water. Though Lehi does tell us that the river acts as a separating agent between the righteous and the wicked, it is not until Nephi's vision that we are told that the river is a gulf representing the depths of hell. The association of depths and water are found in the Hebrew term *tehom*, which is most often translated as "deep" and is the primary term used for the precosmic ocean.[26] The term *gulf* is an English word that originally meant a large body of water,[27] and the term *abyss* is a Greek word denoting the cosmic sea. Thus Alma's use of the terminology fits the dream narrative perfectly, as the abyss is now an analogue for the precosmic chaos represented also as the dark and dreary waste and the mists of darkness. Later, to his son Helaman, he again recounts the event, emphasizing the role of Christ in obtaining the light:

> I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ. . . . Now, as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness. . . . And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold. . . . Yea, and from that time even until now, I have labored without ceasing, . . . that I might bring them to taste of the exceeding joy of which I did taste. (Alma 36:17-18, 20, 24)

One can readily notice the elements of the dream in both references, as demonstrated in the following chart.

---

26. E. J. Waschke, תהום, in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 15:574-81.
27. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "gulf."

Lehi's Dream	Alma's Conversion
Dark and dreary waste/mists of darkness	"I was in the darkest abyss"
Angelic guide/iron rod	"I remembered . . . concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ" "as my mind caught hold upon this thought"
Lehi cries for God's mercy	"O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me"
Lehi partakes of the fruit of the tree of life	"taste of the exceeding joy of which I did taste"

The dream narrative also appears in Alma's missionary discourses. Beginning with his discourse to the people in Zarahemla, Alma states the following: "And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, you that belong to this church, have you sufficiently retained in remembrance the captivity of your fathers? . . . Have ye sufficiently retained in remembrance that he has delivered their souls from hell?" (Alma 5:6). Though the terminology is reminiscent of that expected in the exodus narrative, Alma continues by answering these rhetorical questions using imagery from the dream narrative: "Behold, he changed their hearts. . . . Behold, they were in the midst of darkness; nevertheless, their souls were illuminated by the light of the everlasting word" (v. 7). Later in the chapter, Alma invites them to come unto Christ and partake of the fruit of the tree of life, and finally he ends his discourse by reiterating the invitation "Come and be baptized unto repentance, that ye also may be partakers of the fruit of the tree of life" (v. 62).[28] While it is clear that the dream narrative is being used, it may be even more important to note the manner in which the exodus narrative, while still understood, is folded into the dream narrative, which now defines the Nephite experience.

Perhaps most familiar to the Book of Mormon reader is Alma's use of the dream in his message to the Zoramites. In Alma 32,

28. Interestingly, this group apparently was made up of converts: "And behold, he [Alma the Elder] preached the word unto your fathers, and a mighty change was also wrought in their hearts" (Alma 5:13), which would demonstrate the universality of the dream for all and any who would become "Nephite."

explaining to the inhabitants of Antionum the transforming power of the word of God, he uses the analogy of the word as a seed that, if planted and nourished, will

> take root; and behold it shall be a tree springing up unto everlasting life. . . . Behold, by and by ye shall pluck the fruit thereof, which is most precious, which is sweet above all that is sweet, and which is white above all that is white . . ; and ye shall feast. (Alma 32:41–42)

Clearly the language used to describe the fruit and tree reflects the imagery recorded in the dream as well as the ability for any and all to be able to eat of the fruit—an important message considering his audience. But Alma goes further, adding to our understanding of scenes two and three of the original narrative; the transformation is especially vivid, as eating the fruit leads one to becoming a tree of life: "And now, my brethren, I desire that ye shall plant this word in your hearts. . . . And behold, it will become a tree, springing up in you unto everlasting life" (33:23). Though this image is not one found in the original narrative, it does fit the overall scheme of the narrative and suggests that the narrative changed from time to time to fit specific needs.

Alma's contemporaries, the sons of Mosiah, also use terminology from Lehi's dream to describe their own transformation and the work they had been performing. In Alma 26, Ammon describes his conversion in the following manner: "Behold, he did not exercise his justice upon us, but in his great mercy hath brought us over that everlasting gulf of death and misery" (v. 20). Earlier in Alma 26, Ammon, speaking to his brother Aaron, uses the same type of language to describe the Lamanites prior to their conversion.

> Our brethren, the Lamanites, were in darkness, yea, even in the darkest abyss, but behold, how many of them are brought to behold the marvelous light of God. . . . yea, they were encircled about with everlasting darkness and

> destruction; but behold, he has brought them into his everlasting light. (Alma 26:3, 15)

A few verses earlier, Ammon suggests that he and his brethren acted as the guides, or the iron rod: "Behold, how many thousands of our brethren has he loosed from the pains of hell; . . . and this because of the power of his word which is in us. . . . And we have been instruments in his hands of doing this great and marvelous work" (Alma 26:13, 15). Ammon's use of the dream in his own words may explain why Mormon, editing the account, also used dream imagery to describe Lamoni's conversion: "the cloud of darkness [was] dispelled, and . . . the light of everlasting life was lit up in his soul" (Alma 19:6).

Mormon also uses Lehi's dream imagery to describe the missionary labors of Helaman and his two sons, Lehi and Nephi, about seventy years later:

> Yea, we see that whosoever will may lay hold upon the word of God, which is quick and powerful, which shall divide asunder all the cunning and the snares and the wiles of the devil, and lead the man of Christ in a strait and narrow course across that everlasting gulf of misery. (Helaman 3:29)[29]

Like Alma's use of the dream narrative to the Zoramites, this reference also suggests that the narrative was changed at times to fit certain events. Though the iron rod in the original dream narrative may imply the concept of the divine warrior as found in the older creation narrative, this reading is not explicit; but Mormon here in Helaman 3 describes the dream narrative in terms that reflect martial behavior. The word of God is explicitly a weapon, and the

29. Interestingly, in this text the preposition *across* creates a different imaginative landscape to the dream's setting. Instead of lying next to the path, the gulf is placed in front of the traveler, as he or she must go across the gulf to get to the destination. Thus the description of the path as "strait" fits in this particular instance with the setting and fits the overall creation landscape, with the cosmos in the center and the chaos surrounding.

mists of darkness are now the tools of an adversary who seeks one's destruction.

Yet perhaps one of the most explicit uses of Lehi's dream narrative is in the conversion of the Lamanites as recorded in Helaman 5. There, according to the text, following the imprisonment of Nephi and Lehi, the Lamanites were "overshadowed with a cloud of darkness" (v. 28). In the darkness they encounter a guide, or at least his voice, who provides the way for deliverance. Following his instruction, the Lamanites pray and are "filled with that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory" (v. 44). On a historical level, having achieved this state of cosmos, Lamanite aggression against the Nephites ends as the converted then go and transform other Lamanites until the whole society is changed, at which point they end hostilities and give back all conquered territories still in their possession. Moreover, from this point on, there is no more Nephite-Lamanite aggression; all conflict now centers on secret societies versus everyone else for the next 260 years. Thus, one of the most important historical turning points for both the Nephites and the Lamanites is described using Lehi's dream narrative.

The Narrative of Lehi's Dream and Christ's Theophany

In light of the manner in which the dream narrative is found throughout the Book of Mormon, it is not surprising to find the narrative embedded in the texts describing the events leading up to and including Christ's theophany to the New World, especially as the promise of his visit defines the Nephite experience as much as the dream. From as early as Lehi's time to just a few years preceding the event, almost every prophet in the Book of Mormon had prophesied of the future visitation by Christ. It was the focal point of Nephite spirituality and provided a cultural identity for the Nephites, acting as an anchor to the general Nephite malaise of feeling cut off, isolated, and abandoned. As the following table demonstrates, the two structures overlap, and the overall atmosphere of the dream and the actual Nephite experience culminate in the theophany of Christ.

Elements of Lehi's Dream Narrative	Events of Christ's Theophany
dark and dreary wasteland/mists of darkness	Earth completely redone; mists of darkness
iron rod/angelic guide	Christ's arm is stretched out still Christ is the Word of God "They saw a Man . . . and he was clothed in a white robe" (3 Nephi 11:8) voice of God
tree of life	glorious arrival of Christ at temple his declaration as "the light and the life of the world" (3 Nephi 11:11)
partaking of the fruit/experiencing true cosmos	all touch Christ one by one all partake of the sacrament
become a guide for others	spend the night finding and delivering message to others

Scene 1: The Destruction. This synthesis begins with a wasted landscape. According to 3 Nephi 8, "in the thirty and fourth year, in the first month, on the fourth day of the month, there arose a great storm, such an one as never had been known in all the land" (v. 5). The storm prefigured an entire list of physical phenomena—earthquakes, tempests, fire, raging seas—that completely reconfigured the landscape. Immediately following the storm, the text describes a "thick darkness upon all the face of the land" (v. 20). The characteristics of the darkness were such that "the inhabitants thereof who had not fallen could feel the vapor of darkness; and there could be no light, because of the darkness, neither candles, neither torches; neither could there be fire kindled with their fine and exceedingly dry wood, so that there could not be any light at all" (vv. 20-21).

While many have provided scientific, geological explanations for the nature of the darkness, Mormon simply describes the phenomenon in the following manner: "There was not any light seen, neither fire, nor glimmer, neither the sun, nor the moon, nor the

stars, for so great were the mists of darkness which were upon the face of the land" (3 Nephi 8:22).[30] This description is similar to that which Nephi himself wrote to describe the same event: "And it came to pass that I saw a mist of darkness on the face of the land of promise" (1 Nephi 12:4), and like Nephi, the presence of these physical mists are related to the spiritual reality of the Nephites.

In 3 Nephi 9:2, Christ laments the destruction of the Nephites and relates their destruction to their spiritual state: "because of their iniquity and abominations . . . they are fallen!" This same relationship between their spiritual state and their experience with the mists of darkness was emphasized at least twice in Nephi's vision. First, in 1 Nephi 12 the description of physical devastation is preceded by a description of the Nephite sinful state in which the "multitudes . . . gathered together to battle" (v. 15). The "wars, and rumors of wars, and great slaughters with the sword" (v. 2) that Nephi describes represent the chaos on a cultural level that the mists of darkness and other phenomena represent on a physical level.[31] Later, when witnessing the destruction of his people following Christ's arrival, the angel defines for Nephi the mists as "the temptations of the devil, which blindeth the eyes, and hardeneth the hearts of the children of men, and leadeth them away into broad roads, that they perish and are lost" (1 Nephi 12:17), suggesting that the final destruction is the result of the Nephites getting lost in the mists of darkness.[32]

---

30. See John Gee, "Another Note on the Three Days of Darkness," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 6/2 (1997): 235–44, for the most recent discussion on this topic and for a list of related studies prior to his own.

31. The first six verses of chapter 12, as a whole, reflect the dream narrative in its historical context. Beginning in verse 1, Nephi sees "multitudes of people, yea, even as it were in number as many as the sand of the sea," which corresponds to the numberless concourses of people that open up the second sequence of the original dream. Nephi then sees the multitude experience both the spiritual mists of darkness, as noted in the continual warfare, and the actual mists: "a mist of darkness on the face of the land of promise; and . . . I saw the vapor of darkness." This is followed by the condescension of Christ: "And I saw the heavens open, and the Lamb of God descending out of heaven," which, in the earlier part of the vision, is equated with the tree of life.

32. There are at least two references written by Moroni that suggest the dream narrative was at work even after the final destruction. In Mormon 8:16, speaking of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, Moroni writes: "And blessed be he that shall

Back in 3 Nephi, Christ continues to associate the actual mists with the spiritual state of the Nephites. According to chapter 9, verses 7 and 12, the destruction of the cities came about to

> hide their wickedness and abominations from before my face, that the blood of the prophets and the saints shall not come up any more unto me against them. . . . And many great destructions have I caused to come upon this land, and upon this people, because of their wickedness and their abominations.

Even those who were spared in the destruction were in a sinful place: "O all ye that are spared because ye were more righteous than they, will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins . . . ?" (v. 13). Of course, the physical darkness is not actually sin and temptation, but the literal manifestation of the darkness should be associated with the precosmic chaos and is the Nephite symbol for the chaotic nature of sin, which restrains one from becoming the creation one is meant to be.[33] Yet, because the mists are also associated with chaos, its presence hints at restoration, at a new creation.

Scene 2: "Mine Arm of Mercy Is Extended towards You." According to the text, the central feature experienced by those who were encompassed by the darkness, besides the ongoing destruction, was the manifestation of Christ's voice. In this, the symbolism inherent in the iron rod and its analogue, Christ himself exemplifies the divine guide. To understand how comforting the voice would have

---

bring this thing to light; for it shall be brought out of darkness unto light, according to the word of God; . . . and it shall shine forth out of darkness." In Mormon 9:6, Mormon speaks of the transformation made possible through Christ to a state in which one is "pure, fair, and white," reminiscent of the terms used to describe the tree of life, Mary, and those who were transformed following Christ's arrival in the New World.

33. It appears that the physical mists themselves were also among the causes of death and loss: "And they were spared and were not sunk and buried up in the earth; and they were not drowned in the depths of the sea; and they were not burned by fire, neither were they fallen upon and crushed to death; and they were not carried away in the whirlwind; neither were they overpowered by the vapor of smoke and of darkness" (3 Nephi 10:13).

been, we must recognize the soundscape that surrounded the people. According to the text, for the three days in which the darkness was present the earth continued to be torn apart, creating "groanings" and "tumultuous noises" (3 Nephi 10:9). These, coupled with the wailing of the survivors, would have created an eerie, frightening experience for everyone. Thus, the voice of Christ would have acted as a lifeline, something by which one could retain sanity.

Among the messages the voice delivered was the following invitation:

> Yea, verily I say unto you, if ye will come unto me ye shall have eternal life. Behold, mine arm of mercy is extended towards you, and whosoever will come, him will I receive. (3 Nephi 9:14)

The image of the extended arm of God is one found throughout the Old Testament, most commonly associated with the power of God to deliver Israel from Egypt and thus a symbol of the exodus narrative.[34] This image does show up in the Book of Mormon, but the martial elements of it are, for the most part, nonexistent. Instead the qualifier "of mercy" is added, changing the image from a violent one to one reflecting the dream narrative.[35] Alma's invitation at the end of Alma 5 is a good example of this.

> Behold, he sendeth an invitation unto all men, for the arms of mercy are extended towards them, and he saith: Repent, and I will receive you. Yea, he saith: Come unto me and ye shall partake of the fruit of the tree of life. (Alma 5:33–34)

---

34. For example, see Exodus 3:20; 6:6; 7:5; Deuteronomy 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 9:29; 1 Kings 8:42; 2 Kings 17:36; Jeremiah 32:21; Ezekiel 20:34. Other references use the term to refer to God's destroying power over the nations, including Israel: Isaiah 5:25; 9:17, 21; Jeremiah 6:12; 51:25; Ezekiel 25:7; 13, 16.

35. Jacob 6:5: "I beseech of you in words of soberness that ye would repent, and come with full purpose of heart . . . while his arm of mercy is extended towards you"; Mosiah 16:12: "having never called upon the Lord while the arms of mercy were extended towards them; for the arms of mercy were extended towards them, and they would not"; and Alma 19:36: "And thus the work of the Lord did commence . . . ; and we see that his arm is extended to all people who will repent and believe on his name."

The use of the term *extended* both here and in Christ's invitation of 3 Nephi 9 is reminiscent of the use of the verb in the dream, as the iron rod was also extended. In the dream, the purpose of the rod and its analogue, the divine messenger, was to act as a guide to reaching the tree. In the invitations above, it is Christ's arms that represent the guide leading one to the tree. The image of the extended arm can be found in Lehi's dream as well.

According to 1 Nephi 8:15, after having partaken of the fruit, Lehi sees his family and "beckoned unto them; and I also did say unto them with a loud voice that they should come unto me, and partake of the fruit." Though technically this reference falls with the third scene of the dream rather than the second, the imagery still pertains because the transformation made in the third scene portrays one who becomes a guide himself. Thus, the angelic guide leads Lehi to the tree, who, in turn, becomes a guide extending his arm to others so that they can "come" unto the tree. Back in 3 Nephi, the image of God's extended arms of mercy is later reinforced when he actually appears: "And it came to pass that he stretched forth his hand and spake unto the people" (3 Nephi 11:9). In both cases, Christ is the iron rod that leads one to the tree.

There in the darkness, Christ also declares that he is "Jesus Christ the Son of God. I created the heavens and the earth" (3 Nephi 9:15). With this statement the chaotic environment, characterized by the darkness itself, is put into a context of a coming creation. Thus, like the angelic guide, Christ's voice leads the people to a new creation, thereby giving the whole experience meaning—replacing their fear with the knowledge that Christ, the Creator, was at work. This, in turn, would have provided an assurance that they would survive this and in fact become something more than what they were. This declaration, coupled with his earlier invitation, depicts Christ's creative action as holding out the iron rod. Coming unto Christ is a creative endeavor as one enters into his presence experiencing a cosmos.

Following these declarations, Christ then relates his invitation to a group that had accepted it earlier:

> And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost, even as the Lamanites, because of their faith in me at the time of their conversion. (3 Nephi 9:20)

Of course, this conversion is the Lamanite experience described in Helaman 5, which followed the dream narrative. According to the Helaman text, the Lamanites experienced physical upheaval (a symbolic return to the precreation state) in the form of earthquakes leading to an overwhelming cloud of darkness that paralyzed them. In this state, they received divine assistance in the form of Aminadab as guide and experienced the indescribable joy of union with God. So far this is the exact same pattern the survivors are following, with the last scene still to come; therefore Christ's allusion to the Lamanite experience not only gives the survivors further assurances as to how everything will play out, but it also suggests that Christ himself is well aware of the narrative and is using it accordingly to provide peace to the frightened, isolated people in the dark and in the process is demonstrating why Nephi can insist that the iron rod is the Word of God.[36]

Scene 3: "Therefore Hold Up Your Own Light." The final scene of the dream narrative portrays union with the tree of life and becoming forces of creation ourselves. In 3 Nephi this culminates in the descriptions of Christ prior to his arrival, at his actual arrival, and in the ordinance he establishes at the end of the first day. The setting of Christ's theophany at the temple in Bountiful suggests that he is to be understood as the tree of life. As we explored above, there was an association between the images of the dream and the Garden of Eden, which is where the final organizing events of the creation took place and a completed cosmos finished. The Garden of Eden has been recognized as a temple prototype, the tree of life playing an integral role in both the spatial meaning of the temple and in the

36. See Matthew L. Bowen, "What Meaneth the Rod of Iron?" *Insights* 25/2 (2005): 2–3, in which he compares the Hebrew term for *rod* with the Egyptian term for *word*.

ritualized behavior of those attending.[37] Christ as tree of life appearing at the temple would have corresponded to the tree of life residing in the field, or the representation of the Garden of Eden.

The association is highlighted in his own description of himself as "the light and the life of the world" (3 Nephi 9:18). Christ will make this same declaration again in 3 Nephi 11 as part of his physical introduction to the people: "And behold, I am the light and the life of the world" (v. 11).[38] The association of the light emerging from the darkness and the tree of life was discussed earlier, in which the tree must be understood as the source of light; yet in Christ's theophany this understanding is enhanced by recognizing the relationship between the dream and the condescension of God as taught to Nephi.

In 1 Nephi 11, a series of images connecting the tree to Christ begins in verse 8, where the first symbol in Lehi's dream shown to Nephi is the tree of life, described as exceedingly white. This is followed by a vision of Mary, also described as "exceedingly fair and white" (v. 13).[39] At this point, Nephi's divine guide begins to ask him questions that will connect the image of the tree of life to the doctrine of the condescension of God. This series of exchanges between Nephi and the angel suggests that Nephi is to understand that

37. For more on the Garden of Eden, see Donald W. Parry, "Garden of Eden: Prototype Sanctuary," in *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 126–48.

38. Christ's two statements, and their placement within the sequence of events described in 3 Nephi, seem to highlight the atemporal nature of the dream narrative. Mormon provides no time frame between the lifting of the darkness and the arrival of Christ, though this has not stopped many from trying to establish the chronology. Yet it may be that the omission is deliberate. It is clear that Mormon can provide very specific information on times and dates, but he chooses not to do so here, perhaps highlighting the symbolic nature of the events rather than the literal, sequential elements. Thus, the text emphasizes that Christ's coming is to be associated with the emergence of light onto the New World, the chaos giving way to a new cosmos, and is not so concerned with the details of when—the symbolic representing the reality better than the actual, literal history.

39. For more on the relationship between the Marian scene and the image of the tree of life, see Daniel C. Peterson, "Nephi and His Asherah: A Note on 1 Nephi 11:8–23," in *Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson*, ed. Davis Bitton (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 191–243.

the tree equals the condescension of God and that the condescension of God is represented in Christ as the Redeemer; thus the tree represents Christ. This meaning is then reiterated in the historical portion of his vision recorded in chapter 12 as Nephi observes the multitude of Nephites experiencing the mists of darkness and then witnessing the literal condescension of Christ: "And I saw the heavens open, and the Lamb of God descending out of heaven" (1 Nephi 12:6). Later, Alma explicitly ties the phrase "light of the world" with Christ. Recounting to his second son his experience in the "darkest abyss" and his subsequent redemption from such, Alma declares: "Behold, he is the life and the light of the world" (Alma 38:9).

Christ as the tree of life finds its ultimate meaning in the ordinances experienced by those present that open and close Christ's first-day ministry. According to 3 Nephi 11:14, following his arrival and introduction, Christ invites all present to "arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet." The tactile experience, which probably lasted for hours, would have left an indelible impression on those present. It would have been seen as the fulfillment of his invitation made earlier in the darkness—"Come unto me and ye shall have eternal life" (3 Nephi 9:14)[40]—and would have been reinforced by the institution and partaking of the sacrament established at the end of the day, literally partaking of a meal provided by the tree of life: just as one eats the fruit of the tree, so in the sacrament one partakes of the flesh and blood of Christ.[41]

Yet, perhaps one of the most important elements of the dream narrative is that of the transformation following the partaking of the fruit of the tree, as one becomes a source of the fruit himself.

---

40. "No one can truly say he knows God until he has handled something, and this can only be in the Holiest of Holies." Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Salt Lake City: Grandin Book, 1991), 120.

41. This relationship may have been intimated in 1 Nephi 11, when Nephi learns that the tree of life is "the love of God, which sheddeth itself." The similarity between this language and that of the sacramental prayer, "and ye shall do it in remembrance of my blood, which I have shed for you," is striking (3 Nephi 18:11).

This is demonstrated powerfully in 3 Nephi 17 and 18. According to the text, following Christ's ministrations to all the sick and then the children, the multitude experiences the joy associated with the fruit of the tree of life: "and no one can conceive of the joy which filled our souls at the time we heard him pray for us unto the father" (3 Nephi 17:17). This is then followed by the transformations of their children into divinelike beings: "And he spake unto the multitude, and said unto them: Behold your little ones. . . . And they saw the heavens open, and they saw angels descending out of heaven . . . , and they came down and encircled those little ones about" (vv. 23-24).[42] Following this miraculous event, Christ then exhorts the multitude to reflect on their own transformations:

> I am the light; I have set an example for you. . . . Therefore, hold up your light that it may shine unto the world. Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up. . . . And ye see that I have commanded that none of you should go away, but rather have commanded that ye should come unto me, that ye might feel and see; even so shall ye do unto the world. (3 Nephi 18:16, 24-25)

That this exhortation follows the giving of the sacrament and alludes back to the earlier ordinance only strengthens the final scene of the dream narrative: that by partaking of the tree we can become sources for transformation ourselves by extending our arms and "holding up" the light so that others attain the tree as well.

This lesson is immediately followed by the people doing exactly that which Lehi did after partaking of the tree:

> And it was noised abroad among the people immediately, before it was yet dark. . . . Yea, and even all the night it was noised abroad concerning Jesus; and insomuch did they

42. This scene seems to be an instruction as to the meaning of Christ's earlier words in which he stated that we need to be like little children. See M. Gawain Wells, "The Savior and the Children in 3 Nephi 17," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 14/1 (2005): 62-73.

> send forth unto the people that there were many, yea, an exceedingly great number, did labor exceedingly all that night, that they might be on the morrow in the place where Jesus should show himself unto the multitude. (3 Nephi 19:2–3)

And in this, the narrative is once again used to describe the Nephite experience: the journey through the darkness, the divine guide (this time represented by the people themselves), and the communion with the tree of life when Christ miraculously provides the sacrament for those gathered the next day.[43]

Conclusion

The three scenes that make up Lehi's dream, used again and again in the Book of Mormon to describe the Nephite experience, culminate in 3 Nephi, becoming a template by which Christ's theophany could be understood and related to by this group of lost Israelites. Lehi's dream as the Nephite cultural narrative defined in a symbolic manner their unique experience. But the purpose of the Book of Mormon goes beyond a simple history. As it states explicitly, the book was edited with our contemporary experience in mind. In this, Lehi's dream becomes a narrative that, once recognized, can be utilized by anyone. Its message to those who feel lost and alone is as applicable today as it was then. The transformation promised in the narrative is as real today as it was for the Nephites, and it is in this recognition that the power of Lehi's dream narrative finds full bloom, revealing itself like the tree of life itself, "which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men" (1 Nephi 11:22).

Daniel Belnap is an assistant professor in the Department of Ancient Scripture at Brigham Young University. He received his PhD from the University of Chicago.

43. Interestingly, in the account of the second is the following description of the transformation of the apostles: "And it came to pass that . . . they did pray unto him; . . . and behold they were as white as the countenance and also the garments of Jesus; and behold the whiteness thereof did exceed all the whiteness, yea, even there could be nothing upon earth so white as the whiteness thereof" (3 Nephi 19:25).

"They Came Forth and Fell Down and Partook of the Fruit of the Tree": Proskynesis in 3 Nephi 11:12-19 and 17:9-10 and Its Significance

Matthew L. Bowen

When Jesus appeared in the Americas, he declared: "Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world. And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning." Nephi records that the immediate reaction of the multitude to this declaration was that "the whole multitude fell to the earth" (3 Nephi 11:10-12). Likewise, later that day "all the multitude, with one accord, did go forth with their sick and their afflicted, and their lame, and with their blind, and with their dumb, and with all them that were afflicted in any manner; and he did heal them every one as they were brought forth unto him. And they did all, both they who had been healed and they who were whole, bow down at his feet, and did worship him" (3 Nephi 17:9-10). Although the descriptions of the multitude's reaction in these incidents is slightly different—"the whole multitude fell to the earth" and "they did . . . bow down at his feet, and did worship him"—both events seem to be evidence of an ancient practice found in the ancient Near East known as *proskynesis*.

Proskynesis, very literally "a kissing in the presence of," is a term the Greek historian Herodotus (*Histories* 1.134) originally applied to the ancient Persian custom of "prostrating oneself before persons

and kissing their feet or the hem of their garment [or] the ground."[1] The word in its broadest sense denotes the "hierarchical prostration of inferior to superior,"[2] but in a narrower, cultic sense it signifies "formal submission in the presence of a being from the divine realm."[3] Hence, proskynesis is widely used by scholars as an umbrella term for similar rites known from Egypt to the Far East, whereby deities, kings, and other persons deified or thought to belong to the divine realm were so acknowledged and reverenced. It is in this extended sense that the term *proskynesis* will be used in this study.

Hugh Nibley was the first to call attention to proskynesis in the Book of Mormon as an example of "Old World ritual in the New World."[4] He saw the scene of King Benjamin's people falling to the earth in "the fear of the Lord" (Mosiah 4:1-3) as a textbook example of Old World proskynesis[5] but left the matter of proskynesis elsewhere in the Book of Mormon unexplored. There are, however, a number of other significant instances of proskynesis in the Book of Mormon that prefigure and help readers to better appreciate the nuances of the two events in 3 Nephi. This paper will attempt to show that Mormon clothed the moving events in 3 Nephi in language that recalls the accounts of Lehi's and Nephi's visions of the tree of life

---

1. Walter Bauer et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, rev. and ed. Fredrick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 882.

2. Albert B. Bosworth, "Alexander (3) III ('the Great') of Macedon," in *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 59.

3. K. Grayston, "The Translation of Matthew 28.17," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 21 (June 1984): 107.

4. Hugh W. Nibley, *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 3rd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 304: "The *proskynesis* was the falling to earth (literally, 'kissing the ground') in the presence of the king by which all the human race on the day of the coronation demonstrated its submission to divine authority; it was an unfailing part of the Old World New Year's rites as of any royal audience. A flat prostration upon the earth was the proper act of obeisance in the presence of the ruler of all the universe."

5. Nibley, *Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 504-5 n. 22. Here Nibley has provided some useful examples of this practice ranging from Anatolia all the way to Persia and notes how the practice was eventually adopted by the Byzantine emperors.

and that he also included other momentous scenes in which people "fall down" in proskynesis to illustrate how Israel should approach the Lord and come to know "the joy of [their] redemption" (Moses 5:11). It emerges that there are no more sublime examples of proskynesis anywhere than those found in 3 Nephi 11:12-19 and 17:9-10. Taken together, the worship of Jesus and the scenes that anticipate that occasion show that proskynesis is an essential "rite of passage . . . from profane life into life before God."[6] It is the quintessential expression of gratitude—of total dependence on, deepest faith in, and love for Jesus Christ. It is to *experience* the atoning Lord and to be granted life in his presence.

In what follows I will briefly discuss the concept of worship and the practice of proskynesis in the ancient Near East and then turn to the accounts in the Book of Mormon, culminating with the accounts in 3 Nephi.

Worship

Where the scriptures speak of "worship," the concrete image of cultic prostration is being conveyed and not simply the abstract idea of holding a deity in reverence.[7] Our modern English word *worship* derives from the Old English word *weorðscipe* (compare *worthy* + *ship*),[8] which denoted not only to "regard or approach [deity] with veneration" but also "to adore with appropriate acts, rites, or ceremonies."[9] Early translators of the Bible into English used *worship* in this cultic sense to render the Hebrew verb *hištaḥᵃwāh* throughout the Old Testament, especially where God is the object of obeisance.

6. Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms*, trans. Timothy J. Hallett (Winona, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 310.

7. Today, *worship* is used more often in the abstract sense. This can be seen in the phrase "worship services," a description that offers only the vaguest idea of the actual contents of such services.

8. *Oxford English Dictionary*, ed. J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), s.v. "worship," 575. The noun, first attested in AD 888, originally meant "the condition (in a person) of deserving, or being held in, esteem or repute; honour, distinction, renown; good name, credit." As a verb *weorðscipe* was in use by AD 1200.

9. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. "worship," 577.

In English translations of the New Testament, *worship* is used to render the Greek verb *proskyneō*, which literally means to "kiss in the presence of,"[10] and as a rite denoted "prostrating oneself before persons and kissing their feet or the hem of their garment [or] the ground," as noted above.[11] The Septuagint (LXX), an early Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible from which the New Testament writers frequently quoted, uses *proskyneō* to translate *hištaḥᵃwāh*.[12] In this sense especially one may speak of *hištaḥᵃwāh* as "proskynesis"[13] or "adoration."[14]

The Hebrew verb *hištaḥᵃwāh* in its widest sense connoted the act of "bow[ing] down"[15] and occurs some 170 times in the Hebrew

10. The nominal form of this word is first attested in Herodotus, *Histories* 1.134.

11. Bauer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 882.

12. The Gospel of Matthew employs *proskyneō* as a *Leitwort* ("leadword") to portray Jesus as Emmanuel ("God with us"). To this end, Matthew follows the Septuagint translators' practice of using the verb *proskynein* to express the idea of *hištaḥᵃwāh*, which he uses thirteen times. Matthew opts for this verb where the other Gospel writers describe the same events in less obvious language. For Matthew, Jesus is the divine Son to be reverenced with proskynesis even in infancy (Matthew 2:2, 8, 11); he was the Lord mentioned in Deuteronomy 6:13 to whom proskynesis was due alone (Matthew 4:9-10) and so reverenced by a leper (8:2), a ruler (9:18), disciples in a ship (14:33), a Syro-Phoenician woman (15:25), and the mother of James and John (20:20). He was the divine king of the parable of Matthew 18 and was "worshipped" (18:26) by the slave seeking remission of a ten-thousand-talent debt. He was the resurrected Lord who met his disciples in Galilee, whom "they came and *held* [*ekratēsan*]. . . *by the feet* and *worshipped* [*prosekynēsan*] (28:9; emphasis added), whom they "worshipped" on the "mountain appointed" (28:16-17; compare "temple"), and to whom all *exousia* ("authority," "power") had been committed. In sum, he is the divine Jesus who is to be worshipped with the *hištaḥᵃwāh* (*proskynein*) offered to Yahweh in the Old Testament.

13. *Proskynesis* is often used by scholars as a technical term for ritual prostration as a gesture of approach, although specific practices, and the meaning attached to them, often vary from culture to culture.

14. Our English word *adoration* is a borrowing from the Latin noun *adoratio*, which denotes an act of worship or obeisance (from *ad ora*, literally, "to the mouth," possibly originating with a gesture involving the placing of the hand to the mouth and kissing) cognate with the verb *adorare*. The Latin Vulgate uses *adorare* to render both Hebrew *hištaḥᵃwāh* and Greek *proskyneō* into Latin. Hence "adoration" has passed into Western religious discourse. The modern sense of "adore" as romantic love is derivative.

15. Compare the Ugaritic cognate verb *yštḥwy*. See Gregorio Del Olmo Lete and Joaquín Sanmartín, *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 381; compare 333.

Bible.[16] The Psalms attest the practice of *hištaḥᵃwāh* before the Lord as an important part of the Israelite temple experience (for example, Psalms 5:7 [5:8 MT]; 29:2; 95:6; 96:9; 99:5, 9). In its temple context *hištaḥᵃwāh* manifests "the interior attitude of the Israelite supplicant."[17] Since "God's presence was particularly apprehended in the course of worship in the temple,"[18] it was the quintessential "attitude of prayer."[19]

Some scholars have suggested that the verb originally meant "to throw oneself down (striking the earth)," from the root **ḥwy* "to strike," while others have suggested it meant "to cause oneself to live (by worship)," from the root **ḥyy* "to live."[20] The latter suggestion is given added plausibility by the observation that such "falling down is equivalent to the death-feigning reflex well-known to behavioral research."[21] In other words, proskynesis is, in origin, a *life-saving* gesture.[22] Whatever the precise etymology, Hebrew-speaking

16. See Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 295-96; and Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 360.

17. Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 308.

18. John Day, *Psalms* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992), 128. Day cites Psalms 23:5-6; 27:4; 42:1-2; 84:1-7, 10.

19. Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 296.

20. See Waltke and O'Connor, *Introduction to Biblical Syntax*, 360 n. 34. They note that the traditional derivation from **šḥy*, often cited in older lexica, may be secondary. For earlier scholarly speculation on a **ḥwy/ḥyy* derivation, see William F. Albright, "The North-Canaanite Epic of *'Al'eyan Ba'al and Mot*," *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* 11 (1931): 197 n. 41. Martin Hartmann seems to have first made the suggestion that *hištaḥᵃwāh* derives from a Semitic root **ḥwy* rather than **šḥy*. "Die Pluriliteralbildungen in den semitischen Sprachen mit besonderer Berüksichtigung des Hebräischen, Chaldäischen und Neusyrischen. 1. T.: Bildung durch Weiderholung des letzten Radicales am Schluss and des Ersten nach des Zweiten" (inaugural dissertation, Halle, 1875), 17. Siegfried Kreuzer suggests the meaning "Hoch leben lassen." "Zur Bedeutung und Etymologie von *Hištaḥwah / yšṭḥy*," *Vetus Testamentum* 35/1 (1985): 39-60.

21. Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 310.

22. Notably, several incidents in the Book of Mormon in which individuals have sudden, overwhelming encounters with the holy illustrate this point: the Sherem incident at the temple (Jacob 7:15, 21), the appearance of the angel to Alma and the sons of Mosiah (Mosiah 27:12, 18; Alma 36:7, 10-11), Lamoni's conversion (Alma 18:42), the shock of the unbelievers at the sign of Christ's birth (3 Nephi 1:16-17), and the brother of Jared's falling down with fear when he sees the finger of the Lord (Ether 3:6, 19).

Israelites like Nephi may have associated *hištaḥᵃwāh* with "life," on account of its homophony with forms of **ḥyy* ("to live").[23]

As Israelites of the seventh and sixth centuries BC, Lehi and his party would have appreciated the "extraordinary cultural significance"[24] of this verb, especially in its temple context.[25] It is likely that in speaking of the Nephites and Lamanites worshipping the risen Lord, Mormon intends to convey the Israelite concept of *hištaḥᵃwāh*, albeit supplemented by a rich accumulation of tradition about Jesus Christ handed down by Lehi, Nephi, and later prophets, and finally informed by his own experiences (see Mormon 1:15). The "worship" of the Savior in person at the temple in Bountiful (3 Nephi 11:17; 17:10) is to be understood as the fullest possible "apprehension"[26] of Yahweh's presence, as sought by Israel in proskynesis at the temple before, during, and after Lehi's and Nephi's time.

The Emergent Symbol of Proskynesis in Lehi's and Nephi's Visions of the Tree of Life

Nephi's account of his father Lehi's vision of the tree of life describes a group of people who "continually [held] fast to the rod of iron, until they came forth and *fell down* and partook of the fruit of the tree" (1 Nephi 8:30). The image is counterintuitive: people normally *reach out* or *up* to pluck fruit from a tree (for example, Genesis 3:22; Alma 42:3–5). The act of falling down to partake of the fruit of the tree suggests a degree of humility, devotion, and a love of God that exceeded that of any of the other multitudes mentioned. The paratactic (staccato) rhythm of the verb combination—they *came*

The falling to the earth in these scenes seems to be done out of sheer shock or fear for one's life, rather than as a matter of ritual.

23. Compare the identification of Eve (*Ḥawwāh*), whose name may have suggested the meaning "life giver" to the Israelite ear, as the mother of all living (*ḥay*).

24. Waltke and O'Connor, *Introduction to Hebrew Syntax*, 361; compare 1 Nephi 17:55.

25. Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 361. Its prominence in the Psalms pertaining to Yahweh's kingship confirms this, as mentioned above.

26. Compare Day, *Psalms*, 128.

forth and *fell down* and *partook*—not only is very Hebraistic[27] but also constitutes a prostration formula (compare 1 Samuel 20:41), the kind within which the unique Hebrew verb *hištaḥᵃwāh* functioned in the Hebrew Bible, often within a temple setting (compare Psalms 5:7 [5:8 MT]; 95:6; 1 Chronicles 29:20; 2 Chronicles 20:18).

When Nephi was granted his "desire to behold the things [his] father saw" (1 Nephi 11:3; compare 14:29), he saw not only those "things" but also events in the life of Christ that shed greater light on what those "things" meant. Seeing the "tree, whose fruit was *desirable* to make one *happy*" (1 Nephi 8:10), he came to recognize it as a symbol of "the love of God which is . . . *most desirable above all things*" (11:22), which (as his angelic guide poignantly noted) is "the *most joyous* to the soul" (11:23). Nephi then "beheld the Son of God going forth among the children of men; and . . . I saw many *fall down at his feet and worship him*" (11:24). Recalling that Lehi had seen the multitudes who "came forth and *fell down* and *partook* of the fruit of the tree [of life]" (1 Nephi 8:30), Nephi understood that the waters issuing from the "fountain of *living waters* . . . [were] a representation of the love of God; and . . . that the *tree of life* was a representation of the love of God" (1 Nephi 11:25).

Nephi saw that to fall down at the Savior's feet and worship him is to assume the posture of partaking of eternal *life*—to *fall down* in order to drink the "living waters" and eat from the "tree of life," symbols of the divine presence (compare Alma 5:34).[28] Nephi here binds the concepts of proskynesis (that is, *hištaḥᵃwāh*) to "life" (*ḥay*) and "living" (*ḥayyîm*) together by way of a poetic paronomasia—a wordplay involving similar sounds—that recalls the play on "Eve," "life," and "living" in the account of the fall and expulsion from Eden in Genesis 3:20-24. Falling down and causing oneself to live

27. H. D. Preuss, "חוה *ḥwh*, השתחוה *hištachᵃvāh*," in *The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 4:249 notes how the Hebrew verb *hištaḥᵃwāh* is frequently used in parataxis.

28. Compare the life-bringing waters of Ezekiel 47 and the Menorah, the stylized tree of life that symbolized the presence of God in the temple. See the gemara, or commentary, of Babylonian Talmud *Menachot* 86b.

through worship—partaking of the fruit of the tree of life—precipitates a reversal of the fall.

Nephi saw that proskynesis before the Lord was both a *life-saving* gesture and a response to the "love of God"[29] that acceptably reciprocated that love (11:24-25).[30] This awareness stands behind his further instructions regarding the "right way"—the way to truly fulfill the whole law, as well as the way back from the fall:

> And now behold, I say unto you that *the right way* is to believe in Christ, and deny him not; and Christ is the Holy One of Israel; *wherefore ye must bow down before him, and worship him* with all your might, mind, and strength, and your whole soul; and if ye do this *ye shall in nowise be cast out*. (2 Nephi 25:29)

To show how proskynesis is both lifesaving and the expression of the love for God par excellence, Nephi cleverly recasts a part of the well-known Deuteronomic "Shema": "And thou shalt *love the Lord thy God* with all thine heart, and will all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deuteronomy 6:5; emphasis added), replacing the phrase "love the Lord thy God" with an injunction to "bow down before [God] and worship him."

By casting the commandment to "bow down . . . and worship" the Lord in the language of the Shema, Nephi reveals the proper mode of proskynesis before God: it must be done with *all* one's might, mind, strength, and one's *whole* soul, like the offering of "*whole* souls as an offering unto [the Holy One of Israel]" (Omni 1:26).[31] Acceptable proskynesis is inseparable from faith in Christ

---

29. The phrase *love of God* is formally ambiguous. The context provided in 1 Nephi 11 partially suggests that "God's love" (a subjective genitive) is intended: "I know that he loveth his children" (1 Nephi 11:17). However, immediately seeing that the tree of life signified the "love of God," Nephi sees many of the "children of men" fall down at the feet of the Son of God and worship him (11:24, suggesting that a reciprocal "love for God" (objective genitive) is also implied in the meaning of the tree of life.

30. 1 John 4:19 articulates this principle: "We love him [God], because he first loved us."

31. Perhaps Paul had this kind of worship in mind when he encouraged the Roman Saints to "present [their] bodies a *living* sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God" (Romans

("the right way is to believe in Christ . . . ; wherefore ye *must* . . . ," 2 Nephi 25:29) and is a supernal manifestation of it.

The promise to those who so worship is a promise of eternal *life*: "ye shall in no wise be cast out" (2 Nephi 25:29). Through faith in Christ, the "children of men" (1 Nephi 11:22, 24) can again have access to the tree of life. They must therefore come forth, *fall down*, and partake of the fruit of that tree.

Mormon saw in his ancestors' accounts of their visions of the tree of life the very picture of "Paradise Regain'd"[32] later realized among the Nephites and Lamanites at Bountiful in 3 Nephi. At that time, even the descendants of Laman and Lemuel "came forth and fell down and partook of the fruit of the tree" (compare 1 Nephi 8:30, 35 with 3 Nephi 11:12-19; 17:9-10). All of the children of Lehi, for a time, had continuous access to the tree of life—the full blessings of the divine presence—in Jesus's personal presence: "After that *he did show himself unto them oft*, and did break bread oft, and bless it, and give it unto them" (3 Nephi 26:13). The availability of the "fruits" of his presence continued afterward in his disciples: they "did heal the sick, and raise the dead, and cause the lame to walk, and the blind to receive their sight, and the deaf to hear; and all manner of miracles did they work among the *children of men* . . in the name of Jesus" (4 Nephi 1:5; compare 3 Nephi 17:9).

These descendants of Lehi "had all things common" and "were all . . . *partakers* of the heavenly gift" (4 Nephi 1:3; emphasis added). This access to the divine presence was only ended when the "pride" of the "great and spacious building" (4 Nephi 1:24-26; 1 Nephi 8:26) got such a hold on the people that the Lord took "away his beloved disciples, and the work of miracles and of healing did cease" (Mormon 1:13). The "fruits" of the atonement were thus withdrawn.

While Lehi, Nephi, and their posterity in the temple at Bountiful are a lesson on how "the just shall *live* by his [or her] faith"

12:1). Lesser worship risks becoming empty ritual, or worse, the unacceptable offering of which part has been "kept back" (see Acts 5:2).

32. "Paradise Regain'd" was the title of poet John Milton's 1671 epic sequel to his more widely read and better-known epic poem, "Paradise Lost" (1667).

(Habakkuk 2:4; emphasis added), the last generations of the Nephite nation are a cautionary tale regarding the destructive effects of the "pride of the world," which inevitably causes people to fall (1 Nephi 11:36; Mormon 8:7; Moroni 8:27), and regarding falling "away into forbidden paths" until one is "lost" (1 Nephi 8:28; Mormon 6:17-20). Those later generations were cut "off from the presence of the Lord"[33] or "cast out" (Helaman 12:25)[34] and subject to the awful violence that necessarily pervades when the Lord's Spirit has "ceased to strive" with a people" (see Mormon 5:16; Moroni 8:28; 9:4; compare Genesis 6:3, 11; Ether 15:19).

"Tasting" the Fruit of the Lord's Spirit at the Temple in Zarahemla

Mormon, knowing the arc of Nephite-Lamanite history—that pride would ultimately prove to be the destruction of the Nephite nation (Mormon 8:27)—took care to include, at key moments in his history, scenes that would show his latter-day readership the critical importance of cultivating humility. Mormon uses these scenes to illustrate how one can acceptably humble oneself in the presence of God, just as Nephi and those at the temple in Bountiful knew what to do when the Savior appeared to them (3 Nephi 11). He details two such instances in which people humble themselves in proskynesis as a concrete act of faith, comparable to deciding to partake of the fruit of the tree of life.

The first of these events is recorded in the book of Mosiah, which chronicles a series of seismic changes for Nephite society in its political, social, and religious life. Such a cluster of sudden and sweeping changes would not occur again until the coming of the Savior in 3 Nephi. Covenant making is a leitmotif of the book

33. 1 Nephi 2:21; 2 Nephi 1:20; 4:4; 5:20; Alma 9:13-14; 36:30; 37:13; 38:1; 42:9-14; 50:20; Helaman 12:21; 14:16; Ether 2:15; 10:11. See especially 2 Nephi 9:6; Alma 42:14; Helaman 14:16.

34. This phrase is also used of the "exile" of Israel from the Lord's presence in the Deuteronomistic history (Deuteronomy 9:4; 1 Kings 9:7; 2 Kings 17:8, 20; 24:20) and in Jeremiah (7:15; 22:26, 28; 23:39; 52:3; etc.).

of Mosiah,[35] and a national covenant-making ceremony coincided with King Benjamin's epic sermon and the coronation of his son Mosiah (see chapters 5-6).

At this important moment, and in response to King Benjamin's preaching about the atonement, the multitude is said to have fallen to the earth (Mosiah 4:1). Here Mormon highlights proskynesis as illustrative of the kind of faith that secures the blessings of the atonement on which Benjamin had been sermonizing, the antidote of pride and the natural man (Mosiah 3:18-19). The setting of this falling down is the temple:

> And now, it came to pass that when king Benjamin had made an end of speaking the words which had been delivered unto him by the angel of the Lord, that he cast his eyes round about on the multitude, and behold *they had fallen to the earth, for the fear of the Lord had come upon them. And they had viewed themselves in their own carnal state, even less than the dust of the earth.* And they all cried aloud with one voice, saying: O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified; for *we believe in Jesus Christ*, the Son of God, who created heaven and earth, and all things; who shall come down among the children of men. (Mosiah 4:1-2)

As Nibley observed, "This was the kind of proskynesis at which Benjamin aimed[,] . . . a flat prostration upon the earth [being] the proper act of obeisance in the presence of the ruler of the universe."[36] Not that King Benjamin, or Mosiah, was that ruler, for King Benjamin had taken pains at the outset of his sermon to reinforce the opposite idea (see Mosiah 2:11). In coming to an awareness "of their own carnal state" as being "less than the dust of the earth," the people were prepared to fully appreciate their total dependence

35. See Mosiah 5:5-8; 6:1-2; 18:8-13; 21:31-32; 24:13; 26:20; compare 9:6.

36. Nibley, *Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 304.

on the Savior's atonement and their equality with each other in the presence of God (compare Jacob 5:74).[37]

What is the lesson here? Since, as King Benjamin says, we "cannot say that [we] are even as much as the dust of the earth" (Mosiah 2:25), we are to "get down there and realize what [we] are," as Nibley puts it.[38] King Benjamin revives the lessons from the biblical account of the fall and its nameplay on Adam: the man (*ha-ʾᵃḏām*, "humanity") was taken from *ha-ʾᵃḏāmāh* ("earth," "ground," "soil," Genesis 2:7; 3:19).

Moses, after beholding "the world upon which he was created . . . and the ends thereof, and all the children of men which are, and which were created" (Moses 1:8), could only "f[a]ll unto the earth" (1:9) on account of the incapacitating effects of the theophany and because he had discovered that "man is nothing, which thing [he] never had supposed (1:10). Similar to Moses's experiencing the Lord in his majesty and his own nothingness, King Benjamin's people had to "view themselves . . . even less than the dust of the earth" and to "humble [them]selves even in the depths of humility"[39] (Mosiah 4:2, 11) in order to fully comprehend the blessing of becoming sons and daughters (Mosiah 5:7; Moses 1) who shall stand "at the right hand of God" (Mosiah 5:9), "begotten" through the atonement of Jesus Christ. The humility exhibited by the multitude at the Zarahemla temple on this occasion helps us to appreciate the humility with which the Nephites and Lamanites met the Savior when he first appeared at the temple in Bountiful, and later when he healed them because their "faith [was] sufficient" (3 Nephi 17:8).

Recognizing their state of total dependence on God, the people beg him to "apply the atoning blood of Christ" (Mosiah 4:2),

37. Nibley, *Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 304–5.

38. Hugh W. Nibley, "The Faith of an Observer," in *Eloquent Witness: Nibley on Himself, Others, and the Temple*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 2008), 167.

39. Our English word *humility* derives from the Latin word *humus* ("soil, dirt"). Thus, to humble oneself is very literally to put oneself in the dust.

which immediately evokes images of the Day of Atonement and the ceremonial application of atoning blood on the lid of the ark of the covenant,[40] a stylized throne on which the Lord was thought to sit or stand (see Leviticus 16:14-16).[41] The people "had fallen to the earth" at "the place of [the Lord's] feet" (Ezekiel 43:7), that is, within the precincts of the temple in Zarahemla, to make a covenant. They cite the fact that they "believe in Jesus Christ . . . who shall come down among the children of men" (compare 1 Nephi 11:3; 3 Nephi 11) as their sole qualification to have the atoning blood of Christ applied in their behalf:

> And it came to pass that after they had spoken these words the Spirit of *the Lord came upon them, and they were filled with joy,* having received a remission of their sins, and having peace of conscience, *because of the exceeding faith which they had in Jesus Christ* who should come, according to the words which king Benjamin had spoken unto them. (Mosiah 4:3)

The people's falling down with "exceeding faith" in the presence of the Lord—the temple—to partake of the blessings of the atonement precipitates their being "filled" with overwhelming joy, just as Lehi's soul had been "filled . . . with exceeding joy" when he partook of the fruit of the tree of life (1 Nephi 8:12). They, like Lehi, prayed to the Lord to "have mercy" (1 Nephi 8:8; Mosiah 4:2). They, like Lehi, experienced the Lord through the Spirit. The result was the surpassingly sweet experience of "a remission of sins, and . . . peace of conscience" on a grand scale (Mosiah 4:3; compare 1 Nephi 8:11-12).

In the same way, the experience of "being filled with joy" (Mosiah 4:3) through the Spirit of the Lord after falling down in worship anticipates the inconceivable "joy which filled [the] souls" of

---

40. Their language also evokes the memory of Moses sprinkling the Israelites with the "blood of the covenant," when they made a covenant with the Lord (Exodus 24:8).

41. See Leviticus 16:14-16. Sometimes the Lord is given the epithet "[He who] dwelleth between the cherubim" (1 Samuel 4:4; 2 Samuel 6:2; 1 Chronicles 13:6) or, more accurately, "He [who] sitteth between the cherubims" (Psalm 99:1).

those who experienced the Lord in person (3 Nephi 17:17–18; compare Psalm 16:11), the same fulness of joy experienced by the Savior himself on that occasion ("And now behold my joy is full"; 3 Nephi 17:20). Through their faith in Christ, manifest as proskynesis, the multitude in the temple at Zarahemla had "come to the knowledge of the glory of God" and had now "known of his goodness and [had] tasted of his love and [had] received a remission of [their] sins" (Mosiah 4:11). In a similar, but even more profound way, the multitude in the temple at Bountiful years later would come to "know of a surety" (3 Nephi 11:15). In sum, the Nephites at Zarahemla tasted, just as Lehi had tasted (1 Nephi 8:11; 11:7) and as others would taste. We will examine this experiential sense of taste below.

Lamoni's Father Partakes of the Fruit of the Tree of Life

An equally moving instance of proskynesis occurs at what proves to be another major turning point in Nephite and Lamanite history. This event would help change the dynamics of Nephite-Lamanite relations for generations. It may well be that Mormon included this scene in anticipation of the events attending Christ's appearance in 3 Nephi. Aaron may have been thinking in terms of the symbolism that emerged from Lehi's and Nephi's visions of the tree of life when he taught the Lamanite king how to worship the Lord:

> And it came to pass that after Aaron had expounded these things unto him, the king said: *What shall I do that I may have this eternal life of which thou hast spoken? Yea, what shall I do that I may be born of God, having this wicked spirit rooted out of my breast, and receive his Spirit, that I may be filled with joy, that I may not be cast off at the last day?* Behold, said he, I will give up all that I possess, yea, I will forsake my kingdom, *that I may receive this great joy.* But Aaron said unto him: If thou desirest this thing, *if thou wilt bow down before God, yea, if thou wilt repent of all thy sins, and will bow down before God, and call on his name in faith, believing that ye shall receive, then shalt thou receive the hope which thou desirest.* And it came to pass

> that when Aaron had said these words, *the king did bow down before the Lord, upon his knees; yea, even he did prostrate himself upon the earth*, and cried mightily, saying: O God, Aaron hath told me that there is a God; and if there is a God, and if thou art God, wilt thou make thyself known unto me, and *I will give away all my sins to know thee, and that I may be raised from the dead, and be saved at the last day.* (Alma 22:15–18)

Aaron instructs the king to "bow down before God" in response to the king's desire to have "eternal life," to "be filled with joy," and to "not be cast off at the last day"—themes all connected by Nephi to Christ and the tree of life. He instructs the king in the lifesaving rite of proskynesis linked in Nephite tradition with the tree of life (1 Nephi 8:30; 11:24–25) and not being "cast out" (2 Nephi 25:29). According to Aaron, this expression of faith in and dependence on God will eventuate in eternal life.

Thus, according to this account, the act of prostrating oneself before God is tied to both "call[ing] on [God's] name in faith" with the trust that one will receive the promised blessings of joy and eternal life, and to "repent of all [one's] sins," or to "give away all [one's] sins." The proskynesis of Lamoni's father is a lesson in the posture one must assume in order to call upon God with sufficient faith in Christ to "give away" all one's sins. His was the posture of partaking of the fruit of the tree of life.

This account is remarkable in its depiction of a man of such high status prostrating himself before the Lord presumably inside his own palace (compare Alma 22:2), the most visible emblem of his supreme status among his own people.[42] By prostrating himself on the ground, the king not only forsook all earthly status[43]

---

42. The king approached the Lord with the very gesture that was due himself (as king) by custom (compare Alma 47:23), the gesture with which Aaron had approached him upon entering his palace (Alma 22:2).

43. The king "cast . . . away" his earthly kingship, considered himself a fool before God, and came down in the depths of humility so that God would open the heavens unto him (see 2 Nephi 9:42).

but showed his willingness to come into God's presence—God's "palace"[44]—and partake of eternal life.

Aaron had placed the tremendous emphasis on "bow[ing] down before God," that is, in God's presence.[45] Accordingly, in the midst of this visible demonstration of faith, the king was granted an ecstatic (albeit brief) experience like the visions his son Lamoni, Lamoni's wife, and others had received (compare Alma 18:42-19:33), which involved the removal of "the dark veil of unbelief" and being "carried away in God" (Alma 19:6). The king's becoming the Lord's "vassal" (his "knowing" God)[46] meant the end of his earthly kingship (compare Alma 24:2) but the beginning of eternal life for him and those of his people who followed him.[47]

The king's theophanic experience also anticipates the Christophany in 3 Nephi 11. Jesus pronounced the people blessed because of their faith (3 Nephi 17:20), faith that was "sufficient that [he] should heal" them (3 Nephi 17:8). So great was their faith and joy in worship that Jesus himself expressed "my joy is full" and "he wept" (3 Nephi 17:18-21). Lamoni's father showed himself to be "truly penitent" and a "humble seeker of happiness" (Alma 27:18). Like the Nephites and Lamanites at Bountiful years later, he no longer wanted any part of his sins, only to have "eternal life" and to "be filled with joy" (Alma 22:15).

This desire brought the Lamanite king not only down "upon his knees" (Alma 22:17), but even to "prostrate himself upon the earth" (Alma 22:17). Just as the Nephites and Lamanites at Bountiful would cry several generations later, "Hosanna" ("Save now!"

---

44. In the Hebrew Bible the temple is sometimes called a "palace" (*hēḵāl*), a word that came into Hebrew from Sumerian (É.GAL = "great house") by way of Akkadian (*ēkāllum*). More often it is simply referred to as the Lord's "house" (*bēṯ YHWH*). The phrase *before the Lord* is often synonymous with the temple in the Hebrew Bible.

45. The Hebrew preposition *lipnê* ("before," "in the presence of") literally means "to the face of."

46. Regarding the use of *know* as a covenant term, see RoseAnn Benson and Stephen D. Ricks, "Treaties and Covenants: Ancient Near Eastern Legal Terminology in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of the Book of Mormon Studies* 14/1 (2005): 48-61.

47. The Lamanite king's total self-abasement is a moving lesson in doing what Jesus said was necessary for one to "be exalted" (see Matthew 23:12; Luke 14:11; 18:14).

3 Nephi 11:17), the Lamanite king "cried mightily" in faith amidst his proskynesis to "be raised from the dead and be saved at the last day" (Alma 22:18). Like the Saints at Bountiful, the king was granted "this great joy" (Alma 22:17; 27:18): to feast upon the fruit that was "desirable to make one happy" (1 Nephi 8:10), the fruit of eternal life.

The Christophany at the Temple in Bountiful

When the resurrected Savior appeared from heaven to the assembled "people of Nephi who were spared, and also those who had been called Lamanites" (3 Nephi 10:18), he introduced himself in unmistakable terms:

> Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world. And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning. (3 Nephi 11:10–11)

"He that cometh,"[48] the one who would truly "come . . . to do [the] will" of the Father,[49] was now physically standing before them. The people's response to the Savior's words bears witness to their appreciation of the sacred nature of the occasion and the prophecies that it fulfilled:

> And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words the whole multitude fell to the earth; for they remembered that it had been prophesied among them that Christ should

48. Hebrew *habbā'* (Psalm 118:26; compare Greek *ho erchomenos*; Matthew 3:11; 21:9; 23:39; Mark 11:9; Luke 13:35; John 1:15; 3:31). The expression is usually thought to refer to the worshipper coming into the temple. However, these passages from the New Testament amply attest the messianic interpretation and expectation attached to this expression. One need not confine oneself to either interpretation—after all, Jesus was the worshipper of the Father par excellence. He came into the world and accomplished the will of the Father in all things.

49. Compare 3 Nephi 1:14; Isaiah 53; Mosiah 15:2, 7; see Psalm 40:8.

> show himself unto them after his ascension into heaven. (3 Nephi 11:12)

Their immediate response was the proper ritual gesture for meeting the Lord (Yahweh) in his holy place.[50] Jesus—the Holy One of Israel—does not keep the people at a distance but invites them to come forth and partake of his holiness, to experience him.

> Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world. (3 Nephi 11:14)[51]

Jesus's invitation contains a sequence of five verbs, three of which are sensory. He invites them to come forth and partake of his salvation (compare 2 Nephi 26:24-28). Lehi in 1 Nephi 8:15 beckons his family to "come unto me, and partake of the fruit" or "taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8). In both Hebrew and Egyptian, the verb "to taste" (Heb. *ṭaʿam*, Eg. *dp*) also meant "to experience."[52]

Lehi noted that when he "did go forth and partake of the fruit," he "beheld that it was most sweet, above all that [he had] ever before tasted" (1 Nephi 8:11)—it was the sweetest thing he had ever experienced. The multitude at this temple, like the multitude at the temple at Zarahemla, now had the opportunity to "taste of his love"

---

50. Compare again Psalms 5:7; 29:2; 95:6; 96:9; 99:5, 9.

51. The phrase *slain for the sins of the world* first occurs in 1 Nephi 11:33 as a part of Nephi's vision of the tree of life. Korihor's offhand remark in Alma 30:26 indicates that it had become a Nephite liturgical phrase. It is significant, then, that Jesus uses this specific phrase to introduce himself.

52. Koehler and Baumgartner define טעם as not only to "taste" but to "perceive by experience" (*Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 377); compare Psalm 34:8; Proverbs 31:18. Raymond O. Faulkner lists "taste" and "experience" as his two glosses for *dp* in *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian* (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1999), 312. The experiential sense of taste helps us better understand Alma's desire "to bring souls to repentance" that they might taste of the exceeding joy which [he] did taste" (Alma 36:24; compare v. 26).

(Mosiah 4:11). Mormon, who himself "tasted and knew of the goodness of Jesus" (Mormon 1:15), describes how these ancestors of his came forth and experienced the Lord, one by one:

> And it came to pass that the multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet; and this they did do, going forth one by one until they had all gone forth, and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands, and did know of a surety and did bear record, that it was he, of whom it was written by the prophets, that should come. (3 Nephi 11:15)

What the people felt on this occasion went beyond even the witness of the Spirit and certainly anything that any Israelite had encountered in a temple previously. Indeed, there may be much more to what Mormon attempts to convey by "feel" here than is immediately apparent. In Hebrew, the same verb that denotes the "fastening" or "striking" (*tāqaʿ*) of a nail can also denote a "striking" or "fastening" (that is, clasping) of hands together in a handshake.[53] In ancient Israel, one became a "guarantor" or a surety for another person "by giving a handshake"[54] or, in other words, having one's hands "fastened to the hand of" the person.[55] As they saw with their eyes and felt with their hands the tokens of Jesus's atonement and death, what had been for many previous generations "faith in Christ" became, for this multitude, a sure knowledge of his Messiahship—that he was their guarantor or surety with the Father. The language of this passage (prints, nails, feeling or fastening of hands, surety) conjures up Isaiah's image of the "fasten[ing]" of "a nail in a sure place" (Isaiah 22:23, 25).

---

53. See entry for תקע in Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 1785–86.

54. Koehler and Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 1786.

55. "Lay down now, put me in a surety with thee, who is he that will strike hands with me?" [Or, "Who is it that will be fastened to my hand?"; *mi hû' leyādî yittāqēaʿ*?] (Job 17:3).

> And when they had all gone forth and had witnessed for themselves, they did cry out with one accord, saying: Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God! And they did fall down at the feet of Jesus, and did worship him. (3 Nephi 11:16-17)

Their cry ("Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God!") is an adaptation of the liturgy of Psalm 118:25-26: "Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord. . . . Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord." It may also derive from the exclamation of "the Spirit of the Lord" to Nephi at the beginning of his vision of the tree of life: "Hosanna to the Lord, the Most High God" (1 Nephi 11:6). The people acknowledged Jesus as the "life of the world" (3 Nephi 11:11) with Israel's ritual plea for life ("Save now!") and reverenced him with Israel's lifesaving obeisance.

The Lord then personally addressed Nephi_3, the preeminent prophet among the people, and "commanded him that he should come forth" (3 Nephi 11:18). He not only "went forth" but also "bowed himself before the Lord and did kiss his feet" (11:19). This statement recalls the staccato worship language of 1 Nephi 8:30, as well as the liturgy of the Psalms. It particularly recalls the coronation liturgy of Psalm 2:12, "kiss the Son" (KJV)—or, as this problematic text has been reconstructed in recent times: "Serve the Lord with fear, with trembling kiss his feet" (Psalm 2:11-12 RSV).[56]

Nephi_3, better than anyone present, knew what actions were appropriate for that occasion. He needed only to be told to "come forth." His humility, love for the Savior, and knowledge of what was

---

56. A century ago, Bertholet reconstructed the troublesome phrase *wgylw br'dh: nšqw* ("Kiss the son [understanding Aramaic *br* as 'son'] and rejoice with trembling") to *wnšqw brglyw br'dh*. See Alfred Bertholet, "Eine crux interpretum," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 28 (1908): 58-59; Barnabas Lindars, "Is Psalm II an Acrostic Poem?" *Vetus Testamentum* 17/1 (1967): 61. The RSV and NRSV were confident enough in this emendation to follow it in part. Lindars believes that "the picture given by [this] most probably restoration . . . is certainly the homage of vassal kings to their overlord." The reconstructed phrase **w^{e} našqû beraglâw* compares favorably to Akkadian *našāqu[m] šēpī* (to "kiss the feet").

appropriate for this sacred occasion guided his subsequent actions. He had the opportunity of doing what Lehi had seen symbolized in vision and what had long been ritualized in the temple (compare Psalms 2:12; 29:2; 95:6; 96:9). Only in Luke (7:37–38, 45) is it recorded that anyone had ever kissed the feet of the Savior.[57] This is the first recorded instance of the kissing of the feet of a resurrected Deity.[58]

What had uniquely been Nephi_3's privilege later becomes the privilege of the whole multitude assembled in the temple:

> And it came to pass that when he had thus spoken, all the multitude, with one accord, did go forth with their sick and their afflicted, and their lame, and with their blind, and with their dumb, and with all them that were afflicted in any manner; and he did heal them every one as they were brought forth unto him. And they did all, both they who had been healed and they who were whole, bow down at his feet, and did worship him; and as many as could come for the multitude did kiss his feet, insomuch that they did bathe his feet with their tears. (3 Nephi 17:9–10)

Never before had any people so fully and tenderly worshipped Deity in person. Never before had any people so literally come forth and fallen down and partaken of the fruit of the tree of life, the "fruit . . . desirable to make one happy" (1 Nephi 8:10). Jesus had indeed brought life to these Israelites and enabled them to have it

57. This story, as told by Luke, also marvelously depicts the love of God: Jesus's love for the woman as manifest in his forgiveness of her sins and in her reciprocal love for the Savior. Sometimes it is wrongly concluded that her sins are forgiven because she manifests her love for Christ, based on a misreading of Luke 7:47 (the Greek *hoti*, rendered "for" in the KJV, should be translated as "therefore," reflecting the underlying Semitic idiom (compare Heb. *kî*). The opposite is true: her standing at the feet of Jesus "weeping" and "wash[ing] his feet with tears," and "wip[ing] them with the hairs of her head," and "kiss[ing] his feet" and "anointing them with . . . ointment" (7:38) was due to the fact that he "frankly forgave" her out of his infinite love and compassion (7:42). She showed her gratitude and reciprocal love for the Savior in the most appropriate way that she (or anyone) could conceive.

58. The cult statues of deities had been kissed in many a temple, but never the feet of the "image" of the living God (2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15).

more abundantly (compare John 10:10)—the life and happiness that are the "object and design" of human existence (compare 2 Nephi 2:25).[59] The scene was incomparable. Paradise had been regained. God's love and love for God were present in such abundance that one witness to those events testified, "No one can conceive of the joy which filled our souls" (3 Nephi 17:17).

Conclusion

When Mormon reports that at "fifteen years of age" he had been "visited of the Lord" and "tasted and knew of the goodness of Jesus" (Mormon 1:15), he speaks of experiencing and knowing the Lord in the same way that the Nephites and Lamanites at the temple in Bountiful experienced and knew him (3 Nephi 11; 17). This degree of knowledge was not possible before the Savior's mortal ministry, death, and resurrection (compare Mosiah 4:1), although the experience of the brother of Jared came close (Ether 3:6-20).

Mormon, however, living in the "mists of darkness" of his time and looking back on history, could appreciate and identify with Lehi's description of those who "continually [held] fast to the rod of iron, until they came forth and fell down and partook of the fruit of the tree" (1 Nephi 8:30), just as many Nephites all around him "fell away into forbidden paths and were lost" (8:28). From his knowledge of the Nephite records, he could appreciate how groups falling down in proskynesis had transformed society (see Mosiah 4:1) and how even an individual decision to fall down and partake of the tree could give life to many in later generations (see Alma 22). He could surely appreciate what it meant to come forth and fall down and partake when the resurrected Lord appeared to the people in Bountiful (3 Nephi 11; 17).

Mormon knew that the latter-day audience to which he was writing would be "press[ing] forward through mist[s] of darkness" of their own and would need to have some idea of what—or who—they were pressing toward, how to reach him, and what to do when

59. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 255-56.

they reached him. And he knew of no better people to illustrate how to press forward through mists of darkness until "they came forth and fell down and partook of the fruit of the tree" than the Nephites and Lamanites of 3 Nephi. More than any other group of people, they demonstrated how to receive and reciprocate the love of God—to "love God with all [their heart], might, mind, and strength" (compare Moroni 10:32).

The proskynesis in 3 Nephi 11:12-19 and 17:9-10 thus stands as one of the sublimest scenes recorded anywhere. If these events anticipate (or typify) a future occasion when all the faithful shall "come forth" in the morning of the first resurrection and "fall down and be crowned with glory" (compare Doctrine and Covenants 133:32), we can surely conclude that Mormon has done everything to prepare his audience for that occasion.

Matthew L. Bowen is a PhD candidate in biblical studies at the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. He previously earned a BA in English (with a minor in classical studies) from Brigham Young University and an MA in biblical studies from CUA.

The Praying Savior: Insights from the Gospel of 3 Nephi

Robert L. Millet

By inheritance as well as by perfect obedience, Jesus Christ was entitled to a fulness of the Father's Spirit. "Therefore doth my Father love me," he said, "because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:17-18). Jesus was the son of Mary, a mortal woman, and from her he inherited mortality, including the capacity to die. Jesus was also the Son of God, an immortal resurrected being, and from him he inherited the capacity to take upon him the sins of earth's inhabitants and also rise up from the dead in resurrected immortality. As Lehi explained, the Savior would lay down his life according to the flesh and take it up by the power of the Spirit (2 Nephi 2:8). Jesus thus had "power given unto him from the Father" (Helaman 5:11; see Mormon 7:5) to do all that he was sent to earth to do.

Though the fulness of the glory of the Father would not be given to Christ until after the resurrection (see Matthew 28:18; Doctrine and Covenants 93:16-17),[1] Jesus lived and moved and had his being in the Spirit of God, "for God giveth him not the Spirit by measure, for he dwelleth in him, even the fulness" (John 3:34 JST). It was this fulness that enabled and empowered him to resist evil, dismiss Satan from his life, and enjoy constant communion with the Father.

---

1. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1955), 2:269; Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 333.

"Where is the man that is free from vanity?" Joseph Smith asked. "None ever were perfect but Jesus; and why was He perfect? Because He was the Son of God, and had the fullness of the Spirit, and greater power than any man."[2] At the same time, the New Testament affirms that the Beloved Son was subordinate to his Father in mortality. Jesus came to carry out the will of the Father (see John 4:34). He explained, "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30; compare 6:38-40). In addition, the scriptures attest that our Father in Heaven had power, knowledge, glory, and dominion that Jesus did not have at the time. Truly, "the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do" (John 5:19). Even what the Son spoke was what the Father desired to be spoken (see John 12:49-50). How much more plainly could the Savior describe his subordinate position than when he said, "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I" (John 14:28)?

We balance that understanding by grasping that the Father and the Son enjoyed much more than what we might call closeness; theirs was a divine indwelling relationship: because he kept the law of God, Jesus was in the Father and the Father was in him (see John 14:10, 20; 17:21; 1 John 3:24). Though Latter-day Saints testify that the Father and the Son were two separate and distinct beings—a singular doctrinal position in the traditional Christian world—they were one, infinitely more one than separate. "We believe these three divine persons constituting a single Godhead are united in purpose, in manner, in testimony, in mission," Elder Jeffrey R. Holland declared. "We believe Them to be filled with the same godly sense of mercy and love, justice and grace, patience, forgiveness, and redemption. I think it is accurate to say we believe They are one in every significant and eternal aspect imaginable *except* believing

2. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1938), 187 (hereafter *Teachings*); see Bruce R. McConkie, "Jesus Christ and Him Crucified," in *1976 Devotional Speeches of the Year* (Provo, UT: BYU Press, 1977), 399.

Them to be three persons combined in one substance."[3] Their transcendent unity epitomizes the unity that ought to exist between God and all of his children. That is to say, we are under commission to seek the Spirit of God, to strive to be one with Divinity, to be, as the Prophet Joseph explained, "agreed as one,"[4] to have "the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16). Through cultivating the Spirit in our lives "we dwell in him, and he in us" (1 John 4:13).

Lessons on Prayer in 3 Nephi

We turn our attention now to our "praying Savior" as presented in what Latter-day Saints have come to know as the fifth Gospel, the book of 3 Nephi in the Book of Mormon.[5] We will first focus on some key lessons about prayer and then turn to the narrative to study how the risen Lord instructs us through word and example. Following Christ's marvelous descent to his people in America—after he had been announced and introduced by God the Father, identified himself as the light and life of the world, testified that he had drunk out of the bitter cup of alienation and loneliness and unspeakable pain and suffering associated with the atonement, and invited all 2,500 persons in the environs of the temple at Bountiful to come forward and become witnesses of him and the tokens of his crucifixion—he set forth clearly the relationship of the members of the Godhead.

Because, as the apostle Paul had taught in the Old World, "in [Christ] dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9), Jesus instructed his Nephite disciples that to be baptized in his name was to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (3 Nephi 11:23-27). Why? Because "the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one; and I am in the Father, and the Father

3. Jeffrey R. Holland, "The Only True God and Jesus Christ Whom He Hath Sent," *Ensign*, November 2007, 40; emphasis in original.

4. *Teachings*, 372.

5. B. H. Roberts, in Conference Report, April 1904, 97; B. H. Roberts, *Defense of the Faith and the Saints*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1907-12), 1:373-99.

in me, and the Father and I are one" (3 Nephi 11:27). Further, Jesus taught that

> I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me. . . . And thus will the Father bear record of me, and the Holy Ghost will bear record unto him of the Father and me; for the Father, and I, and the Holy Ghost are one. (3 Nephi 11:32, 36; compare 28:10)

As we mentioned earlier, and by way of summary: (1) There are three personages within the Godhead. (2) Each of those personages possesses all of the qualities and attributes of divinity in perfection. (3) The love and unity of those sacred personages is of such magnitude that they constitute a divine community often spoken of, especially in the Book of Mormon, as "God" (2 Nephi 31:21; Alma 11:44; Mormon 7:7).[6]

The Lord offers much precious counsel on prayer in the Book of Mormon, including what he had taught his disciples on the Eastern Hemisphere: the need to pray with pure intent, to never pray to be heard of men (3 Nephi 13:5-8); to pattern their prayers on the Lord's prayer, with those alterations that would reflect the fact that he is now a resurrected, glorified being, the kingdom of God was now in their midst, and they would soon be initiated into the heavenly order of consecration and stewardship (3 Nephi 13:9-13); and to pray to the Father in the name of the Son (3 Nephi 18:19-21, 23; 19:6, 8; 27:2, 7, 28). He beckons to the more righteous remnant, those who had been spared the destructions, to lift their voices heavenward in behalf of the less active, to "meet together oft; and . . . not forbid any man from coming unto you when ye shall meet together,

---

6. For a more detailed treatment of this concept, a Latter-day Saint variant upon what is known as social trinitarianism, see David Paulsen, "Are Mormons Trinitarian?" in *Modern Reformation* 12/6 (2003): 40-41; see also David Paulsen and Brett McDonald, "Joseph Smith and the Trinity: An Analysis and Defense of the Social Model of the Godhead," *Faith and Philosophy* 25/1 (2008): 47-74; and David Paulsen's article in this volume.

but suffer them that they may come unto you and forbid them not; but *ye shall pray for them*, and shall not cast them out; and if it so be that they come unto you oft *ye shall pray for them unto the Father, in my name*" (3 Nephi 18:22-23).

The Risen Lord in Prayer

Now, let us return to the story. One of the grand ways Jesus teaches us all to pray is by praying. He is our model, our pattern, our prototype. Note in 3 Nephi 17:13-14:

> And it came to pass that when they had all been brought, and Jesus stood in the midst, he commanded the multitude [remember, at this point there are 2,500 men, women, and children present] that they should kneel down upon the ground. And it came to pass that when they had knelt upon the ground, Jesus groaned within himself, and said: Father, I am troubled because of the wickedness of the people of the house of Israel.

Here we see the sublime sensitivity and omniscient awareness of our Master—he is "merciful and gracious unto those who fear [him], and delight[s] to honor those who serve [him] in righteousness and in truth unto the end" (D&C 76:5). On the other hand, he knows perfectly well that "the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isaiah 57:20-21; compare 48:22). He knows, as Alma taught an errant son, that "wickedness never was happiness" and that those who are "in a state of nature, or . . . in a carnal state, are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity." Not only are they enemies of God—working at cross purposes to the great plan of happiness—but, tragically, they are enemies to themselves, laboring against their best good. In Alma's words: "They are without God in the world, and they have gone contrary to the nature of God; therefore, they are in a state contrary to the nature of happiness" (Alma 41:10-11).

The very earth that Jehovah had created cried out: "Wo, wo is me, the mother of men; I am pained, I am weary, because of the wickedness of my children" (Moses 7:48). Enoch of old who, as a result of his panoramic vision in which he beheld the horrid destruction of humanity in the days of Noah and the flood, felt no comfort in the damnation of any portion of the Father's children (see Moses 7:42-44). As Father Richard John Neuhaus pointed out, "The entire plan of salvation assumes that God wants company. . . . If we love others, it seems that we must hope that, in the end, they will be saved. We must hope that all will one day hear the words of Christ, 'Today you will be with me in paradise.' Given the evidence of Scripture and tradition, we cannot deny that hell exists. We can, however, hope that hell is empty."[7] The Good Shepherd takes no delight in any lost sheep.

"And when he had said these words"—when Jesus had groaned concerning the wickedness of his covenant people—

> he himself also knelt upon the earth; and behold he prayed unto the Father, and *the things which he prayed cannot be written*, and the multitude did bear record who heard him. And after this manner do they bear record: *The eye hath never seen, neither hath the ear heard, before, so great and marvelous things as we saw and heard Jesus speak unto the Father; and no tongue can speak, neither can there be written by any man, neither can the hearts of men conceive so great and marvelous things as we both saw and heard Jesus speak*; and no one can conceive of the joy which filled our souls at the time we heard him pray for us unto the Father. (3 Nephi 17:15-17)

Why could they not be written? Some spiritual experiences are so time and place specific, so reserved for the ears and eyes and hearts of those who experience them, that it is simply wrong,

7. Richard John Neuhaus, *Death on a Friday Afternoon: Meditation on the Last Words of Jesus from the Cross* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 61; see also p. 143.

divinely inappropriate to try to replicate them, to speak openly of them, to try to rehearse or record them. In addition, some matters are ineffable, literally unspeakable or unrecordable. Mere words fail us. Telestial or even terrestrial expressions cannot do justice to celestial phenomena. Thus it is that the Prophet Joseph and Sidney Rigdon penned the following at the end of the vision of the glories, a recitation that was at best a hundredth part of what they saw and experienced:[8] "Great and marvelous are the works of the Lord, and the mysteries of his kingdom which he showed unto us, which surpass all understanding in glory, and in might, and in dominion; Which he commanded us we should not write while we were yet in the Spirit, and are not lawful for man to utter; neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows on those who love him, and purify themselves before him" (D&C 76:114-16).

I have reflected for many years upon the people's words that their hearts were filled with joy as they heard and saw Jesus pray unto the Father for them. I have reflected what it would be like to hear my Redeemer importune the Father for me. Listen to the Savior's words to Peter at the last supper: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." Now note this most unusual phrase: "But *I have prayed for thee,* that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:31-32; emphasis added). I have wondered what that senior apostle must have felt to know that Jesus, the Lord of the universe, had been praying for him. It reminds me of Enoch's account once again. The voice of the Father attested: "And That which I have chosen [Jesus Christ] hath pled before my face. Wherefore, he suffereth for their sins; inasmuch as they will repent" (Moses 7:39). Mormon reminds us that the Mediator claims of the Father his rights of mercy for us and advocates our cause before the throne of grace (Moroni 7:27-28). And in modern revelation we encounter the tender pleadings of the Messiah: "Father, behold the sufferings and

8. See *Teachings*, 305.

death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased; behold the blood of thy Son which was shed, the blood of him whom thou gavest that thyself might be glorified" (D&C 45:4).

It was while sitting in the fifth and concluding general session of the 171st Semiannual General Conference (October 2001), only a matter of days after the horrors of September 11, 2001, that President Gordon B. Hinckley closed the conference with a message of hope and encouragement, a reminder that if the people of the covenant will only turn to God they will be empowered to stand in holy places, stand poised and unafraid, even in the midst of wars and rumors of wars. "And now as we close this conference," he said, "even though we shall have a benediction, I should like to offer a brief prayer in these circumstances." The fifteenth president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the man prepared and called to stand in the shoes of Brother Joseph, then petitioned the heavens:

> O God, our Eternal Father, Thou great Judge of the Nations, Thou who art the governor of the universe, Thou who art our Father and our God, whose children we are, we look to Thee in faith in this dark and solemn time. Please, dear Father, bless us with faith. Bless us with love. Bless us with charity in our hearts. Bless us with a spirit of perseverance to root out the terrible evils that are in this world. Give protection and guidance to those who are engaged actively in carrying forth the things of battle. Bless them; preserve their lives; save them from harm and evil. Hear the prayers of their loved ones for their safety. We pray for the great democracies of the earth which Thou hast overseen in creating their governments, where peace and liberty and democratic processes obtain.
>
> O Father, look with mercy upon this, our own nation, and its friends in this time of need. Spare us and help us to walk with faith ever in Thee and ever in Thy Beloved Son, on whose mercy we count and to whom we look as

> our Savior and our Lord. Bless the cause of peace and bring it quickly to us again, we humbly plead with Thee, asking that Thou wilt forgive our arrogance, pass by our sins, be kind and gracious to us, and cause our hearts to turn with love toward Thee. We humbly pray in the name of Him who loves us all, even the Lord Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and our Savior, amen.[9]

Mine was a feeling not like anything I had ever experienced before. I felt a deeper closeness to my Heavenly Father, a stillness and peace within my soul, an assurance that the Almighty was not far away, a love for my family and friends and city and nation and world, even those who had chosen to do this horrid and despicable thing. It was about midway through President Hinckley's prayer that my mind reverted to the scene in 3 Nephi 17, and I realized that I too could not fully express the inexpressible, that I was woefully inadequate in forming my poor and puny words into sentences that would convey the meaning of what we were feeling *and seeing*. I felt and I saw. I saw things with new eyes. I saw the power of an effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avail much (James 5:16). I witnessed the simplicity but the profundity of mighty prayer. Yes, I felt much like the Nephites and also the two disciples on the road to Emmaus as we left the Conference Center: I wanted to ask my wife, "Did not our hearts burn within us as we heard him pray unto the Father for us?" (see Luke 24:32.)

The praying Savior then called the little children unto him, one by one, blessed them, and prayed for them (3 Nephi 17:21-24). Jesus was overcome by the experience and wept. Only one who has looked deeply into the eyes of little children can grasp why. Only one who has sensed how near to the heavens, how close to the angels, how innocent and worthy of our respect, admiration, and awe can know why the purest of the pure wept as he associated with the purest among the Nephites. Angels came down and ministered personally

9. Gordon B. Hinckley, "'Till We Meet Again,'" *Ensign*, November 2001, 90.

to the little ones, an actual event that bespeaks a mighty truth, one that the Lord taught in the Old World: "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels [premortal spirits][10] do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 18:10). Indeed, how we feel toward little children, how we treat them, how we speak to them—these are fairly good measures of how much like the Master we are.

On the Lord's second day among his American saints, Jesus persisted in calling his people, both the disciples and the entire multitude, to pray, to kneel down upon the ground and lift their voices heavenward. "And behold, they began to pray; *and they did pray unto Jesus, calling him their Lord and their God*" (3 Nephi 19:18). They prayed to Jesus! How strange. How unusual, especially given the fact, as we noted earlier, that he had specifically instructed them in the proper order of prayer, had commanded them to address their prayers to the Father in the name of the Son. Let us step back, however, and examine what is taking place.

In their midst now is the Lord Omnipotent, the great Jehovah, the Promised Messiah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In their midst is "God the second, the Redeemer,"[11] the God who ministered to Enoch and Noah and who gave the law to Moses, the one through whom all revelation since the fall had come.[12] In their midst is the being the Prophet Joseph Smith termed the prototype of salvation, the standard of all saved beings,[13] a resurrected, immortal, glorified personage. Would we not be driven by our inner sense of love and divine propriety to worship him? Would we not be enticed, even motivated to pray to him? Jesus left their midst for a short time, bowed himself to the earth, and prayed himself. He thanked God the Father for sending the Holy Ghost and explained that "they pray unto me because I am with them" (3 Nephi 19:22). "Jesus was present

10. See Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965-73), 1:421.

11. *Teachings*, 190.

12. See Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:27.

13. Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 75-76.

before them as the symbol of the Father," Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained. "Seeing him, it was as though they saw the Father [compare John 14:9]; praying to him, it was as though they prayed to the Father. It was a special and unique situation."[14]

Next comes a marvelous lesson about prayer, not one spoken directly by Jesus, but a sublime message that comes to us because of the disciples' eagerness to pray. Mormon writes:

> And it came to pass that when Jesus had thus prayed unto the Father, he came unto his disciples, and behold, they did still continue, without ceasing, to pray unto him; and *they did not multiply many words, for it was given unto them what they should pray,* and they were filled with desire. (3 Nephi 19:24)

When persons determine upon a course to purify and perfect their prayer life, to become more than distant acquaintances with Deity, to capture that peace and power and perspective that come only through communion with the Infinite, then marvelous things begin to happen when they pray, not in every prayer necessarily, but certainly more consistently. We are to pray to the Father, in the name of the Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit. When we meet that divine standard, especially the last criterion, then prayer becomes more than a monologue; it becomes a dialogue. Prayer becomes more than petitionary; it becomes illuminating and instructive. When we have put away all worldly cares; when we have discarded the sordid; when we have elected to focus our minds and center our hearts; when we have sought forgiveness and come boldly before the throne of grace in order to receive divine assistance (Hebrews 4:16; compare Moses 7:59); when our private agenda has been set aside and our greatest desire is to communicate, nay to commune—then, there come those sacred moments when the Spirit begins, not only to settle and soothe but also to teach. Our words begin to reach beyond our thoughts. Our pleas become more

14. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 561.

heartfelt, and the language of the soul replaces the well-worn words to which we so often resort.

Because the Comforter knows all things (D&C 42:17; Moses 6:61), he knows what lies deep down within us, those longings and hopes and desires, those needs that so often go unexpressed and thus unmet. That is, as the apostle Paul wrote, the Spirit helps us with our infirmities, for we generally do not know what things we ought to pray for. But "the Spirit maketh intercession for us with striving which cannot be expressed" (see Romans 8:26).[15] "And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:27). This is known as prayer in the Spirit, and it empowers the Saints of the Most High to pray for those things the Lord would have us pray for, rather than praying amiss (James 4:3). In modern revelation we learn that "he that asketh in the Spirit asketh according to the will of God; wherefore it is done even as he asketh" (D&C 46:30). Similarly, "and if ye are purified and cleansed from all sin, ye shall ask whatsoever you will in the name of Jesus and it shall be done. But know this, it shall be given you what you shall ask" (D&C 50:29-30).

Conclusion

We have covered much in this paper relative to prayer and particularly what Jesus taught and demonstrated through his own prayerfulness. There is, however, a major question just beneath the surface of most conversations that yearns to be addressed, namely, Why did Jesus need to pray? To begin with, during his mortal ministry he set aside much of the power and glory he had enjoyed before he came into the world (John 17:5). Paul wrote that Jesus "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:7-8). Other translations

15. *Teachings*, 278.

render the above passage as "*emptied himself,* taking the form of a slave" (New American Bible; see also New Revised Standard Version; emphasis added). By choice Jesus did not turn the stones to bread, although he certainly possessed the power to do so (Luke 4:3-4). By choice Jesus did not cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple and anticipate divine deliverance, although he had the power to do so (Luke 4:9-12). By choice our Lord did not call down legions of angels to deliver him and his in the Garden of Gethsemane, although he indeed possessed the power to do so (Matthew 26:51-54). And by choice the Master of ocean and earth and skies did not come down from the cross and bring an end to the pain and suffering, the ignominy and irony of his crucifixion and death, although the power to do just that was within his grasp (Matthew 27:39-40; Luke 23:39).

By setting aside power and glory, he was able to know mortality in its fulness, to know by experience what it felt like to be hungry, thirsty, tired, snubbed, ridiculed, excluded; in short, he chose to endure the throes and toils of this estate so that he might then be in a position to succor his people (Alma 7:11-13; D&C 62:1). Thus when he felt the need for reassurance, he prayed to his Father in Heaven. When he needed answers or perspective, he prayed. When he needed the sacred sustaining influence of the Father in his darkest hours, he prayed, prayed earnestly. Because of the Spirit, which conveys the mind of God (1 Corinthians 2:16),[16] he was in the Father, as the Father was in him. They were one.

Then what of the risen Lord among the Nephites? Why would a glorified, immortal, and resurrected being, now possessing the fulness of the glory and power of the Father (Matthew 28:18; D&C 93:16),[17] spend so much of his time in prayer among the Nephites? Was there some truth he did not know, some godly attribute he did not possess, some energy or strength he lacked? Was there some approval of the Father, some encouragement or permission

16. See Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, 60.

17. See note 2, above.

he needed? I rather think not. The descendants of Lehi might have cried out *Emmanuel,* "God is with us." Jesus prayed frequently as an example to the Saints and to all men and women of the need to communicate with God—often, regularly, consistently, intensely, reverently.

Building on these truths, we therefore ask further whether there are not other purposes of prayer, both in time and eternity. Jesus prayed to the Father because he loved the Father. Jesus prayed to the Father because it was a reverential way of speaking to his Father, who is forever worthy of the reverence of his children. Jesus prayed to the Father because they enjoyed *communion.* That word *communion* is an especially meaningful word, one that is worth much reflection. President David O. McKay observed that spirituality is "the consciousness of victory over self, and of communion with the Infinite."[18] Jesus possessed perfect spirituality because he had overcome the world (John 16:33; D&C 101:36) and because he enjoyed perfect communion with the Father. This pattern is a call to you and me, is it not, to live our lives in such a manner that we cultivate the cleansing and revelatory benefits of the Spirit more and more; that we yield our hearts unto God (Helaman 3:35) and have an eye single to his glory (D&C 88:67); that we allow our consciences to be strengthened, our judgment to be refined, and our desires to be educated. It is to become bearers of the fruit of the Spirit—charity, or the pure love of Christ—so that this grandest of all spiritual gifts and graces will be permitted to reign triumphantly in our speech and actions and attitudes, so that eventually we will have become like our God and thereby be able to see him as he is (Galatians 5:22-25; 1 John 3:1-3; Moroni 7:45-48).

All of this points us to the ordinal relationship between the Father and the Son, the fact that even though Jesus possessed the fulness of the glory and power of the Father, the same divinity with the Father, yet he still looked to the Father as his superior. It would

18. David O. McKay, *Gospel Ideals* (Salt Lake City: Improvement Era, 1953), 390.

never seem appropriate, for example, for the Father to pray to the Son or the Holy Ghost. In the words of Elder Parley P. Pratt, Christ

> differs in nothing from his Father except in age and authority, the Father having the seniority and, consequently, the right, according to the patriarchal laws of eternal priesthood, to preside over him and over all his dominions, for ever and ever. . . . The difference between Jesus Christ and his Father is this: one is subordinate to the other and does nothing of himself independently of the Father, but does all things in the name and by the authority of the Father, being of the same mind in all things.

Elder Pratt further explained how exalted men and women relate to the Godhead:

> The difference between Jesus Christ and another immortal and celestial man is this: the man is subordinate to Jesus Christ and does nothing in and of himself, but does all things in the name of Christ and by his authority, being of the same mind and ascribing all the glory to him and his Father.[19]

Finally, there is another scene in the Book of Mormon that provides an unspeakable promise to each of us. As the disciples continued to pray,

> *his countenance did smile upon them, and the light of his countenance did shine upon them, and behold they were as white as the countenance and also the garments of Jesus*; and behold the whiteness thereof did exceed all the whiteness, yea, even there could be nothing upon earth so white as the whiteness thereof. (3 Nephi 19:25)

19. Parley P. Pratt, *Key to the Science of Theology: A Voice of Warning* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 20–21. See *Teachings*, 347–48.

The Savior then dropped to the ground and uttered thanks to the Father for purifying his chosen Twelve. He prayed for the Twelve and those who give heed to their words, yearned for their unity with one another and the Godhead, much as he had done in his great Intercessory or High Priestly Prayer in the Upper Room (3 Nephi 19:25-30; see also John 17). In likening this passage to ourselves, we conclude that when we pray, God is pleased. He smiles upon us. We bring light and divine glory into our countenances and our conduct. We are sanctified—made pure and holy—and renewed in mind and body. Prayer prepares us for his presence.

Jesus Christ is truly the light we hold up to one another and to all the world (3 Nephi 18:24). Mere mortals are but dim reflections of that light, lamps as compared to the light of the Son. In prayer, as in all facets of our lives, we look to our Model and Master: "And as I have prayed among you even so shall ye pray in my church. . . . Behold I am the light; I have set an example for you" (3 Nephi 18:16).

Robert L. Millet is the Abraham O. Smoot University Professor and professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University. He received his bachelor's and master's degrees from BYU in psychology and his PhD from Florida State University in religious studies.

The Father's Covenant People Sermon: 3 Nephi 20:10–23:5

Victor L. Ludlow

The Savior's last major public sermon recorded in the holy scriptures is what I call the Father's Covenant People Sermon in 3 Nephi 20:10–23:5.[1] This capstone sermon of the resurrected Savior records Heavenly Father's promises to the house of Israel and the Gentiles in latter days. As commanded by the Father, Jesus tells the people at Bountiful and future readers about events that will fulfill the Father's ancient covenant promises made with Abraham and the house of Israel. Combined with other Book of Mormon teachings, the Father's Covenant People Sermon provides significant insights into the Father's covenant promises and the key roles of the Gentiles, Isaiah's writings, and the Book of Mormon in connection with the gathering of Israel in the last days. Some of these teachings are found in the writings of Nephi in 1 and 2 Nephi, and others are recorded in the Savior's earlier prophecies in 3 Nephi. However, some remarkable teachings and prophetic insights are found nowhere else in holy writ, including key covenant signs and promises that must be fulfilled as a part of the gospel restoration in the last days.

The unique insights and richness of this sermon have generally not been recognized, studied, or appreciated by most Latter-day Saints or other readers and students of the Book of Mormon. Common unfamiliarity with these chapters of Book of Mormon

1. The identity, name, and basic structure of this discourse was established and developed as I taught Book of Mormon classes at BYU and delivered Know Your Religion lectures throughout the United States from the 1970s through the 1990s.

text might be explained by some observations of Brigham Young University students through the past three dozen years. Since the sermon follows the earlier and very familiar Sermon on the Mount at Bountiful, it seems to get lost in the miraculous events and scriptural discussions of the second day of the Savior's resurrection ministry in America. In addition, half of the sermon consists of various Old Testament quotations from Isaiah and Micah that are not easily recognized in either their Book of Mormon context or a latter-day setting. Also, the whole sermon is structured as a very sophisticated type of Hebrew poetry, known as an introverted (or chiastic) form of semantic parallelism. This article addresses these challenges as it seeks to (1) identify and outline the key elements of this sermon, (2) analyze and organize the profound teachings of the sermon, and (3) highlight and reinforce the key prophecies and promises of the sermon. I will develop some new perspectives about this sermon by studying the basic structure and title of the sermon along with its context among earlier, similar teachings of the Book of Mormon.

Key Elements of the Father's Covenant People Sermon

Let us first identify some key elements of this sermon by answering some basic questions about the text.

- *What is the Father's Covenant People Sermon?* It is the last public sermon of the resurrected Savior as recorded in 3 Nephi of the Book of Mormon. It consists of eighty-eight verses spread over four chapters (3 Nephi 20:10–23:5), with forty-four, or one-half, of the verses being quotations from the ancient writings of Isaiah and Micah.[2]
- *By whom and where and when was this sermon delivered?* Jesus the Christ, Son of the Father, gave this discourse at the temple area of Bountiful on the second day of his resurrection ministry on the American continent.

2. The eleven Micah verses are cited in 3 Nephi 20:16–19; 21:12–18. The thirty-one Isaiah verses are cited in 3 Nephi 20:32–45; 21:8, 10, 29; 22:1–17. Note that 3 Nephi 21:9 seems to paraphrase Isaiah 29:14.

- *Who was the audience of the sermon?* The immediate audience was the righteous Nephite/Lamanite people assembled there. The extended audience was the future readers of the Book of Mormon and those who would witness the fulfillment of the promises recorded in the sermon.
- *How was the sermon structured?* It is organized as a major, intricate, profound chiastic poem, which will be discussed in detail later.
- *Why was the sermon delivered and then recorded in the Book of Mormon?* God the Father instructed Jesus to give these teachings to the assembled remnants of Israel in America. This record was to be a witness to the world of the Father's power to honor his covenants with Abraham and Israel.
- *Why is this sermon so important?* It instructs Israelites about the fulfillment of God's covenant promises. It foretells the role of the Gentiles and specific scriptures in the gathering of the house of Israel in the last days. And it testifies of God's works and love for his children through the ages.

Three key words describe this sermon: *Father, covenant,* and *people.* Although found throughout the Book of Mormon, these three words are especially concentrated in this 3 Nephi text. The word *Father,* referring to Heavenly Father, appears thirty-nine times in the sermon.[3] Although the sermon is delivered by Jesus, it absolutely contains Heavenly Father's teachings and promises to his children. Also, sixteen of the 154 "covenant" citations of the Book of Mormon appear in this sermon.[4] As will be discussed, covenant teachings are an essential part of all scripture, especially the Book of Mormon. The word *people* appears thirty-five times

3. There are 277 references to "Father" (with a capital *F,* referring to Heavenly Father) in the Book of Mormon with the great majority found in the words of the resurrected Savior in 3 Nephi. Third Nephi 20 and 3 Nephi 21 each contain nineteen references to the Father. The only other Book of Mormon chapter that contains as many references is 3 Nephi 11, which also has nineteen "Father" citations.

4. The word *covenant* appears ten times in 3 Nephi 20, which is more than in any other chapter of the Book of Mormon.

throughout the discourse. The sermon is not only *about* a covenant people, it is also directed *to* a covenant people. Indeed, with these three key words appearing ninety times in eighty-eight verses, one or another of these three words could appear in each verse of the sermon's text, indicating their central focus within the sermon.

Although the least mentioned of the three words, *covenant* is a pivotal term in the sermon. The title page of the Book of Mormon declares that one of the book's primary purposes is to teach the house of Israel "that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever." The first major concentration of covenant references in the Book of Mormon is in 1 and 2 Nephi, where Nephi lays the foundation of God's covenant teachings.[5] The most significant and insightful concentration of Book of Mormon covenant references is recorded in 3 Nephi and is centered in the last two of the three major public sermons that the resurrected Savior taught at Bountiful.[6] In what I call the Law and Covenant Discourse (3 Nephi 15–16), Jesus teaches the surviving Nephite/Lamanite community of Israelites about key elements of the Abrahamic covenant that remained to be fulfilled after his first earthly ministry.[7] In the Father's Covenant People Sermon, as will be discussed in detail, Jesus continues these teachings and also reveals two essential covenant signs and one significant covenant promise to be manifest in latter days.[8]

Nephi's Foundational Covenant Teachings in 1 and 2 Nephi

Some six centuries before Jesus taught at Bountiful, Nephi built upon earlier prophecies of Moses and Lehi as he recorded his covenant insights. Just before the Israelites entered their promised land,

5. Forty-one of the 154 "covenant" references in the Book of Mormon are found in 1 and 2 Nephi.

6. Forty-one of the 154 "covenant" (or "covenanted," "covenanteth," "covenanting," and "covenants") references in the Book of Mormon are located in 3 Nephi. The Savior cited twenty-three of them as he taught the Nephite/Lamanite community both before he physically appeared among them and also as he taught them at Bountiful.

7. Five covenant citations are in this second sermon.

8. Sixteen covenant citations are in this third sermon.

Moses told them that the Lord would later scatter and gather them (see Deuteronomy 4:27-29; 28:64; and 30:3). Nephi's father, Lehi, recorded similar prophecies about the scattering and gathering of Israel as his family camped near the Red Sea.[9] Over the course of fifty years, Nephi received various insights and revelations about Heavenly Father's covenant promises with Abraham and the scattering and gathering of the house of Israel. Four valuable passages record Nephi's key teachings and prophecies.

First, as recorded in 1 Nephi 14:8-17, Nephi received angelic instruction about Lehi's tree of life vision. In response to a question about the Father's covenants with the house of Israel, Nephi was shown the great and abominable church among the nations of the Gentiles that would oppose the Lord's covenant people in the last days. Nephi was told that when God's wrath would be poured out upon this church of the devil, "the work of the Father shall commence, in preparing the way for the fulfilling of his covenants, which he hath made to his people who are of the house of Israel" (v. 17). Somehow, the divine judgments upon the wicked Gentiles would coincide with the fulfillment of the Father's promises with covenant Israel.

Second, in 1 Nephi 15:12-20, Nephi elaborated upon his father's earlier teachings of Israel's scattering and gathering and explained that, after scattering Israel (including Lehi's seed), the Gentiles would receive the fulness of the gospel and deliver it unto Lehi's descendants. Then the Lord's covenant with Abraham would be fulfilled as all the house of Israel would be gathered and restored and they, in turn, would bless all peoples of the earth in the latter days.

Third, in 1 Nephi 22:3-12 (which records events a dozen years after Lehi's group had arrived in their new land), Nephi connected Isaiah 48 and 49 (which he had just quoted to his family) with the Lord's covenant promises to Abraham. He taught that the families of

9. In 1 Nephi 10:12-14, father Lehi foretold the basic outline of the scattering and gathering of Israel: after the house of Israel should be scattered and after the Gentiles had received the gospel, the remnants of Israel should then later be "grafted in" or gathered and come to the knowledge of their true Messiah.

the earth could not be blessed unless the Lord God would bare his arm before the nations. The manifestation of God's power would be demonstrated as the Gentiles would scatter and nurse their (Nephite/Lamanite) descendants, as the Lord would bring forth his covenants and gospel unto the house of Israel, and finally as he would gather the remnants of Israel to their various lands of inheritance.

Fourth, in 2 Nephi 29 and 30, Nephi records some of his last prophetic insights. As an aged prophet, he highlights how his scriptural writings, and those of later Nephite prophets, would come forth as a marvelous work and a wonder in the latter days. These writings, today known as the Book of Mormon, would testify of God's work to fulfill his ancient promises to Abraham—especially the gathering of Israel and the blessing of Abraham's seed to the world. In addition to the words of Isaiah and other Bible prophets, the Book of Mormon would provide another witness and valuable insights of these key promises. Other prophecies found in these two chapters foretell of additional scriptures and signs of the latter days. The Book of Mormon is to be an instrument in bringing the fulness of the gospel and significant teachings and prophecies to the Gentiles, from whom the messages would be brought back to the descendants of the Nephites and Lamanites.

In essence, these four passages in 1 and 2 Nephi illustrate the growing understanding that Nephi developed about how the writings of Isaiah and the Book of Mormon would provide a united witness of God's fulfillment of his covenant promises to Abraham. The resurrected Savior builds upon these teachings as he instructs his disciples and followers in 3 Nephi.

The Savior's Insightful Covenant Teachings in 3 Nephi 9-17

Prior to delivering the Father's Covenant People Sermon, Jesus provided a framework of covenant teachings as recorded in earlier chapters of 3 Nephi. In chapters 9-10, the Savior speaks from the heavens and invites the people to come unto him through a covenant relationship. In 3 Nephi 12-14, the Sermon on the Mount at Bountiful is delivered, providing a covenant context to those who

chose to accept this "Constitution of Christianity."[10] In 3 Nephi 15-16, Jesus delivers the Law and Covenant Discourse, explaining how the Mosaic law had now been fulfilled but key portions of the Abrahamic covenant had not yet been fulfilled. A quick review of these teachings will provide an essential context to better understand the profound insights of the Father's Covenant People Sermon.

Before he appeared at the temple in Bountiful, the Savior spoke to the people from the heavens. His voice pierced the darkness that covered the land following the great destructions. He invited the people to repent of their sins and to come unto him that he might baptize them with fire and the Holy Ghost (3 Nephi 9:13-15). He testified that not only were the scriptures concerning his coming fulfilled but also the law of Moses was fulfilled (9:16-17). No more were they to perform the Mosaic sacrifices and burnt offerings; rather, their sacrifice should be a broken heart and a contrite spirit (9:19-20). In his redemptive role, he invited them to come to him and be saved (9:21-22). He reminded this remnant of Israel how often he sought to gather them (10:4-6). He concluded with a warning: if they would not repent and return to him, their dwellings would become desolate "until the time of the fulfilling of the *covenant* to your fathers" (10:7).[11] Such desolation would come centuries later to the descendants of these people; but in the meantime, a choice Zion society needed to be established in America.

Later that year, Jesus appeared among those at Bountiful who had heard his words through the darkness. He gave them details about the fulfilling of the covenants that God the Father had made with their ancestors—Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph. These teachings are found in his public sermons as recorded in 3 Nephi. Covenant teachings and promises comprise significant structural elements in

10. A variety of references to this title are found throughout Christian literature (including Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and various Protestant denominations). One of the earliest references is in Isaac Bronson Burgess, *The Life of Christ* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1908), 116. For an example of its use among Latter-day Saints, see Harold B. Lee, *Decisions for Successful Living* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1973), 57.

11. This is the first of twenty-three times that Jesus specifically used the word *covenant* (or *covenants*) during his resurrection ministry among the Nephite/Lamanite remnant of Israel.

all three public sermons of the resurrected Savior in America. First, a covenantal framework is established in the Sermon on the Mount, also called the sermon at the temple in Bountiful,[12] where Jesus outlines the expectations and promises of citizenship in his kingdom (3 Nephi 12-14). To become true Christians, his followers cannot simply hear and believe his teachings—they must *do* them (3 Nephi 15:1). They must indicate their personal, internal commitment through a public, symbolic act as they enter his church through the covenantal ordinance of baptism (3 Nephi 12:1-2). As they accept the new laws and the higher commandments of Jesus, they are counted ready and worthy to receive the gospel blessings of a new covenant with Christ.

After this gospel framework was established with the early-day Lamanite and Nephite Saints, there was some confusion among them about when the older Mosaic law was to be fulfilled and how the ancient Abrahamic covenant was to be completed. These concerns led to the second sermon, the Law and Covenant Discourse (3 Nephi 15-16) in which Jesus clarified that the law given to Moses had already been fulfilled. He, as the premortal Yahweh, had given the law to Moses. He, as the sacrificial Lamb of God, had fulfilled the law. Indeed, the preparatory Mosaic law along with the harsh demands of the law of justice and the beneficent expectations of the law of mercy were fulfilled in the final week of the Savior's earthly ministry at Gethsemane, Golgotha, and the Garden Tomb.

Although Jesus Christ had fulfilled the law through the atonement, all the covenant promises given to Abraham had *not* yet been completed. God had promised Abraham a numberless posterity, a chosen land, and that his seed would be a blessing to all nations.[13] Millions of Abraham's posterity had been born by AD 34, yet billions more were waiting for their foreordained mortal destiny.[14]

---

12. Robert J. Matthews, "Jesus the Savior in 3 Nephi," in *The Book of Mormon: 3 Nephi 9-30, This Is My Gospel*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1993), 31.

13. See the Bible Dictionary in the Latter-day Saint edition of the King James Version of the Bible, s.v. "Abraham, Covenant of."

14. Considering the population explosion of the past couple of centuries, the great majority of Abraham's posterity seem to have been preserved to come forth in the latter days and the millennial era.

Therefore, the first of the Abrahamic covenant promises was not yet fulfilled. The second divine promise to Abraham was that lands of the Fertile Crescent and the Arabian Peninsula would be governed by his seed. In AD 34, these lands were controlled by the Romans, Nabataeans, and peoples other than Abraham's posterity, indicating that this promise was also not yet fulfilled.[15] Finally, the third promise of the Father to Abraham was that his lineage was to be a blessing to all nations and families of the earth. By AD 34, Moses, the prophets, and Jesus (through his teachings, miracles, and atonement) had given wonderful spiritual blessings to the world. However, many blessings that Abraham's descendants would share with the world remained to be delivered. Eventually, much of Western civilization would be based upon the Judeo-Christian teachings and values as found in the Bible, one of the many gifts of Abraham's family to the world.[16]

In the Law and Covenant Discourse, Jesus highlights key elements of the Abrahamic covenant that remained to be fulfilled. First, as promised by the Father, Jesus needed to preach the gospel to the major scattered Israelite communities so that they personally could hear his voice and become one fold under his shepherdlike care (3 Nephi 16:1–3; compare John 10:16). Second, the scattered remnants of Israel needed to be gathered from the peoples of the earth to their promised lands of inheritance (3 Nephi 16:5, 16). Third, the house of Israel needed to come to the knowledge of the fulness of Christ's restored gospel (16:11–12).

The Savior also speaks to the Gentiles and promises them that if they will repent and come unto him, they can be numbered with the house of Israel (3 Nephi 16:13–15). He then promises his Nephite and Lamanite audience that this land (of America) would become

15. In the past century, these lands promised to Abraham have basically come under the governance of his Arab and Jewish posterity. However, the conflicts and disharmony among the various factions are far removed from the ideal role model that should be presented by the Abrahamic family.

16. Living two thousand years after the Savior's earthly ministry, we who claim to be of Abraham's lineage or of covenant Israel have the responsibility to continue to bless many peoples through the spiritual, moral, intellectual, and other insights and gifts that we should bring forth.

their land of inheritance (16:16). And then Jesus foretells that "the words of the prophet Isaiah shall be fulfilled" (16:17). In the biblical passage quoted by Jesus (Isaiah 52:8-10), Isaiah prophesied of a time when Israel's watchmen will lift up their voices and sing as the Lord brings forth Zion, redeems Jerusalem, and shows his might to all nations until "all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God" (3 Nephi 16:20). After centuries of anticipation and preparation, Abraham's great posterity will be in their lands of inheritance under the Lord's protective care where they will be a righteous example and a wonderful blessing to the nations of the earth. Thus, the world would know that the Father's covenant promises with his people had finally been fulfilled.

It was toward the end of the first long day of Jesus's resurrection ministry in Bountiful that the Savior quoted these marvelous promises from Isaiah 52. Sensing the listeners' difficulty in understanding his Father's message (especially the Isaiah passages), the Savior admonished his listeners to return to their homes, to ponder and pray about the things that he had taught them, and to prepare for more instruction the following day (see 3 Nephi 17:1-3).

Profound Teachings of the Father's Covenant People Sermon

Continuing his teachings the next day, Jesus delivered the Father's Covenant People Sermon, found in 3 Nephi 20:10-23:5. Most readers of the Book of Mormon have probably not studied this sermon in great depth because of its eloquent style, its elaborate prophecies, and its inclusion of numerous Old Testament passages. If the contents of this sermon of Jesus were to be discovered and verified in some ancient archive in the Middle East, it would be the most significant archaeological discovery of this millennium. What an addition to the scriptures it would be! Although many who have read this unique sermon in the Book of Mormon may not have appreciated its value, the keen insights, signs, and promises it reveals for us as Christ's covenant people in the latter days warrant our careful study. The Father's Covenant People Sermon highlights divine promises for Heavenly Father's covenant people through the

ages but is even more specifically directed to those living in the latter days—the days in which knowledgeable observers may witness the fulfillment of key covenant signs.

As will be explained in this paper, the Father's Covenant People Sermon is organized in a major introverted parallelism, also known as a chiasmus, as outlined below:

A Isaiah's words will be fulfilled (3 Nephi 20:10-12)

B Israel gathers to Zion (3 Nephi 20:13-20)

C Choice promises to Israel (and Gentiles) (3 Nephi 20:21-31)

D Blessings to righteous Judah (3 Nephi 20:32-40)

E The marred servant and the Father's covenant (3 Nephi 20:41-46)

F A promised sign of the Book of Mormon and Israel's gathering (3 Nephi 21:1-7)

E' The marred servant and a work and a wonder (3 Nephi 21:8-11)

D' Warnings to all wicked people (3 Nephi 21:12-21)

C' Select promises to gentiles (and Israel) (3 Nephi 21:22-29)

B' Building Zion in the last days (3 Nephi 22:1-17)

A' Two admonitions and two promises (3 Nephi 23:1-5)

Each of these poetic segments will now be discussed in more detail.

A The words of Isaiah will be fulfilled
3 Nephi 20:10-12

The Father's Covenant People teachings begin in 3 Nephi 20:10 when Jesus states that he is going to finish the Father's commanded instructions concerning this remnant of the house of Israel. The previous day, Jesus had begun to fulfill the Father's commandment by telling the people why their ancestors were separated from their original lands of inheritance near Jerusalem. He had also told them of the Father's covenant to bring the fulness of the gospel to their descendants through the Gentiles. He had concluded his teachings that day by quoting some of Isaiah. Jesus continues his teachings the second day with an admonition to study Isaiah's words and a

promise that when the prophecies of Isaiah are fulfilled, Heavenly Father's covenant with Israel will be fulfilled (vv. 10-12).

B The promises to Abraham are fulfilled as Israel gathers to Zion
3 Nephi 20:13-20 (Micah 5:8-9; 4:12-13)

Jesus then taught that the scattered remnants of Israel will be gathered from all directions and be brought to the knowledge of their Lord (3 Nephi 20:13). He also tells the Nephite/Lamanite audience that their descendants would receive this land (America) as their promised land of inheritance (v. 14). He promises them that if the latter-day Gentiles do not repent "after the blessing which they shall receive," Lehi's seed would go forth among the Gentiles with awesome power. He quotes a biblical passage found in Micah 5:8-9 that describes how Israel's influence among the Gentiles is to be like lions among sheep (3 Nephi 20:15-17).[17] He then promises to gather his own people of Judah and to give them power to "beat in pieces many people" (or to have power over many enemies), quoting phrases from Micah 4:13 (3 Nephi 20:19). Jesus concludes this section of the Father's Covenant People Sermon with a strong warning to the people of Israel and the Gentile nations that if they do not repent, the sword of his justice will fall upon them (v. 20).

C Gospel blessings come first to covenant Israel and then to the Gentiles
3 Nephi 20:21-31

Jesus changes his tone with a positive promise of Zion in America. He promises that he will establish *his people* (of Judah) in Jerusalem and *this people* (of Lehi's seed) in "this land" (America), which will be a New Jerusalem, and that heavenly powers will be in their midst. Indeed, he also will be in their midst (3 Nephi 20:21-22). Thus the threefold promise to Abraham will finally be completed as the various remnants of Israel (Abraham's *posterity*) return to their lands of inheritance (the *places* promised them, including America as given to Lehi's seed) and become a powerful, righteous community (a *blessing* to the lives of all peoples on earth).

17. Micah was a younger, contemporary prophet during the ministry of Isaiah.

Continuing in verse 23, Jesus announces that he is the great prophet foretold by Moses and all the prophets of God. He reminds his audience that they are the children of the covenant that the Father made with their fathers that through Abraham's seed, all kindreds of the earth would be blessed (v. 25). As children of the covenant, Jesus personally came to them first. After Israel was blessed and strengthened, the Savior would pour out the Holy Ghost upon the Gentiles. This blessing, in turn, would make the Gentiles mighty and they would scatter his people (the Jews) and be a scourge to the people of this land (Lehi's seed and other native inhabitants in America, vv. 26-28). He also warns the Gentiles not to harden their hearts against him after they have received the fulness of his gospel (as restored in latter days, v. 28). Jesus then promises to remember the covenant with his people (the Jews) to gather them to Jerusalem and the promised land of their inheritance (v. 29). Eventually the gospel will be preached to them and they will believe in him as their Christ (or Messiah, vv. 30-31).

In this section of the Father's Covenant People Sermon, Jesus highlights the Father's promise to first bless Israel through Jesus and then to bless the Gentiles through the Holy Ghost. Gentiles would scatter various segments of Israel, and then (centuries) later they would have the opportunity to receive the fulness of the gospel. Promises to the Jews will then be fulfilled as they gather to Jerusalem and their promised land and as they receive the gospel and accept Jesus as their Messiah. Some of these prophecies have been fulfilled since the Book of Mormon was published in 1830, while others await completion.

D Isaiah's prophesied blessings to Judah
3 Nephi 20:32-40 (Isaiah 52:8-10, 1-3, 6-7)

When these prophecies of the gathering and restoration are fulfilled, powerful prophecies of Isaiah will also be fulfilled. Without mentioning Isaiah by name, Jesus quotes Isaiah 52:8-10, the same three verses that he quoted the previous day at the end of his Law and Covenant Discourse (3 Nephi 16:18-20). He adds context to Isaiah 52:8 by stating that their watchmen's singing and rejoicing will result

in the context of their accepting him as their Messiah and as the Son of God (3 Nephi 20:32). Additional commentary between verses 8 and 9 of Isaiah 52 states that their accepting him is also the context for the Father gathering them (the Jews) again[18] and giving them Jerusalem for their land of inheritance (3 Nephi 20:33). Then the people themselves will sing with joy as they are comforted in Jerusalem (v. 34).

Jesus also provides helpful clarification about some divine titles as he quotes Isaiah 52:9-10. Instead of the "Lord" (*Yahweh* in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament; sometimes translated as Jehovah, referring to the Son of God) being the divine agent, it is the "Father." *Elohim* in the Hebrew text is usually translated as "God" in the King James Version; "Elohim" is a name/title for Heavenly Father,[19] who comforts his people and makes bare his holy arm before the nations. However, either the Father or the Son can represent each other because, as Jesus adds in the text, "the Father and I are one" (3 Nephi 20:34-35).

Jesus then quotes the three beginning verses of Isaiah 52 and promises that they "shall be brought to pass" (3 Nephi 20:36). Some of the key terms in this short passage are clarified in verses 7-10 of section 113 in the Doctrine and Covenants. Combining the Isaiah text with the Joseph Smith insights, we learn that the Lord invites the people of Zion to put on their (priesthood) strength and those in Jerusalem to put on their (temple) garments. The people are to loose their bands of captivity and exile, both physical and spiritual, for he will redeem them (3 Nephi 20:36-38). He also quotes Isaiah 52:6-7 and foretells a time when his people will know his name and that it is he that speaks to them (through their prophets, 3 Nephi 20:39). Then shall his people rejoice with the good tidings delivered by the Lord's messengers (his prophets, missionaries, and others, v. 40).

E The marred servant and the Father's covenants
3 Nephi 20:41-46 (Isaiah 52:11-15)

18. The first gathering of the Jews occurred after their exile in Babylon.
19. See Bible Dictionary, s.v. "God," "Lord," and "Christ," known as Jehovah.

Jesus concludes the Isaiah passages by quoting the last five verses of Isaiah 52.[20] In verses 11 and 12, Isaiah exhorts the people to depart from the wicked world and to become clean. He promises that the Lord will prepare the way before them and the God of Israel will come behind them as they gather in an orderly process (vv. 41-42). In verses 13-15, Isaiah foretells an amazing servant of the Lord who will be abused; yet he will affect many nations and astonish their rulers (vv. 43-45). Later in the Father's Covenant People Sermon, Jesus tells us more about this major figure of the last days. In this part of the sermon, he quotes Isaiah and then concludes with a promise that "all these things shall surely come" (v. 46) as commanded by the Father (and foretold by Isaiah). Then the Father's covenant with his people will be fulfilled and Jerusalem will be inhabited with the Lord's people.

F The promised sign that the Father's covenant is being fulfilled
3 Nephi 21:1-7

Jesus continues in chapter 21 with a promised sign so that we can know when these covenants are finally being fulfilled because as the covenant promises are fulfilled, then Christ's millennial reign can be established. Readers of the Book of Mormon have probably read these verses many times but may not have recognized their significance.

The previous instructions of the Father's Covenant People Sermon are summarized in the last verse of chapter 20. Jesus has just finished quoting most of Isaiah 52. He then summarizes what he has told them with a promise. As the Book of Mormon verses are cited, some clarifications are inserted in the text: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, all these things [these prophecies of Isaiah and what I have told you earlier] shall surely come, even as the Father hath commanded me. Then shall this covenant which the Father hath covenanted with his people be fulfilled."

He continues in verse 1 of chapter 21: "And verily I say unto you, I give unto you a sign, that ye may know the time when these

20. Careful readers will note that Jesus does not quote verses 4 and 5 of Isaiah 52. They deal more with Israelite ancient history rather than with future prophecy.

things shall be about to take place [which things?]—that I shall gather in, from their long dispersion, my people, O house of Israel, and shall establish again among them my Zion."

The critical things that are about to take place as the sign is given are the gathering of Israel and the establishment of Zion. In verse 2 he continues, "And behold, this is the thing which I will give unto you for a sign." But before he tells us the sign, he explains the significance of some things that he has revealed or that he will yet reveal. He tells us in verses 3-6 about the Gentiles being established in this land and the great works he will show forth among them. Then, in verse 7, he tells us that the latter-day Lamanites will "begin to know these things—it shall be a sign unto them, that they may know that the work of the Father hath already commenced unto the fulfilling of the covenant."

Note the change of context between verses 1 and 7! In verse 1 the Savior promises us a sign so we can "know the time when these things shall be about to take place." The future tense is promising something "about to take place." It is still ahead, but it seems to be close at hand. Then, in verse 7 Jesus tells us some things that will be a *sign* that we can know "that the work of the Father hath already commenced." Note the past tense here: it "hath already commenced," or, as we would say, it "has already started." So somewhere between verse 1 and verse 7 we pass from a future promise to a past fulfillment. To go from the future to the past, we have to pass through the present. Somewhere in the middle verses we missed the sign that would be the transition from a time when something was about to take place to the time when it had already commenced.

A couple of suggestions may help us find the sign in these verses. First, note that verses 1 through 7 of chapter 21 are punctuated as one long sentence—one very long, complicated sentence. English teachers would require numerous large class boards just to diagram the grammatical parts of this sophisticated sentence, and theologians would take hundreds of hours trying to understand the doctrinal meanings of this profound sentence. So readers should

not be discouraged if they do not comprehend this sentence the first few times they read it.

Second, the Savior uses certain techniques or key words to alert us when something important in his sermon is approaching. With a live audience, he could speak in a loud or emphatic voice to let them know that something important was about to be said. But that volume or tone of voice does not carry over into the printed text. However, he does give us some "attention getters" within the text to let us know when something important—something very important—is coming up. He uses foremost the word *verily*—which could be translated as his way of telling us that something very important is about to be said. Thus when readers see *verily* in the text, they should think "something very important is coming." Note in verse 3 the double use of *verily,* indicating that what is coming is *very, very* important. Another attention getter is the word *therefore*, used to introduce verse 5, which indicates that an important summary is coming. So let us read verses 3 to 5 and see if we can recognize the important promised sign. As these verses are cited, some definitions of key terms, as established in the earlier verses, are inserted in the text:

> Verily, verily, I [the Savior] say unto you [the audience in Bountiful], when these things [of the Book of Mormon] shall be made known unto them [the Gentiles] of the Father, and shall come forth of the Father, from them unto you;
>
> For it is wisdom in the Father that they [the Gentiles] should be established in this land [America], and be set up as a free people by the power of the Father, that these things [as found in the Book of Mormon] might come forth from them unto a remnant of your seed [the Lamanites], that the covenant of the Father may be fulfilled which he hath covenanted with his people, O house of Israel;
>
> Therefore, when these works and the works which shall be wrought among you hereafter [as later recorded in

> the Book of Mormon] shall come forth from the Gentiles, unto your seed [that will be the promised sign].

Then, continuing in verse 7: "And when these things come to pass that thy seed [the Lamanites] shall begin to know these things [of the Book of Mormon]—it shall be a sign unto them, that they may know that the work of the Father [the gathering of Israel and the establishment of Zion] hath already commenced unto the fulfilling of the covenant which he hath made unto the people who are of the house of Israel" (3 Nephi 21:3-5, 7).

The key sign is recognized when the Savior's words and works in the Book of Mormon come from the Gentiles to the Lamanites, who then begin to accept their gospel message! Then is the time period of the fulfillment of the covenant promises in preparation for Christ's millennial reign. Although many attempts were made in earlier Latter-day Saint history to take the gospel and the Book of Mormon to the Lamanites, it was not until the 1960s that Lehi's descendants began to accept the teachings and come into the church in great numbers. Thus the sign as promised by Jesus in the Father's Covenant People Sermon has finally been given, and now is the generation for the fulfillment of the Father's covenant promises.

The spreading of the gospel into former communist countries, the proliferation of LDS temples, and other evidences of the growth of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints demonstrate how God's work is rolling forth to fill the earth. Gradually we are seeing how, as a part of the gathering of the covenant righteous to Zion, powerful remnants of Israel are being gathered to their various lands of inheritance.[21] Jeremiah—an older contemporary prophet during the days of Lehi and Nephi—also foresaw the latter-day events of the gathering of Israel. Jeremiah foretold that the gathering of latter-day Israel would be an even greater manifestation of God's power than the bringing forth of ancient Israel

21. See 3 Nephi 16:5, 15-16; 20:14-16, 19, 22, 29; 21:1, 11-12, 22-28 for key passages in this sermon on the gathering of Israel.

from bondage in Egypt (Jeremiah 16:14-15). The sign given in 3 Nephi 21 lets us know that the work of the Father in gathering Israel has already commenced.

The Mirror Image Second Half of the Father's Covenant People Sermon

This profound sentence of 3 Nephi 21:1-7 with its promised sign is the pivotal point in the poetic chiasmus of the Father's Covenant People Sermon. The second half of the discourse is, in many ways, a mirror image of the first: Jesus repeats key ideas, quotes passages from Micah and Isaiah 54, and highlights certain covenant promises. However, the second half of the sermon is much more than simple repetition; it also includes additional insights and valuable clarification, as elements in each half complement and enrich each other. A much more detailed outline of the chiastic or introverted parallelistic pattern of the sermon's main ideas is seen in chart 1.

E' Silenced kings and the marred servant of the Lord
3 Nephi 21:8-11 (Isaiah 52:14-15)

After announcing the promised sign, Jesus states "when that day shall come" that the Father commences to fulfill the covenant promises, kings shall shut their mouths because they will see and consider previously unknown things. After repeating the last verse of Isaiah 52, he provides additional commentary. He testifies also that "in that day" the Father will work a great and marvelous work among the people. Although someone (such as a missionary or faithful believer) will declare this divine work to them, some among them will still not believe it (3 Nephi 21:8-9). Echoing Nephi's prophecies received and recorded six centuries earlier, this marvelous work includes the ministry of the Prophet Joseph Smith, the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, and other dimensions of the restoration of Christ's gospel and church in latter days.

Chart 1: The Father's Covenant People Sermon

Chiastic Outline[22]

A	The Father and Son work together	3 Nephi 20:10
B	*Isaiah's words are written, therefore search them*	*11*
C	*Isaiah's words and the Father's covenant with Israel will be fulfilled!!*	** 12*
D	Scattered Israel to be gathered	13
E	America an inheritance for the Lamanites	14
F	Gentiles to repent and receive blessings (Micah 4:12-13; 5:8-9)	* 15-20
G	A New Jerusalem and the Father's covenants with Moses, the Gentiles, etc.	****** 21-29
H	*Gospel preached and Zion established; the marred servant (Isaiah 52)*	*30-44*
I	*Kings shall be speechless (Isaiah 52:15)*	*45*
J	Covenant fulfillment and the work of the Father	** 20:46
K	A key sign to be given when things are "about to take place"	3 Nephi 21:1
L	Gentiles learn of scattered Israel	2
M	These things (in Book of Mormon) to come from Gentiles to you (Lamanites/Nephites)	3
>N	**The sign of the covenant**	**** 3 Nephi 21:4<**
M'	These works (in Book of Mormon) to come from Gentiles to you (Lamanites/Nephites)	5
L'	Some Gentiles to be with Israel	6
K'	Sign as Lamanites begin to know Book of Mormon that work "hath commenced"	7
J'	The work and covenant fulfillment of the Father	* 7
I'	*Kings shall be speechless (Isaiah 52:15)*	*8*
H'	*A great and marvelous work; the marred servant (Isaiah 52:14)*	*9-10*
G'	Moses, the Gentiles and covenant Israel	* 11
F'	Unrepentant Gentiles will be cut down (Micah 5:8-15)	12-21
E'	America an inheritance for the righteous	* 22-23
D'	Gentiles to help in the gathering of Israel and a New Jerusalem	24-25
C	Father's work with his people	26-27
A'	The Father and Son work together	21:28-29
B'	*Isaiah's portrayal of Zion (Isaiah 54); search his words!*	** 3 Nephi 22; 23:1-3*
PS	Christ's command to heed these things and be saved.	3 Nephi 23:4-5

* = The sixteen specific "**COVENANT**" references in this sermon.
Note: The many Isaiah references and passages are shown in ***italics.***

22. This chiastic outline was developed and refined over many years as I taught and lectured. In spite of the many, many hours involved in studying and analyzing this profound sermon, the outline is still a work in progress.

Then Jesus shares insights about a marred servant of the Lord in that day. Including phrases from Isaiah 52:13-14, which was quoted earlier in 3 Nephi 20:43-44, Jesus promises that although people will mar (or injure) his servant, he will heal the servant to demonstrate that his divine wisdom is greater than the devil's cunning efforts (v. 10). Footnote 10a in the Book of Mormon cross-references this passage to D&C 135:1, thus referring the marred servant to the martyred prophet Joseph Smith.[23] Jesus warns that whoever does not believe in his words as brought forth by this servant will be cut off from among the Lord's covenant people (3 Nephi 21:11).

D' Warnings and judgments unto the Gentiles
3 Nephi 21:12-21 (Micah 5:8-15)

Jesus delivers an even stronger warning against the Gentiles in the next section of the Father's Covenant People Sermon. He again cites Micah 5:8-9, and then he adds a variety of specific judgments upon the Gentile, "except they repent" (3 Nephi 21:14). Not only will the wicked be cut off from the Lord's people, but their own weaponry, strongholds, paganism, idolatry, and cities will be cut off and destroyed (vv. 14-18; compare Micah 5:10-14). Jesus then repeats some signs of a wicked people that he had warned against during his Law and Covenant Discourse on the previous day (3 Nephi 21:19; compare 16:10). A strong warning from the Father to the whole world follows: all who do not repent and follow the Son will be cut off, and he will execute vengeance and unheard-of fury upon them, even as upon the heathen (vv. 20-21; compare Micah 5:15).

In contrast to the blessings and strengths and in addition to warnings mentioned earlier in the Father's Covenant People

23. The English words *mar* and *martyr* share similar meanings from different Middle English and Anglo-Saxon roots. *Mar* derives from *merran*, meaning to injure, damage, disfigure, or deform. *Martyr* derives from *martir*, meaning a person who is maimed, tortured, or killed; one who suffers great pain or misery; or one who is willing to die rather than give up one's faith or principles. See *Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (New York: William Collins Publishers, 1979), s.v. "mar" and "martyr." For another interpretation of the marred servant, see Gaye Strathearn and Jacob Moody, "Christ's Interpretation of Isaiah 52's 'My Servant' in 3 Nephi," in this volume.

Sermon, these warnings and judgments will befall a people who sin against the light, truth, and spiritual gifts they had earlier received. They will be accounted as the heathens who live in darkness and paganism. However, some and maybe even many of the Gentiles will accept the gospel and be numbered among the Lord's people. Their blessings and close relationship with the house of Israel is highlighted in the next section of the sermon.

C' Promises to the Gentiles and the remnants of Israel
3 Nephi 21:22–29 (Isaiah 52:12)

Jesus's blessings to the Gentiles are conditional upon their repenting, hearkening to his words, and not hardening their hearts (3 Nephi 21:22). He then promises five profound blessings:

1. He will establish his church among the Gentiles (v. 22). This promise was fulfilled by Joseph Smith and the first generation of Latter-day Saints. As stated in the dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland Temple, these early Saints, "who are identified with the Gentiles," received the necessary revelations and commandments from the Lord to establish the restored church of Jesus Christ on earth (D&C 109:60).
2. They will be numbered among the house of Israel (v. 22). Patriarchal blessings indicate that baptized Latter-day Saints have become covenant Israelites and are identified with different tribes of the house of Israel. Granted, most church members probably have some ancient Israelite ancestry, although it may be far back in their pedigree. But the majority of the ancestors of the early Latter-day Saints come from the Gentile nations of Europe and not from the recognizable posterity of Israel, such as the Jews or Lamanites. As these mostly Gentile people enter the covenant, they are restored as rightful heirs in the house of Israel.
3. They will assist the American remnant of Jacob in building the New Jerusalem (v. 23). Although the early Saints attempted to build this holy city in early church history, that effort was thwarted. Thus, this promise remains to be

fulfilled. While church members await the building of the city, Zion is being strengthened as LDS stakes and temples are established throughout the world.

4. They will assist the Lord's people of Israel to gather unto the New Jerusalem (v. 24). This service opportunity still awaits its promised fulfillment.
5. The "power of heaven," including the Lord Jesus Christ, will come down and be in their midst (v. 25). This blessing, culminating in the Savior's millennial reign, is still in the future.

As these promised blessings unfold among the Gentiles, the Father's work among the scattered remnants of Israel will also commence. The gospel will be preached among "the remnant of this people," commonly identified as the Lamanites in LDS culture (v. 26). Also, the Father's work will commence among the lost tribes of Israel (v. 26) and among the dispersed of Lord's people (the Jews) so that they may call upon his holy name (v. 27). Then the Father's work will commence among all nations in gathering his people to their promised lands (v. 28). As foretold by Isaiah and quoted earlier by Jesus in the Father's Covenant People Sermon, this gathering process will not be in haste nor by flight (Isaiah 52:12; 3 Nephi 20:42); rather, Israel's gathering and restoration will proceed in an orderly manner with divine help preparing the way and protecting their work (v. 29).

B' The building and triumph of Zion in the last days
3 Nephi 22:1-17 (Isaiah 54:1-17)

Jesus summarizes the Father's covenant fulfillment with his people as he cites the prophetic and poetic words of Isaiah 54 with only a few minor changes. Isaiah compares the house of Israel and her connection with the Lord to the relationship between a wife and her husband. She is told to sing aloud because even though she has been barren and did not "travail with child" (or deliver children of her own), many children will be added to her family. These children will come from the desolate woman, referring to

the Gentile nations (3 Nephi 22:1). So much growth is expected that Israel needs to enlarge her tent by adding more curtains or walls reinforced with cords and strong stakes. This comparison of Israel's abode with a tent symbolizes the growth of Zion in the latter days with new, strong stakes representing the expansion of the Lord's church on earth (v. 2). In fact, the house of Israel will expand so much that her people will inhabit the lands and desolate cities of the Gentiles (v. 3).

In addition to an expanded family, Israel's broken marriage to her spouse, the Lord, will be repaired. She will not be ashamed any more because of her earlier misbehavior; she will not remember the reproach of her youth when she failed to keep the Mosaic law during the Old Testament era, nor will she remember the reproach of her widowhood when she rejected her Lord in the New Testament period (v. 4). Even though her husband, the Holy One of Israel, forsook her and left her as a grieving woman, with loving forgiveness he will bring her back (vv. 5-7). Granted, with a little wrath he hid himself from her; but with eternal kindness he will show mercy to her (v. 7).

The sureness of his love, mercy, and redemption is sealed with an oath. Just as the Lord made an oath with Noah that the earth would never be flooded again, the Lord promises that he will not be wroth with Israel (v. 9). Although mountains and hills may depart, his kindness and the covenant of his peace will not depart from Israel (v. 10).

Isaiah uses symbolic imagery to describe how the house of Israel will eventually be built as with precious jewels and semi-precious gems. For examples, her foundations will be laid with blue sapphires, her windows made with milky agates and her gates with red carbuncles (or garnets, vv. 11-12).

The children of Israel will be taught of the Lord, and they will live in peace and righteousness. Although difficulties may surround them, they will not need to fear (vv. 13-14). The Lord promises that the enemies who gather against Israel will fall (v. 15). To bring about the redemption of the house of Israel, he has prepared both

servants who will bring forth his work and spoilers who will destroy the wicked in the latter days (v. 16). No weapons or lies against the covenant children of God will prevail. All these blessings are secure because "this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord" (v. 17).

This glorious capstone of the Father's Covenant People Sermon describes a heavenly family setting. A large, righteous family lives in peace and harmony: the parents are loving, tender, and forgiving; their house is like a palace with beautiful, precious decor; the children are intelligent and righteous; the household is sheltered and protected. Their blessings and righteousness result from the spiritual gifts and power of God the Father as promised and delivered by the redemptive love and mercy of their Lord, the Son of God. What a glorious scene that will be for the Father's covenant people.

A' The Savior's concluding admonitions and promises
3 Nephi 23:1-5

The Savior concludes the Father's Covenant People Sermon in the first verses of 3 Nephi 23 with two admonitions, each with an accompanying promise. The first admonition is to "search these things diligently; for great are the words of Isaiah" (3 Nephi 23:1). The attached promise is similar to the one at the beginning of the sermon—that all things Isaiah spoke either have been or will be fulfilled according to the words he spoke (v. 3). So, in addition to studying the covenant teachings found in the Book of Mormon, we need to continually study Isaiah's writings in the Bible in order to understand and appreciate the covenant promises and key events of the last days.

The second admonition is directed to the multitude, with specific instructions to his disciples. The people are to heed his words, and the disciples are to be sure his words are written so the writings can go forth unto the Gentiles (v. 4). The associated promise is that those who hearken to his words and repent and are baptized—"the same shall be saved" (v. 5). We today have the blessing and opportunity to share and testify of the teachings and prophecies of

the holy scriptures so that more of God's children can heed God's word, repent, and come unto Christ and be saved.

Key Prophecies and Promises of the Father's Covenant People Sermon

In summary, we recognize that the Father's Covenant People Sermon develops six key themes that are structured in a chiastic pattern of introverted parallelism: (A) the words of Isaiah and God's promises, (B) Israel gathering in Zion, (C) covenant promises to Israel and the Gentiles, (D) judgments (blessings and warnings) to the world, (E) kings and the "marred servant," (F) the promised covenant sign of the Book of Mormon coming from the Gentiles to the Lamanites.

Through reading and studying the Father's Covenant People Sermon in 3 Nephi, we see that Heavenly Father is a covenantal God. He created this earth and provided for our mortal existence as promised in the premortal councils. He sent forth prophets—such as Moses, Lehi, Nephi, and Jeremiah, and his own Son—to instruct, prepare, supervise, remind, record, and perpetuate God's covenant blessings and promises among us. He inspired Nephi to record valuable prophecies about the restoration of the gospel and the gathering of Israel. The scriptural writings of the ancient prophets, especially the insights of Nephi in 1 and 2 Nephi, lay the foundation for the Father's covenant teachings as delivered by Jesus in 3 Nephi.

As commanded by the Father, Jesus taught the Book of Mormon community about the Father's covenant people in the latter days. He cited Old Testament prophets (whom he had instructed as the premortal Yahweh, or Jehovah) to reinforce and enrich his teachings. He highlighted the roles of key prophets, including himself and his servant of the latter days (Joseph Smith). He gave two significant signs: (1) the Book of Mormon coming forth from the Gentiles to Lehi's seed, who would "begin to know these things" (the Savior's teachings and works, 3 Nephi 21:7) recorded in the

Book of Mormon,[24] and (2) as a part of the marvelous gathering of the covenant righteous to Zion, powerful remnants of Israel will be gathered to their various promised lands of inheritance.[25] With a message of power and authority, Jesus also made a sure promise that the Father will fulfill all the covenant promises that he gave to Abraham.[26] In essence, the resurrected Savior explained important elements of the gospel's restoration, foretold signs associated with the establishment of Zion in the last days, and invited Israel and the Gentiles to come unto him, to become the Father's covenant people, and to help fulfill the Father's covenant promises.

Jesus emphasized that these covenant blessings are available for each of us, whether we are literally of the house of Israel or from the nations of the Gentiles. By covenant, we strive to bring others unto Christ. By covenant, we become his representatives to the world and we seek out and encourage others to enter into covenants with him. By covenant, we commit ourselves to build and perfect each other in Christ's church and kingdom. By covenant, we open the gates of heaven as we enter the house of the Lord and make solemn promises with God for ourselves and, vicariously, for others. We cannot draw close to Heavenly Father and we cannot dwell in his celestial realms without being in an everlasting covenant relationship with him. This covenant blessing was initiated by God the Father, continues to be administered by his Son, Jesus Christ, and must be verified by the Holy Spirit.

As taught in the Father's Covenant People Sermon, the house of Israel and the teachings of Isaiah and the Book of Mormon play

---

24. See 3 Nephi 21:1-7 and 29:1-3, where this sign is first given by Jesus and then emphasized by Mormon.

25. See 3 Nephi 16:5, 15-16; 20:14-16, 19, 22, 29; 21:1, 11-12, 22-28, where this topic is repeatedly declared. Compare Jeremiah 16:14-15, where the significance of the gathering as a sign of God's power is emphasized. Note that Lehi was a younger, contemporary prophet in Jerusalem during Jeremiah's ministry. Also, as described earlier in this paper and in note 10, the first teachings in the Book of Mormon about the gathering of Israel were delivered by Lehi.

26. See 3 Nephi 16:5, 17; 20:12, 25, 46; 21:7, 26-29; 22:1; 23:1-5, where this promise is taught.

key roles in distributing and verifying God's covenant promises made some four millennia ago to the great patriarch and prophet, Abraham. We, as covenant people of Israel, can carry these blessings to all nations and peoples of the earth. This profound sermon provides us with the insights and encouragement to do so.

Victor L. Ludlow is an emeritus professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University. He received his PhD in Near Eastern and Judaic studies from Brandeis University.

Christ's Interpretation of Isaiah 52's "My Servant" in 3 Nephi

Gaye Strathearn and Jacob Moody

Introduction

When the Savior appeared to the "more righteous" of the Nephites and Lamanites, he used many teachings that modern readers readily recognize from the Old and New Testaments. Some critics have suggested that Joseph Smith merely lifted these teachings from his copy of the Bible.[1] While some of these quotations are very similar to the accounts in the King James Bible, there are some significant differences that strongly suggest that the process was more complex and nuanced than these critics allow.

The most quoted biblical text in the Book of Mormon is the book of Isaiah. In fact, the Book of Mormon records twenty-one

1. As far back as 1887, one critic criticized the Book of Mormon because he said it duplicated the Sermon on the Mount "word for word." He claimed that there is "no excuse for this lack of originality and constant repetition of the Bible" because "God never does unnecessary things." He thus concluded, "[C]areful examination proves [the Book of Mormon] to be an unprincipled *plagiarist*." M. T. Lamb, *The Golden Bible; or, The Book of Mormon. Is it from God?* (New York: Ward and Drummond, 1887), iii, 187–89, 212. Likewise, Mark Twain claimed that the Book of Mormon contains passages "'smouched' from the New Testament and no credit given. Mark Twain, *Roughing It* (New York: Harper & Row, 1913), 1:119. Yet, neither the Bible nor the Book of Mormon claims that the Sermon on the Mount is the intellectual property of Matthew; it is the teachings of Jesus given to both groups of people. A more recent academic critique is David P. Wright, "Isaiah in the Book of Mormon: Or Joseph Smith in Isaiah," in *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon,* ed. Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 157–234.

chapters from Isaiah with frequent quotations from other chapters.[2] This fascination with Isaiah's writings should not be surprising. Among the Dead Sea Scrolls, the book of Isaiah is also well represented in the extant texts.[3] Three Book of Mormon individuals in particular quote Isaiah at length: Nephi, his brother Jacob, and Christ.[4] Nephi says that he delighted in the words of Isaiah because "he verily saw my Redeemer, even as I have seen him" (2 Nephi 11:2). He quoted Isaiah that he "might more fully persuade [his people] to believe in the Lord their Redeemer" (1 Nephi 19:23). As we read his Isaiah selections, it becomes evident that one of the major lessons he wanted his people to know about Christ was his desire and power to redeem Israel and gather them from their scattered condition, a condition that was particularly poignant to Nephi because his people were "a remnant of the house of Israel, a branch who have been broken off" (1 Nephi 19:24). Nephi instructed Jacob that he was to continue to use the teachings of Isaiah in his preaching (2 Nephi 6:4).

Six hundred years later when Christ came to the Americas, he spent a significant portion of his sermon on the second day focused

---

2. "The Book of Mormon quotes from the following chapters of Isaiah: 2–14 (2 Nephi 12–24); 29 (2 Nephi 27); 48, 49 (1 Nephi 20, 21); 50, 51 (2 Nephi 7, 8); 52 (3 Nephi 20); 53 (Mosiah 14); 54 (3 Nephi 22); 55 (2 Nephi 26:25)." Sidney B. Sperry, "The 'Isaiah Problem' in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4/1 (1995): 137.

3. At least twenty-one manuscripts of Isaiah, including the Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsa[a]), have been discovered at Qumran. Only the books of Psalms (thirty-six scrolls) and Deuteronomy (thirty scrolls) are more numerous. James VanderKam and Peter Flint, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Their Significance for Understanding the Bible, Judaism, Jesus, and Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2002), 131.

4. Other Latter-day Saint discussions on the Book of Mormon's use of Isaiah include Sperry, "The 'Isaiah Problem' in the Book of Mormon," 129–52; John A. Tvedtnes, "Isaiah Variants in the Book of Mormon," in *Isaiah and the Prophets: Inspired Voices from the Old Testament* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1984), 165–77; and Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch, eds, *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998). See also LDS commentaries on Isaiah that frequently reference the Book of Mormon passages: Monte S. Nyman, *"Great Are the Words of Isaiah"* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980); Victor L. Ludlow, *Isaiah: Prophet, Seer, and Poet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982); and Donald W. Parry, Jay A. Parry, and Tina M. Peterson, *Understanding Isaiah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1998).

on Isaiah's teachings. He quoted a substantial portion of chapter 52, although in a rearranged order, and all of chapter 54. What is stunning about this rendition is that Jesus did not include Isaiah 53 in his sermon, even though his audience would probably have expected it. Instead he includes a chapter discussing the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. It is the purpose of this paper to argue that the discussion on the Book of Mormon was not a digression from his teaching from the Isaianic texts, but rather was Jesus's interpretation of the servant passage in Isaiah 52:13-15, which he had just quoted in 3 Nephi 20:43-45.

The Suffering Servant in Isaiah

It has long been noted that Isaiah, starting in chapter 41, includes a series of four Servant Songs or poems (42:1-7; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12), three of which are also included in the Book of Mormon (see 1 Nephi 21:1-8; 2 Nephi 7:4-9; Mosiah 14-15; 3 Nephi 20:43-45; 21:8-10). From these texts we learn that God has a vested interest in this servant. He was formed "from the womb to be [God's] servant" (Isaiah 49:1, 5). Further, God declares, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him" (Isaiah 42:1), and "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee" (Isaiah 42:6). In addition, it is through this servant that God will be glorified (Isaiah 49:3). He is to be God's "salvation unto the end of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6). In his responsibilities God has prepared him with the qualities that will enable him to be an instrument in God's hands. "And [the Lord] hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me" (Isaiah 49:2), and "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned" (Isaiah 50:4). "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth" (Isaiah 42:4).

The servant has a role to play with both the house of Israel and the Gentiles. Among the house of Israel the servant's responsibility

is "to bring Jacob again to [God]" and "to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel" (Isaiah 49:5-6).

Among the Gentiles, he will bring forth judgment (Isaiah 42:1) but will also be given as "a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, *and* them that sit in darkness out of the prison house" (Isaiah 42:6-7; emphasis added; see also 49:6).[5] Indeed, "the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for *that* which had not been told them shall they see; and *that* which they had not heard shall they consider" (Isaiah 52:15; emphasis added). These references seem to show that the Gentiles are those who are blind or in darkness and that it is the servant's responsibility to provide them with judgment and the light of understanding. The shut-mouthed reaction of the "kings" of the "many nations" only goes to show the power the servant's message/mission will have on the leaders of the Gentiles. In the Book of Mormon, Nephi implies that the servant of Isaiah 49 would do "a marvelous work among the Gentiles" that would be "of great worth" unto both the Gentiles and the house of Israel (1 Nephi 22:8-11).

The third and the fourth Servant Songs, in particular, detail the willingness of the servant to fulfill his mission but describe the intense persecutions and difficulties that accompany the call. "The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting . . . : therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed" (Isaiah 50:5-7). Likewise, the most famous of the Suffering Servant Songs describes a servant whose

---

5. Christopher R. Seitz shows the ambiguity of the phrase "and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles" (Isaiah 42:6). He says that "the people" refers to Israel and that this passage is showing two distinct roles for the servant: as a covenant of Israel and a light of the Gentiles. Seitz also recognizes that "the people" and "the Gentiles" are in a parallelism and are one and the same. Either way it is read, Seitz explains both of these views still show the servant's role among the nations, Israelite or Gentile. *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 6:364.

> visage was so marred more than any man, . . . [who] is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows; and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed . . . ; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: . . . for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. . . . He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. (Isaiah 52:14–53:11)

But who is this servant? In some places Isaiah identified him with Israel: "But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend" (41:8; compare 44:1), but in other places the servant seems to refer to a specific individual (42:1; 49:4; 52:13). Thus, the servant has variously been interpreted as referring to corporate Israel, a historical figure such as the prophet Isaiah, a royal servant, a priestly servant, or a second Moses. In Nephi's explanation of Isaiah 48, the servant seems to refer to "a marvelous work among the Gentiles" (1 Nephi 22:8) and is usually interpreted to refer to Joseph Smith.[6] It is quite possible that given

6. Nyman, *"Great Are the Words of Isaiah,"* 177; Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon: Volume 1—First and Second Nephi* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987), 160–62; Robert E. Parsons, "The Prophecies of the Prophets," in *The Book of Mormon: First Nephi, The Doctrinal Foundation*, ed.

the symbolic nature of Isaiah's prophecies, the servant can refer to both Israel and a number of individuals who have suffered and been persecuted while engaged in God's work.[7]

The last of these Servant Songs (Isaiah 53) is the most widely known. It is of particular significance for Christians who, in the New Testament, the Book of Mormon, and numerous other Christian texts, have interpreted it in reference to Christ.[8] It should be noted that the previous interpretations of Isaiah's servant prophecies in no way devalue the Christological interpretation; rather they enhance it because they add further witness to the numerous ways that the Old Testament prefigured Christ and his mission.[9]

Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1988), 276-77; David Rolph Seely, "The Lord Will Bring Salvation (Isaiah 51-66)" in *Studies in Scripture, Volume 4: 1 Kings to Malachi*, ed. Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993), 151; Andrew C. Skinner, "Nephi's Lessons to His People: The Messiah, the Land, and Isaiah 48-49 in 1 Nephi 19-22," in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 107.

7. Gordon P. Hugenberger, "The Servant of the Lord in the 'Servant Songs' of Isaiah: A Second Moses Figure," in *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts*, ed. Philip E. Satterthwaite, Richard S. Hess, and Gordon J. Wenham (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), 105-40. For a more extensive list of interpretations, see Kristin Joachimsen, "Steck's Five Stories of the Servant in Isaiah lii 13-liii 12, and Beyond," *Vetus Testamentum* 57 (2007): 220.

8. Acts 8:26-35, Mosiah 14-15. See also *1 Clement* 16; *Epistle of Ignatius to the Antiochians* 3; *Epistle of Barnabas* 5; *First Apology of Justin* 50, 51; *Dialogue of Justin* 43, 97, 111, 114. For discussions of Jewish and Christian interpretations, see Bernd Janowski and Peter Stuhlmacher, eds., *The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 in Jewish and Christian Sources*, trans. Daniel P. Bailey (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004). There is also some evidence that a Qumran interpretation may have understood the text messianically. 1QIsa^a has "So have I anointed his appearance" rather than "his visage was so marred" for Isaiah 52:14. Hengel suggests that this variant "could be based on a conscious interpretation of Isaiah 52:14 in Qumran." 1QIsa^a of Isaiah 53:5, 10 has "pierced" instead of "bruised." Martin Hengel with Daniel P. Bailey, "The Effective History of Isaiah 53 in the Pre-Christian Period," in Janowski and Stuhlmacher, eds., *The Suffering Servant*, 105.

9. For Latter-day Saints the multiple fulfillments provide a legitimate way to understand Isaianic prophecies. Elder Dallin H. Oaks has taught, "The book of Isaiah contains numerous prophecies that seem to have multiple fulfillments. One seems to involve the people of Isaiah's day or the circumstances of the next generation. Another meaning, often symbolic, seems to refer to events in the meridian of time, when Jerusalem was destroyed and her people scattered after the crucifixion of the Son of God. Still another meaning or fulfillment of the same prophecy seems to relate to the

Scholars have long recognized that Isaiah 52:13-15 should be read as the prologue to chapter 53. These verses have a number of linguistic links to the poem's epilogue (Isaiah 53:11c-12); the most important for this discussion is the repetition of the term *my servant* (52:13 and 53:11), which acts as an *inclusio* for the poem.[10] Therefore, instead of placing the chapter break at verse 15, a more logical chapter break would be after verse 12.[11]

Although Isaiah 54 does not contain a Servant Song, an interesting phenomenon takes place in its final verse: the singular servant of the Servant Songs becomes the plural servants. "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord." One scholar has noted the connection between this verse and the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 who "had been promised a posterity and the fruit of his labor. On his account many were to be accounted righteous (v. 11). Isaiah 54:17 builds on this promise. The suffering innocent one of chapter 53 is seen as having his life, in some way, extended and incorporated through his suffering by those who are now designated 'the servants of the Lord.' They are the bearers of the true faith to the next generation."[12]

"My Servant" in 3 Nephi 20:43-45

As we turn to Jesus's second-day sermon, we see that in the Book of Mormon, as with Isaiah 53, the modern chapter divisions can sometimes distract us from important literary units. For example, it is evident that Jesus intended for 3 Nephi 20:10-23:5 to be

---

events attending the Second Coming of the Savior." "Scripture Reading and Revelation," *Ensign,* January 1995, 8.

10. Michael L. Barré, "Textual and Rhetorical-Critical Observations on the Last Servant Song (Isaiah 52:13-53:12)," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 62 (2000): 1-2.

11. This reading is supported by the layout of the Leningrad Codex, the oldest extant complete Hebrew Bible (eleventh century AD), which has a break after Isaiah 52:12 but not at 53:1. David Noel Freedman, ed., *The Leningrad Codex: A Facsimile Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 492-93. The Great Isaiah Scroll from the Dead Sea Scrolls has a break after Isaiah 52:12, but it has another one before the beginning of Isaiah 53:1. Donald W. Parry and Elisha Qimron, eds., *The Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsa^a): A New Edition* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 86-89.

12. Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 430.

understood as a single thematic unit, structured in a chiastic pattern and centering on the writings of Isaiah.[13] Jesus begins and ends by commanding his listeners to search Isaiah's words. In chapter 20 Jesus directs his listeners, "Ye have them [i.e., the writings of Isaiah] before you, therefore search them" (3 Nephi 20:11). At the end he commanded, "Ye ought to search these things [i.e., the writings of Isaiah]. Yea, a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently" (3 Nephi 23:1). Although not everything contained in the intervening material is a quotation from Isaiah, these thematic "bookends" suggest to the reader that even the non-Isaiah material must be understood with an Isaianic context.

Jesus uses the Isaiah passages to teach his audience about the doctrine of the gathering. Isaiah's teachings are important because he taught "all things concerning my people which are of the house of Israel; therefore it must needs be that he must speak also to the Gentiles. And all things that he spake have been and shall be, even according to the words which he spake" (3 Nephi 23:2-3). Also, when the words of Isaiah are fulfilled, "then is the fulfilling of the covenant which the Father hath made unto his people, O house of Israel. And then shall the remnants, which shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth, be gathered in . . . ; and they shall be brought to a knowledge of the Lord their God, who hath redeemed them" (3 Nephi 20:11-13).

It is in this context of the gathering that Jesus quotes Isaiah 52, although in a version rearranged and modified from that found in the biblical text. At the end of 3 Nephi 20, Jesus quotes Isaiah 52:13-15: "Behold, my servant shall deal prudently; he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonied at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider." In its Isaianic context, the role of this servant is to do away with

13. Ludlow, *Isaiah: Prophet, Seer, and Poet*, 433-46.

the uncleanness and defilement of Zion.[14] In the 3 Nephi context, however, the servant's role is more specifically to prepare Israel for the gathering.

Even though the Book of Mormon does not specifically combine Isaiah 52:13-15 with Isaiah 53, as we have noted, scholars have almost universally recognized that these verses act as the prologue to Isaiah 53. The characteristics of the servant described in them is therefore expanded and explained in chapter 53. In 3 Nephi, however, Jesus does not continue and quote Isaiah 53. This must have been somewhat surprising to his audience. We know from Abinadi's teaching that Isaiah 53 was included on the brass plates and would therefore have been familiar to Jesus's listeners (Mosiah 14). Instead, Jesus returns to the subject of the gathering. At the end of 3 Nephi 20, he says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, all these things [for example, the servant prophecy] shall surely come, even as the Father hath commanded me. Then shall this covenant which the Father hath covenanted with his people be fulfilled; and then shall Jerusalem be inhabited again with my people, and it shall be the land of their inheritance" (v. 46). The future tense of the passage indicates that Jesus is *not* using the servant passage to speak of himself. As he spoke these words, he stood before his audience as a glorified, resurrected being; not as someone whose "visage was so marred more than any man." Latter-day Saint commentators, therefore, have generally understood this passage to refer to Joseph Smith or, occasionally, to another latter-day prophet.[15] Without

14. Seitz, *Interpreter's Bible*, 6:454.

15. See Nyman, *"Great Are the Words of Isaiah"*, 204; *Old Testament: 1 Kings-Malachi* Student Manual, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982), 197; Ludlow, *Isaiah*, 439-41; Monte S. Nyman, *Isaiah: Prophecies of the Restoration* (Salt Lake City: Millennial, 1998), 18-19; Joseph Fielding McConkie, Robert L. Millet and Brent L. Top, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon: Volume IV—Third Nephi through Moroni* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992), 148-49; Hoyt W. Brewster, *Isaiah Plain and Simple: The Message of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1995), 243-44; Parry, Parry, and Peterson, *Understanding Isaiah*, 467-68; Victor L. Ludlow, "Isaiah chap. Review: 3 Nephi 20:32-45 // Isaiah 52:1-3, 6-15," in *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, ed. Dennis L. Largey (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 397; David R. Minert, *Simplified Isaiah for Latter day Saints: An Interpretive Guide for*

doubt, Joseph Smith was "marred" for the work, as prophesied by Moroni (Joseph Smith—History 1:33), and yet his influence has continued to grow even after his death. The difficulty with this interpretation of the servant in the 3 Nephi context is that the Savior himself connects the servant in 3 Nephi 20 with his teachings in chapter 21, and this chapter is not about Joseph Smith per se; it is about the Book of Mormon. Readers, therefore, should not view chapter 21 as a digression from Jesus's discussion of Isaiah; rather, it should be understood as his interpretation of the servant passage in Isaiah 52:13-15. At least in our minds, it is this interpretation that is the most significant contribution of the 3 Nephi rendition of Isaiah 52 and 54.

Chapter 21 begins with Jesus identifying a sign for the people to recognize the beginning of the gathering. Although the gathering is the major theme of Jesus's discourse, the sign that he gives of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, on the surface, comes abruptly.

> And verily I say unto you, I give unto you a sign, that ye may know the time when these things shall be about to take place—that I shall gather in, from their long dispersion, my people, O house of Israel, and shall establish again among them my Zion; And behold, this is the thing which I will give unto you for a sign—for verily I say unto you that when these things which I declare unto you, and which I shall declare unto you hereafter of myself, and by the power of the Holy Ghost which shall be given unto you of the Father, shall be made known unto the Gentiles that they may know concerning this people who are a remnant of the house of Jacob, and concerning this my people who shall be scattered by them; . . . therefore, when these works and the

Those Who Diligently Search the Book of Isaiah (Orem, UT: Granite, 2006), 219. Even a non-Latter-day Saint who wrote on the Book of Mormon argued that the servant was a reference to Joseph Smith. Wesley P. Walters, *The Use of the Old Testament in the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1990), 45.

> works which shall be wrought among you hereafter shall come forth from the Gentiles, unto your seed . . . —it shall be a sign unto them, that they may know that the work of the Father hath already commenced unto the fulfilling of the covenant which he hath made unto the people who are of the house of Israel. (3 Nephi 21:1, 2, 5, 7)

This covenant teaching is, according to one scholar, the very heart of the chiastic structure of Jesus's teaching in this second-day sermon.[16]

Jesus then teaches that the Book of Mormon will come forth from the Gentiles (3 Nephi 21:5-6) and that it will be the means whereby the Gentiles "may repent and come unto me and be baptized in my name and know of the true points of my doctrine, that they may be numbered among my people, O house of Israel" (v. 6). Furthermore, he teaches that "when these things [i.e., the coming forth of the Book of Mormon] come to pass that thy seed shall begin to know these things—it shall be a sign unto them, that they may know that the work of the Father hath already commenced unto the fulfilling of the covenant which he hath made unto the people who are of the house of Israel" (v. 7).[17]

We would like to suggest, therefore, that there is another nuance that Jesus is making by his interpretation of the servant. He may be using a literary device called personification, which applies human attributes to inanimate objects. This technique is often found in other scriptural passages. For example, we read in Isaiah 55:12 that "the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." Mountains and hills don't sing, and trees don't have hands to clap, but in this instance they are given human characteristics to portray

16. Ludlow, *Isaiah: Prophet, Seer, and Poet*, 433-46. See Victor L. Ludlow, "The Father's Covenant People Sermon: 3 Nephi 20:10-23:5," in this volume.

17. Thus President Ezra Taft Benson taught, "The Book of Mormon is the instrument that God designed to 'sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out [His] elect.' (Moses 7:62)." "Flooding the Earth with the Book of Mormon," *Ensign,* November 1988, 4.

a picture for the reader. Likewise, sometimes concepts like Christ's everlasting covenant are described as "a messenger before my face to prepare the way before me" (D&C 45:9). We would suggest that Jesus is using a similar technique to identify the servant as the Book of Mormon. After all, in the first half of chapter 21, Jesus's emphasis is on the writings rather than an individual. Even when he refers to the agent who brings forth the writing in verse 5, he uses the more generic plural term *Gentiles* rather than make reference to a specific individual.

After this seemingly abrupt shift in focus to the Book of Mormon, Jesus then makes three deliberate statements that show his discussion of the Book of Mormon is in fact linked to the servant prophecy in the previous chapter. First, in verse 8, Jesus again quotes Isaiah 52:15 / 3 Nephi 20:45. "And when that day shall come, it shall come to pass that kings shall shut their mouths; for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider." Then in verse 9 he interprets: "For in that day, for my sake shall the Father work a work, which shall be a great and a marvelous work among them; and there shall be among them those who will not believe it, although a man shall declare it unto them." This language, as we have seen, parallels that of Nephi's interpretation of the servant in 1 Nephi 22:8–11. Latter-day prophets have frequently equated the "great and marvelous work" with the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, and the context of 3 Nephi 21 supports such an interpretation. In verses 8 and 9, the phrase *in that day* refers to the beginning of the fulfilling of the covenant that was facilitated by the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.

Second, Jesus again refers to "my servant" in verse 10, tying this chapter back to the Isaiah 52 prophecy, just as he does in Isaiah 53. "But behold, the life of my servant shall be in my hand" (3 Nephi 21:10).

Third, just as the Isaianic servant had been described, "his visage was so *marred* more than any man," so Jesus prophesies that because "the life of my servant shall be in my hand; therefore they

shall not hurt him, although he shall be *marred* because of them. Yet I will heal him, for I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil" (3 Nephi 21:10). Speaking of the Book of Mormon, the Lord declared, "I will not suffer that they shall destroy my work; yea, I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil" (D&C 10:43). Nevertheless, many critics have tried to undermine and destroy the Book of Mormon. In 1887 the Reverend M. T. Lamb described the Book of Mormon as "verbose, blundering, stupid."[18] In a famous statement, Mark Twain characterized the Book of Mormon as "such a pretentious affair, and yet so 'slow,' so sleepy; such an insipid mess of inspiration. It is chloroform in print."[19] In modern times some seem to have devoted their lives to trying to discredit the Book of Mormon.[20] Nevertheless, in spite of the ongoing attacks against the legitimacy of the Book of Mormon, its influence continues to increase throughout the world.

Why is the Book of Mormon *the* sign that the gathering is about to take place? There are two major reasons. First, one of its purposes, as stated on the title page, is that the house of Israel "may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever." But "Israel . . . must first return to their covenants and then to their covenant lands."[21] Second, as we have seen in 3 Nephi 20, the purpose of the gathering is so that the house of Israel "shall be brought to the knowledge of the Lord their God, who hath redeemed them" (v. 13). The Book of Mormon is the sign for the gathering because its

18. Lamb, *The Golden Bible*, iii.

19. Twain, *Roughing It*, 1:110.

20. See, for example, Brent Lee Metcalfe, ed., *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993). For responses to many of the criticisms therein, see *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, 6/1–2 (1994); 7/1–2 (1995); and John Wm. Maddox, "A Listing of Points and Counterpoints," *FARMS Review of Books* 8/1 (1996): 1–26.

21. Joseph Fielding McConkie, "The Final Gathering to Christ," in *Studies in Scripture, Volume 8: Alma 30 to Moroni*, ed. Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 184.

purpose is also to convince both "Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ" (Book of Mormon title page).

The gathering includes both Jew and Gentile. Jesus specifically taught that if the Gentiles "will not harden their hearts, that they may repent and come unto me and be baptized in my name and know of the true points of my doctrine, that they may be numbered among my people, O house of Israel" (3 Nephi 21:6). Again, later in the chapter he reiterates, "But if they will repent and hearken unto my words, and harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them, and they shall come in unto the covenant and be numbered among this the remnant of Jacob, unto whom I have given this land for their inheritance" (v. 22). In this dispensation, it is the Book of Mormon that has been most influential in helping the Gentiles come unto Christ. As President Ezra Taft Benson taught,

> [The Book of Mormon] contains the words of Christ, and its great mission is to bring men to Christ and all other things are secondary. The golden question of the Book of Mormon is, "Do you want to learn more of Christ?" . . . Anyone who has diligently sought to know the doctrines and teachings of the Book of Mormon and has used it conscientiously in missionary work knows within his soul that this is the instrument which God has given to the missionaries to convince Jew and Gentile and Lamanite of the truthfulness of our message.[22]

Having interpreted the servant as the Book of Mormon, outlining the importance of the Gentiles in bringing it forth, and outlining the place of the Gentiles vis-à-vis latter-day Israel, Jesus gives a series of "then" statements that highlight aspects of the gathering: *then* the Gentiles will assist Israel to be gathered (3 Nephi 20:24); "*then* shall the power of heaven come down among them; and I will be in their midst" (v. 25), reinforcing his statement in 20:22;

22. Ezra Taft Benson, *A Witness and a Warning: A Modern-day Prophet Testifies of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 5–6.

"*then* shall the work of the Father commence at that day, even when this gospel shall be preached among the remnant of this people" (v. 26); and "*then* shall the work commence, with the Father among all nations in preparing the way whereby his people may be gathered home to the land of their inheritance" (v. 28). None of these stages would be possible without the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.

Jesus concludes his discussion of Isaiah by quoting Isaiah 54, which rejoices in the blessings that will come to both Israel and the Gentiles as they gather. One of those blessings is that they will "be taught of the Lord" (3 Nephi 22:13), which must have reminded his audience of what he said at the beginning of this sermon about the reason for the gathering, "and they shall be brought to a knowledge of the Lord their God, who hath redeemed them" (3 Nephi 20:13). The genitive construction "taught of the Lord" in 3 Nephi 22:13 can be understood either as a subjective genitive (they will be taught by the Lord) or as an objective genitive (they will be taught about the Lord).[23] Certainly the major role of the Book of Mormon is to teach about Jesus Christ, but that is only a precursor to the time when in the last days, just as he was with the people of 3 Nephi, he will come to his gathered people and teach them personally.

Another blessing that Jesus extends to gathered Israel is "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall revile against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord" (3 Nephi 22:17). Jesus thus returns to the servant theme, but here, as in the biblical text, there is a shift from the singular servant in 3 Nephi 20:43 and 21:10 to the plural servants here in verse 17. In 3 Nephi as well as Isaiah, this verse forms a crucial link back to the earlier chapters. In this context, the work of the Book of Mormon, as a servant of the Lord, rather than being

23. For an example of "by the Lord," see Childs, *Isaiah*, 430. For an example of "about the Lord," see John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982), 239.

destroyed by its marring has, rather, engendered the testimony of the many servants who have received righteousness from the Savior! Thus the promise of Moroni that weak things will become strong is fulfilled in the Book of Mormon (Ether 12:27; see also Mormon 9:33).

Conclusion

There are numerous ways that the servant in the Servant Songs can be understood. It may refer to Israel as a whole; it may refer to an individual prophet or to all prophets collectively. As Christians, we certainly recognize the interpretation of the servant as a reference to Christ. All of these interpretations have merit in helping us better understand the work of God in bringing to pass the immortality and eternal life of his children (Moses 1:39). In this paper we have argued that when Jesus quotes the servant passage in Isaiah 52:13-15 during his second-day sermon, he does so to add another interpretive layer to the servant. He teaches his audience, and all who would read the account, that the work of the Book of Mormon, though marred in the eyes of many critics, plays an essential role in the gathering of Israel. It is God's servant in preparing both Israel and the Gentiles to remember or enter into covenants that will prepare them to be a part of the great gathering of the latter days that will prepare them for the return of the Savior. The Book of Mormon is the standard for the gathering because its main purposes are to teach the covenants and to bring people to Christ. It is an important servant of the Lord that will bring about his purposes in the latter days.

Gaye Strathearn is an associate professor in the Department of Ancient Scripture at Brigham Young University. She received her PhD from Claremont Graduate University in religion with an emphasis on New Testament and early Christianity.

Jacob Moody is an MA student at Andrews University studying archaeology and history of antiquity.

The Social Model of the Trinity in 3 Nephi

David L. Paulsen and Ari D. Bruening

On June 16, 1844, in his last public sermon, Joseph Smith declares:

> When I have preached on the subject of the Deity, it has [always] been the plurality of Gods. It has been preached by the Elders for fifteen years. I have always declared God to be a distinct personage, Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father, and that the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and a Spirit: and these three constitute three distinct personages and three Gods.[1]

Aaron Tress, Preston Campbell, Michael Hansen, and Martin Pulido, BYU undergraduates majoring in philosophy, significantly contributed to the form and content of this article. Laura Rawlins, managing editor of the BYU Faculty Editing Service, provided valuable editing. The authors thank the BYU College of Humanities and Department of Philosophy for their generous financial support.

1. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 369-70; see 372. See Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1980), 378-80. Joseph's address responds to apostate members whose local newspaper attacked the church's doctrine of a plurality of Gods. The editors claim they received personal spiritual confirmation for Joseph's original teachings as recorded in the Book of Mormon and Book of Covenants; however, they anathematize those "damnable" doctrines they say are not among Joseph's original revelations, such as a plurality of Gods in the Godhead, Gods above God the Father, and the potentiality for God to fall. "Preamble" and "Resolutions," *Nauvoo Expositor* (Nauvoo, Illinois), June 7, 1844. Although we can infer that the authors had something other than a plurality of Gods in mind, they do not tell whether they believed Joseph's original doctrine was modalist, trinitarian, Unitarian, or otherwise. In any case, Joseph denies the apostates' claim that the doctrine on a plurality of Gods is

In the same discourse, Joseph rejects the classical Christian view that the three divine persons constitute one metaphysical substance, affirming instead that they should be considered "one God" in the sense that the three divine persons are "agreed as one."[2] As Joseph elsewhere explains, "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one God, infinite and eternal, without end" (Doctrine and Covenants 20:28),[3] but their unity is such that they "all agree in one or the self-same thing."[4] Thus, according to Joseph, whatever he spoke about the Godhead was always consistent with the teaching of a plurality of Gods who are agreed as one (apparently a variant of what is now called social trinitarianism).[5]

But the accuracy of Joseph's affirmation is disputed. Several scholars allege that Joseph's claim contradicts the historical record.[6] For instance, in his book *Mormonism and the Nature of God:*

---

a recent development. Rather, he holds that he and others have been teaching a plurality of Gods for fifteen years. *History of the Church*, 6:473-79.

2. Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 380.

3. While giving instruction to the Nauvoo Lyceum on February 16, 1841, "Joseph said concerning the Godhead [that] it was not as many imagined—three heads and but one body. He said the three were separate bodies—God the first, and Jesus the Mediator the second, and the Holy Ghost. And these three agree in one." Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 63. The unity of God is such that the saved may "become one with Christ, as he and the Father are one." "The Gospel," *Millennial Star* 38/32 (1876): 503.

4. Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 382.

5. David Paulsen and Brett McDonald, "Joseph Smith and the Trinity: An Analysis and Defense of the Social Model of the Godhead," *Faith and Philosophy* 25/1 (2008): 47-74.

6. Examples include Dan Vogel, "The Earliest Mormon Concept of God," in *Line upon Line: Essays on Mormon Doctrine*, ed. Gary J. Bergera (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 17-33; Thomas G. Alexander, "The Reconstruction of Mormon Doctrine: From Joseph Smith to Progressive Theology," in *Line upon Line*, 53-66; Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996); Boyd Kirkland, "The Development of the Mormon Doctrine of God," in *Line upon Line*, 35-52; Boyd Kirkland, "Jehovah as the Father," *Sunstone*, Autumn 1984, 36-44; Boyd Kirkland, "Elohim and Jehovah in Mormonism and in the Bible," *Dialogue* 19/1 (1986): 77-93; George B. Arbaugh, *Revelation in Mormonism: Its Character and Changing Forms* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1932); Clyde R. Forsberg Jr., "The Roots of Early Mormonism: An Exegetical Inquiry" (master's thesis, University of Calgary Department of Religious Studies, 1990); and Melodie Moench Charles, "Book of Mormon Christology," in *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology*, ed. Brent L. Metcalfe (Salt Lake

A Theological Evolution, 1830-1915, Kurt Widmer argues that "the 1830 Book of Mormon, and subsequently the early Mormon Church, held a modalistic, Christological position," and that for the first three years of its existence, the church was "a strict monotheistic Christian sect," holding to a "modalistic form of monotheism."[7]

In a previously published work, "The Development of the Mormon Understanding of God: Early Mormon Modalism and Other Myths," we tested Widmer's modalist thesis by examining every reference to Deity in the first edition of the Book of Mormon. We concluded that the evidence, taken in its entirety, powerfully contradicts Widmer's thesis.[8] And of this evidence, we found that the text of 3 Nephi is the most relevant because it recounts the resurrected Christ's interactions with God the Father and includes Christ's own explicit teachings about his relationship to God the Father.

In this paper we examine 3 Nephi in light of the claim that the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon is a modalist document. We conclude that (1) 3 Nephi contains extensive and persuasive evidence that Jesus Christ and his Father are distinct persons; (2) the model of the Godhead that most clearly emerges from a careful reading of the text is a variant of trinitarianism, consistent with social trinitarianism; and (3) the evidential potency of putative modalist passages found elsewhere in the Book of Mormon weakens in this context, and that read against the backdrop of this evidence and other teachings found in 3 Nephi regarding the Godhead, even these passages can be plausibly understood within a social trinitarian model. As prelude to this work, we set out more fully the differences between modalism and trinitarianism and summarize and examine the claims of historians who believe the Book of Mormon advances a form of modalism.

City: Signature Books, 1993), 81-114. Most proponents of this developmental theory make similar claims and use the same proof texts.

7. Kurt Widmer, *Mormonism and the Nature of God: A Theological Evolution, 1830-1915* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2000), 6, 36.

8. Ari D. Bruening and David L. Paulsen, "The Development of the Mormon Understanding of God: Early Mormon Modalism and Other Myths," *FARMS Review* 13/2 (2001): 109-69.

Modalisms vs. Trinitarianisms

Modalists affirm that one (and only one) person is God but that he functions or appears to us in three different modes, as Father, Son, or Holy Ghost. Sabellius (ca. 215 CE) thought God appears in these modes successively. That is, God acted in the role of the Father prior to the incarnation, acted as the Son when incarnated as Christ, and acts as the Holy Ghost after Christ's resurrection and ascension.[9] This is called chronological modalism, and many church fathers anathematized it.[10] The early controversy around modalism appears most pronounced in the third century and prior to the First Council of Nicaea. Adolf von Harnack explains that "against this view [modalism] the great Doctors of the Church—Tertullian, Origen, Novation, but above all, Hippolytus—had principally to fight."[11] As a result, the doctrine of the Trinity would at first be understood against the modalist backdrop. It was Tertullian who introduced the term *trinity* to Latin literature in *Against Praxeas*, and Theophilos of Antioch would introduce it to Greek literature in *Apology to Autolycus* 2.15.

Modalism also began to develop into a more rigorous position during this period. "At first Cleomenes, the disciple of Epigonus, was regarded as the head of the sect, and then, from c. A.D. 215, Sabellius. Against these there appeared, in the Roman Church, especially the presbyter Hippolytus, who sought to prove that the doctrine promulgated by them [the modalists] was a revolutionary error."[12] In the West, the controversy came to a head when Callistus became bishop (217–222 CE). To address the issue, he "determined to excommunicate both Sabellius and Hippolytus, the two heads of the contending factions."[13] Callistus's decision marked a distinctive point against the modalist doctrine as a mainstream position in the

9. Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 327–28.

10. Church fathers such as Tertullian and the Cappadocian fathers developed the Trinity doctrine against modalism.

11. Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1958), 3:52.

12. Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 57.

13. Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 58.

West. As Harnack explains: "The excommunication of Sabellius by Callistus in Rome resulted at once in the Monarchians [believers in only one divine person][14] ceasing to find any followers in the West, and in the complete withdrawal soon afterwards of strict and aggressive Modalism."[15]

Despite its weakened following, the position of modalism remained theologically relevant to the Arian controversy during the First Council of Nicaea (325 CE). Some bishops feared that the council's chosen term *homoousios* ("same substance") risked falling back into a heretical modalist Christology. John Henry Newman explains that Athanasius—the great proponent of the Nicene conclusions and great opponent to Arianism—mentioned that some council attendees objected to using "homoousios" because "it was not in Scripture . . . [and] that it was of a Sabellian tendency."[16] But modalism remained a separate heresy from Arianism; both were to be avoided. This separation is clear when Arius himself denies the Sabellian position in a "Letter to Alexander of Alexandria." He distances his own Christology from the modalist's when he writes, "nor [was Christ], as Sabellius said, dividing the Monad, a Son-Father."[17] So Arianism and modalism each stand as independent, anti-Nicene positions. Yet around the time of Nicaea, modalism was already eclipsed by larger

14. F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2nd ed. rev. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), s.v. "monarchianism."

15. Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 73. The doctrine was more persistent in the East. "That 'Sabellianism' was almost the only name by which Monarchianism was known in the East, points, for the rest, to schisms having resulted only from, or, at any rate, after the appearance and labours of Sabellius in the East, therefore at the earliest since about 230-240." Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 83. However, the documents needed to trace the doctrine between Origen and Arius are not well preserved. But "this much is certain, . . . in the East the fight against Monarchianism in the second half of the third century was a violent one." Harnack, *History of Dogma*, 82. For a detailed account of Modalism in the East, see Harnack's section entitled "Modalistic Monarchians in the East: Sebellianism and the History of Philosophical Christology and Theology after Origen," from *History of Dogma*, 81-118.

16. Athanasius, *Select Treatises of St. Athanasius in Controversy with the Arians*, 6th ed. trans. John H. Newman (London: Longmans Green, 1895), 1:124.

17. Translation in *Christianity in Late Antiquity*, comp. Bart D. Ehrman and Andrew S. Jacobs (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 165-67.

controversies and newer heresies, thus marking its limit as a major issue in the early Christian world.

After these losses, whatever was left of modalism in the early church was further renounced by the Athanasian Creed: "We worship one God in trinity, and trinity in unity, neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance. For the person of the Father is one; of the Son, another; of the Holy Spirit, another. But the divinity of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is one." Put simply, the orthodox view of God is three persons in one substance; this view avoids both extremes—modalism, which confounded (equated) the persons, and Arianism, which divided the substance.

So if Joseph were a modalist, he might have held the view described and ultimately rejected by David Millard,[18] a contemporary of Joseph:

> [Chronological modalists] reject the term *person*, and instead of this, use the term *mode*, or *office*: and hold that the Trinity consists in one God, acting in three distinct *offices*: that the three distinct *offices* are those of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. . . . It is impossible that God should act in more than one of these *offices* at one and the same time: consequently, while acting in the *office* of Father, there is no Son nor Spirit: and while acting in the *office* of Spirit, there is no Father nor Son. This system completely refutes itself: for in finding a character to fill one *office*, it leaves the other two *offices* vacant, and is just no Trinity at all. It is reducing characters to mere offices, belonging to certain characters, which is at best only imaginary.[19]

However, chronological modalism may not have been the only type of modalism available to Joseph Smith. Although orthodoxy

18. Apparently during Joseph's day, the Godhead was a hotly debated topic, especially Unitarianism and trinitarianism. Millard, a Unitarian, argues that trinitarianism approaches modalism and thus should be rejected.

19. David Millard, *The True Messiah Exalted, or Jesus Christ Really the Son of God, Vindicated; in Three Letters to a Presbyterian Minister* (Canandaigua, NY: Keene, 1818), 7.

considers and explicitly rejects modalism, Michael Servetus (1511-1553),[20] Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772),[21] and Oneness Pentecostalism (1913-present)[22] openly affirm a version of the doctrine. Alister McGrath explains that contemporary modalism often takes the form that he calls "functional modalism." Like chronological modalism, functional modalism maintains that one (and only one) person is God, but unlike chronological modalism, functional modalism asserts that when God operates in one office, the other two offices are not left vacant. Thus God acts in all three offices simultaneously throughout history.[23]

> [In Oneness Pentecostalism] there is but one divine being whose essence is revealed as Father *in* the Son and as Spirit *through* the Son. The attention is christocentric in that as a human being Jesus *is* the Son, and as Spirit (i.e., in his deity) he reveals—indeed *is* the Father—and sends—indeed *is* the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ who indwells the believer. Because the nature of God is one, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all present in the manifestation of each.

20. Although the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* does not name Servetus a modalist, it does report he was anti-trinitarian. However, the following passage certainly lends itself to a modalist interpretation: "[Servetus] maintained that an essentially unknowable divinity was manifest as Word and communicated as Spirit, the supreme manifestation of the Word being the historical Jesus, the Son of God, whose existence was limited to His earthly life." If Servetus hoped to disguise his beliefs by merely refraining from labeling himself a modalist, it did not work. After sharing with John Calvin a manuscript containing his ideas, Calvin turned him in and Servetus was burned to death. *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, s.v. "Servetus, Michael."

21. Rejecting the Athanasian formula that God is three persons and one substance, Swedenborg teaches "that God is one in essence and in person." Emanuel Swedenborg, *The True Christian Religion: Containing the Universal Theology of the New Church* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1912), 2; see 25-26. See also Emanuel Swedenborg, *Angelic Wisdom concerning the Divine Love and the Divine Wisdom* (New York: American Swedenborg Printing and Publishing Society, 1909), 9-10.

22. Thomas A. Fudge, *Christianity without the Cross: A History of Salvation in Oneness Pentacostalism* (Parkland, FL: Universal, 2003), 65, 69. Oneness Pentecostalism, like Mormonism, claims it is a restoration of the original church. For Oneness Christians, part of this restoration includes a return to a pre-trinitarian formula of the Godhead, modalism. Fudge, *Christianity without the Cross*, 16-23.

23. McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 328-29.

> Oneness Pentecostalism is a form of simultaneous modalism that, unlike Sabellianism, regards all three manifestations as present at the same time, not in successive revelatory periods. . . . Recalling the Jewish experience of God's dwelling temporarily in localized places, God now dwells permanently in the human tabernacle of Jesus. . . . In Christ the hidden God becomes manifest. He who is without form takes on the form of a servant. The invisible One reveals himself as in a mirror, Christ being the true and perfect image. The OT theophanies are regarded as temporary manifestations that anticipate the future permanent attachment of God to the human body of Jesus.[24]

In contrast, trinitarians, as we have already seen, affirm that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are *three distinct persons* who together constitute *one divine entity*. The precise nature of this oneness has been variously interpreted within the Christian theological tradition. For instance, while classical trinitarianism affirms that the three divine persons constitute one metaphysical substance, social trinitarianism avows they are one divine community perfectly united in mind, will, love, and work. In his watershed and lucid treatment of social trinitarianism, Cornelius Plantinga presents a biblically faithful and internally consistent model that sets the standard for future theorizing. For Plantinga, the "one what" question about the Trinity is answered in three specific ways. There is "only one font of divinity, only one Father, only one God in *that* sense of God"; there is "only one divine essence or set of excellent properties severally necessary and jointly sufficient for their possessor to be divine"; and there is "only one divine family or monarchy or community, namely, the Holy Trinity, itself."[25] Did Joseph Smith,

---

24. *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee (Grand Rapids, MI: Regency Reference Library, 1988), s.v. "Oneness Pentecostalism," 649.

25. Cornelius Plantinga Jr., "Social Trinity and Tritheism," in *Trinity, Incarnation and Atonement*, ed. Ronald J. Feenstra and Cornelius Plantinga Jr. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 31.

as Widmer and others claim, *initially* understand God as one person who appears in three modes considered chronologically or functionally? Or did Joseph, as he himself explicitly claims, *always* understand the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to be three distinct persons? Surely, Joseph's own declarations of what he believed, combined with the lack of any explicit teachings to the contrary, far outweigh any reconstruction of his belief by others based solely on circumstantial evidence—in this case, interpretations of passages in an ancient record that he translated. However, in light of the number of credible scholars who concertedly contradict Joseph's own declaration of what he believed and taught, we set out and examine their case for early Mormon modalism based on their interpretations of passages in the Book of Mormon.

Proponents' Case for Early Mormon Modalism

In attempting to document the earliest Mormon understanding of God, proponents of early Mormon modalism turn to the earliest Mormon publication, the first edition of the Book of Mormon (1830). They believe this best reflects "Joseph Smith's and therefore the Mormons' earliest theological convictions."[26] Many of them assume the Book of Mormon is a work of fiction written by Joseph Smith that reflects Joseph's personal theological beliefs, including a modalist understanding of God.[27] We believe, on the other hand, that the Book of Mormon is, as Joseph testified, a divinely aided translation of an ancient text. Nevertheless, we also believe that the evidence derived from the Book of Mormon testifies against modalism in the early Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We now address the specific claims of the modalist advocates.

---

26. Widmer, *Mormonism and the Nature of God*, 27.

27. Charles, "Book of Mormon Christology," 94. In discussing the Book of Mormon, Widmer writes that through it "early Mormons were reacting against a . . . Trinitarian concept of God" (p. 30). Also, through the Book of Mormon "the Mormons in turn *chose* an alternative, a strict monotheistic position" (p. 31; emphasis added). It is clear that Widmer considers the Book of Mormon to be a product of the nineteenth-century Latter-day Saints.

Widmer claims that the restoration of the gospel was in part a restoration of modalism: "Early Mormon documents, [including] the *Book of Mormon* . . . are attempts at restoring 'plain and precious truths.' The great mystery of the ages, the plain and precious truth removed from the Bible, was that 'the Son is the Father, and the Father is the Son.'"[28] While Widmer admits that the Book of Mormon is "neither consistently tritheistic nor modalistic,"[29] he makes the unusually strong claim that the "evidence clearly shows that the 1830 Book of Mormon, and subsequently the early Mormon Church, held a modalistic, Christological position."[30]

Dan Vogel, another student of Mormon intellectual history, argues that, according to the first edition of the Book of Mormon, the members of the Trinity are one in a modalist sense.[31] Passages that affirm that Christ is the Father and the Son do not distinguish the Father from the Son, and thus in his view the Book of Mormon does not advocate a trinitarian position. However, he claims modalism does nicely fit this evidence:

> Passages which speak of the Father sending the Son (Al. 14:5; 3 Ne. 27:13-14; 26:5) do not necessarily support a trinitarian view and should be understood in light of Ether 4:12: "He that will not believe me will not believe the Father who sent me. For behold, I am the Father." In other words, Jesus as the Father sent himself into the world to redeem his people. Nor do passages which speak of the Son being prepared from before the foundation of the earth (Mos. 18:13) necessarily imply two persons existing before the incarnation. Consider the following: "I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son" (Eth. 3:14). The Book of Mormon therefore violates a major tenet of trinitarianism by confusing

28. Widmer, *Mormonism and the Nature of God*, 53.
29. Widmer, *Mormonism and the Nature of God*, 30.
30. Widmer, *Mormonism and the Nature of God*, 36.
31. Vogel, "Earliest Mormon Concept of God," 21.

the persons of the Father and Son and by referring to Jesus as the Father.[32]

LDS thinker Melodie Moench Charles also reads modalism in the Book of Mormon: "In isolation the Book of Mormon's 'which is one God' statements sound like orthodox trinitarianism, but in context they resemble a theology rejected by orthodoxy since at least 215 C.E., the heresy of modalism."[33] Citing passages like "God himself shall come down among the children of men, . . . being the Father and the Son" (Mosiah VIII, 186 [15:1-2][34]), Charles argues that the Book of Mormon's teachings are inconsistent with Joseph's later sermons regarding three distinct personages:[35] there is "no good way to reconcile Abinadi's words with the current Mormon belief that God and his son Jesus Christ are separate and distinct beings. . . . [P]erhaps Abinadi's understanding was incomplete."[36] However, Charles admits that the Book of Mormon does not contain chronological modalism since the text posits a preincarnate Christ as opposed to a Christ who first emerges in the incarnation.[37] Indeed, the Book of Mormon affirms the constant activity of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost throughout human history, making a chronological reading implausible.[38] Though she does not mention

32. Vogel, "Earliest Mormon Concept of God," 22.

33. See Charles, "Book of Mormon Christology," 98.

34. Hereafter, all Book of Mormon references are from the 1830 edition. Citations include chapter (in roman numerals) and page number as well as chapter and verse for the 1981 edition.

35. Charles, "Book of Mormon Christology," 103.

36. Charles, "Book of Mormon Christology," 81.

37. Chronological modalists reject the idea of a preincarnate Christ because God reveals himself only as the Father until the Incarnation. But as Ether 3:14 relates a preincarnate appearance of Christ, a different kind of modalism is required.

38. See 1 Nephi III, 23-24 (10:17-11:13); 1 Nephi III, 33 (14:17); 2 Nephi VII, 84 (10:7); 2 Nephi XI, 107-8 (26:13); 2 Nephi XIII, 119-20 (31:11-18); Alma VIII, 254 (11:44); 3 Nephi V, 480-82 (11:32); 3 Nephi VII, 486 (15:14-19); 3 Nephi VII, 487 (16:9); 3 Nephi VIII, 488-89 (17:4); 3 Nephi IX, 496 (19:27-29); 3 Nephi IX, 498 (20:10); 3 Nephi XII, 508-9 (27:14-30); Ether I, 544 (3:9-12); Moroni VII, 579 (7:27); Moroni IX, 585 (9:26); Moroni X, 585-86 (10:4-5).

it by name, Charles apparently believes functional modalism best fits the content of the Book of Mormon.

> On one point the Book of Mormon's Christology differs from what early Christian modalists believed [about a premortal Christ]. . . . [E]arly Christian modalists rejected the idea that Christ existed apart from his father prior to his incarnation. They would not have attributed to Christ any of God's activity prior to Jesus's birth. For example, they interpreted John 1:1-18 as describing the Word's creation of the world allegorically, not as Christ's literal pre-existent activity.[39]

Charles goes on to state that the Nephites whom Jesus appeared to in 3 Nephi might have understood the Godhead as "one God who could appear in different roles [simultaneously]."[40] Mormon critic Ronald Huggins agrees that chronological modalism (what he calls Sabellian sequentialism) does not fit the Book of Mormon. Instead, Huggins argues that Joseph was familiar with Swedenborgianism and drew his functional modalism from Swedenborg.[41] However,

39. Charles, "Book of Mormon Christology," 99.

40. Charles, "Book of Mormon Christology," 100.

41. Ronald V. Huggins, "Joseph Smith's Modalism: Sabellian Sequentialism or Swedenborgian Expansionism?" *Institute for Religious Research*, 2006, http://www.irr.org/mit/modalism.html. We only have one statement in which Joseph allegedly mentions Swedenborgianism, a conversation with Edward Hunter: "I asked him [Joseph] if he was acquainted with the Sweadenburgers. His answer I verially [*sic*] believe. 'Emanuel Sweadenburg had a view of the world to come but for daily food he perished.'" William E. Hunter, *Edward Hunter: Faithful Steward* (Salt Lake City: Publishers Press, 1970), 316. For the most extensive study to date on Swedenborgian-Mormon parallels, see Craig W. Miller, "Did Emanuel Swedenborg Influence LDS Doctrine?" unpublished paper. Miller's paper is available at http://craigwmiller.tripod.com. However, we have no record telling how Joseph learned about Swedenborgianism. Especially pertinent is the question, Did Joseph come into contact with Swedenborgianism before he translated the Book of Mormon? For information on possible ways and times Joseph may have learned about Swedenborgianism, see J. B. Haws, "Joseph Smith, Emanuel Swedenborg, and Section 76: Importance of the Bible in Latter-day Revelation," in *The Doctrine and Covenants: Revelations in Context: The 37th Annual Brigham Young University Sidney B. Sperry Symposium*, ed. Andrew H. Hedges, J. Spencer Fluhman, and Alonzo L. Gaskill (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2008), 142-67; Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (New York: Knopf, 2005), 198-99.

we find reading functional modalism into the Book of Mormon a difficult task. For example, Charles concludes more from "oneness" statements than the text allows:

> Those people are right who point out that many places in the Book of Mormon (particularly in 3 Nephi) portray the Son and the Father as if they were separate gods functioning simultaneously. However, they are not right to imply that this is evidence that Book of Mormon people had a concept of God and Jesus being separate and distinct individuals, as Mormons do today. These descriptions must be assessed in connection with the frequent statements (again particularly in 3 Nephi) that Jesus and his Father are one. To say that "oneness" in these passages refers only to oneness of will, purpose, power, and glory but not oneness of personality, person, essence, or number is imposing an interpretation on the text rather than letting the text speak.[42]

Also speaking on 3 Nephi, Boyd Kirkland argues that "the more specific Book of Mormon statements on the relationship between the Father and the Son should serve as the framework for understanding the theology of 3 Nephi rather than vice-versa."[43] It is not clear why Kirkland does not consider 3 Nephi to be "specific" regarding the relationship between the Father and the Son.

Clyde Forsberg[44] writes in his master's thesis, "Of those passages in the Book of Mormon which might be classified as Christological in their thrust, the great majority seem to favor [modalism]."[45] Forsberg finds evidence in passages that "[refer] to the 'Son' as the 'flesh' of God" (Mosiah VIII, 186 [15:1-8]) or that identify Christ as the Father (see Alma VIII, 252-53 [11:26-40], Ether I,

---

42. Charles, "Book of Mormon Christology," 99-100.

43. Kirkland, "Jehovah as the Father," 43.

44. According to his 2004 *Equal Rites* text, "Clyde R. Forsberg, Jr. is adjunct assistant professor of history at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, and at Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario."

45. Forsberg, "Roots of Early Mormonism," 191-92.

544 [3:13-16]).[46] And Forsberg sees the amendment from "God" to "Son of God" in later editions of the Book of Mormon as marking a change in Joseph's thought from modalism to a plurality of Gods.[47]

Examining the Evidence

So, what does the Book of Mormon actually teach about the nature of God and the Trinity? The Book of Mormon is clear about the role of Christ as the preincarnate Son of God,[48] the Creator of the world,[49] the God of Israel,[50] and the Savior of the New Testament.[51] However, the scriptures are not treatises expounding theological metaphysics. Ross David Baron[52] explains: "The teachings of the Book of Mormon focus on Christ, not the details of his oneness with the Father. The nature of the Godhead is only touched on and in this sense the Bible is no different."[53] Even so, we believe the Book of Mormon provides strong evidence that the Father and Son are one not in the sense of being two offices occupied variously by one person, but in a social (or at least trinitarian) sense, involving two persons.[54]

---

46. Forsberg, "Roots of Early Mormonism," 193.

47. Forsberg, "Roots of Early Mormonism," 195.

48. 2 Nephi VII, 84-85 (10:7); 2 Nephi XIII, 119-20 (31:12-18); Mosiah IX, 192 (18:13); 3 Nephi I, 453 (1:14); 3 Nephi IV, 473 (9:15); 3 Nephi XI, 505 (26:5); Ether I, 544 (3:9-14).

49. Mosiah I, 160 (3:8); Mosiah II, 162 (4:2); Mosiah V, 171 (7:27); Helaman V, 446 (14:12); 3 Nephi IV, 473 (9:15).

50. 1 Nephi V, 51 (19:10, 13); Alma VIII, 254 (11:44); 3 Nephi V, 477 (11:14); 3 Nephi VII, 485 (15:4-5); Mormon I, 524 (3:20); Mormon III, 530 (6:21); Moroni X, 588 (10:34).

51. 1 Nephi III, 32 (13:40); 2 Nephi VII, 84 (10:3); Helaman II, 418 (5:11); 3 Nephi V, 477 (11:11); Ether I, 544 (3:9-12).

52. Ross David Baron, former director of the Glendora Institute of Religion in Southern California, now teaches at BYU-Idaho.

53. Ross David Baron, "Melodie Moench Charles and the Humanist Worldview," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 7/1 (1995): 106.

54. It should also be noted that functional modalism would seemingly imply separate functions for each mode in which God manifests himself. In the Book of Mormon, however, while some functions do seem specific to certain members of the Godhead, many functions overlap, and those that are individuated often do not favor a modalist model.

In terms of shared functions, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are described as judges (Alma VIII, 254 [11:44]), and as bearing record of the truth (3 Nephi V, 478-79 [11:32-36]; Ether II, 548 [5:4]). The mutual grace of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is to be in and abide with the children of men (Ether V, 566 [12:41]). Both the Father and the Son

Since the Book of Mormon spans over a thousand years of history, we should not assume that every prophet-writer shares the same idea of God's oneness. Moreover, prophets are not theologians selecting precise philosophical terms; they are divinely inspired men

---

covenant with the ancestors of the Jews, promising lands of inheritance (1 Nephi III, 33 [14:8]; 2 Nephi VII, 84 [10:7]; 3 Nephi VII, 485-86 [15:13]), and direct and lead the Nephite people (Mormon II, 527-28 [5:12-17]). Depending on how one reads the text, many scriptures may teach that the Son and the Father created the universe. The Holy Ghost and the Father are both described as comforters (3 Nephi IX, 498 [20:34]; Moroni VIII, 582-83 [8:26]). If the modes are supposed to perform different functions for the one divine person like functional modalism claims, then why are many of the same functions delegated to two or more modes? A functional modalist thesis for the Book of Mormon has to explain this overlap if it is to be convincing. Of course, there are some functions that do seem specific to the Father, Son, or Holy Ghost. Only the Son is manifest in the flesh, making a physical intercession for humanity. The Son is prepared from the foundation of the world, and the Father prepares things from the foundation of the world and directs the course of human history (Ether I, 547 [4:14]; Mosiah IX, 192 [18:13]; 3 Nephi VII, 486 [15:20]; 3 Nephi VII, 487-88 [16:9-14]) through the power of the Holy Ghost (Moroni VII, 579 [7:32]; Moroni X, 586 [10:4]). But that there are some separate roles is not evidence for functional modalism, for both traditional and social trinitarianism accept the same.

Ironically, however, many differentiated roles in the Book of Mormon become difficult to understand in terms of functional modalism. Take, for instance, the method of bearing record as described in the Book of Mormon. The Father bears record of the Son, the Son of the Father, and the Holy Ghost of the Son and the Father (2 Nephi XIII, 119-20 [31:12-18]; 3 Nephi V, 478-79 [11:32-36]). But does it make sense to have offices that bear record of the truth of what is taught by the selfsame person? It seems less reasonable to suppose so. The idea of three witnesses suggests three different sources, like the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon, not witnesses by the same person in different roles. Why would such testimony be persuasive and bring any assurance if it came from one source? The Son is often described in terms of subordination to the Father, which makes far less (if any) sense in terms of roles adopted by one person. The Son receives his power and commandments from the Father (Helaman II, 418 [5:11]; 3 Nephi VII, 486 [15:14-19]; 3 Nephi IX, 497 [20:26]), and the Father directs the Son in which scriptures to give (3 Nephi XI, 503 (24:1); 3 Nephi XI, 505 (26:2); 3 Nephi XIII, 509 [27:26-28]). The Son is baptized to "humble himself before the Father" (2 Nephi XIII, 118-19 [31:7]), and while described as having his own will (3 Nephi I, 453 [1:14]), is also described as having "suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning" (3 Nephi V, 477 [11:11]; Mosiah VIII, 186 [15:2-7]). He prays to the Father (3 Nephi VIII, 489-90 [17:15-18]). In what way can it be understood for a role to humble itself to another, or for a role with a will to suffer the will of another role? Roles do not humble themselves, suffer, have wills, or pray to one another; people do. The Father performs a work for the sake of the Son, who has ascended to heaven "to claim of the Father his rights of mercy which he hath upon the children of men" (3 Nephi IX, 500 [21:9]; Moroni VII, 579 [7:27]). This makes sense in terms of two persons, but becomes seemingly arbitrary or superfluous in terms of separate roles.

who present their message sometimes in narratives, sometimes in metaphors, and sometimes in doctrinal pronouncements. Therefore, we cannot isolate passages and conclude that they present the nature of God as taught by the Book of Mormon as a whole.

A better way to frame our initial question might be as follows: Which model of the Godhead finally and most fully emerges when we review the Book of Mormon in its entirety? Does the text as a whole suggest a modalist or nonmodalist model? Drawing our data from the first edition of the Book of Mormon, we have carefully considered this question by identifying, analyzing, and weighing book by book, writer by writer, and passage by passage, the doctrine that each explicitly or implicitly teaches on this issue. We use the term *nonmodalist* to refer to texts that most favorably appear to explicitly or implicitly identify at least two distinct divine persons, and we use the term *modalist* to refer to passages that most favorably appear to explicitly or implicitly affirm that one, and only one, person is God. We label as *evidentially neutral*—that is, as favoring neither a modalist nor an nonmodalist view of God—passages that refer to Christ as "God" or "the Lord" without addressing matters of number or identity and passages that affirm only one God (as opposed to only one *person*). We focus our study solely on those passages that are prima facie either modalist or nonmodalist.

We believe that proponents of Book of Mormon modalism correctly identify several prima facie modalist passages, but that these proponents simply neglect, or discount without satisfactory explanation, many other passages that are prima facie nonmodalist. In our previous study of the frequency, distribution, and implications of all the references to God in the Book of Mormon, we showed the text as a whole to be clearly nonmodalist. Indeed, nonmodalist passages outnumber modalist passages by a ratio of at least 20 to 1.[55] Still, the strongest and most extensive nonmodalist evidence is found in

55. Bruening and Paulsen, "Development of the Mormon Understanding of God," 124.

3 Nephi, which is the reason why we have chosen this book as our focus in this paper.

Furthermore, we argue that each prima facie modalist passage can plausibly be subsumed within a social trinitarian model of God, but that numerous nonmodalist passages cannot be made to fit a modalist model without much creativity or contrivance. Next, we also consider the nature and effect of Joseph's 1837 editorial revisions. On the basis of our examination of the total evidence, we conclude that the 1830 Book of Mormon is decidedly nonmodalist.

The Godhead in 3 Nephi

Of the evidence in favor of a nonmodalist interpretation, as we have already asserted, that of 3 Nephi is particularly pertinent. This is because 3 Nephi contains the explicit conversations of the Son with, and statements about, the Father. From such, we can draw general conclusions pertaining to the Son's relationship with the Father. Considering the passages that have evidential weight on the issue before us, 3 Nephi is overwhelmingly nonmodalist. Since 3 Nephi contains too many nonmodalist passages to discuss each individually, we will summarize by grouping them into five separate, though closely related, categories.

1. Statements wherein Christ refers to God as "My Father." When instructing the Nephites in a manner similar to the way he instructed his disciples in Jerusalem, Christ told them, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of *my Father* which is in heaven" (3 Nephi VI, 484 [14:21]) and "Whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name, . . . [and] endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before *my Father*" (3 Nephi XII, 508 [27:16]). He later tells three faithful disciples that they will "sit down in the kingdom of my Father" (3 Nephi XIII, 510 [28:10]). It seems odd that Christ would refer to himself as "my Father," because for humans fatherhood is an irreflexive relational predicate, and so if Christ were trying to teach how he begat himself, his message would hardly have been communicated. While references to Christ as the Father may

allow a modalist interpretation (under the assumption that Christ is the Father of creatures other than himself), such an interpretation is much more difficult when Christ refers to *Christ's* Father.

2. *Accounts of Christ praying to the Father or teaching the Nephites the order of prayer.* Verses in this category are most plausibly understood as portraying Christ praying to another person, his Father. For example, "when [some Nephites] had knelt upon the ground, Jesus groaned within himself, and saith, Father, I am troubled because of the wickedness of the people of the house of Israel" (3 Nephi VIII, 489 [17:14]). Another account reads, "And it came to pass that Jesus departed out of the midst of them, and went a little way off from them and bowed himself to the earth, and he saith, Father, I thank thee that thou hast given the Holy Ghost unto these whom I have chosen" (3 Nephi IX, 494 [19:19-20]). It seems incongruous to imagine God in one role physically retreating from his faithful saints to congratulate himself for a job well done in his other role. Jesus would not likely petition, or express gratitude to, or intercede with, himself. The text reads best as Christ making prayers that were an attempted communion of two distinct persons.

Also noteworthy are instances of Christ commanding individuals and multitudes to pray unto the Father in his (Christ's) name: "Therefore ye must always pray unto the Father in my name" (3 Nephi VIII, 491 [18:19]). Further, "And they shall believe in me, that I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and shall pray unto the Father in my name" (3 Nephi IX, 498 [20:31]). Although these passages could possibly be read to be consistent with a modalist doctrine, they at first glance distinguish between the Father and the Son as though they are two persons and are thus most naturally read as nonmodalist.[56]

3. *Descriptions of Christ receiving or obeying the Father's commandments.* For example, we read of Christ saying: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Thus hath the Father commanded me, that I should give

56. Similar verses include 3 Nephi VIII, 488, 491-92 (17:3, 18:21-23, 30); 3 Nephi IX, 494 (19:6-8); 3 Nephi X, 501 (21:27); 3 Nephi XII, 507 (27:2, 9); 3 Nephi XIII, 509, 511-12 (27:28; 28:30).

unto this people this land for their inheritance" (3 Nephi VII, 488 [16:16]). And in another instance Christ said, "Not at any time hath the Father given me commandment that I should tell it unto your brethren at Jerusalem" (3 Nephi VII, 486 [15:14]). To intelligibly read these passages as supporting modalism is challenging indeed. To do so requires readers to understand God in one mode to give a command that he, himself, receives or obeys in another mode. Odd state of affairs! Why attribute this uncommon speech to God, when the word *command* as a form of personal decision making is foreign to the rest of the Book of Mormon? Again, this class of passages is more plausibly read as implying that the Father and the Son are separate persons.

4. *References to Christ's ascension to the Father.* These passages differentiate between the locations of the Father and the Son when Christ, in the first person, says that he must *go* unto the Father. "Behold, ye have heard the things which I have taught before *I ascended to my Father*" (3 Nephi VII, 485 [15:1]). Also, "But now *I go unto the Father,* and also to shew myself unto the lost tribes of Israel: for they are not lost unto the Father, for he knoweth whither he hath taken them" (3 Nephi VIII, 488 [17:4]. See also 3 Nephi VIII, 492–93 [18:27, 35]; XII, 506 [26:15]; XIII, 509–10 [27:28; 28:1, 4]). The last passage is additionally telling in ascribing to the Father knowledge regarding the lost tribes. It would be extremely unusual for someone to refer, in the third person, to the knowledge (that is, of the location of the lost tribes) he himself has in another role. In fact, this would be the only such awkward description of self-knowledge in the entire Book of Mormon.

If the Son and the Father are the same person in different modes, these passages are difficult to understand. A modalist interpretation would have to posit a figurative ascension, perhaps in the sense of a shifting of roles, or that a locational ascension was required for the shifting of roles. The former seems like a less plausible reading of the text since Christ does physically ascend to and descend from the Father's presence when remarks like these are made (3 Nephi V, 476–77 [11:7–11]; 3 Nephi XII–XIII, 507–9 [27:2, 28]; 3 Nephi XII,

506 [26:15]). The latter suffers in proscribing an awkward limitation on God's power: that his ability to act in certain roles depends on his physical location. Both positions will struggle to explain how God still acts in the role of the Son once "ascended to heaven" in the figurative or literal senses (Moroni VII, 579 [7:27]; Moroni IX, 585 [9:26]). A nonmodalist reading of these ascensions is far less problematic.

5. Instances otherwise differentiating the Father from the Son in some manner not heretofore specified. For example, Christ teaches, "The Father having raised me up unto you first, and sent me to bless you" (3 Nephi IX, 497 [20:26]). Christ also tells the Nephites, "Ye are numbered among them which the Father hath given me" (3 Nephi VII, 486 [15:24]). In addition, Christ teaches, "For in that day, for my sake shall the Father work a work" (3 Nephi IX, 500 [21:9]). Numerous verses in 3 Nephi manifest this sort of distinction: V, 478 (11:35); VII, 487 (16:6); IX, 497–500 (20:26–27, 35; 21:2, 20); X, 501, 503 (21:27; 23:9); XIII, 510 (28:10–11). Another example is Christ's statement "Now, behold, my joy is great, even unto fulness, . . . and even the Father rejoiceth, and also all the holy angels, because of you and this generation" (3 Nephi XIII, 509 [27:30]). At another time Jesus tells his Nephite disciples, "Your joy shall be full, even as the Father hath given me fulness of joy" (3 Nephi XIII, 510 [28:10]). In each of these passages, the Son in some manner differentiates between himself and his Father because the Son receives some action from the Father (for example, being raised up, being "given" the Nephites, or being given a fulness of joy), because the Father does something for the sake of the Son, or because the Father and the Son are separately listed as having some quality or taking some action. For example, if the Father and the Son are the same person, then why does Christ state that not only he rejoices but "*even* the Father" rejoices? The Father's joy would follow as a necessary consequence and would be a completely superfluous thing for the Son to add.

We include in this catchall category the Father's announcement of Christ, his beloved Son, as Christ appears to the survivors in Bountiful, followed by Christ's acknowledgment of his atonement:

> And they [the Nephites gathered at Bountiful] did look steadfastly towards Heaven, from whence the [voice] came; . . . and it saith unto them, Behold, *my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name, hear ye him.* . . . And behold, they saw a man descending out of Heaven; and he was clothed in a white robe, and he came down and stood in the midst of them. . . . And it came to pass that he . . . spake unto the people, saying: Behold I am Jesus Christ, of which the prophets testified that should come into the world; and behold I . . . have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things, from the beginning. (3 Nephi V, 476-77 [1:5-11])

A natural reading of this passage strongly suggests that Christ is a separate person from the Father. The Father's words suggest that the Son is an object of his pleasure, someone other than the Father himself. The Son also appears to distinguish between two persons by stating that the Father gave him a bitter cup—indicating one giver and one recipient—and by apparently referring to two separate wills, one of which suffered the will of the other. Hence, this important passage, like the rest of the discourse in 3 Nephi, coheres much more plausibly with a nonmodalist, rather than with a modalist, model of the trinity.

Although 3 Nephi contains more at first glance nonmodalist references than any other book, similar references can be found throughout the Book of Mormon.[57] So if the Book of Mormon does mirror Joseph's earliest understanding of God, as advocates of early Mormon modalism claim, from the foregoing evidence we may reasonably conclude that as early as 1830 Joseph taught just as he

57. For example, 1 Nephi I, 6 (1:8-10); 1 Nephi III, 23-24 (10:17; 11:1, 6); Mosiah VIII, 186 (15:7-8); Mosiah IX, 192 (18:13); Alma XVI, 317 (33:11); Moroni VII, 579 (7:27); Moroni IX, 585 (9:26). For a more detailed discussion of other modalist and nonmodalist passages in the Book of Mormon, see Bruening and Paulsen, "Development of the Mormon Understanding of God."

testified: that the Father and the Son are distinct divine persons who are agreed as one.

Possible Modalisms in the Book of Mormon

Given 3 Nephi's apparent differentiation of the Father and the Son, how do we, consistently with that view, interpret or explain other Book of Mormon passages that appear to equate the Son with the Father? Rather than searching for explanations exterior to the text, it seems reasonable to look first within the Book of Mormon itself. What do its writers and editors teach us about Christ? When we become clear about these teachings, it will not be difficult to understand putative modalist passages in a way that is both self-consistent and consistent with 3 Nephi's clear-cut portrayal of God the Father and Jesus Christ as distinct and separate persons.

Book of Mormon Christology

The very high Christology of the Book of Mormon is evident from the very beginning of the record. Upon completing the record, Moroni, editor and writer, engraves a title page in which he summarizes both the content and the fundamental purposes of the book. These purposes include "the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations" (the title page of the Book of Mormon). The account of Christ's visit to the Nephites in 3 Nephi contains the personal teachings of the Son regarding himself and is particularly instructive. Prior to Christ's physical appearance, he proclaims that he is "the Son of God," that he "created the Heavens and the earth, and all things that in them is [*sic*]," that he is "in the Father, and the Father in [him]," that those who receive him become his adoptive children, and that he is "the light and the life of the world" and "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end" (3 Nephi IV, 473-74 [9:15-18]). Among Christ's first pronouncements during his visit with the Nephites are that he is "the light and the life of the world," that he took upon him "the sins of the world," and that he is "the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth" (3 Nephi V, 477

[11:11-14]). He later adds, "I am he that gave the law [of Moses], and I am he which covenanted with my people Israel," clearly indicating that he is the Jehovah of the Old Testament (3 Nephi VII, 485 [15:5]). The Nephites pray to Jesus, "calling him their Lord and their God" (3 Nephi IX, 494 [19:18]). This is high Christology—high in the sense that it emphasizes Jesus's eternal, divine nature rather than focusing primarily on his condescended human nature. Notice that such descriptions do not in any way entail modalism and are interwoven throughout the 3 Nephi account, intermingled with the numerous nonmodalist passages discussed above, signifying that modalism is not the best way to understand this high Christology.

Proponents of Book of Mormon modalism commonly rely on four groups of passages in making a case for their claims: (1) passages that affirm that Jesus Christ is God; (2) so-called "oneness" passages that affirm that there is only one God, or that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one God; (3) passages that refer to Jesus Christ as the Father of heaven and earth; and (4) passages that unqualifiedly affirm that Jesus is the Father and the Son. We will consider the evidentiary bearing of each of these sets of putative proof texts. We believe that the text, particularly the text of 3 Nephi, provides some very helpful guidance in interpreting these passages in a way that does not affirm modalism.

Passages Affirming That Jesus Christ Is God

Book of Mormon writers repeatedly affirm that Jesus Christ is God, beginning with Moroni on the title page: "Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations." While proponents of modalism cite this and similar passages as evidence for their position,[58] we consider them to be evidentially neutral, as both modalism and trinitarianism affirm that Jesus Christ is God; however, we recognize that these types of passages are much

58. Ronald V. Huggins, "Joseph Smith's Modalism: Sabellian Sequentialism or Swedenborgian Expansionism?" http://www.irr.org/mit/modalism.html; Charles, "Book of Mormon Christology," 81, 100-107; and Vogel, "Earliest Mormon Concept of God," 23, 25.

more common in the Book of Mormon than in the Bible, reinforcing the high Christology of the former. Nevertheless, if these passages favor modalism in some special sense, we invite proponents of early Mormon modalism to show us how they do so.

Unity Passages Affirming That There Is Only "One God" or That the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost Are One

Advocates of early Mormon modalism[59] also attempt to establish their claim by citing oneness passages that affirm that there is only one God, or that affirm that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one God.[60] But trinitarians, including social trinitarians, also affirm only one God or that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one God. So it again appears that such putative modalist texts are evidentially neutral, being equally consistent with either a modalist or trinitarian view of the Godhead. In this connection, it is important to note that none of these passages affirm that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one person. To so read these oneness passages is the result of interpretation not suggested by the text: while it is possible to interpret them as signifying only one person, this interpretation is no more natural than a social trinitarian interpretation. And with a few exceptions, Christians historically have not interpreted similar oneness passages in the Bible as signifying one person. As already pointed out, "three persons, one God" is the crux of the trinitarian formula. Both modalism and trinitarianism hold that there are three *somethings* that unitedly constitute one *something* that is God. For modalism, the three *somethings* are modes of one God-person, while for social trinitarians the three *somethings* are three distinct persons who constitute one God in the sense of one perfectly united divine monarchy, family, or community. Classical trinitarianism holds that

59. Forsberg, "Roots of Early Mormonism," 191–95; Vogel, "Earliest Mormon Concept of God," 22–23; Kirkland, "Development of the Mormon Concept of God," 35–37; Alexander, "Reconstruction of Mormon Doctrine," 53, 57; Charles, "Book of Mormon Christology," 100–107.

60. Widmer, *Mormonism and the Nature of God*, 35. For example, 2 Nephi XIII, 120 (31:21); Alma VIII, 253–54 (11:28–29, 44); 3 Nephi IV, 473 (9:15); 3 Nephi V, 478 (11:27, 36); 3 Nephi IX, 498 (20:35); 3 Nephi XIII, 510 (28:10); Mormon III, 531 (7:7).

the three persons are further united in being of one substance. Since these oneness passages do not specify whether the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three persons or three modes, they are compatible with either interpretation. Consequently, many oneness passages are at first glance evidentially neutral.

Nonetheless, 3 Nephi provides some evidence as to how to interpret these oneness passages. Christ prays to the Father, asking that the believing Nephites be purified in him: "That I may be in them as thou, Father, art in me, that we may be one, that I may be glorified in them" (3 Nephi IX, 495 [19:29]).[61] The purification is necessary for the oneness of God and man, or for the indwelling of the Son in Christian believers, in the same manner in which the Father indwells in the Son. The analogy for oneness appears to be not that of offices or modes in a single entity, but that of purification, alignment, and divine indwelling within a community.

Passages Affirming That Jesus Christ Is the Father of Heaven and Earth

Proponents of early Mormon modalism also infer modalism from passages affirming that Jesus Christ is "the Father of Heaven and Earth."[62] But this does not necessarily follow. To see this, we must first clarify the different ways in which the word *Father* was used when Joseph was engaged in translating the Book of Mormon. In the 1828 *Webster's Dictionary* (which purports to merely report common usage), the sixth definition of *father* reads: "He who creates, invents, makes or composes any thing; the author, former or contriver; a founder, director or instructor. God as creator is the *father* of all men."[63] Since *father* was used sometimes to mean *creator,* phrases like "the Father of heaven and earth" can plausibly be interpreted as "the Creator of heaven and earth." This is fully

61. See similar passages in Book of Commandments XXXVII:2 (D&C 35:2) and John 17:21-23.

62. For example, 2 Nephi VI, 79 (9:5); 2 Nephi XI, 104 (25:12); Mosiah I, 160 (3:8); Mosiah II, 162 (4:2); Mosiah V, 171 (7:27); Alma VIII, 253 (11:39); Helaman V, 446, 450-51 (14:12, 16:18); Ether I, 546 (4:7).

63. *Webster's First Edition of an American Dictionary* (1828 ed.), s.v. "father"; emphasis added.

consistent with the Book of Mormon's high Christology, including its frequent affirmations that Christ is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the God of Israel.[64]

If the Father were the only Creator of heaven and earth, this interpretation would still suggest modalism by equating the Son with the Creator—the Father. However, other passages of scripture available to early Latter-day Saints explicitly affirm that the Son, apparently distinguished from the Father, is Creator. In 3 Nephi, Christ proclaims from heaven to the Nephites that he is the Creator, while clearly distinguishing himself from the Father: "Behold I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I created the Heavens and the earth, and all things that in them is [*sic*]. I was with the Father from the beginning. I am in the Father and, the Father in me; and in me hath the Father glorified his name" (3 Nephi IV, 473 [9:15]). Similarly, the New Testament explicitly affirms that Jesus Christ is the Creator (or Father) of all things, while differentiating him from *his* father, God the Father. For instance, John writes, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. *All things were made by him;* and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. . . . And the Word became flesh" (John 1:1-4, 14; emphasis added). Similarly, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews explains, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, *by whom also he made the worlds*" (Hebrews 1:1-2; emphasis added; see also Ephesians 3:9). The Book of Commandments (also written during the period in which Joseph was supposedly a modalist) similarly discloses Christ as the Creator: "Behold I am Jesus Christ the Son of the living God, which created the heavens and the earth" (Book of Commandments XII:5 [D&C 14:9]).

64. 1 Nephi V, 51 (19:10, 13); Alma VIII, 254 (11:44); 3 Nephi V, 477 (11:14); 3 Nephi VII, 485 (15:4-5); Mormon I, 524 (3:20); Mormon III, 530 (6:21); Moroni X, 588 (10:34).

With these 3 Nephi and New Testament verses, as well as other teachings in the sacred literature, early Mormons likely would have understood that Christ was the Creator of the heavens and the earth. If so, Book of Mormon passages affirming that Christ was the "Father of heaven and earth" can plausibly be read as affirming Christ's role as Creator without any theological jarring. In fact, it is significant that passages affirming Christ's fatherhood in this sense also mention his creative role directly afterward. King Benjamin prophesies of Christ that "he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of Heaven and Earth, the creator of all things, from the beginning" (Mosiah I, 160 [3:8]). Similarly, Samuel the Lamanite proclaims, "For this intent I have come up upon the walls of this city, . . . that ye might know of the coming of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of Heaven and of earth, the Creator of all things" (Helaman V, 446 [14:11-12]). Both Samuel and King Benjamin specify Christ as the "Creator of all things" directly after mentioning Christ's fatherhood; this may indicate that they understood his fatherhood in terms of creation. The 3 Nephi and New Testament background on Christ's creative role, the use of the term *father* in the sense of creator in 1828, and the juxtaposition of fatherhood and creation in Book of Mormon passages make it reasonable to suppose that the phrase "Father of Heaven and Earth" means "Creator of Heaven and Earth." Thus, this title ascribed to Christ should not be construed as evidence in favor of modalism.

Moreover, like Hebrews 1:1-2, the Book of Moses (revealed shortly after the publication of the Book of Mormon and during the period in which Joseph Smith was purportedly a modalist) teaches not only that Christ was the Creator but that the Father created the world *through* Christ, suggesting two separate persons: "And worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten" (Moses 1:33). It should be sufficiently clear that passages that teach that Christ is the Father of heaven and earth, while consistent with modalism, are equally compatible with social trinitarianism and are therefore evidentially neutral.

Passages Unqualifiedly Affirming That the Son Is the Father

Proponents of early Mormon modalism do not qualify when they quote passages affirming that the Son is the Father and the Father is the Son as evidence for Book of Mormon modalism.[65] Indeed, in our judgment these passages constitute the most plausible evidence for modalism found in the Book of Mormon. Before considering ways in which these passages might nonetheless be plausibly understood within a social trinitarian model, it will be important to once again put this class of data into proper perspective. Passages of this sort are few in the Book of Mormon. Of approximately eighteen hundred references to God, only seven passages (and two others that were subsequently changed, which we deal with later) are of the kind presently considered. Third Nephi—which we have proposed is the most important portion of the Book of Mormon on the nature of God—is permeated at first glance by nonmodalist passages that overwhelm the apparent modalist texts. To repeat: when the Book of Mormon is taken as a whole, the ratio of nonmodalist to modalist passages in the first edition of the Book of Mormon is at least 20 to 1. Hence, even if these modalist passages could not be accommodated by a social trinitarian model, the existence of these seven passages would pose far less difficulty to a social trinitarian model than the overwhelming preponderance of nonmodalist passages would pose to a modalist model.

Let us consider four ways of assimilating or otherwise analyzing the apparently modalist data that are drawn from the Book of Mormon text itself, with 3 Nephi being particularly noteworthy in providing guidance.[66] First, some unqualified references to Christ as Father might merely be abbreviated expressions of his being Father in the sense of being the Father of heaven and earth. As

---

65. Widmer, *Mormonism and the Nature of God*, 34. See also 2 Nephi IX, 95 (19:6); Mosiah VIII, 186, 189 (15:1-4, 16:15); 3 Nephi I, 453 (1:14); Mormon IV, 536 (9:12); Ether I, 544 (3:14).

66. For a later LDS exposition of why Christ is called both the Father and the Son, see the June 30, 1916, First Presidency letter, "The Father and the Son," in *Messages of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,* ed. James R. Clark (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1971), 5:23-34.

already shown, such references when viewed as being ascriptions of Christ's role as Creator are fully consistent with a social trinitarian doctrine.

Second, the Book of Mormon itself teaches us a second sense of *father,* which is also properly applied to Christ. In 3 Nephi, prior to his physical appearance, Christ teaches, "And as many as have received me, to them have I given to become the sons of God; and even so will I to as many as shall believe on my name" (3 Nephi IV, 473 [9:17]). Those who receive Christ become his adopted children, as further explained by King Benjamin: "And now, because of the covenant which ye have made, ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you" (Mosiah III, 166 [5:7]).[67] Through Christ's atonement for the sins of all humanity, he spiritually adopts those who covenant to obey him. Christ is an adoptive father to those who are born again and become "new creatures" (Mosiah XI, 214 [27:26]). In his preincarnate appearance to the brother of Jared, Christ explains his fatherhood in just these terms (Ether I, 544 [3:14]). The faithful generations of Nephite Christians following the visitation of the resurrected Christ are described as being "in one, the children of Christ" (4 Nephi I, 515 [1:17]), a phrase Mormon also uses to describe Christians in general (Mormon IV, 537 [9:26]). Mormon further taught that one becomes a child of Christ by following the light of Christ (Moroni VII, 578 [7:19]).

Third, Christ can be called the Father because his Father gave him the fulness of Godhood: he is perfect like his Father. In his visit to the Nephites in 3 Nephi, the Son instructs the multitudes to

67. Book of Commandments XLI:1-2 (D&C 39:1-4) is even more explicit: "Hearken and listen to the voice of him who is from all eternity to all eternity, the Great I AM, even Jesus Christ, the light and the life of the world; a light which shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not: the same which came in the meridian of time unto my own, and my own received me not; but to as many as received me, gave I power to become my sons, and even so will I give unto as many as will receive me, power to become my sons." See also Mosiah VIII, 187 (15:10-12); Mosiah XI, 214 (27:25); Book of Commandments X:12 (D&C 11:28-30); XXXVI: 1-3 (D&C 34:1-3); XXXVII:2 (D&C 35:2); XLVIII:8-10 (D&C 45:7-8); Moses 6:66-68.

be perfect "*even as I,* or your Father which is in Heaven is perfect" (3 Nephi V, 481 [12:48]) and tells his disciples that he is "even as the Father" (3 Nephi XIII, 510 [28:10]).[68] He further testifies of the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son: "I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one" (3 Nephi V, 478 [11:27]; 3 Nephi IV, 473 [9:15]). The Book of Mormon continually teaches that Christ, the Son or Messiah, received a fulness of divine attributes, being full of grace, truth, mercy, equity, patience, and long-suffering (2 Nephi I, 63 [2:6]; Alma III, 236 [5:48]; Alma VII, 247 [9:26]; Alma IX, 259 [13:9]); and mercy, justice, and holiness are described as being in him (3 Nephi XI, 505 [26:5]). Christ's perfection, his mutual indwelling with the Father, and his reception of the fulness of Godhood show how he is a perfect image of the Father, which thus provides an explanation of why and how he can also refer to himself as the Father. This is made more explicit in a revelation given on May 6, 1833, in which the Son teaches again that "I am in the Father and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one" and in which he offers this further explanation: "the Father because he gave me of his fulness; and the Son because I was in the world and made flesh my tabernacle, and dwelt among the sons of men" (1835 Doctrine and Covenants LXXXII:1 [1971 D&C 93:3-4]). Christ became the Father in the sense that he inherited the fulness of divine perfections from the Father.

Another way in which the Book of Mormon appears to refer to Christ as the Father is through the subjection of the will of the Son to the will of the Father. In 3 Nephi, the resurrected Lord declares that he "suffered the will of the Father in all things, from the beginning" (3 Nephi V, 477 [11:11]). Similarly, the Gospels describe when Christ in Gethsemane forsakes his will to do the will of his Father (Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42). Nephi reports that Christ fully submitted: the Jews "scourge him, and he suffereth it; and they smite him, and

68. The Son's perfection is noted as being complete in this discourse to the Nephites. Compare with Matthew 5:48, where the Son only commands the multitude to "be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." The Resurrected Lord includes himself, while the mortal Lord does not.

he suffereth it. Yea, they spit upon him, and he suffereth it" (1 Nephi V, 51 [19:9]). By so suffering, the Savior shows his humility and proper obedience to the Father (2 Nephi XIII, 118-19 [31:7]). Because he is fully obedient to the will of the Father, Christ becomes an instrument and extension of the Father.

We will now show how each of the seven putative modalist passages can plausibly be assimilated within one or more of these interpretations. The first of the seven scriptures appears in 2 Nephi. Nephi simply records the words of Isaiah: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (2 Nephi IX, 95 [19:6]). The 1830 edition renders this verse exactly as it appears in the King James Version of the Bible. Because Christ was the everlasting God of the Old Testament and the Creator of heaven and earth, it seems likely that this Old Testament passage is a reference to the Son as the Father in the sense of creator. Biblical commentators offer a second interpretation involving Christ's relation to his people as the father of those who serve him: "'Father' bears on His relation to His people: this King cares for them with loving goodness as a father his children."[69] This second interpretation seems to indicate something close to Christ's role as adoptive Father. In either case, this passage can be—and has been for over a thousand years—interpreted in a way that does not entail modalism. It is unclear why proponents of modalism would think that early Latter-day Saints would have interpreted it any differently.

In the second passage, Book of Mormon prophet Abinadi exhorts his listeners, "Teach them that redemption cometh through Christ the Lord, which is the very Eternal Father"[70] (Mosiah VIII, 189

69. *Bible Student's Commentary: Isaiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985), 103. See also John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 247-48.

70. *Eternal* here needn't be understood as "universal" or "unconditional"—in the sense that Christ *has always been*, without beginning, our Father (for this reading would preclude the notion of adoption); rather, *eternal* may be read in the Doctrine and Covenants 19 sense, as "endless," meaning that Christ *will always be*, without end,

[16:15]). This statement could be an abbreviated reference to Christ as the Father in any of the senses of fatherhood previously mentioned, but given the context in which it occurs—several chapters dealing with the atonement—it most likely refers to Christ's role as adoptive Father of those who follow him. Indeed, this seems to be Abinadi's own suggestion, for he continues:

> Who shall be his seed? Behold I say unto you, that whosoever hath heard the words of the prophets, . . . [and] hearkened unto their words, and believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins; I say unto you, that these are his seed. (Mosiah VIII, 187 [15:10-11])

In the third passage, Moroni writes, "Behold, he crated [*sic*] Adam; and by Adam came the fall of man. And because of the fall of man, came Jesus Christ, even the Father and the Son" (Mormon IV, 536 [9:12]). While the immediate context provides no clue as to how Moroni was using the word *Father* here, Moroni's description of Christ as Father can be understood as affirming Christ as Father in one of the senses already identified above.

The fourth apparently modalist passage is where Christ speaks to Nephi the night before his birth in Bethlehem: "Behold, I come unto my own, to fulfil all things which I have made known unto the children of men, from the foundation of the world, and to do the will, *both of the Father, and the Son of the Father*, because of me, and of the Son, because of my flesh" (3 Nephi I, 453 [1:14]). Joseph revised this passage in 1837, and since that time the verse has read, "Behold, I come unto my own, to fulfil all things which I have made known unto the children of men from the foundation of the world, and to do the will, *both of the Father and of the Son—of the Father* because of me, and of the Son because of my flesh" (3 Nephi I, 453 [1:14]). This altered version adds the preposition *of* before "the Son"

---

the Father of those who follow him, or that he will always stand as the person one must accept as "father" in order to inherit eternal life.

and changes the punctuation, making it clearer that the phrase "the Son" is intended to go with the antecedent clause ("both of the Father and [of] _____") rather than with the subsequent clause ("_____ of the Father"). Note that neither version actually refers to the Son as the Father; both state that Christ does the will of the Father "because of him [Christ]," which could certainly be read to state that Christ is the Father, but need not. The passage could simply be referring to the subjection of Christ's will to the Father—Christ willingly submits to the will of the Father, and therefore he does the Father's will because of himself. If one reads the passage as suggesting that Christ is the Father, either version could be interpreted through the lens of any of the ways in which Christ can be referred to as the Father—for example, Christ as the preincarnate Jehovah and Father, or Creator, of heaven and earth, who does the will of himself, the Father.

The change between the two editions does not necessarily mark an evolution in Joseph's thought, for the 1830 version may itself be altered to support the later (1837) meaning with the mere repositioning of one comma, without the addition of any preposition. Note the main difference:

Original 1830: "I come . . . to do the will, both of the Father, and the Son of the Father, because of me, and of the Son, because of my flesh."

Altered 1830: "I come . . . to do the will, both of the Father [omission of comma] and the Son[,] of the Father, because of me, and of the Son, because of my flesh."

This demonstration illustrates that the changes made to this passage in the 1837 edition of the Book of Mormon were likely merely editorial—corrections of punctuation errors in the original text. Additionally, "the earliest text" version of the Book of Mormon, *which corrects textual errors of the 1830 edition by comparing them with the original manuscripts and earliest sources, has verse read as follows: "Behold, I come . . . to do the will both of*

and changes the punctuation, making it clearer that the phrase "the Son" is intended to go with the antecedent clause ("both of the Father and [of] _____") rather than with the subsequent clause ("_____ of the Father"). Note that neither version actually refers to the Son as the Father; both state that Christ does the will of the Father "because of him [Christ]," which could certainly be read to state that Christ is the Father, but need not. The passage could simply be referring to the subjection of Christ's will to the Father—Christ willingly submits to the will of the Father, and therefore he does the Father's will because of himself. If one reads the passage as suggesting that Christ is the Father, either version could be interpreted through the lens of any of the ways in which Christ can be referred to as the Father—for example, Christ as the preincarnate Jehovah and Father, or Creator, of heaven and earth, who does the will of himself, the Father.

The change between the two editions does not necessarily mark an evolution in Joseph's thought, for the 1830 version may itself be altered to support the later (1837) meaning with the mere repositioning of one comma, without the addition of any preposition. Note the main difference:

Original 1830: "I come . . . to do the will, both of the Father, and the Son of the Father, because of me, and of the Son, because of my flesh."

Altered 1830: "I come . . . to do the will, both of the Father [omission of comma] and the Son[,] of the Father, because of me, and of the Son, because of my flesh."

This demonstration illustrates that the changes made to this passage in the 1837 edition of the Book of Mormon were likely merely editorial—corrections of punctuation errors in the original text. Additionally, "the earliest text" version of the Book of Mormon, which corrects textual errors of the 1830 edition by comparing them with the original manuscripts and earliest sources, has the verse read as follows: "Behold, I come . . . to do the will both of

the Father and of the Son—of the Father because of me, and the Son because of my flesh."[71]

The fifth passage appears in the book of Ether, in which the preincarnate Christ states, "Behold, I am he which was prepared from the foundation of the world, to redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son. In me shall all mankind have light, and that eternally, even they which shall believe on my name; and they shall become my sons and my daughters" (Ether I, 544 [3:14]). This passage seemingly refers to Christ's role as adoptive father to those who believe on his name, specifying that they shall "become" his sons and daughters.

The sixth passage also appears in the book of Ether. Mormon writes that "the Lord"—apparently Jesus Christ—said to him, "I am the same that leadeth men to all good: he that will not believe my words, will not believe me, that I am; and he that will not believe me will not believe the Father who sent me. For behold, I am the Father, I am the light, and the life, and the truth of the world" (Ether I, 547 [4:12]). This passage could be referring to Christ as the Father because he does the Father's will—the Father sent the Son, and the Son acts as agent for the Father such that those who will not believe the Son also will not believe the Father. Alternatively, the scripture could be referring to Christ as the Father because he is the Creator of the world, a reading that is suggested earlier in the narrative when Jesus Christ is referred to as "the Father of the heavens and of the earth, and all things that in them is. . . . And at my command the heavens are opened and are shut; and at my word, the earth shall shake; and at my command, the inhabitants thereof shall pass away, even so as by fire" (Ether I, 546 [4:7, 9]).

Finally, the passage most frequently quoted by Mormon modalist theorists is another passage from Abinadi that they use as their

71. Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven, CT; Yale University Press, 2009), 565.

proof text because he provides the strongest evidence for modalism in the entire Book of Mormon:[72]

> I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people; and because he dwelleth in flesh, he shall be called the Son of God: and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son; the Father, because he was conceived by the power of God; and the Son, because of the flesh; thus becoming the Father and Son: and they are one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of Heaven and of Earth; and thus the flesh becoming subject to the Spirit, or the Son to the Father, being one God, suffereth temptation, and yieldeth not to the temptation, but suffereth himself to be mocked, and scourged, and cast out, and disowned by his people. (Mosiah VIII, 186 [15:1-5])

While this passage may lend itself naturally to a modalist interpretation, it can also be understood within a social trinitarian framework. Beyond the description of Christ and the Father as the Father of heaven and earth, which can be understood in terms of Christ and the Father both playing roles as the Creator, the focus on the fatherhood of Christ in this passage is on his being "conceived by the power of God." Thus, rather than simply equating the Son with the Father, or stating that the Father became the Son, this passage suggests a deeper meaning than mere modalism.

What is Abinadi arguing by urging that Christ is the Father because of being conceived by God's power? It probably does not mean simply that he was brought about by divine power, for in a general sense everything is at least indirectly created this way. For God "hath created all things, both the heavens and the earth, and *all things that in them is*" (2 Nephi I, 64 [2:14]). Perhaps Abinadi is

72. Charles, "Book of Mormon Christology," 81-82; Alexander, "Reconstruction of Mormon Doctrine," 53-54; Vogel, "Earliest Mormon Concept of God," 23; Forsberg, "Roots of Early Mormonism," 191-92.

affirming the virgin birth of Christ (2 Nephi IX, 93 [17:14]). Alma the Younger suggests that this virgin birth was made possible by the power of God. He teaches that Mary would be "overshadowed, and [would] *conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost*" (Alma IV, 240 [7:10]). Both Abinadi and Alma use similar language to capture the conception of Jesus. Furthermore, Christ's conception through God also draws attention to the Book of Mormon's continual recognition of him as the "Only Begotten," suggesting that his Sonship is through the Father's bestowal of himself in bringing about the life of his Son. Thus, it is possible that Abinadi is teaching that Christ is the Father because of his status as the Only Begotten: he was to be conceived *directly* by God's person in the miraculous virgin birth. Although we are unaware of any other text in the Book of Mormon that seems to refer to Christ as the Father in this way, the use of the word *conceived* makes this a very plausible reading of the passage.

Another explanation may be that Christ becomes the Father through conception by the power of God because he receives of the fulness of the Father. Note the similarity of language in the May 6, 1833, revelation discussed above: "The Father because he gave me of his fulness, and the Son because I was in the world and made flesh my tabernacle, and dwelt among the sons of men." As in Abinadi's teachings, Christ is the Son because he dwells in the flesh. Here, he is the Father because the Father gave him of his fulness. Christ inherits all the divine perfections of the Father and can be referred to as the Father.

Abinadi's message also draws attention to the subjection of the will of the Son (the flesh) to the will of the Father (the spirit). The Son, or the flesh, appears to be associated with the natural man and his earthly trials and temptations. This is not surprising since many Book of Mormon prophets speak of the will of the flesh. Lehi cautions men not to choose death "according to the will of the flesh and the evil which is therein" (2 Nephi I, 65 [2:29]). Nephi describes "the lusts of the flesh" (1 Nephi VII, 58 [22:23]) and asks himself, "Why should I yield to sin, because of my flesh?" (2 Nephi III, 70 [4:27]). Jacob urges his brethren to "reconcile [themselves] to the will of

God, and not to the will of the Devil and the flesh" (2 Nephi VII, 85 [10:24]). However, the flesh is not inherently wicked, but allows humanity to be enticed by good and evil. Lehi teaches that "men are free according to the flesh: . . . free to choose liberty and eternal life . . . or to choose captivity and death" (2 Nephi I, 65 [2:27]). Men are thus commanded to yield up the inclinations of the flesh "to the enticings of the Holy Spirit" and to be "willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon [them], even as a child doth submit to his father" (Mosiah I, 161 [3:19]; see also Mosiah XI, 206 [24:15]). They, like Ether, are to "suffer the will of the Lord in the flesh" (Ether VI, 573 [15:34]). Given this backdrop, it appears that Abinadi is speaking of the eventual temptations and sufferings of Christ in the flesh as he submits to the will of the Father. After all, Abinadi is expounding on Isaiah's witness that "it pleased the Lord to bruise him" (Isaiah 53:10). The desires of the natural man must be denied in favor of following God, even unto death, as Abinadi urges (Mosiah VIII, 186 [15:7]).

With these considerations in mind, although Abinadi's words in Mosiah VIII may appear plausibly modalist, they can be understood in a nonmodalist manner. Furthermore, the vast number of nonmodalist statements by both Abinadi[73] and other authors throughout the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants suggests a nonmodalist interpretation. Therefore, we are compelled to read Abinadi's words in the context of the whole Book of Mormon.

If any of these interpretations prove unsatisfying, we need not rule out the possibility that a few preincarnation Book of Mormon writers may have been modalists or, at least, had modalist leanings. The clearest and most consistently nonmodalist passages in the Book of Mormon occur in writings that recount the resurrected Christ's appearance to the Nephites and subsequent events. It is

73. See, for example, Mosiah VIII, 186 (15:7–8), where Abinadi refers to "the will of the Son being swallowed up in the will of the Father" and "mak[ing] intercession for the children of men." See also Mosiah VIII, 185–86 (14:4, 10), in which Abinadi quotes Isaiah, who says of Christ that he is "smitten of God" and that "it pleased the Lord to bruise him."

easy to admit the possibility that a few preincarnation prophets (Abinadi is a candidate) did not have as full an understanding of the Godhead as the postincarnation prophets. But this can be just as easily admitted about many biblical prophets and even about Joseph Smith. After all, the understanding of every person—and even every prophet—changes with time and experience. No matter the explanation given for the few apparently modalist passages, the portrait of God that most fully and finally emerges from 3 Nephi—and indeed the Book of Mormon as a whole—is nonmodalist and consistent with social trinitarianism. Contrary to the claims of the proponents of Mormon modalism, the Book of Mormon, when evaluated as a whole text, cannot plausibly be construed as modalist.

Nevertheless, these proponents rely on one other class of evidence, albeit circumstantial, in arguing their claim: certain editorial changes Joseph made to the language of the first edition of the Book of Mormon in his 1837 revision. Their claim is that Joseph was seeking to remove from the document modalist ideas that earlier, but no longer, reflected his theological understanding. Widmer, for example, writes, "The new work, in keeping with the recently emerged Mormon concept of the divine, removed the passages that reflected the earlier modalistic position of the church."[74]

Revisions to the First Edition of the Book of Mormon

According to Widmer, the 1837 edition of the Book of Mormon revised several passages in the first edition that referred directly to the Father and the Son as modes of the same being.[75] Charles, Alexander, Forsberg, and Vogel concur.[76] Along with the passages of Abinadi, these edits are the "evidence" most frequently cited by advocates of early Mormon modalism. In this section, we examine this alleged evidence, arguing that it fails to establish that either

74. Widmer, *Mormonism and the Nature of God*, 32.

75. Widmer, *Mormonism and the Nature of God*, 32.

76. See Charles, "Book of Mormon Christology," 107–8; Alexander, "Reconstruction of Mormon Doctrine," 54; Forsberg, "Roots of Early Mormonism," 195; Vogel, "Earliest Mormon Concept of God," 27–28.

Joseph Smith or the Book of Mormon was originally modalist. We will discuss two groups of changes, only one of which actually removed apparently modalist language from the Book of Mormon. It should be noted first, however, that most of the apparently modalist passages discussed earlier were not changed, suggesting that the revisions to the Book of Mormon were not an attempt to systematically remove modalist references.

The first category of changes, consisting of two verses, includes changes from Christ being called "God" to being called "the Son of God." In the first edition (1830), 1 Nephi III, 25 (11:18) reads: "the virgin which thou seest, is the mother of God, after the manner of the flesh." In the 1837 edition, Joseph changed it to read: "the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of *the Son* of God, after the manner of the flesh" (1 Nephi 11:18). Also, in the 1830 Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi III, 26 (11:32), reads: "[the Lamb of God] was taken by the people; yea, the Everlasting God, was judged of the world." This was changed to read: "[the Lamb of God] was taken by the people; yea, the *Son of* the everlasting God was judged of the world" (1 Nephi 11:32). Returning to the criteria we have previously set forth, these verses were actually evidentially neutral between social trinitarianism and modalism before the changes: in both models, Christ is properly referred to as "God." Because the initial renderings of the passages were evidentially neutral to start with, the revisions cannot represent a change from modalism to social trinitarianism. Instead, since both models properly refer to both Christ and his Father as "God," the changes simply remove ambiguity by making it clear that the references in the verses are to God the Son rather than to God the Father. The new phrases stating "Son of God" can be read just as much in a modalist sense as they were before when they stated simply "God." In addition, many passages referring to Christ as God were not changed, suggesting there was not an attempt to systematically alter the doctrines taught in the Book of Mormon.

The second group of revisions involves changes from calling Christ "the Father" to calling him "the Son of the Father."

First Nephi III, 25 (11:21) originally read: "behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Eternal Father!" It was changed to read: "Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even *the Son* of the Eternal Father" (1 Nephi 11:21). Also, 1 Nephi III, 32 (13:40) originally read: "[these records] shall make known to all . . . that the Lamb of God is the Eternal Father and the Saviour of the world." It was changed to read: "[these records] shall make known to all . . . that the Lamb of God is the *Son of* the Eternal Father, and the Savior of the world" (1 Nephi 13:40). In their context in the 1830 edition, the references to Christ as "Eternal Father" can be seen as part of the high Christology of the Book of Mormon: both passages emphasize his premortal and eternal power and glory. Both teach that the person understood by the Nephites and by other preincarnation Israelites to be the Father (or Creator) was the person who would be born as a babe to Mary and subsequently crucified on a cross. Since both Christ and his Father are referred to as "Father" in the Book of Mormon, these revisions, as with the revisions discussed earlier, should be seen as clarifying which member of the Godhead is being referenced. Once again, disambiguation as opposed to doctrinal alteration provides the best explanation of these editorial revisions, particularly given that the seven other passages that referred to Christ as the Father were left unchanged. So these changes do not in themselves provide a strong challenge for a nonmodalist reading of the Book of Mormon.

Royal Skousen, editor of the ongoing Book of Mormon critical text project, argues that these four changes (1 Nephi III, 25 [11:18]; III, 25 [11:21]; III, 26 [11:32]; III, 32 [13:40]), which he identifies as "characteristic of Joseph's editing for the first part of the text," should be "considered as clarifications, not as doctrinal reinterpretations." The passages were modified so that they "could not be misinterpreted as references to God the Father instead of his Son, Jesus Christ." To support this, Skousen cites earlier instances where "Jesus is clearly identified as the Son of God" (see 1 Nephi III, 22 [10:17]; III, 24 [11:7]) and points out that subsequently "Joseph Smith left unchanged all the references that describe Jesus Christ as the Father and as God" (see 2 Nephi XI, 104 [25:12]; Mosiah I, 160

[3:8]; Mosiah V, 171 [7:27]; Mosiah VIII, 186 [15:1-3]; Helaman V, 446 [14:12]; Helaman V, 451 [16:18]; Mormon IV, 536 [9:12]; Ether I, 544 [3:14]; Ether I, 546-47 [4:7, 12]).[77]

Furthermore, Skousen suggests that "perhaps the original motivation for adding the first 'the son of' (in 1 Nephi 11:18) resulted from complaints . . . about the use in the Book of Mormon of the seemingly Catholic phraseology 'the mother of God.'"[78] This complaint was printed by an anonymous author, who was greatly influenced by Alexander Campbell's 1831 article "Delusions,"[79] in an article published in early 1835 in an Illinois newspaper, *The Pioneer.* As Skousen points out, "There is clear evidence that the Latter-day Saints were aware of this issue."[80] Oliver Cowdery, editor of the *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate,* quoted a passage from the *Pioneer* article that labels the 1 Nephi 11:18 phrase "mother of God" as "true Roman phraseology."[81] Thus, as Skousen suggests, the impetus for inserting the phrase "the Son of" likely was to avoid the Catholic stigma associated with the phrase "mother of God." So, the shift is likely one of stylistic preference, not a revision of theology.

Yet another problem remains for the thesis that Joseph's 1837 revision of the Book of Mormon was motivated by a theological shift away from modalism: why did he not revise all the modalist passages? According to Widmer, Joseph's "revision was not carried out consistently throughout the *Book of Mormon.* This is seen from the Ether passages that remained unchanged. Many other modern *Book of Mormon* passages still reflect the Church's earliest modalistic theology."[82] But if Joseph *did not* revise all or even most of the presumably modalist passages—we could forgive him for missing

77. Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon, Volume 4, Part One: Title Page, Witness Statements, 1 Nephi 1-2 Nephi 10* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004), 230-31.

78. Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon,* 232.

79. See Alexander Campbell, "Delusions," *Millennial Harbinger* 2/2 (1831): 85-96.

80. Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon,* 232.

81. "Trouble in the West," *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 1/7 (1835): 105.

82. Widmer, *Mormonism and the Nature of God,* 35.

a few—would not a more reasonable explanation of the revision be that Joseph sought to remove textual ambiguities instead? Are the advocates of early Mormon modalism honestly suggesting that Joseph did a hodge-podge job in cleaning up his text for a doctrinal rewrite?

As we have seen, the claim that the 1830 Book of Mormon, read in its entirety, is a modalist document is difficult to support. While the Book of Mormon in a few passages calls Christ the Father and the Son, this does not necessitate that God the Son is identical to God the Father, because, as shown above, Christ can be considered "the Father" in numerous ways. Additionally, passages of scripture that seemingly advocate modalism can easily be interpreted within a social trinitarian model. Furthermore, the accounts of the Godhead in 3 Nephi provide numerous passages that are far more challenging for proponents of functional modalism to explain. Similarly, revisions in the 1837 Book of Mormon do not seem to suggest any motivation to remove modalism from the scriptures. And we have no evidence that Joseph or the Church of Jesus Christ interpreted such passages as modalist in 1830.[83]

We encourage scholars who believe the 1830 Book of Mormon is an early modalist document to attend to the accounts of the Godhead in the Book of Mormon as a whole. Including the two passages that were changed in the 1837 edition, only nine apparently

83. In fact, it is highly significant that the actual term *modalism* never once appears in *any* of the early (pre-1900) Mormon documents (that is, books, journals, discourses, newspapers, etc.). The only mention of modalism that does appear, and which uses only cognates of the term, is that referred to and denounced by Orson Pratt in "Are the Father and Son Two Distinct Persons?" Speaking on the subject, Pratt says, "All revelation, both ancient and modern, that has said any thing on this subject, has represented the Father and Son as two distinct persons. There are some [non-Mormons], however, who believe that the Spirit of Christ, before taking a tabernacle, was the Father, exclusively of any other being. They suppose the fleshly tabernacle to be the Son, and the Spirit who came and dwelt in it to be the Father; hence they suppose the Father and Son were united in *one* person, and that when Jesus dwelt on the earth in the flesh, they suppose there was no distinct separate person from himself who was called the Father. We shall proceed to show from the scriptures, that this view of the subject is erroneous." Orson Pratt, "Are the Father and Son Two Distinct Persons?," *Millennial Star* 11/18 (1849): 281.

modalist verses can be found throughout the Book of Mormon—as opposed to numerous distinctly nonmodalist verses. When the latter are combined with the even more clearly nonmodalist passages of the Book of Commandments, the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, and the Book of Moses, we find a larger picture that is definitely nonmodalist. Those who claim that the Book of Mormon is a modalist document seem to have focused on a few passages while ignoring the rest of the book, especially the climactic witness of Christ found in 3 Nephi.

David L. Paulsen is an emeritus professor of philosophy at BYU. He earned a BS degree in political science from BYU, a JD from the University of Chicago Law School, and a PhD in philosophy from the University of Michigan.

Ari D. Bruening graduated magna cum laude from Harvard Law School and currently is an attorney specializing in large-scale land use and transportation issues at the law firm of Grow & Bruening, PC.

"So Great and Marvelous Things": The Literary Portrait of Jesus as Divine Lord in 3 Nephi

Charles Swift

As we study 3 Nephi through a literary lens, we can see that the writer crafted a narrative that portrays Jesus not as another man with whom others associated but as the glorified and resurrected Christ, the Eternal God whom the Nephites worshipped. Like the four Gospels of the New Testament, 3 Nephi offers a beautiful and powerful account of the Savior and his ministry. But it is different from its four companions in a number of significant ways. For Latter-day Saint readers, a central message of the four Gospels in the New Testament is the good news that Jehovah, the God of the Old Testament, has taken upon himself a body and come to live among us. Though it may not be explicit throughout the four Gospels, we can see that Jesus is God-who-is-now-Man, whereas 3 Nephi portrays him as God come back to earth, Man-who-is-now-God.

This title is not meant to imply that the mortal Savior was no longer God, but that the Gospel writers are frequently portraying what we might call his "human side." Even the book of John, the Gospel that frequently focuses on the divinity of Jesus, begins by proclaiming that "the Word was with God, and the Word was God," and "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:1, 14). In other words, John is proclaiming that God is now a man who lives among us. Though God, the Jesus in the Gospels is a man who attends wedding festivals, has children sit on his lap, and converses with common people at a well and in the fields and cities. He is powerful—performing miracles throughout the land—but also approachable.

By contrast, 3 Nephi portrays the Lord as Man-who-is-now-God. This title does not imply that he was only a man before, but that, while the four Gospels often emphasized the humanity of the Savior in his mortal state, 3 Nephi emphasizes his godly nature in his resurrected state. Rather than his way being prepared by a single man crying in the wilderness, as described in the New Testament, in 3 Nephi city after city in the New World is destroyed because of wickedness, showing forth his power and righteous judgment. We read not of a babe born in a manger and wrapped in swaddling clothing, but of a heavenly being who descends from heaven, clothed in a white robe. In Matthew, the Lord tells people to be perfect even as their Father in heaven is perfect, but in 3 Nephi he includes himself with the Father as an example of perfection to follow.

The difference in how 3 Nephi speaks of the Savior is not limited to what happened when he was with the Nephites, however, but can also be seen in the way in which the Nephite author offers his account of what happened. In other words, the difference between the four New Testament Gospels and the 3 Nephi account of his ministry is not just in *what* happens, but in *how* it is described.

A Literary Text

Much of the difference between 3 Nephi and its four biblical companions lies in the simple fact that the Savior often did different things with the Nephites than he did with the Jews. It is merely a matter of history. In 3 Nephi, Jesus is resurrected and glorified; he is different than he was in mortality, and the text should reflect that. Martin S. Tanner writes that the "dichotomy is not between Matthew and 3 Nephi, but rather between the mortal and resurrected Jesus."[1] And New Testament scholar Krister Stendahl notes, "The image of Jesus in the whole of 3 Nephi . . . is that of a revealer" rather than "a teacher in the ongoing community of God's people

1. Martin S. Tanner, review of "Book of Mormon Christology," by Melodie Moench Charles, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 7/2 (1995): 10.

correcting the foibles and the misconceptions of religious people."[2] It is a matter of history that the Savior appeared to the Nephites by descending from the sky, so, the logic goes, how else could the writer relate the account of his appearance? One might surmise that the writer is simply giving an account of an historical event. Since the history of the resurrected Savior is different from the history of the mortal Savior, the account will naturally be different.

While that is certainly true, it is not the complete answer. We do not know, for example, that everything the Savior did in 3 Nephi that varied from his actions in the Gospels can be attributed to the fact that he was resurrected in the one account and not the other. To assume that the reason he could provide the sacrament to the Nephites without having any bread or wine to begin with (see 3 Nephi 20) is that he was resurrected could be just as fallacious as to claim that the reason he walked on water in the Gospels, but not in 3 Nephi, is because he was mortal. There is more to this issue than simply noting that the events were different and that the nature of the Savior was different (resurrected as opposed to mortal), thereby assuming that the accounts vary for those reasons. The writer of 3 Nephi was inspired to write the way he did, leaving out some facts and including others. He does not offer us an account of everything the Savior said to the Nephites, but he chooses certain statements and includes them for a purpose. What the noted Bible-as-literature scholar Robert Alter describes regarding biblical narrators also applies, at least in many instances, to the writer of 3 Nephi:

> How does the Bible manage to evoke such a sense of depth and complexity in its representation of character with what

2. Krister Stendahl, "The Sermon on the Mount and Third Nephi," in *Reflections on Mormonism*, ed. Truman G. Madsen (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1978), 151. Stendahl sees 3 Nephi as being something of a break from the three synoptic Gospels and having a style of discourse common with the Gospel of John. While I agree that 3 Nephi is more like John than any of the other Gospels in a number of ways, and that a sharing of style exists in the revelatory nature of the Lord's discourse, 3 Nephi also takes the portrayal of the Savior and his divinity beyond what we find in John.

> would seem to be such sparse, even rudimentary means? Biblical narrative offers us, after all, nothing in the way of minute analysis of motive or detailed rendering of mental processes; whatever indications we may be vouchsafed of feeling, attitude, or intention are rather minimal; and we are given only the barest hints about the physical appearance, the tics and gestures, the dress and implements of the characters, the material milieu in which they enact their destinies. In short, all the indicators of nuanced individuality to which the Western literary tradition has accustomed us—preeminently in the novel, but ultimately going back to the Greek epics and romances—would appear to be absent from the Bible. . . . Though biblical narrative is often silent where later modes of fiction will choose to be loquacious, it is selectively silent in a purposeful way.[3]

While we may not be able to claim with surety what the purposes of 3 Nephi's author are by including what he does in each specific instance, we can speak with confidence about the effect of the text he left us. The literary qualities of his writing help to convey the image of Jesus as resurrected, glorified God. While a large number of literary elements could be studied in 3 Nephi—and other writers have looked at parts of the book in literary terms[4]—this paper will focus on three important aspects of the Lord's Nephite ministry—prayer, miracles, and dialogue—to explore how the literary nature of the book helps to convey Jesus's divinity.[5]

---

3. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 114-15.

4. For example, see Richard D. Rust, *Feasting on the Word*; James T. Duke, *The Literary Masterpiece Called The Book of Mormon* (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 2004); and Sidney B. Sperry, "Types of Literature in the Book of Mormon: 'The American Gospel,'" in *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4/1 (1995): 48-68.

5. I could choose other literary elements to consider from 3 Nephi, of course. However, these three—prayer, the depiction of miracles, and dialogue—are significant enough in the book to allow for identifying literary patterns that help create a portrait of the Savior as experienced in 3 Nephi. These three elements are also markedly different from the way they are used in the Gospels.

Prayer

The writers of the Gospels provide us with many instances of the Lord praying[6] and tell us at least part of what he said.[7] John gives us a verbatim account of what the Lord says in his great Intercessory Prayer (see John 17). When he is about to raise Lazarus from the dead, we know that he prays, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 11:41–42). Even in Gethsemane, when he says one of the most sacred prayers ever offered, we know something of what he prays: "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done" (Matthew 26:42). In each New Testament narrative in which part or all of a prayer of the Lord is recorded, we see at least part of his human side as he speaks to his Heavenly Father much as he would teach us to do.

There are several times, though, when the Lord prays but the writer does not tell us any of what was said: "he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God" (Luke 6:12); "as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him" (Luke 9:18); "he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone" (Matthew 14:23). While these are biblical examples of the writer not telling us what the Lord said in a prayer, the author does not say that he could not write what was said. Perhaps the writer was too far away to hear what the Savior prayed or simply did not record what was said, but the author does not seem to give significance to the fact that the words of the prayer are not written.

---

6. See also Robert L. Millet, "The Praying Savior: Insights from the Gospel of 3 Nephi," in this volume.

7. When I refer to the Gospels in this paper, I am always referring to the Gospels as we have them in the King James Version of the Holy Bible. It is beyond the scope of this study to discuss passages that scholars believe are not original because they are missing from the earliest known texts, or to debate authorship. This is a literary study focusing on 3 Nephi as compared and contrasted with the Gospels found in the KJV.

On the other hand, the first time in 3 Nephi when the Savior prays with the Nephites, we read of this sacred communion between the Son and his Father as something that we humans cannot even discuss. "The things which he prayed," the writer tells us, "cannot be written, and the multitude did bear record who heard him. And after this manner do they bear record: The eye hath never seen, neither hath the ear heard, before, so great and marvelous things as we saw and heard Jesus speak unto the Father" (3 Nephi 17:15-16). By including this important observation in his account, the writer helps to portray Jesus as Man-become-God—a being whose words of prayer cannot be written. On the first level of analysis, we can understand the simple but exquisite message that the Lord's words were "great and marvelous." It is as though the writer is saying, "What the Lord said in his prayer was so amazing that I simply do not have words to describe it." We use similar expressions today in modern speech: "Words just can't describe the experience" or "I just don't have the words."

However, this first-level analysis does not do justice to the text. The writer is not saying that he does not have words to *describe* the experience of hearing the Savior pray for them; he is saying that the words the Savior said *cannot be written*. A woman present when Abraham Lincoln delivered the Gettysburg Address may have said she could not put into words how it felt to hear the president give that historic speech, but she could not say the words could not be written. They were, in fact, written, and anyone can read them. The writer of 3 Nephi provides us with some information—the Savior's words cannot be written—but he does not give us all the information. By not telling us *why* the Savior's words could not be written, the narrator opens the door to a number of possibilities. Did the Lord tell the people not to write the words?[8] Were the words too sacred to write? Did the people simply not have the

8. We have an example of this happening elsewhere in the Book of Mormon, when the angel tells Nephi: "But the things which thou shalt see hereafter thou shalt not write; for the Lord God hath ordained the apostle of the Lamb of God that he should write them" (1 Nephi 14:25).

ability to write the words because they were so captured by the grandeur of the moment? Were the words the Lord prayed uttered in a different language, one that the people could not write even though they could understand, perhaps miraculously, what he said? Of course, the writer possibly did not know why the words could not be written, so he did not tell us why. But that possibility also opens up questions about why he would not know. And, there is the interpretation that would maintain that the writer purposely left out any explanation because it was simply not important. Here again, readers would wonder why he would not believe that the words of the Lord's prayer would be important to know.

By withholding this information, the writer creates a text that invites us to ask questions, to reflect on experiences we have had in our lives, and to see if we can make any connections. If he had directly told us the reason, our pondering would have been quite limited by the single explanation given. By leaving out any explanation, however, a whole world of possibilities opens up that allows us to learn more about ourselves and what we can understand about our own spiritual experiences.

The writer continues to explain why he cannot write what the Lord prayed: "And no tongue can speak, neither can there be written by any man, neither can the hearts of men conceive so great and marvelous things as we both saw and heard Jesus speak" (3 Nephi 17:17). A careful reading of this text confirms that the writer is once again not speaking of his inability to describe how he felt, but of his inability to write what was said. The focus is not on how the listeners felt (he does not even mention their feelings at this point), but on the words they "heard Jesus speak." The author is not saying, "no tongue can speak, neither can there be written by any man, neither can the hearts of men conceive *how we felt* as we both saw and heard Jesus speak." Something different is going on here: the words were spoken, the words were heard, but the words cannot be spoken or written by anyone who heard them.

The conclusion of this verse, though, does deal with the feelings of those present, saying that "no one can conceive of the joy which

filled our souls at the time we heard him pray for us unto the Father" (3 Nephi 17:17). Here, he is not speaking of the words the Lord used but of their joyful response to those words. Note, though, that he is also no longer speaking about not having the words to write—he does not say that he cannot write the words that convey the joy the people felt—he is merely stating that no one can conceive the joy the people felt. Throughout these three verses, the writer says that he cannot write the words the Lord spoke, without ever saying that he could not write the words that conveyed the joy people felt.

A similar account occurs later when the Lord prays again. This time the writer notes that "tongue cannot speak the words which [the Lord] prayed, neither can be written by man the words which he prayed. And the multitude did hear and do bear record; and their hearts were open and they did understand in their hearts the words which he prayed. Nevertheless, so great and marvelous were the words which he prayed that they cannot be written, neither can they be uttered by man" (3 Nephi 19:32–34).

Here, the writer is specific about why he cannot write the words: the words were so great and marvelous that they cannot be written. The phrase *great and marvelous* was used in the earlier account, but not as an explanation as to why the words could not be recorded, only as a description of what the people saw and heard. Still, even in this account, we do not know why the words could not be written because we do not understand the relationship between the words being "great and marvelous" and the inability to write them. Does the writer not have the words to match the sublimity of the Lord's prayer, for example, or has he been commanded to not write them because of what was said? Does "great" mean "too sacred" to be written or spoken by mortals? Once again, by including this scene the author helps to create an image of the Savior in 3 Nephi as Divine Lord, whose words are so great they cannot be written. And, by excluding the reason why the words' greatness stops them from being written, he has opened the door to our personal reflection and understanding.

It is noteworthy that these instances of the Lord praying and of those hearing not being able to write his words are not always the case in 3 Nephi. Other times in the book the words of the Lord's prayer are recorded verbatim, such as when he prays, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast given the Holy Ghost unto these whom I have chosen; and it is because of their belief in me that I have chosen them out of the world" (3 Nephi 19:20; see 3 Nephi 19:21-23, 28-29). In another instance when he prays, the writer does not inform us what was said but describes the event: "He took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them. And when he had done this he wept again" (3 Nephi 17:21-22). Here, however, the writer does not claim that the words cannot be written but simply does not write the words of the prayer.

Another significant event recorded in 3 Nephi regarding prayer is when the Nephites pray not to God the Father, but to the Lord himself. The Savior had explicitly taught the Nephites to pray to the Father in the Lord's name. "Therefore ye must always pray unto the Father in my name; and whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you. Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed" (3 Nephi 18:19-21). Yet, after praying to the Father in the name of Jesus earlier in the text, the disciples "did pray unto Jesus, calling him their Lord and their God" (3 Nephi 19:18). While this is an exceptional case, and we are taught to pray only to Heavenly Father, this scene supports the 3 Nephi portrayal of the Savior as Divine Lord. Prayer, after all, is communication with God. The fact that the Lord does not permit anyone to pray to him in the New Testament Gospels, but allows them to pray to him in 3 Nephi, is another indication of how he is now Man-become-God. In fact, not only do they pray to the Savior, but they call him "their Lord and their God."

Miracles

In a number of accounts in the Gospels, the Lord performs miracles. For example, he changes water into wine (John 2:1-11), heals people (Matthew 9:27-31), feeds five thousand men with five loaves of bread and two fish (Matthew 14:15-21), walks on water (Matthew 14:25-33), and even raises a man from the dead (John 11:1-45). And, of course, the atonement, from the Garden of Gethsemane through the cross on Calvary to the empty tomb, is the greatest of miracles. In many ways, however, the miracles he performs with the Nephites, written about in 3 Nephi, go beyond those recorded in the Gospels, once again offering a portrait of the Savior as a powerful God. Even the Lord teaches about the difference: "So great faith have I never seen among all the Jews; wherefore I could not show unto them so great miracles, because of their unbelief" (3 Nephi 19:35).

This is not to say that all 3 Nephi has to offer concerning the Lord's miracles is that they are somehow more impressive than most of the miracles in the Gospels. Someone studying 3 Nephi as history could rightly conclude that more spectacular miracles are mentioned in 3 Nephi because the Lord actually performed more spectacular miracles with the Nephites than he did with the Jews. However, from a literary perspective, we need to note what miracles the 3 Nephi writer chose to include and how he wrote about them.

In the New Testament the Lord feeds thousands of people from only five loaves of bread and two fish; in 3 Nephi he provides the sacrament to the multitude without even one loaf of bread or cup of wine, miraculously producing the bread and wine from nothing. "Now, there had been no bread, neither wine, brought by the disciples, neither by the multitude; but he truly gave unto them bread to eat, and also wine to drink" (3 Nephi 20:6-7). In the Gospels, the Lord heals a number of people, but the general pattern is that individuals seek him to be healed. In this Book of Mormon account of the Lord's ministry, he invites everyone present who is afflicted to come forth to be healed. "Have ye any that are sick among you? Bring them hither. Have ye any that are lame, or blind, or halt, or maimed, or leprous, or that are withered, or that are deaf, or that

are afflicted in any manner? Bring them hither and I will heal them, for I have compassion upon you; my bowels are filled with mercy" (3 Nephi 17:7). He heals everyone present who needs his healing touch, as "all the multitude, with one accord, did go forth with their sick and their afflicted, and their lame, and with their blind, and with their dumb, and with all them that were afflicted in any manner; and he did heal them every one as they were brought forth unto him" (3 Nephi 17:9; see 3 Nephi 26:15, which includes mention that he raised a man from the dead). Matthew gives the account of people bringing little children to Jesus so that he could "put his hands on them, and pray," and "he laid his hands on them" (Matthew 19:13, 15). In 3 Nephi, however, the Lord prays for the people, then tells them to look at their children. "And as they looked to behold they cast their eyes towards heaven, and they saw the heavens open, and they saw angels descending out of heaven as it were in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled those little ones about, and they were encircled about with fire; and the angels did minister unto them" (3 Nephi 17:24).

We can find one of the Lord's great prayers in John 17, when he offers what is often called his Intercessory Prayer. The Savior offers a similar prayer on behalf of the Nephites. This 3 Nephi prayer, though, is accompanied with miraculous events that we do not find with the prayer recorded in John. The disciples pray to the Father in the name of Jesus, asking that the Holy Spirit be given to them. They are baptized, filled with the Holy Spirit, and then "they were encircled about as if it were by fire; and it came down from heaven, and the multitude did witness it, and did bear record; and angels did come down out of heaven and did minister unto them. And it came to pass that while the angels were ministering unto the disciples, behold, Jesus came and stood in the midst and ministered unto them" (3 Nephi 19:14-15). Jesus commands the disciples to pray, so they begin praying to him. He then departs and offers the first part of his prayer, thanking the Father for giving the Holy Spirit to those whom he had chosen out of the world, acknowledging that they were given the Holy Spirit because they believed in him, and praying for them and for those who

will hear their words so that they may be one with him (see 3 Nephi 19:20–23). Afterward, he returns to the disciples, who are still praying to him. "And it came to pass that Jesus blessed them as they did pray unto him; and his countenance did smile upon them, and the light of his countenance did shine upon them, and behold they were as white as the countenance and also the garments of Jesus; and behold the whiteness thereof did exceed all the whiteness, yea, even there could be nothing upon earth so white as the whiteness thereof" (3 Nephi 19:25). The Lord then goes a little way off and continues his prayer, asking that they will be purified, praying not for the world, but for these people who have been given to him out of the world, and praying that they will be one with him (see 3 Nephi 19:28–29). He returns to his disciples who are still praying and who are "white, even as Jesus" (3 Nephi 19:30). At this point the Lord walks off a little way again and offers a prayer that is so "great and marvelous" that "the words which he prayed . . . cannot be written, neither can they be uttered by man" (3 Nephi 19:34). Though some of the content of this 3 Nephi scene of prayers is similar to what the Lord said in his Intercessory Prayer recorded in John, the author of the Nephite account includes events that illustrate the Savior's godliness. Jesus is not simply praying, as he did in John, but he is the one to whom others are praying. And, there is much more than prayers occurring in this narrative: a miraculous change is taking place for each of his disciples.

After Jesus rides triumphantly into Jerusalem, he sees the moneychangers in the temple and cleanses it. The blind and lame come to him and are healed, and the children in the temple cry out "Hosanna to the Son of David." The chief priests and scribes are displeased, asking Jesus if he hears what the children are saying. "Yea," the Savior replies, "have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" (Matthew 21:14, 16). During the Savior's ministry among the Nephites, he has a similar experience with the children, yet it is, once again, even more astounding. The Savior "did teach and minister unto the children of the multitude . . . , and he did loose their tongues, and they did speak unto their fathers great and marvelous things, even greater than

he had revealed unto the people; and he loosed their tongues that they could utter" (3 Nephi 26:14). The next day, the people gather together and see that "even babes did open their mouths and utter marvelous things; and the things which they did utter were forbidden that there should not any man write them" (3 Nephi 26:16).

The Gospels give us an account of an individual who is translated, even though the account is far from clear: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" (John 21:22-23). We know from modern revelation, including the Book of Mormon (see 3 Nephi 28:6), that this passage of John refers to John himself, and that he was indeed translated. While this great miracle of translation is only mentioned once in the New Testament Gospels, and done so somewhat ambiguously, the 3 Nephi account is much clearer. Three disciples are involved, and Jesus makes clear that these three servants are translated when he says,

> Ye shall never taste of death; but ye shall live to behold all the doings of the Father unto the children of men, even until all things shall be fulfilled according to the will of the Father, when I shall come in my glory with the powers of heaven. And ye shall never endure the pains of death; but when I shall come in my glory ye shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye from mortality to immortality; and then shall ye be blessed in the kingdom of my Father. And again, ye shall not have pain while ye shall dwell in the flesh, neither sorrow save it be for the sins of the world; and all this will I do because of the things which ye have desired of me, for ye have desired that ye might bring the souls of men unto me, while the world shall stand. And for this cause ye shall have fulness of joy; and ye shall sit down in the kingdom of my Father; yea, your joy shall be full, even as the Father hath given me fulness of joy; and ye shall

> be even as I am, and I am even as the Father; and the Father and I are one. (3 Nephi 28:7-10)

After the Savior touches each of the disciples except for the Three Nephites, he departs. The heavens are opened and the three are caught up in heaven, seeing and hearing "unspeakable things" that they were "forbidden" to utter (3 Nephi 28:13-14). We are then told a good amount about the Three Nephites by Mormon, the abridger of this record—how they ministered "upon the face of the earth," united "as many to the church as would believe in their preaching," and baptized people. We even learn that the Three Nephites were cast into prison, "delivered out of the depths of the earth," "thrice . . . cast into a furnace" but received no harm, and twice "cast into a den of wild beasts" only to "play with the beasts as a child with a suckling lamb" (3 Nephi 28:16-22). While the New Testament offers one brief, somewhat confusing account of John's being promised translation, 3 Nephi shows the Lord promising three people such a blessing and offers the most detailed information we have on what it means to be translated. Without modern revelation, we cannot be sure what has happened with John, but the Book of Mormon shows us a God who has the power to translate people and gives us a glimpse into what power lies in being translated.

The Gospels provide us with brief glimpses of the resurrected Savior. He appears to Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary" after they have been at his tomb; to two disciples on the road to Emmaus; to his assembled disciples; to Thomas, inviting him to touch his wounded side; and to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias (see Matthew 28, Luke 24, John 20-21).[9] While there is no doubt that the four Gospels are testimonies that Jesus was resurrected, the 3 Nephi account is an even stronger witness of his resurrection. We read of his descending from heaven and of his ministry as a resurrected

9. Appearances of the resurrected Savior are mentioned in Acts, but our discussion here is centered on the Gospels. Still, what we can read about the resurrected Savior in Acts is very limited.

being to the Nephites for several days. After reading this gospel, there can be no doubt that the Lord was resurrected with a physical body and that he could continue to minister to his people even after his death. It could not be more poignantly stated than in 3 Nephi:

> Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world. And it came to pass that the multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet; and this they did do, going forth one by one until they had all gone forth, and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands, and did know of a surety and did bear record, that it was he, of whom it was written by the prophets, that should come. And when they had all gone forth and had witnessed for themselves, they did cry out with one accord, saying: Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God! And they did fall down at the feet of Jesus, and did worship him. (3 Nephi 11:14-17)

The 3 Nephi telling of the resurrected Lord leaves no room for debate over such things as whether the Savior received an actual, physical body. The resurrected Savior in the Book of Mormon is no metaphor, but a living, breathing God who walks among the people, preaching to them and allowing thousands to touch his wounds and bear witness of his reality.

If, as Stendahl notes, everything in John is "a little more miraculous" than what we read in the synoptic Gospels,[10] we can readily understand that the miracles in 3 Nephi go far beyond what even John has to offer in depicting the divinity of the Savior. However, it would be a mistake to conclude that the 3 Nephi miracles are just "more" than the ones in the Gospels. The author of 3 Nephi

10. Stendahl, "Sermon on the Mount and Third Nephi," 150.

purposefully chose certain miracles to relate and then related them in particular ways that portray the Savior as much more than a man—he is the Most High God, capable of exercising his great power in blessing his followers.

Dialogue

In discussing the Bible, Alter writes that "quantitatively, a remarkably large part of the narrative burden is carried by dialogue, the transactions between characters typically unfolding through the words they exchange, with only the most minimal intervention of the narrator," and adds that "the very occurrence of extended dialogue should signal the need for special attentiveness as we read."[11] When we read such verbal "transactions between characters" in the Bible, we know that something significant to the narrative is occurring. We can see a number of examples of Alter's observation in the Gospels, such as the Lord's discussions with Nicodemus (see John 3), the woman at the well (see John 4), and the multitude during his discourse on the Bread of Life (see John 6).[12] However, each of these instances of dialogue, as well as others in the Gospels, portray Jesus as very much a man with whom others can interact through conversation. People can ask him questions, disagree with him, and even challenge what he says.

Many examples of dialogue in the Book of Mormon signify special attention is warranted. The dialogue between Korihor and Alma comes to mind (see Alma 30), of course, but there are many other examples as well, such as Nephi and the Spirit of the Lord and, later, Nephi and an angel (see 1 Nephi 11), Jacob and Sherem

11. Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 182. As a scholar of Jewish writings, Alter is referring to the Hebrew Bible. However, later in his book he also seeks to "underscore the wider applicability of the approach" he is writing about (see p. 179). His observations about biblical dialogue in the Hebrew Bible apply to other scripture with the common background of Jewish culture as well.

12. I have purposely cited examples only from John to illustrate the point that even in this Gospel, which is often noted as emphasizing the divinity of the Savior, we find examples of how people approached him and entered into discussions with him as they would with any other person.

(see Jacob 7), Ammon and King Limhi (see Mosiah 8), Amulek and Zeezrom (see Alma 11), and Ammon and King Lamoni (see Alma 17–18). Many passages throughout the Book of Mormon do not have dialogue because it is not necessary or even important to the text's message and purpose. For example, since we are dealing with 3 Nephi, we see no dialogue when we read of the Nephites and Lamanites uniting to defend themselves against the Gadianton robbers (see chapter 2) or when the Nephite armies defeat the robbers (see chapter 4).[13] However, there are times in 3 Nephi when it would make sense to include dialogue, but the author purposefully excludes any word of dialogue. Occasionally it is obvious that people must be talking with each other and what they say would be of interest to us, but we read no dialogue. Such instances also indicate that "special attentiveness" is called for. For example, when the Lord first appears to the Nephites, Heavenly Father speaks when he introduces his Son to the people, and the Lord speaks when he proclaims who he is and instructs the Nephites, but at no time in that chapter is there dialogue (see 3 Nephi 11). One may argue that no dialogue appears in the chapter because no dialogue occurred during the course of the actual historical event. That is unlikely, though, especially when we consider that the Lord spent hours allowing everyone present to touch his wounds (3 Nephi 11:15). It is difficult to believe that not one instance occurred during that entire time in which the Lord spoke to someone and that person spoke in return, or in which two people spoke with each other. It is true that the people shout afterwards "Hosanna! Blessed be the name of the Most High God!," but that is an exclamation of praise, not dialogue (3 Nephi 11:17). The author dramatically emphasizes the Lord and what he says by omitting dialogue. He portrays the experience as God coming down from heaven and capturing the attention of his people, rather than as a man appearing and conversing with others.

13. I make a distinction between dialogue, when two or more people converse, and merely speaking. After the Nephites defeat the Gadianton robbers, they speak when they praise the Lord, but they are not conversing with anyone.

This lack of dialogue with the Lord is not unique to this chapter. When the Lord institutes the sacrament among the Nephites, he interacts with the people there rather extensively. He tells his disciples to go for bread and wine, commands the multitude to sit down, takes the bread from his disciples and blesses it, gives it to his disciples and tells them to eat, commands his disciples to give the bread to the multitude, and then teaches his disciples about the sacrament. (I repeat "his disciples" to illustrate how often he interacted with other people and had the opportunity to converse with them.) Next, he repeats this process for the wine (see 3 Nephi 18:1-11). Not only is there no dialogue in this entire chapter, but the Savior is the only person who even speaks. There is no account of the disciples saying a word, or of even a single person in the multitude speaking. By leaving out words by any other person, the writer creates a feeling in the text of awe toward the Savior. While the blessing and passing of the sacrament is by definition a communal experience, it is also a sublimely reverent experience in which any communication is to be between the people and their Lord through worship, not conversing.

By contrast, after the Savior ascends into heaven we have an example in which quite a bit of speaking takes place among the people. What is remarkable, though, is not one example of dialogue exists in the text—not even one sentence of speech. After he ascends, "every man did take his wife and his children and did return to his own home" (3 Nephi 19:1), but there is no record that anyone in the families spoke. "And it was noised abroad among the people immediately, before it was yet dark, that the multitude had seen Jesus, and that he had ministered unto them, and that he would also show himself on the morrow unto the multitude. Yea, and even all the night it was noised abroad concerning Jesus" (3 Nephi 19:2-3). Here we finally have an account of people speaking, but there is still no dialogue and no quoted speech. The next day, the disciples separate the multitude into twelve bodies and teach them. The disciples teach the people to pray, and both the people and the disciples pray, but the writer does not include a word of what was said

(see 3 Nephi 19:5-7). The disciples then minister to the multitude "those same words which Jesus had spoken—nothing varying from the words which Jesus had spoken" (3 Nephi 19:8). We have at least a partial account of what the Lord taught the previous day, so we know that the disciples had a great deal to report to the multitude, yet no words are quoted. In fact, for the remainder of the chapter, only the Savior's spoken words are recorded. We do not know what the disciples say in their prayers, what the people say in theirs, or what, if anything, was said among the people or between them and the Lord. The chapter makes it clear that words were spoken, but the writer once again places the emphasis on the Savior and what he says.

Considering how many times people have discussions with the Lord in the Gospels, it is amazing—and significant—that only two examples of dialogue with the Savior are recorded in all of 3 Nephi. The first instance of dialogue occurs when the Lord asks Nephi to bring the record he has kept. Nephi brings the record and the following dialogue is recorded (I have reformatted it, with quotation marks added, to emphasize the passage as dialogue):

> [The Lord is apparently speaking to Nephi at this point.] "Verily I say unto you, I commanded my servant Samuel, the Lamanite, that he should testify unto this people, that at the day that the Father should glorify his name in me that there were many saints who should arise from the dead, and should appear unto many, and should minister unto them."
>
> And he said unto them [the disciples]: "Was it not so?" And his disciples answered him and said: "Yea, Lord, Samuel did prophesy according to thy words, and they were all fulfilled."
>
> And Jesus said unto them: "How be it that ye have not written this thing, that many saints did arise and appear unto many and did minister unto them?"

> And it came to pass that Nephi remembered that this thing had not been written. And it came to pass that Jesus commanded that it should be written; therefore it was written according as he commanded. (3 Nephi 23:9–13)

Several elements of this account of the dialogue help shape the portrayal of Jesus as God and not as just another man with whom mere mortals can have conversations. First, the Lord is the primary speaker here. The disciples say only one sentence. Second, the exchange is basically the Lord reprimanding the disciples for not including an account of the resurrection of many Nephites. He speaks directly to Nephi at first, reminding him of Samuel's prophecy; then he speaks to the disciples as if to solicit their support for what he has reminded Nephi: "Was it not so?" Second, though Nephi is the record keeper at this point, the Lord asks all of them the pointed question as to why the account of the Nephite resurrection was not included. Perhaps he does so out of compassion to soften the effect of his reprimand on Nephi and to imply to those present that each had a responsibility to make certain the record was complete. Third, the writer crafts the dialogue into a two-person exchange, the first person being the Lord and the second person being his disciples speaking as one. Naturally, the disciples did not say, "Yea, Lord, Samuel did prophesy according to thy words, and they were all fulfilled" in unison. If we had been present for this dialogue, we may have seen that only one of the disciples replied to the Savior, or that several said different statements that could be summarized by the quotation offered in the account. While we cannot determine the reason the writer crafted the dialogue in this way, we can see the effect of his doing so: the disciples' response is anonymous, thus shifting the power and significance of the dialogue to the Savior, where they belong.

The second dialogue appears several chapters later when the disciples are gathered together praying. The Lord appears to them and has the following dialogue (once again, reformatted and with quotation marks added):

"What will ye that I shall give unto you?"

And they said unto him: "Lord, we will that thou wouldst tell us the name whereby we shall call this church; for there are disputations among the people concerning this matter."

And the Lord said unto them: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, why is it that the people should murmur and dispute because of this thing? Have they not read the scriptures, which say ye must take upon you the name of Christ, which is my name?" (3 Nephi 27:2–5)

The Savior then continues with his answer for the remainder of the chapter—for a reply that is a total of thirty verses! The same three qualities of the first dialogue hold true for this one as well. The Savior is the primary speaker, an element of reprimand appears in his answer (in this case, his reprimand is directed toward the people for their murmuring and disputation), and the writer crafts the dialogue to have the disciples speak as though they are one person. Additionally, this exchange begins with a question from the Lord that shows that he answers prayers (he comes as a result of their praying), possesses great power (he is able to give them what they want), and feels compassion (he cares about them and wants to know what they want).

The second part of this dialogue with the Savior in 3 Nephi occurs in the next chapter. The Lord has just completed the reply to his disciples' question when the following takes place (reformatted, with added quotation marks):

And it came to pass when Jesus had said these words, he spake unto his disciples, one by one, saying unto them:

"What is it that ye desire of me, after that I am gone to the Father?"

And they all spake, save it were three, saying: "We desire that after we have lived unto the age of man, that our

> ministry, wherein thou hast called us, may have an end, that we may speedily come unto thee in thy kingdom."
>
> And he said unto them: "Blessed are ye because ye desired this thing of me; therefore, after that ye are seventy and two years old ye shall come unto me in my kingdom; and with me ye shall find rest."
>
> And when he had spoken unto them, he turned himself unto the three, and said unto them: "What will ye that I should do unto you, when I am gone unto the Father?"
>
> And they sorrowed in their hearts, for they durst not speak unto him the thing which they desired.
>
> And he said unto them: "Behold, I know your thoughts, and ye have desired the thing which John, my beloved, who was with me in my ministry, before that I was lifted up by the Jews, desired of me. Therefore, more blessed are ye, for ye shall never taste of death; but ye shall live to behold all the doings of the Father unto the children of men, even until all things shall be fulfilled according to the will of the Father, when I shall come in my glory with the powers of heaven." (3 Nephi 28:1-7)

The Lord's answer continues for another four verses. This section of the second dialogue continues in the same pattern as the first. The Lord is the primary speaker, once again saying more than anyone else in the text. There is an element of reprimand—twice, in fact. The first is when the Lord tells the nine disciples that their desire to come to him quickly is a good thing by saying, "Blessed are ye because ye desired this thing of me." The three feel reprimanded, in a way, when they infer that their desire is not as valid, and they sorrow "in their hearts, for they durst not speak unto him the thing which they desired." The second reprimand could have been inferred by the nine disciples, when they hear the Lord tell the three that they are "more blessed" for their desire. The writer, again, crafts the disciples' speaking as though one person is talking; the nine are portrayed as saying the same sentence, and the three,

though they never speak, have the same desire. It is unlikely that the Lord said the exact same words to each of the twelve in asking his question, and it is even more unlikely that each of the nine answered with the exact same words. By portraying the dialogue in this way, the writer takes the attention away from word choice and how the individual questions and answers differed and focuses our reading on the Lord's words and what he was doing for these followers. And finally, as with the first part of this second dialogue, it begins with a question from the Lord (though it is not an answer to a prayer, so far as we know), shows his power (he is able to give them something they desire to receive after he is returned to the Father), and manifests his compassion (he cares about each of the twelve disciples and wants to give them what they desire, even when they do not all desire the same thing).

It may be tempting to suppose that one reason there is so little dialogue with the Savior in 3 Nephi as compared to the Gospels is because the devastating destruction before the Lord came to the Nephites left only good people. When he taught among the Jews, he frequently had to deal with wicked people who were seeking to trap him in his words. While it is true that the people in the Lord's Nephite ministry were more righteous than many in his mortal ministry, it is also true that he conversed with many faithful followers in the Gospels. In the New Testament, Jesus does not enter into dialogue with enemies only, or even with only nonbelievers. He also has dialogues with his apostles, disciples, and people of goodwill. In fact, in the book of Matthew alone, we find the Savior conversing with such people as the blind men whom he healed (see Matthew 9) and Peter, his apostle. The Savior converses with Peter several times in Matthew: when Jesus tells him that he is blessed because of his testimony, when he chastises him for objecting to his future death, when he asks him about paying taxes, and when he tells him that he will deny knowing him (see Matthew 16, 17, 26). While it is true that the Gospels give accounts of the Lord discussing various issues with the unrighteous (even with the devil himself in the wilderness), they also include dialogues with others as well.

By including so little dialogue with the Savior in 3 Nephi, and by carefully choosing the dialogue that is included and crafting it as discussed above, the writer of the book has helped to create a different image of Jesus than the one we read about in the New Testament Gospels. This 3 Nephi Jesus, resurrected and glorified, is not a man among men, but Divine Lord among his people. The Nephites do not question him, challenge him, or disagree with him—they stand in awe of him, kneel before him, pray to him, and worship him. What he speaks is eternally important, and the Nephites come to listen.

Conclusion

While all who love the Lord cherish the accounts of his life found in the Gospels of the New Testament, the Book of Mormon offers a fifth account that portrays the Savior and his divinity in even more clear and undeniable ways. This fifth version does not diminish the first four in any way but complements them by allowing us to see more of Jesus as the glorified, resurrected God that he is. By using a literary lens to study the 3 Nephi account of the Savior's visit to the Nephites, we can see how the author crafts the narrative to portray him not as a man living on the earth, interacting with others on a daily basis and living among them, but as Divine Lord, come down from heaven to minister to his people and save them.

Appendix

Many scholars have written about the Bible as literature. In fact, this particular approach to the Bible is considered significant enough to be offered as part of the standard curriculum of English departments for many universities (including Brigham Young University). The well-respected scholar Robert Alter has written *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981) and *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), in addition to editing, with Frank Kermode, *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987). Leland Ryken

has published extensively on the Bible as literature, including *The Literature of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1974), *How to Read the Bible as Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), and *Words of Delight: A Literary Introduction to the Bible*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book, 1992). Even the great literary critic Northrop Frye wrote about this topic in two books: *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1982); and *Words with Power: Being a Second Study of "The Bible and Literature"* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990).

For decades, scholars have taken an interest in studying the Book of Mormon through a literary lens as well. Sidney B. Sperry discusses the types of literature (including allegory, song, epistle, psalm, lamentation, historical narrative, memoir, prophetic discourse, oratory, symbolic prophecy, and, especially relevant to this paper, what he termed "the American Gospel") in his book *Our Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1950). John S. Tanner writes of some of the literary qualities in the Book of Mormon in his article "Literary Reflections on Jacob and His Descendants," in *The Book of Mormon: Jacob through Words of Mormon, To Learn with Joy: Papers from the Fourth Annual Book of Mormon Symposium, 1988*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1990), 251–69. Bruce Jorgensen wrote a careful and insightful literary study in his "The Dark Way to the Tree: Typological Unity in the Book of Mormon," in *Literature of Belief: Sacred Scripture and Religious Experience*, ed. Neal E. Lambert (Provo, UT: BYU Studies Center, 1981), 217–31. Richard D. Rust wrote his seminal book, *Feasting on the Word: The Literary Testimony of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1997), as well as such articles as "'All Things Which Have Been Given of God . . . Are the Typifying of Him': Typology in the Book of Mormon," in *Literature of Belief*, 233–43; "Book of Mormon Imagery," in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), 132–39; and "'So Curious a Workmanship': The Book of Mormon as Literature," in *Colloquium: Essays in Literature and Belief*, ed. Richard H. Cracroft, Jane D.

Brady, and Linda Hunter Adams (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 2001), 189–210. I have also written "Lehi's Vision of the Tree of Life: Understanding the Dream as Visionary Literature," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 14/2 (2005): 52–63; and "The Literary Power of the Book of Mormon," in *Living the Book of Mormon: Abiding by Its Precepts*, ed. Gaye Strathearn and Charles Swift (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and BYU Religious Studies Center, 2007), 72–84. And, most recently, Grant Hardy has written *Understanding the Book of Mormon: A Reader's Guide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). These are just a handful of examples of studies of the Book of Mormon as a work of sacred literature.

As with any research approach, studying scripture as literature strives to answer some questions while leaving some for others to answer. For example, studying the scriptures through a literary lens does not pretend to answer historical questions, though historical context can play a role in understanding some literature. Similarly, while literary analysis may be informed by an understanding of a doctrinal perspective, its purpose is not to determine doctrine. Often in literary studies we may focus less on trying to determine what an author intended and more on realizing the effect the author's text has on its readers. Just as a historical, linguistic, or doctrinal analysis has its own focus that, by necessity as well as by definition, forces some aspects of the text out of the analytical picture, so does literary analysis focus on the literary elements and questions in a text while not devoting as much attention to other, less-related concerns.

Charles Swift is an associate professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University. His PhD dissertation was a literary study of the vision of the tree of life and how it conveys ideas about teaching and learning.

The Writings of Malachi in 3 Nephi: A Foundation for Zion in the Past and Present

Aaron P. Schade and David R. Seely

In the course of his visit to the Nephites as recorded in 3 Nephi, the Savior taught the gospel of the "new covenant," organized his church, and instituted the ordinances necessary for salvation. After he organized his church, he taught the Nephites about the future by quoting from a host of important prophecies known from the Old Testament—including passages from Deuteronomy, Micah, and Isaiah—that spoke of the scattering of Israel, apostasy, and ultimately the restoration of the gospel, the gathering of Israel, and the building of the New Jerusalem. At the culmination of these prophecies, the Savior commanded the Nephites to record the writings of Malachi 3-4 in 3 Nephi 24-25; these chapters had been written after the Lehites had left Jerusalem and were thus not on the plates of brass. The words of Malachi hold a special place in the Savior's teachings and establish the foundation for the Zion we read about in 4 Nephi. The visit of Christ to the New World was a type of the second coming. We can learn much from a study of his visit.[1]

The prophet Malachi lived and prophesied in Israel, probably between 500 and 350 BC. He addressed a religious community who had returned from Babylon in 539 BC, had rebuilt the temple, and had renewed allegiance to the covenant under Ezra (Nehemiah 8-10), but was already in apostasy. His primary message to them was repentance from their apostasy and the promise of future restoration,

1. See Ezra Taft Benson, *A Witness and A Warning: A Modern-Day Prophet Testifies of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 21-22, 37-38.

judgment, and salvation. In Malachi chapters 3-4, which the Savior wanted included in the Book of Mormon (see 3 Nephi 24-25), Malachi deals with the neglect of tithes and offerings (Malachi 3:8-12) and the growing attitude among the people that it was "vain to serve God" (3:13-18). To provide motivation for obedience and faith, Malachi prophesied the future coming of messengers to prepare for the coming of the Lord in judgment (3:1-6), and the judgment of the world when the wicked would be burned and the righteous delivered and healed (4:1-3). The final promise was that "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord," the Lord would send Elijah to "turn the heart of the fathers to the children" (4:5-6). The prophecies in chapters 3-4 are referred to in the standard works, and Moroni recited portions of chapter 3, and all of chapter 4, to Joseph Smith in 1823 with the promise that the events prophesied would soon come to pass (Joseph Smith—History 1:36-39).[2] The final promise to send the prophet Elijah identifies the central mechanism for the salvation of all God's children. The binding of the hearts of the fathers and the children through the promises of the covenant provides numerous generations with the principles of salvation for Zion.

After the writings of Malachi were recorded, Jesus "expounded them" to the Nephites near him (3 Nephi 24:1) and explained that these words were to be given "unto future generations" (26:2). Those future generations who could benefit from the writings of Malachi included the righteous descendants of Lehi who would establish a perfect society—Zion—before it disappeared because of apostasy (4 Nephi), as well as those future generations who would participate in the restoration of the gospel and the building of Zion in the latter days in preparation for the second coming of Christ. While much Latter-day Saint study of Malachi has focused on the meaning of Malachi for the restoration, we will expand this study to include the significance of Malachi's words for the ancient Nephite and Lamanite

2. See 1 Kings 17–2 Kings; 2 Chronicles 21:12-15; Malachi 4:5; Matthew 16:14; 17:3; 27:47-49; Mark 6:14-15; 9:4; 15:35-36; Luke 4:25-26; 9:30; James 5:17; 3 Nephi 25:5; Doctrine and Covenants 2:1; 27:9; 110:13-15; 128:17; 133:55; 138:46-47; Joseph Smith—History 1:38.

members of the church to see if lessons can be learned from their building of Zion that can help us in building a latter-day Zion.

We will look at four significant passages in Malachi and examine how they relate to both of these audiences. In particular, because the Nephites clearly enjoyed the blessings of the gospel made possible by the Melchizedek Priesthood, we will examine the issues of the role of the keys of Elijah, the rewards of the book of remembrance, and the binding of families. The four passages are:

1. "Behold, I will send my messenger" (Malachi 3:1)
2. "But who may abide the day of his coming?" (Malachi 3:2)
3. "It is vain to serve God" (Malachi 3:14)
4. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet" (Malachi 4:5)

1. "Behold, I will send my messenger" (Malachi 3:1)

Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.

Malachi promises covenant Israel that before the day of judgment, the Lord will send messengers to prepare his way. Here Malachi speaks of two messengers: the first is a messenger whose purpose is to prepare, and the second is the Lord who will come to his temple in the role of the "messenger of the covenant" that will precede "the day of his coming." Malachi's prophecy of a messenger to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ provides a model for both of his appearances.

The Savior's mortal ministry was preceded by a host of messengers—most notably John the Baptist. The coming of Christ in the Book of Mormon is a type and shadow of his second coming, for which the book of Malachi was also written. As prophesied by Malachi, many messengers prepared the way for the coming of the Savior in the Americas. Nephi, Samuel the Lamanite (Helaman 13–15), and Nephi, son of Nephi (3 Nephi), all preached repentance and warned of the judgment and destruction that would attend Christ's coming and establishment of Zion. In addition, they all

warned about the apostasy that would lead to the final destruction of the Nephites. In 3 Nephi judgment and the destruction of the wicked did occur. As prophesied, Jesus Christ did in fact "suddenly come to his temple" (Malachi 3:1) in Bountiful as the messenger of the covenant—to preach his gospel and give the Nephites the necessary keys to establish their Zion society (3 Nephi 24:1). Because of the warnings of the messengers, a generation of people were prepared to survive the destruction, welcome the Savior, and establish a Zion society based on the gospel that he taught them.

Likewise, God has sent a series of messengers in the latter days to prepare the way for the second coming of Christ. The angel Moroni quoted portions of Malachi 3 and all of Malachi 4 to Joseph Smith and promised that Malachi's prophecies were to be fulfilled beginning in his day. Messengers of preparation included John the Baptist, Peter, James, and John, and others who restored knowledge and keys necessary to restore the church, build Zion, and prepare for the second coming of the Savior.[3] On April 3, 1836, the Lord Jesus Christ "suddenly came" to the Kirtland Temple as the messenger of the covenant to introduce Elias, Moses, and Elijah, who would restore other important keys. As noted by Elder Bruce R. McConkie, this appearance was a fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy, but "it may well be that he will come again, suddenly, to others of his temples, more particularly that which will be erected in Jackson County, Missouri" in preparation for "his appearance at the great and dreadful day, for that coming will be when he sets his foot upon the Mount of Olivet in the midst of the final great war."[4]

3. In fact, the Book of Mormon, the restoration of the church, and the Spirit all served as messengers.

4. These quotations from McConkie appear here in context: "Malachi recorded the promise, speaking of latter-day events that, '*The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple.*' (Mal. 3:1.) Certainly the Almighty is not limited in the number of appearances and returns to earth needed to fulfill the scriptures, usher in the final dispensation, and consummate his great latter-day work. This sudden latter-day appearance in the temple does not have reference to his appearance at the great and dreadful day, for that coming will be when he sets his foot upon the Mount of Olivet in the midst of the final great war. The temple appearance was fulfilled, in part at least, by his return to the Kirtland Temple on April 3, 1836; and it may well be that he will come

The events of the coming of Christ in the Book of Mormon testify of the importance for Latter-day Saints to give heed to the messengers of preparation and to use the keys restored by the Savior to build Zion. Malachi's teachings have been instrumental in preparing multiple generations for the coming of the Lord.

2. "But who may abide the day of his coming?" (3:2)

Following the promise of messengers to prepare the way, Malachi 3:2 contains a bold pronouncement of the coming of the Lord in judgment phrased in a rhetorical question: "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?" (3:2). Malachi calls this coming "the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (4:5).

In the Old Testament the "day of the Lord" was originally a positive image, for it represented the coming of the Lord in light and truth to deliver his covenant people. However, for many of God's children, who were in varying states of apostasy, "the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light" (Amos 5:18) and would spell for them destruction. Malachi employs several dramatic images that illustrate the coming of the Lord in judgment: "he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap" (Malachi 3:2). Thus the primary message of the whole of the book of Malachi is to repent: "Return unto me, and I will return unto you" (3:7).

Throughout the book of Malachi (like those of many of the Israelite prophets), the primary sin of the covenant people is pride and wickedness: "we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up" (3:15) and "all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly" (4:1). Malachi describes the day of judgment for the wicked as a day of burning "for, behold, the day cometh, that shall

---

again, suddenly, to others of his temples, more particularly that which will be erected in Jackson County, Missouri. In this connection it is worthy of note that whenever and wherever the Lord appears, he will come suddenly, that is 'quickly, in an hour you think not.' [D&C 51:20.] His oft repeated warning, 'Behold, I come quickly' [D&C 35:27], means that when the appointed hour arrives, he will come with a speed and a suddenness which will leave no further time for preparation for that great day." Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 693–94.

burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be as stubble" (4:1). For the righteous "shall the Sun [BofM "Son"][5] of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall" (4:2).

The Book of Mormon people experienced such a scenario with the first coming of the Savior when many of the wicked were destroyed. Some of the wicked experienced the day of judgment like a burning (3 Nephi 9:3, 9, 10), but many of the righteous were delivered. After the Savior came to his temple, the people gathered there and experienced the "Son of righteousness" who came with "healing in his wings" to heal, forgive, and give life (see Malachi 4:2; 3 Nephi 17).

The specific sins that Malachi mentions in judgment are sorcery; adultery; false swearers; oppression of the hireling, the widow, and the fatherless; and those that turn away the stranger (3:5). Malachi's

5. The book of Malachi has the image "the Sun of righteousness" as an allusion to the Lord. The King James translators recognized it as an allusion to God and thus capitalized "Sun." In the Book of Mormon this image is rendered "Son of Righteousness" (3 Nephi 25:2), which is a more precise personification of Jesus Christ. Because "sun" and "son" are homonyms in English, some have argued that this change occurred in the process of translating the Book of Mormon. It is possible, however, that the "sun of righteousness" would have been an image more readily understood by the biblical people in the Old World and that "son of righteousness" was deliberately used by the Savior when he quoted this passage to communicate that it was a reference to the Lord. Isaiah 30:26 states, "The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven days, on the day the Lord binds up the fracture of His people and heals the bruise He has inflicted" (*New American Standard Bible*, 1973). Alviero Niccacci, "Poetic Syntax and Interpretation of Malachi," *Liber Annuus* 51 (2001): 99, situates the unique phrase "Sun of righteousness" following a *merismus* describing the opposite fates of individuals on the "day" of his coming, and Ralph L. Smith, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 32, Micah-Malachi* (Nashville: Nelson, 1984), 339, equates the image with "rays" and references of the sun to God in the Bible. Some Jewish and Christian interpretations claim the "Sun of righteousness" refers to a messiah. Andrew E. Hill, *Malachi: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*; Anchor Bible 25D (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 212, describes the common Near Eastern conception of the sun disk as a deity (the image similarly portrayed here in Malachi): "The image depicting (falcon or eagle) wings against a full sun represented the guardianship of the deity, an emblem of divine effulgence as well as protection and blessing for those overshadowed by the 'wings' of the deity." This conception fits the messianic image of the coming of Christ as the "Sun of righteousness" well, and the *merismus* scenario that the day of his coming will be either great or dreadful depending on the protection, or lack thereof, one receives as a result of personal conduct in the course of life.

prophecies of judgment and destruction reverberate through the future generations in the Book of Mormon. Concerning the generations following the coming of the Savior, 4 Nephi recounts that those generations of Nephites and Lamanites eradicated these sins in their establishment of Zion. Instead of adultery, 4 Nephi says that there were no "whoredoms . . . nor any manner of lasciviousness" (1:16); instead of pride "there were no envyings, nor strifes" (1:16); "they had all things common"; and instead of oppression of the poor and the widows and orphans, "there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free" (1:3).

After two hundred years had passed, the future generations of Nephites and Lamanites forgot the warnings of Malachi and these same sins began to creep back in among the people.[6] Because of their sins, the Lord allowed his covenant people to be destroyed by their enemies, the Lamanites. Perhaps reminiscent of the promised burning in judgment that will accompany the second coming—as described in Malachi 4:1—Mormon records that the Nephite cities were burned with fire by the Lamanites (Mormon 5:5).

Like Malachi, Moroni warns the latter-day readers of the Book of Mormon with the same warnings: "I know that ye do walk in the pride of your hearts" (Mormon 8:36); "For behold, ye do love money, and your substance, and your fine apparel, and the adorning of your churches, more than ye love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted" (8:37); and "Why do ye adorn yourselves with that which hath no life, and yet suffer the hungry, and the needy, and the naked, and the sick and the afflicted to pass by you, and notice them not?" (8:39). "There shall be murders, and robbing, and lying, and deceivings, and whoredoms, and all manner of abominations" (8:31).

Almost as if he were reading the Savior's exposition on Malachi 3-4 in 3 Nephi, Moroni portrayed the day of the Lord with the same images and almost the same words used by the Lord as he described

6. Mormon records that sorceries, witchcrafts, and magic began to appear in the land (Mormon 1:19).

the final judgment: "The earth shall be rolled together as a scroll, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat" (Mormon 9:2; compare 3 Nephi 26:3). Again, Malachi's teachings help prepare Zion, in whatever dispensation, to come unto the Lord and be cleansed and healed, to overcome pride, and to prepare for the coming of the Lord so as to be worthy to endure his presence.

3. "It is vain to serve God" (3:14)

In Malachi 3:14-15 the Lord chides Israel for saying, "It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered." In the following verses in Malachi, the Lord comforts the righteous by reiterating two of the promised rewards of the covenant: (1) to write their names in the "book of remembrance" (3:16) and (2) to "spare them" "in that day when I make up my jewels" (3:17). An examination of these promises shows that they are both rooted in concepts that involve the Melchizedek Priesthood. While Latter-day Saints have a keen awareness and appreciation for the blessings of the Melchizedek Priesthood, which keys have been restored in our day, seeing how these blessings of the higher law relate to the Nephites and to their posterity can increase our understanding of Book of Mormon peoples and their religious beliefs.

In Malachi 3:16-18 the image of the book of remembrance and "jewels" are found together: "And a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not."

This is the only place in the Old Testament where the phrase *book of remembrance* occurs.[7] It is clear from verse 17 that those whose names are entered into the book of remembrance have become the Lord's; specifically, they have become his "peculiar treasure," the same Hebrew word elsewhere translated as "jewels."[8] Importantly, this term is also used in describing the Lord's intention for Israel when leading them out of Egypt: "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure[9] unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exodus 19:5-6).

This statement of the Lord occurs prior to establishing the Mosaic law and thus refers to the promises of Abraham and his covenant with the Lord.[10] If we can equate this same covenant

7. Other Old Testament passages speak of divine books wherein the Lord records the names of his people (Exodus 32:32-33; Psalms 69:28; 87:6; Daniel 12:1). See, for example, Smith, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 338. This concept is developed in the idea of the book of life in Jewish liturgy. See Adele Berlin, Marc Z. Brettler, and Michael Fishbane, eds., *The Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1274. "The alms of your prayers have come up into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, and are recorded in the book of the names of the sanctified, even them of the celestial world" (D&C 88:2). "Indeed, 'few religious ideas in the Ancient Near East have played a more important role than the notion of the Heavenly Tablets or the Heavenly Book'; 'in the literature of early Judaism' in particular, they 'play a considerable role.' The idea is at home in classical literature and hence it is assumed was taken over by the early Christians with their Book of Life. In Rabbinic tradition, Abraham '"being found faithful," is declared a "friend of God" on the "heavenly tablets," and every righteous keeper of the Covenant is . . . registered in the same Book of Life.'" Hugh Nibley, "A Strange Thing in the Land: The Return of the Book of Enoch, Part 5," in *Enoch the Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1986), 141 and nn. 221-24.

8. The KJV reads "jewels," see s.v. "סגלה," Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, Charles A. Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*. electronic ed. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2000), S. 688. Based on Ugaritic and Akkadian cognates, Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 368, equates this term with covenant terminology between a suzerain and a vassal, thus highlighting God's covenant relationship with his people.

9. This is the same term used in Malachi 3:17 for "jewels."

10. The intended higher order of the priesthood is clearly established in D&C 84:19-27 and Exodus 34:1 JST. Brigham Young also remarked: "The Gospel was among the children of men from the days of Adam until the coming of the Messiah; this Gospel of Christ is from the beginning to the end. Then why was the law of Moses

relationship in Exodus with that in Malachi, then the word of the Lord in Malachi transcends the Mosaic law and extends back into the realms of promises made to Abraham that are to be fulfilled. Ordinances of the Melchizedek Priesthood are thus involved in becoming the Lord's peculiar treasure and in establishing Zion.[11]

Pointing toward Elijah's sealing power, Malachi 3:18 continues, "Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not." Discerning between the righteous and the wicked and serving God or not seems to have some reference to the book of remembrance mentioned in verse 16 and may shed some light onto what exactly this service would entail—going beyond being good or bad. In this verse "the righteous and the wicked" is found in parallel with "him that serveth . . . and him that serveth not." The "righteous" and "those who serve" describe those in verse 16 whose names are written in the book of remembrance. To be written in the book of remembrance may also involve participation in the process by which other names are written in the book of remembrance and may be an allusion to those who fulfill their responsibilities to be saviors on Mount Zion in temple service.[12] It seems relevant that the book of Malachi is

---

given? In consequence of the disobedience of the Children of Israel, the elect of God; the very seed that he had selected to be his people, and upon whom he said he would place his name. This seed of Abraham so rebelled against him and his commands that the Lord said to Moses, 'I will give you a law which shall be a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ'" (see Galatians 3:24). *Discourses of Brigham Young,* ed. John A. Widtsoe (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 104. "If they had been sanctified and holy, the Children of Israel would not have traveled one year with Moses before they would have received their endowments and the Melchizedek Priesthood" (see D&C 84:23). *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 106.

11. A further connection that may link the usage of the terms in these contexts with the Melchizedek Priesthood may be found in 1 Peter 2:9. Περιποίησιν is used both in 1 Peter 2:9 and in the Septuagint for Malachi 3:17 to describe the "peculiar people" and "peculiar treasure." The Hebrew version of Malachi 3:17 uses סגלה. What is interesting is that this Hebrew word is used in only eight passages in the Old Testament. In Malachi 3:17 and Exodus 19:5 the context is focusing directly on becoming the treasure or possession through a process of action, requirements of doing, and being made such by keeping covenants and serving God. In most of the other contexts the possession is simply being declared.

12. See D&C 128:15, where the necessity of temple worship and service are discussed, as well as verse 24, where Malachi 3:1-3 is reiterated in the context of abiding the day by presenting in the temple a book containing the records of our dead. It

given just prior to the intertestamental period and points to the first coming of the Lord, while the Nephites would be viewing it with specific reference to his coming again. This was a multigenerational call to service in the temple and seems to underscore the importance and connectedness of temple work in the various dispensations.[13]

---

is also interesting to note that the verb *return* used in this verse is the same verb used in Malachi 4 in reference to "turning" hearts. In relation to Malachi 4 the Prophet Joseph Smith stated, "Now, the word *turn* here should be translated *bind*, or seal. But what is the object of this important mission? or how is it to be fulfilled? The keys are to be delivered, the spirit of Elijah is to come, the Gospel to be established, the Saints of God gathered, Zion built up, and the Saints to come up as saviors on Mount Zion." *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1974), 330. In relation to Malachi 3:18 one commentator remarked, "No one seemed to be able to distinguish right from wrong, or the righteous from the wicked. In 3:18 Yahweh makes it clear that there is a difference between the righteous and the wicked and the time will come when everyone will be able to discern that difference. 'And you shall return' is a little ambiguous. . . . The precise meaning of 'return' here is not clear." Smith, *Word Biblical Commentary*, 338. If the verbal root *return* is used here in chapter 3 like it is in chapter 4, then we may witness a process in Malachi 3:16-18 dealing with a book of remembrance: the Lord's peculiar treasure, the righteous and the wicked, binding, and those who serve and those who don't. This is interesting in that "we are informed that the books will be opened. One of these books will be the record of our lives as it is kept in heaven. Other books which will be opened are records which have been kept on earth." Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Way to Perfection* (Salt Lake City: Genealogical Society of Utah, 1931), 342. The Hebrew text has no Malachi 4, but continues into the theme of the coming of the day of the Lord, a theme of root and branch (a reference to posterity), and the coming of Elijah to turn hearts to avoid utter destruction. This is also echoed in D&C 2. In relation to current practices of family history and temple work we read:

"But how can this assistance be given? By every family preparing its own genealogies to provide the identification needed to perform the ordinances of the dead. Properly performed ordinances for properly identified persons are acceptable to the Lord. He provides that all such work be done in a house especially built for the purpose. Such houses are called temples.

"Why do Latter-day Saints build temples? That in them they may receive those sealing blessings for themselves and perform for their kindred the vicarious baptisms and sealings which will permit them in the words of Peter to 'live according to God in the spirit' and yet be judged according to the opportunities and standards of men in the flesh." Mark E. Petersen, "Why We Build Temples," *Liahona*, October 1980, 34.

Malachi 3:1 makes reference to the Lord coming to his temple, in 3 Nephi he has come to his temple, and in this dispensation he also came to his temple, in conjunction with Elijah.

13. Another important item that may help link becoming the Lord's "jewels" with temple worship and work may be manifested in the temple garb of the high priest (of the Aaronic order) in ancient Israel, who was officiating in sacrifices on behalf of the

It is important that the Lord would include the teachings of Malachi in his sermons to the Nephites. Richard Draper touches upon the possible implications this had on the Nephite people:

> Those generations were the righteous children of Lehi who established the perfect society after the coming of the Lord. Those people needed the words of Malachi in order to understand the new dimension which the work of the Lord took, now that he had fulfilled his mortal mission. Up to this time most of the preparation had been for his first coming. From that point on, it would be for his second. The words of Malachi reveal not only key events but also the nature of the work that would prepare for that coming.[14]

Statements such as this have been made, and they seem to imply that temple work was being done by the Nephites. The context in which these words were delivered by the Savior seem to indicate that Malachi's teachings were relevant not only to future generations but also to the Nephites hearing his words quoted at the present time, with the invitation and responsibility to participate in the process. This all seems relevant to Malachi 3:16–18 and the "book of remembrance" and introduces the prophecy foretelling the coming of Elijah in chapter 4.

4. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet" (4:5)

In accordance with the previous dispensations and administrations of priesthood keys, authorities, and ordinances, it seems

---

Israelites in the temple, who could not perform sacrifices for themselves, the priests performing a vicarious work in the preparatory gospel designed to prepare Israel for the intended higher order. According to Exodus 28:29, upon the breastplate worn by the priest were twelve precious stones (perhaps signifying the concept of the Lord's "jewels"), each with the names of a tribe of Israel inscribed upon it, and the high priest thus bore "the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy *place,* for a memorial before the Lord continually." This may highlight the notion of becoming the Lord's "peculiar treasure" through priesthood ordinances in the "holy place."

14. Richard D. Draper, "The Book of Malachi," in *Studies in Scripture, Volume 4: 1 Kings to Malachi*, ed. Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993), 365.

consistent that the Nephites received not only baptism, confirmation, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, but also the higher ordinances of the priesthood. This is implied in Joseph Smith's prophetic statement:

> This [Book of Mormon] also tells us that our Savior made His appearance upon this [the American] continent after His resurrection; that He planted the Gospel here in all its fulness, and richness, and power, and blessing; that they had Apostles, Prophets, Pastors, Teachers, and Evangelists; the same order, the same priesthood, the same ordinances, gifts, powers, and blessings, as were enjoyed on the eastern continent.[15]

The people of 4 Nephi may have enjoyed the ordinances and blessings of eternal marriage associated with sealing power. After a description of their Zion society, we read:

> And they were married, and given in marriage, and were blessed according to the multitude of the promises which the Lord had made unto them. And they did not walk any more after the performances and ordinances of the law of Moses; but they did walk after the commandments which

15. *History of the Church*, 4:538. See Spencer W. Kimball, *Faith Precedes the Miracle* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1972), 329-36, and McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 435. Concerning the 3 Nephi account, John W. Welch writes: "Jesus addressed most of his teachings at that time to his apostles and instructed them in their priesthood duties; told them about their premortal existence, the creation of the world, and the purpose of this life; and explained how they could return to the glory of God through obedience to ordinances for the salvation of the living and the dead. He blessed them with an initiation or endowment, generally called the 'mysteries,' which emphasized garments, marriage, and prayer circles. . . . Joseph Smith taught that Peter and John received the 'fulness of priesthood or the law of God' at the Mount of Transfiguration and that Peter 'washed and anointed' all the apostles and received 'the endowment' on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem. President Heber C. Kimball similarly once remarked that Jesus had 'inducted his Apostles into these ordinances [the holy endowments].'" John W. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 33-34. The Nephites also seemed privy to this process. For a discussion on the Nephites holding the Melchizedek Priesthood, see Paul Y. Hoskisson, "By what authority did Lehi, a non-Levite priest, offer sacrifices?," *Ensign*, March 1994, 54; and David R. Seely, "Lehi's Altar and Sacrifice in the Wilderness," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 10/1 (2001): 62-69.

> they had received from their Lord and their God, continuing in fasting and prayer, and in meeting together oft both to pray and to hear the word of the Lord. (4 Nephi 1:11–12)

In verse 12 the meaning behind "the performances and ordinances of the law of Moses" probably extends beyond the obvious abolishment of the sacrificial system under the Mosaic law. Here it may extend into the realms of the higher order of marriage as a covenant and the abandonment of allowing the dissolution of marriage under the former law. Malachi 4:4 states, "Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel." The angel Moroni quoted this passage to Joseph Smith. The reference to the pre-Mosiac "law" apparently indicated the higher law revealed to Moses that Israel did not receive because of rebellion. Kent P. Jackson wrote of this:

> It may be that the intent of Jesus and Moroni in quoting the verse was to draw attention to that higher law. Jesus' listeners in early America were worthy and able to have the higher law, the Melchizedek Priesthood, and the ordinances and blessings that God revealed to Moses on the mountain but which their Israelite ancestors had forfeited. . . . Perhaps the Savior's visit to the Nephites initiated an era of intense temple activity among them, and perhaps Malachi's prophecy was used to stress eternal marriage and the other blessings of Elijah's sealing power (see 4 Ne. 1:11).[16]

16. Kent P. Jackson, *Lost Tribes and Last Days* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 171, 173, about Malachi 4:4. Welch writes, "Husbands are not to put their wives away, and wives are not to remarry. For centuries, commentators have struggled to understand the intended application of this radical prohibition against divorce. In light of the exceptionally righteous audience that had assembled at the temple in Bountiful, the context of the Sermon at the Temple suggests that this very demanding restriction may have something to do with the spirit and law through which husbands and wives are to be bound together in the eternal covenant relationships involved here. This explains the strictness of the rule, for eternal marriages can be dissolved only by proper authority on justifiable grounds and are sealed up for all eternity (see D&C 132:19)." Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple*, 70.

This statement is extremely interesting in light of the fact that Malachi 2 (not cited in the Book of Mormon) contains condemnations against breaking marriage covenants and divorce.[17] These chapters may have been excluded from the Book of Mormon because the Lord now instituted the higher law among the more righteous part, which was spared the destructions at the Lord's coming, and in the current condition, which did not support the "putting away" of a spouse under the umbrella of eternal marriage.[18]

It seems that the chapters of Malachi and the prophecy of Elijah were given to the Nephites in 3 Nephi not just to give hope that their posterity would someday receive something that they themselves did not possess, but rather, that they would have restored to them the blessings of the fulness of the gospel the generations of 3-4 Nephi were then enjoying. We assume that the statement "You cannot receive the *fulness of the priesthood* unless you go into the temple of the Lord and receive these ordinances"[19] holds true across the various dispensations (including the Nephites). Malachi thus fits prominently

17. For a brief discussion of the difficulties encountered in these passages encountered in Malachi see Berlin, Brettler, and Fishbane, *Jewish Study Bible,* 1272.

18. The covenant mentioned in "profaning the covenant of our fathers" (Malachi 2:10) and "the wife of thy covenant" (Malachi 2:14) has been viewed in light of the eternal covenant made between Adam and Eve as found in Genesis 2:24, where they are commanded to become one flesh (Malachi 2:15, "And did not he make one?"). See Gordon P. Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant: A Study of Biblical Law and Ethics Governing Marriage, Developed from the Perspective of Malachi* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 166, 342, who attributes both Adam and Eve's marriage and the marriage scene in Malachi 2 to covenantal contexts. The following summary has also been given in relation to the injunction in Malachi concerning marriage: "Malachi sees marriage as a covenant to which God is the witness, and which has as its goal the procreation of godly children. He does not appear to have any place for divorce. The opening statement in Mal 2:16 can now be read in a new light: 'have we not all one father.' The appeal is to creation and is meant to unify the community, not tear it apart. . . . Malachi's pronouncements on divorce mark a change in traditional Jewish attitudes to marriage. Divorce would still be accepted by mainstream Judaism, but Malachi points to the emergence of a stricter view of marriage as indissoluble. The basis for that view was found in the statement in Genesis that man and wife were one flesh. This stricter view was later developed in the Dead Sea Scrolls, and receives a famous endorsement in the New Testament in the saying attributed to Jesus: 'what God has joined together, let no one separate' (Matt 19:6)." John J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 418-19.

19. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation,* 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1956), 3:131. For a discussion on the eternal nature of the endowment, see Hugh W.

into the present and future of the Nephites as they worked to become a Zion society.

Binding Generations

The Prophet Joseph Smith stated, "The building up of Zion is a cause that has interested the people of God in every age; it is a theme upon which prophets, priests and kings have dwelt with peculiar delight; they have looked forward with joyful anticipation to the day in which we live."[20] In 1 Nephi 11–15, Nephi sees the destruction of his people and the apostasy and restoration of the gospel. He witnesses the coming of the Lord to his posterity and that "their garments were white even like unto the Lamb of God . . . because of their faith in him" (1 Nephi 12:11). President John Taylor commented on making our garments white in the blood of the Lamb:

> It is not enough for us to be connected with the Zion of God, for the Zion of God must consist of men that are pure in heart and pure in life and spotless before God, at least that is what we have got to arrive at. We are not there yet, but we must get there before we shall be prepared to inherit glory and exaltation.[21]

The people of Zion, in whatever dispensation, are to be pure in heart. Third Nephi 12:8 states, "And blessed are all the pure in heart, for they shall see God." John Welch, in his discussion of Jesus's sermon at the temple in Bountiful, describes the possibility that the beatitudes are associated with ritual and the kingdom, and possibly entrance into the holy of holies (representing God's presence).[22] Malachi's teachings were clearly designed to prepare people to endure God's presence, and when Nephi sees that the garments of the

---

Nibley, "On the Sacred and the Symbolic," in *Temples of the Ancient World*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 535–615.

20. *History of the Church*, 4:609.

21. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: John Taylor* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2001), 114.

22. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple*, 59.

people of 3-4 Nephi "were white even like unto the Lamb of God" (1 Nephi 12:11), there seems to be something implicit about higher ordinances of the gospel appended to this process and preparations to participate in temple worship.[23]

According to 1 Nephi 13:22-26, the early Nephites had scriptures containing the fulness of the gospel and covenants. To them the Lord stated, "And blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion *at that day* [implying that there was a Zion in their own day], for they shall have the gift and the power of the Holy Ghost; and if they endure unto the end they shall be lifted up at the last day, and shall be saved in the everlasting kingdom of the Lamb; and whoso shall publish peace, yea, tidings of great joy, how beautiful upon the mountains shall they be" (1 Nephi 13:37). Publishers of peace and joy upon the mountains may also describe a temple setting.[24]

23. See D&C 84:19-23. This is also interesting in light of 3 Nephi 15:3-9, where the Mosaic law has been replaced: "And he said unto them: Marvel not that I said unto you that old things had passed away, and that all things had become new. Behold, I say unto you that the law is fulfilled that was given unto Moses. Behold, I am he that gave the law, and I am he who covenanted with my people Israel; therefore, the law in me is fulfilled, for I have come to fulfil the law; therefore it hath an end. Behold, I do not destroy the prophets, for as many as have not been fulfilled in me, verily I say unto you, shall all be fulfilled. And because I said unto you that old things have passed away, I do not destroy that which hath been spoken concerning things which are to come. For behold, the covenant which I have made with my people is not all fulfilled; but the law which was given unto Moses hath an end in me. Behold, I am the law, and the light. Look unto me, and endure to the end, and ye shall live; for unto him that endureth to the end will I give eternal life."

24. See, for example, Isaiah 2:1-3. In 1 Nephi 15:13-18, Nephi explains that the "fulness of the gospel of the Messiah" would come unto their posterity and that they would be grafted into the covenant made to Abraham, which would be fulfilled in the latter days. For connections of the people of 3 Nephi as benefactors of the Abrahamic covenant, see 3 Nephi 21:4-11 and 3 Nephi 20:25-27.

"What, then, is involved in the gathering of Israel? The gathering of Israel consists in believing and accepting and living in harmony with all that the Lord once offered his ancient chosen people. It consists of having faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, of repenting, of being baptized and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and of keeping the commandments of God. It consists of believing the gospel, joining the Church, and coming into the kingdom. It consists of receiving the holy priesthood, being endowed in holy places with power from on high, and receiving all the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, through the ordinance of celestial marriage. And it may also consist of assembling to an

When the Savior included Malachi's writings in his teachings to the Nephites in 3 Nephi, generations past, present, and future were to be affected by these Zion-building teachings.

Speaking of the prophecy in Malachi 4:5-6, the Prophet Joseph Smith asked:

> How is it [this prophecy] to be fulfilled? The keys are to be delivered, the spirit of Elijah is to come, the Gospel to be established, the Saints of God gathered, Zion built up, and the Saints to come up as saviors on Mount Zion. But how? . . . By building their temples . . . and receiving all the ordinances, baptisms, confirmations, washings, anointings, ordinations and sealing powers upon their heads, in behalf of all their progenitors who are dead, and redeem them; . . . and herein is the chain that binds the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, which fulfills the mission of Elijah.[25]

The conclusions reached here are that Malachi's words given to the Nephites in 3 Nephi were as relevant to them as they are to us today. Temple ordinances for the living, and possibly for the dead (and we know the New Testament church practiced baptisms for the dead; see 1 Corinthians 15:29), as a foundation for establishing Zion seemed to have been a part of the society of 3-4 Nephi. The indication is that the Nephites were enjoying the blessings of the higher ordinances of the priesthood and were rejoicing in the day when their posterity (who would fall away) would be blessed again with the same covenant they themselves were enjoying. For the Nephites prior to the coming of the Lord, this may have found partial fulfillment with the people of 3 Nephi. For the Nephites who lived subsequent to the Lord's coming, the day of their hope was to come to

---

appointed place or land of worship. Having this concept of the scattering and gathering . . . we are able to understand the prophetic word relative thereto." Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 515.

25. *History of the Church*, 6:184.

fruition with the restoration. In all scenarios the quoting of Malachi and Elijah was relevant. Surely the future generations of Saints who have read the prophecies of Malachi—from the time of the coming of the Savior in the Americas to the present—have found hope and comfort in the restoration of these keys and have sought for these blessings in order that all our names be recorded in the book of remembrance and that we may be sealed together as families through the keys restored by Elijah. As the Prophet Joseph Smith stated, "Let us, therefore, as a church and a people, and as Latter-day Saints, offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness; and let us present in his holy temple, when it is finished, a book containing the records of our dead, which shall be worthy of all acceptation" (D&C 128:24; see vv. 15-18, 22).[26] As the Lord taught the Nephites the words of Malachi—which included the coming of priesthood-bearing messengers, preparation to endure the presence of God, the important nature of serving God, the purpose of a book of remembrance, and the coming of Elijah to bestow sealing powers and keys—these teachings must have penetrated the hearts of the Nephites, thus turning their hearts to their fathers, motivating them to press forward in the establishment of Zion. Malachi's words were a quintessential part of laying the foundation for the Nephite Zion.

Aaron P. Schade received his PhD from the University of Toronto with an emphasis on the Hebrew Bible, Northwest Semitic epigraphy, and Egyptian languages and literature. He completed a postdoctoral fellowship in the humanities/social sciences (ancient history and religions) at the University of Toronto. He is chair of the Department of Religious Education at Brigham Young University–Hawaii.

David R. Seely, professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University, has an undergraduate degree in Greek and a master's degree in Classics from Brigham Young University and received his PhD from the University of Michigan in Near Eastern studies.

---

26. This was a letter from Joseph Smith to the Saints, September 6, 1842, Nauvoo, Illinois.

Jesus's Gospel-Defining Discourse in 3 Nephi 27:13-21: Doctrinal Apex of His New World Visit

Andrew C. Skinner

The statements of Jesus Christ in 3 Nephi 27:13-21 regarding *the gospel* are a treasure; they are unique in scripture. Nowhere else in sacred writ does Jesus personally define the term with such power, clarity, and simplicity. Nowhere else does he declare personal ownership or authorship of the gospel he preached and define it as the carrying out of his Father's will. And nowhere else in scripture does he connect so directly and succinctly his Father's will with the crucifixion, resurrection, and final judgment and link them to the universal salvation offered to humankind. In this passage Jesus ties together the relationship between true discipleship, adherence to the ordinances of salvation, and his offer to stand as everyone's personal intercessor to the Father. He starkly states that the absolute purity required for entry into the kingdom of heaven is directly and unequivocally related to the act of washing one's garments in his blood. (Such imagery is visceral in its effect.) In addition, 3 Nephi 27:13-21 might be described as a succinct tutorial on the nature of justification and sanctification. Doctrinally, this passage stands at the apex of Jesus's postresurrection visit to the New World. It is a discrete unit, beginning and ending with the phrase *my gospel*. It is the culminating discourse of his other New World teachings on the nature of the gospel.

Setting

The setting for this capstone instruction is Jesus's appearance to his disciples who are "united in mighty prayer and fasting" after

having traveled and taught the things they had witnessed and heard previously (3 Nephi 27:1). This is consistent with other Book of Mormon examples of the stunning results that come from mighty prayer. The first Nephi (1 Nephi 18:3), Enos (Enos 1:4), Alma (Alma 8:10), the sons of Mosiah (Alma 17:3-4), and Nephi, son of Nephi (3 Nephi 1:11-12), are only a few of the many other witnesses that affirm the validity of this spiritual law. Mighty prayer is a conduit of power. It opens the gates of heaven.

The spiritual power generated by these disciples derived from their unity of purpose and united actions. They were following the precepts and example of their Master. At the end of his life, Jesus himself offered his great High Priestly Prayer, blessing his disciples that they would "be one, even as we are one" (John 17:22). Significantly, Jesus likewise prayed for his disciples in the New World, "that I may be in them as thou, Father, art in me, that we may be one" (3 Nephi 19:23). Much later, Jesus would emphasize the necessity of unity to his latter-day disciples: "I say unto you, be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine" (D&C 38:27). This is a kind of unity and oneness that some of us may not yet have fully grasped but that is a nonnegotiable requirement for existence with God—"the union required by the law of the celestial kingdom" (D&C 105:4).

So it was that as a direct result of their united fasting and prayer Jesus showed himself to the New World disciples. He answered their direct questions and laid the foundation for the doctrinal watershed and spiritual feast found in verses 13 through 21. The disciples learned that in addition to bearing the correct, proper, and authorized name, the Church of Jesus Christ would be correctly identified because it would also be built upon his gospel, "my gospel" as he said (3 Nephi 27:9), and display the works of the Father, which he would "show forth . . . in it" (v. 10). The name of the church, the gospel it teaches, and the recognizable works of God the Father found in the Lord's church are all inextricably linked. The Church of Jesus Christ constitutes the repository of salvation on earth.

"My Gospel"

Having testified that his church is founded on his gospel, the resurrected Lord then proceeded to provide definitions, in order that there be no misunderstanding.

> Behold I have given unto you my gospel, and this is the gospel which I have given unto you—that I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me. And my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, that I might draw all men unto me, that as I have been lifted up by men even so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me, to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil—and for this cause have I been lifted up; therefore, according to the power of the Father I will draw all men unto me, that they may be judged according to their works. And it shall come to pass, that whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world. (3 Nephi 27:13-16)

These verses constitute an arresting first-person discourse on the nature of the gospel by the very source of the good news himself. Latter-day revelation defines the gospel as "the glad tidings" (D&C 76:40), even "glad tidings of great joy" (D&C 79:1). This squares perfectly with earlier, even ancient, conceptions of the term, as noted by modern scholarship: "The modern English word *gospel* is derived from the Old English *gódspel*, a combination of *gód* (good) and *spel* or *spiel* (news, tidings). . . . The original English word, however, was a proper translation of the Latin transliteration (*evangelium*) of the original [New Testament] term *euangelion*, 'good news.'"[1] This surely is the sense in which Jesus used the word with

1. M. Eugene Boring, "Gospel, Message," in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 4 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), 2:629.

his New World Israelites as recorded in 3 Nephi. For what better or more supernal news could have been delivered to them than that the Great Creator himself came to the earth to be lifted up upon the cross as a redemptive offering so that all humanity could be lifted up in a resurrected state, overcome physical death, and be declared guiltless if they became committed disciples?

One of the greatest contributions of 3 Nephi 27:13-21 is so simple as almost to be overlooked; namely, its confirmation that Jesus knew and used the term *gospel,* as a noun, in his own preaching, teaching, and exhortation. Though the noun *euangelion* is found in the New Testament gospel accounts,[2] some scholars believe it "improbable that Jesus himself should have used the [Greek] noun or its Semitic equivalent,"[3] which is *baśōrāh.* Rather, authorities have attributed the origins of the use of the Christian term *gospel* to the apostle Paul.[4] Certainly, he spoke often of the message of salvation as "good tidings" and felt its impact deeply. The noun *euangelion* appears sixty times in his writings—in every one of his letters. But the fact remains that the synoptic Gospels attribute to Jesus the use of the term *euangelion,* "glad tidings" or "gospel," when talking about his own mission and message, and it takes a lot of argumentation to explain why we shouldn't take the gospel writers at face value. Gratefully, 3 Nephi 27:13-21 clarifies the picture and prevents error.

But more than confirming Jesus's knowledge and use of *euangelion,* or whatever cognate he used when addressing his New World disciples, 3 Nephi 27 uniquely reports Jesus's unequivocal declaration that *he* is the author of the glad tidings of salvation. It is "my gospel," he says, and this serves to stand as a stark differentiation between his and other glad tidings or messages of "good news." We know that other "good tidings" did circulate during the period roughly contemporaneous with Jesus's mortal existence. For

2. The surprising exception is John. He presents no mention of it.

3. O. A. Piper, "Gospel (Message)," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible,* 5 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 2:443.

4. Millar Burrows, "The Origin of the Term 'Gospel,'" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 44/1-2 (1925): 22.

instance, a Priene calendar inscription dated to around 9 BC speaks of the birth of the emperor Caesar Augustus (emperor during the first fourteen years of Jesus's life) as "the beginning of good tidings for the world."[5] It is interesting to compare how Mark introduces his gospel account: "The beginning of the gospel [good tidings] of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1). His introduction serves to announce to his readers that the good tidings of his report are different from anything else being noised about, including earlier reports of glad tidings such as the coming of a secular imperial ruler. The fact that he appeals immediately (v. 2) to the forecasts of messianic prophets to validate his message of good news indicates a desire on his part to have readers understand the covenantal significance of the real "gospel" and its link to Israel's ancient authorities.

Scholars seem generally to acknowledge that it is Mark upon whom we are most dependent when studying those personal sayings of Jesus containing the noun *euangelion*, "glad tidings." Of the five instances found in Mark, the corresponding text in Matthew omits the word *gospel* in three of them, and "Luke (like John) does not use the noun [*euangelion*] at all in his gospel," preferring the verbal form *euangelizesthai*, "preach the gospel."

By declaring the gospel that he taught to his New World disciples to be *his* gospel, Jesus also forestalled any possible attempts by imposters, false messiahs, or false teachers to try to offer another version of the gospel or another plan of salvation. This very thing apparently happened in the Old World. No less a figure than the eminent doctor of the law, Gamaliel, mentioned two such messiah figures (Theudas and Judas the Galilean) when he gave his speech before the Sanhedrin advocating tolerance toward the new Christian movement (Acts 5:34-39).[6] Jesus had even warned, while delivering his Olivet discourse the last week of his life (see Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:22-25), of similar attempts by false Christs to

5. Burrows, "Origin of the Term 'Gospel,'" 21.

6. The Jewish historian Josephus also mentions Theudas (*Antiquities of the Jews* 20:97-98) and Judah the Galilean (*Antiquities of the Jews* 18:4-8).

deceive the very elect in the future. Jesus's miraculous appearance to the Nephites, with its attendant miracles and manifestations, was proof enough of his authentic messiahship and divine sonship. His subsequent declaration that the gospel he was teaching was *his* gospel, that he was its author, was then sufficient certification of the gospel's truthfulness and effectiveness. Additionally, what better way could there be to teach the disciples that they must not deviate from his prescribed gospel and follow another. (Even with his declarations in place, many did deviate from his gospel several hundred years later.) The apostle Paul would similarly warn disciples in the Old World that only Christ's own gospel, the glad tidings of the true Messiah, were valid even though others might teach a different one. Said he, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. . . . But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:8, 11-12).

In effect Paul is saying that the gospel he preached was Christ's gospel, not authored or established by anyone but Jesus Christ. Had Jesus given Paul's speech he might well have said, "It's *my* gospel that I gave to Paul and not anyone else's, and he preached it directly unto you without modification." In this way, Paul's warning to the Galatians parallels Jesus's own declaration to the Nephites. It is *his* gospel and not another's. He is its author and finisher. For this simple insight alone 3 Nephi can be appreciated.

Origins

The New Testament writers' use of *euangelion*, "glad tidings," and certainly Jesus's use of it, should not be thought to have derived from a familiarity with classical Greek literature. The neuter singular Greek noun "is rarely found in the sense of 'good tidings' outside of early Christian literature."[7] Rather, as Millar Burrows has

7. Burrows, "Origin of the Term 'Gospel,'" 21.

argued convincingly, in "Isaiah is to be found the main source for the Christian use of the term 'gospel.'"[8] This is not startling, given our Lord's preference for Isaiah in both the New Testament and the Book of Mormon, as evidenced by the many direct quotations he used from the great eighth-century-BC prophet as well as his endorsement of Isaiah found in 3 Nephi 23.

A pivotal episode in helping us to understand the origin of the early Christian use of the term *gospel*, "glad tidings," and particularly the disciples' seemingly almost-immediate grasp of its significance (without any reported lengthy explanation being given to them) is found in Luke's report of Jesus's visit to the Nazareth synagogue early in his ministry.

> And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach *the gospel* to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. (Luke 4:16–21; emphasis added)

Some disciples, if not all, were probably acquainted with Isaiah 61:1–2 and recognized it to be a powerful messianic prophecy. Jesus looked in every way to be its fulfillment, the very One who was preaching *the gospel* in a day of triumph. In addition, there were other well-known passages from Isaiah in Jesus's day that had to do

8. Burrows, "Origin of the Term 'Gospel,'" 31.

with a coming deliverance of God's people, a messianic triumph, and a glorious future for Zion and used the term *good tidings* (see Isaiah 40:9; 52:7). These passages resonated with spiritually prepared, attuned Jews and caused them to expect a fulfillment of prophesied "good tidings" of redemption and deliverance. Thus, when Jesus used the term, no great explanatory discourse was needed. What eventually did prove to be surprising, maybe even incomprehensible for a time to the disciples, was that the "good tidings" of deliverance and redemption came not by way of military might or the overthrow of existing imperial power, but through the ignominious death of the very One who preached the "glad tidings." That aside, it seems that the New Testament disciples' understanding of the gospel emerged soon after Jesus applied the prophecies of Isaiah to his own life and ministry.

The Father's Will

After proclaiming personal authorship of the gospel he had been teaching, Jesus described its essence, its core, as the carrying out of the will of his Father. "This is the gospel which I have given unto you," he said, "that I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me" (3 Nephi 27:13). By carrying out his Father's will, he acted as his Father's agent, seeking only to satisfy his Father's desire and plan. He had said this very thing earlier, during his mortal ministry, "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30).

The constant and consistent picture presented by the scriptures from beginning to end is of Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son, seeking only to carry out the will of the Father.

- In a grand council, held before the world came into being, the premortal Jesus offered to become the executor of the Father's plan, "even the messenger of salvation" (D&C 93:8). On that occasion he said, "Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever" (Moses 4:2). This selfless offer set him at odds with the "angel of God who was in authority in the presence of God" (D&C 76:25), who sought to carry out his

own will, and ultimately rebelled against the Father and the Son, to become Satan (Hebrew, "adversary") (see D&C 76:25; Moses 4:1-4).

- During his earthly mission, in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus's plea was to have the bitter cup removed if possible, "nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt" (see Mark 14:36). Even as the intensity of Gethsemane's experience became acute, his prayer was the same, according to Matthew, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. . . . And [he] prayed the third time, saying the same words" (Matthew 26:42, 44; see also Luke 22:42).
- During the very last moments of his life, and literally with his dying breath, Jesus proclaimed his fulfillment of the promise made in the premortal council of heaven. "Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, saying, Father, it is finished, thy will is done, yielded up the ghost" (Matthew 27:54 JST; see Matthew 27:50).
- As the resurrected Lord, when he first made his appearance to the people in America, he chose to introduce himself by declaring his obedience to the Father's will: "And it came to pass that he stretched forth his hand and spake unto the people, saying: Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world. And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the *will of the Father* in all things from the beginning" (3 Nephi 11:9-11).
- In a powerful and atonement-centered revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith in March 1830, the Savior again proclaimed his identity to the leader of this new and final dispensation by making reference to the Father's will: "I am Jesus Christ; I came by the will of the Father; and I do his will" (D&C 19:24).

The scriptural record is impressive; in Jesus's every thought and action the consistent and singular theme that can be found was and is the fulfillment of the will of the Father. The gospel of Jesus Christ, then, as Jesus himself declared to his New World disciples, consists of one basic, fundamental, overriding principle: doing the will of our Father in Heaven, subordinating one's own will to his, having one's desires "being swallowed up in the will of the Father" just as it was prophesied of the Son long before he entered mortality (Mosiah 15:7).

We have been told that the tangible expression of doing the Father's will in our day consists of living by the plan of salvation and participating in its ordinances. Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained it this way:

> Salvation does not come to those who merely confess Christ with their lips, or even to those who go about doing good works (as men generally view good works). It is reserved for those who do the very things which *constitute the will of the Father,* namely: (1) Accept and believe the true gospel, thus gaining faith in Christ, and thus believing in the prophets sent by Christ to reveal his truths, Joseph Smith being the greatest of these in this dispensation; (2) Repent; (3) Be baptized by a legal administrator who has power from God to bind on earth and seal in heaven; (4) Receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, also by the authorized act of a duly appointed priesthood bearer; and (5) Endure in righteousness and devotion to the truth, keeping every standard of personal righteousness that appertains to the gospel, until the end of one's mortal probation.[9]

Not coincidentally, these are the very same tenets the risen Christ taught in the New World. For disciples of Jesus, the Father's will centers on the first principles and ordinances administered by

9. Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary,* 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1976), 1:254; emphasis added.

the Church of Jesus Christ. For the Son himself the Father's will centered on carrying out the great and last sacrifice in order to put into effect the terms and conditions of the Father's plan.

The Cross

The gospel in its most basic and pared-down definition, then, consists of the Son fulfilling the will of the Father, which culminated on the cross. "I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me. And my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross" (3 Nephi 27:13–14). For Jesus, as well as those prophetic witnesses in the Book of Mormon who testified of his first coming, the focus of his ministry came to rest upon his being lifted up upon the cross. Some six hundred years beforehand, Nephi saw in vision that the Messiah "was lifted up upon the cross and slain for the sins of the world" (1 Nephi 11:33). Even before that, the brother of Jared was told to "write the things which he had seen," but that "they were forbidden to come unto the children of men until after that [the Lord] should be lifted up upon the cross" (Ether 4:1). And the great prophet Jacob desired "that all men would believe in Christ, and view his death, and suffer his cross" (Jacob 1:8).

It is, perhaps, an irony of the modern theological world that one of the most noted of the distinctive teachings of LDS theology is its emphasis on the central role of Gethsemane as a place of redemptive suffering. Yet the keystone of our religion emphasizes "the cross," though such emphasis does not seem to receive much "press," or is sometimes misunderstood. One writer tells the story about a woman who asked a Protestant pastor who engages in ecumenical outreach how he could associate with Mormons seeing how they "don't even believe that Jesus died on the cross." When pressed by the Pastor as to where she thought Latter-day Saints believed Jesus died, she responded, "Oh, I don't mean that. . . . I mean, they don't believe he died for our sins on the cross."[10]

10. Robert L. Millet, *What Happened to the Cross?* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2007), 103.

Third Nephi 27:13-21 addresses and corrects such erroneous notions about LDS doctrine. In these verses the Savior boldly emphasized the singular importance of the cross. Because we adore and worship Jesus Christ as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, we revere the image, symbol, and metaphor that is "the cross." This does not, in any way, diminish the importance of Gethsemane. We must never lose or even downplay our knowledge of Gethsemane as a place of redemptive suffering. Historically, for all intents and purposes, the last we hear of such a notion until the nineteenth century seems to be the church father Irenaeus, who wrote a tract about AD 180 entitled *Against Heresies* wherein he said that Jesus "sweated great drops of blood . . . tokens of the flesh . . . bearing salvation to His own handiwork" (*Against Heresies*, 3.22.2).[11] But, on the other hand, we must never diminish the monumental importance of the cross. Thankfully its significance is reenthroned in the unforgettable narrative of 3 Nephi 27.

Both Gethsemane and the cross constitute the awful, terrible suffering and sacrifice that was the atonement. Elder B. H. Roberts instructively put it this way: "If it be true, and it is, that men value things in proportion to what they cost, then how dear to them must be the Atonement, since it cost the Christ so much in suffering that he may be said to have been baptized by blood-sweat in Gethsemane, before he reached the climax of his passion, on calvary."[12] On the cross, "all the infinite agonies and merciless pains of Gethsemane recurred."[13] Perhaps the Savior chose to emphasize the cross during his New World discourse precisely because it represents the climax of his passion, his suffering. As President Gordon B. Hinckley said, "He worked out [redemption] in the Garden of Gethsemane and upon the cross of Calvary which made his gift immortal, universal, and everlasting."[14]

---

11. English translation from Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10 vols. (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1903), 1:454-55.

12. B. H. Roberts, *The Seventy's Course in Theology*, 5 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1907-12), 5:4.

13. Bruce R. McConkie, "The Purifying Power of Gethsemane, *Ensign*, May 1985, 10.

14. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Christmas Devotional," *Church News*, December 14, 1996, 4.

It is instructive that during his postresurrection ministry among his original disciples in the Old World, Jesus also emphasized the cross, specifically referring to the wounds left by his being nailed to it. Luke reports that the risen Lord proved to his disciples that he was the same being who earlier had been crucified "by many infallible proofs" (Acts 1:3). The language of the King James Version obscures the true significance of Luke's remark. The Greek term from which "infallible proofs" is derived is *tekmēriois*, meaning literally, "sure signs, tokens."[15] It was the tokens in his hands and feet that provided positive proof that his crucifixion and death, unlike the thousands of others carried out in the Roman Empire, ultimately ended in resurrection. Thus, the Greek of Acts 1:3 might more directly be rendered, "To them [the apostles] he showed himself to be alive after his great suffering, through many sure signs or tokens."

Also, the marks by which Jesus will identify himself as the once-crucified but now-risen Messiah to the Jewish people are those wounds, those sure signs or tokens, resulting from being nailed to the cross. "And then shall the Jews look upon me and say: What are these wounds in thine hands and in thy feet? Then shall they know that I am the Lord; for I will say unto them: These wounds are the wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. I am he who was lifted up. I am Jesus that was crucified. I am the Son of God. And then shall they weep because of their iniquities; then shall they lament because they persecuted their king" (D&C 45:51-53).

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of the cross in LDS theology. The cross is one of those universal symbols of God's love and salvation that we share and cherish along with the rest of the Christian world. We rejoice in the cross for what it represents and are truly educated by passages like 3 Nephi 27:13-21 that tell us how our risen Lord felt about the cross and how important it is in the Father's great plan of redemption. We also appreciate the expressions of other Christians about the cross because they are so

15. Henry G. Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Lexicon: Abridged from Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon , 1976), s.v. "τεκμήριον," 695.

eloquent. A. W. Tozer penned such a sentiment, one that summarizes some of the teachings from 3 Nephi 27 and other restoration scripture that teach that Christ was raised up upon the cross so that all may be raised up to a newness of life. He wrote,

> The cross is the most revolutionary thing ever to appear among men.
>
> The cross of Roman times knew no compromise; it never made concessions. It won all its arguments by killing its opponent and silencing him for good. It spared not Christ, but slew Him the same as the rest. He was alive when they hung Him on that cross and completely dead when they took Him down six hours later. That was the cross the first time it appeared in Christian history. . . .
>
> The cross effects its ends by destroying one established pattern, the victim's, and creating another pattern, its own. Thus it always has its way. It wins by defeating its opponent and imposing its will upon him. It always dominates. It never compromises, never dickers nor confers, never surrenders a point for the sake of peace. It cares not for peace; it cares only to end its opposition as fast as possible.
>
> With perfect knowledge of all this, Christ said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" [Matthew 16:24]. So the cross not only brings Christ's life to an end, it ends also the first life, the old life, of every one of His true followers. It destroys the old pattern, the Adam pattern, in the believer's life, and brings it to an end. Then the God who raised Christ from the dead raises the believer and a new life begins.
>
> This, and nothing less, is true Christianity. . . .
>
> We must do something about the cross, and one of two things only we can do—flee it or die upon it.[16]

16. A. W. Tozer, *The Root of the Righteous* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1955), 61–63, as quoted in John F. MacArthur Jr., *Faith Works: The Gospel According to the Apostles* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1993), 205.

And so it comes down to this when considering the meaning of the cross for us personally: we can ignore it or we can embrace it and die upon it—meaning we can be transformed by it, we can crucify the natural man, we can yield to the enticings of the Holy Spirit (Mosiah 3:19). The apostle Paul put it this way: "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Galatians 5:24). This was Paul's personal experience, for he stated, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

Thus, committed disciples "crucify the natural man" and undergo a transformation on a regular, consistent basis as they participate in that weekly priesthood ordinance called the sacrament, which has as its focus the freewill offering of Jesus's flesh and blood culminating on the cross. It seems no accident that the discourse we have been examining in 3 Nephi 27:13-21 came *after* Jesus had personally administered the sacrament to his New World disciples, at least twice (3 Nephi 18: 1-10 and 20:3-7). In these instances the sacrament seems to have served as preparation for the disciples to be able to understand the deep meaning of the relationship between the gospel, the cross, and the ordinance of remembrance.

The sacrament is the most oft-repeated ordinance for us personally in mortality. Other ordinances of exaltation are performed for us personally only once in our lifetime (baptism, confirmation, temple endowment, and sealing). But with the sacrament, all worthy persons may participate in a personal, intimate way, as often as it is administered by those who are authorized. This is exactly the pattern Jesus demonstrated for his American Israelites. We are told that "the Lord truly did teach the people, for the space of three days," but "he did show himself unto them *oft*, and did break bread *oft*, and bless it, and give it unto them" (3 Nephi 26:13). It seems ironic that the link between the sacrament, the cross, and the gospel is conveyed so strongly in LDS scripture, and yet so many in the

world misunderstand the theology of the modern Church of Jesus Christ and its practices.

Just as the cross can transform us, it can also comfort us. Contemplation of what happened on the cross can help us cope when tragedy strikes or times get very bad. Knowing that God himself suffered unjustly and infinitely helps us bear our afflictions with greater patience and faith, giving us hope that we can be exalted because of the things that we suffer (see Hebrews 5:8–9). Making Jesus's example of suffering on the cross our model can help us "submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon [us]" (Mosiah 3:19). As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland observed, obedience and submission to God to the very end of our lives, whether physically or spiritually, "are the key to our blessings and our salvation. In the suffering as well as in the serving, we must be willing to be like our Savior"[17]—though we may not understand why certain things happen as they do. In a moving comment, writer Richard Mouw gave this insight: "We admit we can't understand the mysteries of God's purposes. But we can go to the cross of Jesus Christ. We can see that, at the cross, God took upon himself abandonment, abuse, forlornness, depth of suffering. Christ himself cried out from the depths of his being, 'My God, why hast thou forsaken me?' When we see what God did through Jesus Christ we can say, 'There is a safe place in the universe, in the shelter of the Almighty, in the shadow of the Most High.' That place is Calvary."[18]

Lifted Up to Draw All to Him

So in times of sorrow and suffering the atonement draws all serious truth seekers to Jesus Christ. This is confirmed by the author of Hebrews, who said we do not worship a distant, uncaring God who "cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities,"

17. Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 304.

18. Richard J. Mouw, "Christian Responses to a World in Crisis," *Fuller Focus* (Spring 2002): 11.

but rather we can "come boldly unto the throne of grace, . . . obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:15-16).

But the atonement also draws to Christ all those who contemplate the seriousness of their sinful predicament. The power of the atonement will draw all men and women to the Savior because his sacrifice, culminating on the cross, is the only way anyone can escape the ravages of this fallen, sinful world. That is really what the atonement is—a remedy to the fall, a way, the *only* way in fact, to fix that which is broken, the only way to restore wholeness. The remedy is so great because the sickness is so pervasive. Writing on the nature of man's mortal, fallen condition, Blaise Pascal, the seventeenth-century French mathematician and philosopher, said: "The Incarnation shows man the greatness of his wretchedness through the greatness of the remedy that was required."[19] The infinite suffering of Jesus in Gethsemane and on the cross is the remedy. And this is what Jesus is trying to teach when he said, "I had been lifted up upon the cross, that I might draw all men unto me" (3 Nephi 27:14).

Because he was lifted up, Christ is able to offer an escape from any permanent damage caused by a fallen world. It is a compelling offer. It draws us to him. It invites us, nay entices us, to accept the terms and conditions of an offer so great that it results not only in a lighter burden for the moment, but also in "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17).

Jesus taught the doctrine of being "lifted up" during the last week of his mortal life, using much of the same language found in 3 Nephi 27:14-15, when the voice of the Father was heard. "Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die" (John 12:30-33). That Jesus repeated this instruction to his Nephite disciples indicates its importance.

---

19. Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. and trans. Roger Ariew (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2005), 103.

Furthermore, in the New World Jesus used the language of being "lifted up" in a parallelism to emphasize the "lifting up" or universal resurrection made possible by his sacrifice or his being "lifted up." He stated that just as he had been lifted up, so all men would "be lifted up by the Father, to stand before [him], to be judged of their works" (3 Nephi 27:14). A final judgment for all humankind follows their resurrection. But note the following verse wherein Jesus taught that both the resurrection and the final judgment are brought to pass by the power of God the Father. "And for this cause have I been lifted up; therefore, according to the power of the Father I will draw all men unto me, that they may be judged according to their works" (v. 15).

The great powers of God the Father include the power to give life (John 5:21, 26), the power (and the right) to judge (John 5:22), and ultimately the power to raise up his children to his station and to glorify them (Moses 1:39). During his earthly ministry Jesus taught of his Father's life-giving power and how it extended to the Son: "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. . . . For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself" (John 5:21, 26).

Jesus also taught that while all judgment rightfully belongs to the Father, the latter delegated all judgment to the Son (see John 5:22–23). In other passages in the New Testament, we learn that not only has the Son been given responsibility for judgment, but that he has, in turn, delegated that task to the original Twelve (see Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30). Such delegation of responsibility for judgment did not end with the Twelve in Palestine. An indispensable doctrine of the Book of Mormon confirms the continued delegation of responsibility for judgment. Later on, during this same discourse we have been examining in 3 Nephi 27, Jesus reconfirmed his Father's role in judgment and then delegated judgment to the Nephite twelve disciples for their own people in the New World: "And behold, all things are written by the Father; therefore out of the books which shall be written shall the world be judged. And know ye that ye

shall be judges of this people, according to the judgment which I shall give unto you" (3 Nephi 27:26-27). This doctrine of the delegation of judgment was summarized specifically for the people of the latter days by the prophet Mormon more than three hundred years after Christ's visit to the New World. He said:

> Yea, behold, I write unto all the ends of the earth; yea, unto you, twelve tribes of Israel, who shall be judged according to your works by the twelve whom Jesus chose to be his disciples in the land of Jerusalem. And I write also unto the remnant of this people, who shall also be judged by the twelve whom Jesus chose in this land; and they shall be judged by the other twelve whom Jesus chose in the land of Jerusalem. And these things doth the Spirit manifest unto me; therefore I write unto you all. And for this cause I write unto you, that ye may know that ye must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, yea, every soul who belongs to the whole human family of Adam; and ye must stand to be judged of your works, whether they be good or evil. (Mormon 3:18-20)

Thus, it seems there will be a whole hierarchy of judges who will act under Jesus Christ to judge all the posterity of Adam and Eve. Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote, "Under Christ, selected agents and representatives shall sit in judgment upon specified peoples and nations. Scriptural intimations indicate that there will be a great judicial hierarchy, each judge acting in his own sphere of appointment and in conformity with the eternal principles of judgment which are in Christ. When John wrote of that day of judgment incident to the Second Coming of our Lord, he said: 'I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them.' (Rev. 20:4)."[20]

Since no one will be able to ignore or escape the final judgment presided over by Jesus Christ, all people will be drawn to the

20. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 398.

Savior in this way as well. Judgment will be based on "their works" (3 Nephi 27:15). And as we learn from a vision given to Joseph Smith, the Lord also "will judge all men . . . according to the desire of their hearts" (D&C 137:9).

Justification Taught

Having taught his disciples the nature of his gospel, its unique connection to the will of the Father involving the cross, and the subsequent inescapable judgment, Jesus once again brings his discourse back to focus on what he had earlier called "my doctrine" (3 Nephi 11:30-40), namely, obedience to the first principles and ordinances of salvation. An indispensable part of the Savior's gospel is comprehended in the first principles and ordinances, as the fourth article of faith states. Earlier in his three-day ministry among New World disciples, Jesus even called these principles and ordinances the rock foundation against which the gates of hell would not prevail (3 Nephi 11:39-40).[21] Now, in this culminating discourse the Savior declares that those who repent, are baptized, and endure to the end "will [he] hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world" (3 Nephi 27:16). It is most significant that he says he will hold these covenanters "guiltless." It is not that they are completely sinless and perfect at that point, but, rather, that Jesus applies his atoning blood to them so that a verdict of "not guilty" is rendered in their behalf on the day of judgment.

---

21. Both the Articles of Faith and the Savior's teachings in 3 Nephi indicate that the Savior's "gospel" and his "doctrine" are not exact equivalents. Article of Faith 4 defines faith, repentance, baptism, and receipt of the gift of the Holy Ghost as the first principles and ordinances of the gospel. His "gospel," as he defines it in 3 Nephi 27:13-21, seems broader than his "doctrine" described in 3 Nephi 11:30-40. His gospel touches upon matters of central importance not explicitly laid out in 3 Nephi 11. It might be said that what Jesus gives to us in 3 Nephi 27:15-17 is the law of the gospel (as mentioned in other holy places)—that is, his personal assurance of our being held guiltless if we follow the path of faith, repentance, baptism, receipt of the gift of the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end in righteousness. For a different view, namely that his "gospel" and his "doctrine" are equivalents and interchangeable, see Noel B. Reynolds, "The Gospel of Jesus Christ as Taught by the Nephite Prophets," *BYU Studies* 31/3 (1991): 31-50.

Only Jesus's atonement and advocacy in their behalf puts them (puts *us*) back into a right relationship with Deity. This is the doctrine of justification, and it stands behind the graphic scene of advocacy portrayed by Jesus to Joseph Smith. "Listen to him who is the advocate with the Father, who is pleading your cause before him—saying: Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased; behold the blood of thy Son which was shed, the blood of him whom thou gavest that thyself might be glorified; wherefore, Father, spare these my brethren that believe on my name, that they may come unto me and have everlasting life" (D&C 45:3–5).

This is the apex of the good news or glad tidings that Jesus authored. All who comply with the Father's will are absolved of the guilt and punishment associated with each broken law. This is done by the simple decree of one man—the Sinless One—who paid for all guilt and punishment and whose right it is, according to divine justice, to set free or require payment. The soul or inner being of the person being absolved may not, indeed likely is not, completely purified. But that makes no difference. He or she is still put back into a right relationship with God and set on the path that will ultimately bring the person to a state or condition of total purity. This is one of the messages of Mormon's summary found in Helaman.

> Yea, thus we see that the gate of heaven is open unto all, even to those who will believe on the name of Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God. Yea, we see that whosoever will may lay hold upon the word of God, which is quick and powerful, which shall divide asunder all the cunning and the snares and the wiles of the devil, and lead the man of Christ in a strait and narrow course across that everlasting gulf of misery which is prepared to engulf the wicked—
>
> And land their souls, yea, their immortal souls, at the right hand of God in the kingdom of heaven, to sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and with Jacob, and with all our holy fathers, to go no more out. . . . Nevertheless they did

> fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God. (Helaman 3:28–30, 35)

Complete salvation, which is exaltation, is a process by which we grow stronger and stronger in righteous power and become purer and holier. Justification, or being declared guiltless, precedes sanctification. The latter is a continuing process by which we are cleansed, over time, through the power of the Holy Ghost to make us more and more like God. By being put back into a right relationship with Deity through the atonement of Christ, we enter that state of grace by which our inner natures are actually and entirely changed. The apostle Paul spoke much about both justification and sanctification as separate but related aspects of complete salvation. Using the writings of Paul, author John MacArthur has described in modern terms both the nature of justification and sanctification. He points out their difference, but also their inseparability, in a way that helps emphasize the magnitude of what Jesus taught in 3 Nephi 27.

> In its theological sense, justification is a forensic, or purely legal, term. It describes what God *declares* about the believer, not what He *does to change* the believer. In fact, justification effects no actual change whatsoever in the sinner's nature or character. Justification . . . changes our status only, but it carries ramifications that guarantee other changes will follow. . . .
>
> In biblical terms, justification is a divine verdict of "not guilty—fully righteous." It is the reversal of God's attitude toward the sinner. Whereas He formerly condemned, He now vindicates. . . . Justification is more than simple pardon; pardon alone would still leave the sinner without merit before God. [But] when God justifies He imputes

> divine righteousness to the sinner (Rom. 4:22-25). Christ's own infinite merit thus becomes the ground on which the believer stands before God (Rom. 5:19; 1 Cor. 1:30; Phil. 3:9). So justification elevates the believer to a realm of full acceptance and divine privilege in Jesus Christ. . . .
>
> Justification is distinct from sanctification because in justification God does not *make* the sinner righteous; He *declares* that person righteous (Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16). Justification *imputes* Christ's righteousness to the sinner's account (Rom. 4:11b); sanctification *imparts* righteousness to the sinner personally and practically (Rom. 6:1-7; 8:11-14). Justification takes place outside sinners and changes their standing (Rom. 5:1-2); sanctification is internal and changes the believer's state (Rom. 6:19). Justification is an event, sanctification a process. The two must be distinguished but can never be separated. . . Both are essential elements of salvation.[22]

The twofold doctrine of justification and sanctification is comprehended in Jesus's discourse in 3 Nephi 27. Notice what he says after he promises a decree of guiltlessness (v. 16) to those who receive authorized ordinances and endure to the end. "And no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end. Now this is the commandment: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day" (3 Nephi 27:19-20).

Purity is the requirement of heaven. As we immerse ourselves in the doctrine of the atonement and practice the principles that derive from this central act of the Father's plan, we become spotless.

22. MacArthur, *Faith Works*, 89-90.

We wash our garments in the rich red blood of Jesus Christ, and yet they become white. In literature this is called an antinomy, an apparent contradiction. But its graphic nature points us to a sure reality. Only the atonement of Christ and our obedience to its interconnected ordinances will allow us to enter the kingdom of God.

Justice of the Father

As one might expect, in this gospel-defining discourse in 3 Nephi 27 Jesus also touches upon the "justice of the Father" (v. 17)—something that he understood exquisitely from personal experience in Gethsemane's garden and on Golgotha's cross. If there was any doubt that the principle of justice ultimately issues from God the Father, Jesus resolved the question.

The justice of the Father requires payment for all the broken laws, wickedness, and depravity from the time of Adam to the end of the present mortal world. Jesus suffered the demands of God's justice and therefore suffered the wrath of God the Father. To be clear, Jesus absorbed the full force of the punishment deserved by each one of us though he himself deserved *no* punishment. The full force of God's justice and God's wrath was not slackened for him. As the scripture states, "When he shall deliver up the kingdom, and present it unto the Father, spotless, saying: I have overcome and have trodden the wine-press alone, even the wine-press of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God" (D&C 76:107). Elder Neal A. Maxwell elaborated upon this awful reality: "Jesus always deserved and always had the Father's full approval. But when he took our sins upon Him, of divine necessity required by justice He experienced instead 'the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God' (D&C 76:107; 88:106)."[23] Those who will not submit to the purifying power of the atonement through the ordinances found in Jesus's church, nor endure to the end, will essentially experience the demands of "the justice of the Father" for eternity—"whence they can no more return" (3 Nephi 27:17).

---

23. Neal A. Maxwell, *Lord, Increase Our Faith* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1994), 13.

Jesus elaborated on the requirements of divine justice in a very personal way, using language so stark as to sound almost brutal. But it is not so much the stark phraseology one remembers as much as Jesus's first-person description of the price he paid for all those who repent and embrace his suffering as an intimate gift of self.

> Therefore I command you to repent—repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore—how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not. For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; but if they would not repent they must suffer even as I; which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men. (D&C 19:15-19)

This is not easy doctrine; it is not cheap grace; it is not warm and fuzzy "believe-ism." It is a frank portrayal of the atonement's exacting cost to Jesus and the atonement's requirement of each disciple. It is an eyewitness account of the great and last sacrifice by the very participant himself. It seems very much as though Jesus, by recounting the experience, is plunged back into it with such perfect recollection of every detail, of the exquisite pain, that he simply cannot continue with the description beyond a certain point. And that point is symbolized by the dash at the end of verse 18: "and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—."

Yes, Jesus understands the Father's justice. He has tried to show his disciples a better way; he has offered mercy for justice. Those who will not accept the gift, or, more precisely, those who will not continue in the gift and endure to the end will be "cast into the fire,

from whence they can no more return, because of the justice of the Father" (3 Nephi 27:17).

Conclusion

One cannot help but marvel at both the doctrinal profundity as well as the rhetorical and literary power of the Savior's gospel-defining discourse in 3 Nephi 27, particularly its doctrinal core in verses 13 through 21. This is a unique passage; there is nothing like it in all of scripture. Verses 13 and 21 are bookends, discernible by the phrase *my gospel*, used by Jesus to identify personally the essence of the plan of salvation. Nowhere else in scripture do we find the connections that Jesus made on that occasion for his audience. There is a compelling persuasiveness to the simplicity and succinctness of his words. We see once again how the Master has the incomparable ability to boil things down to their fundamental aspects, define expectations, point us to his church, and leave us to choose. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel; and ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do; for that which ye have seen me do even that shall ye do" (3 Nephi 27:21).

As we contemplate this verse in our quiet moments, we hear the Savior summarize for us all his teachings in 3 Nephi: "You now know what the gospel is; you know it is found in my church; you know what you must do; you know that it is only my gospel that will allow you to be *with* God and be *like* God." In commentary both elevating and instructing, Elder Bruce R. McConkie said,

> Viewed from our mortal position, the gospel is all that is required to take us back to the Eternal Presence, there to be crowned with glory and honor, immortality and eternal life. To gain these greatest of all rewards, two things are required. The first is the atonement by which all men are raised in immortality, with those who believe and obey ascending also unto eternal life. This atoning sacrifice was the work of our Blessed Lord, and he has done his work. The

> second requisite is obedience on our part to the laws and ordinances of the gospel. Thus the gospel is, in effect, the atonement. But the gospel is also all of the laws, principles, doctrines, rites, ordinances, acts, powers, authorities, and keys needed to save and exalt fallen man in the highest heaven hereafter.[24]

Jesus "closed his visit to the Nephites as he began it, with the fundamental declaration that he had come into the world to do the will of the Father."[25] He then urged all to do likewise: "Therefore, what manner of men [and women] ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am" (3 Nephi 27:27). Where his gospel is concerned it is all a matter of "will"—whether we choose to follow God's or our own. This is the heart of the issue. The former way leads to glory, the latter to misery. This was the message of Jesus's gospel-defining discourse in the New World. This is truly good news.

Andrew C. Skinner is a professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University. He earned a master's degree from the Illif School of Theology and Harvard University and a PhD from the University of Denver in Near Eastern and European history, specializing in Judaism.

24. Bruce R. McConkie, *New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 134.

25. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant*, 303.

Children of Light: How the Nephites Sustained Two Centuries of Peace

Robert A. Rees

> The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. (Isaiah 9:2)
>
> Believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. (John 12:36)
>
> My brethren and sisters, "Mormonism" is the Gospel of peace, life and salvation. It has never been a Gospel of war or contention. (Seymour B. Young, in Conference Report, April 1906, 68)

Studying the scriptures over the years, I have been struck by how often the writers of sacred literature use elements of drama to tell their stories. One could argue, in fact, that the extent to which God inspires and directs the writing of scripture indicates that he is a superb dramatist—a creator of powerful dramatic situations and narratives. The use of dramatic setting, plot, tension, and irony in scripture is similar to what one finds in great literature, from the Greeks to the present. The stories of both individuals and entire

I am indebted to my late friend, Eugene England, whose peaceful efforts continue to inspire my own quest for peace. See, for example, his *Making Peace* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995) and "Can Nations Love their Enemies? An LDS Theology of Peace," in *Dialogues with Myself* (Midvale, UT: Orion Books, 1984), 135-52. I also express appreciation to Brent Rushforth, a true seeker of peace, and Gordon Thomasson and Richard Rust, peacemaking friends who made helpful suggestions for revising the original draft of this paper.

peoples who begin in grace and end in tragedy or who transcend sin and evil to find redemption make the Bible one of the great works of world literature. Many of the Bible's narratives are similar to classical tragedy in that they show individuals, tribes, or nations "brought to ruin" or who suffer "extreme sorrow, especially as a consequence of a tragic flaw, moral weakness, or inability to cope with unfavorable circumstances."[1]

By its very nature, dramatic literature has the ability to engage our minds and imaginations in such a way that we are emotionally drawn into the action being presented. A reviewer of Paul Woodruff's *The Necessity of Theater: The Art of Watching and Being Watched* argues that drama is "as necessary—and as powerful—as language itself. . . . [It is] an art that—at its most powerful—can change lives and (as some peoples believe) bring a divine presence to earth."[2]

I was struck by the use of such elements in my recent reading of 3 Nephi, including what happens there as illumination on what is happening in the world today. Essentially in 3 Nephi we have an archetypal conflict between the forces of darkness and light. This conflict has been central to Nephite history from the beginning as the sons of Lehi divide into opposing tribes, with the Nephites symbolizing the quest for light (as exemplified by their industry, righteousness, and striving for peace) and the Lamanites representing the powers of darkness (as exemplified by their ignorance, wickedness, and impulse to war). At times these two groups reverse sides so that the Lamanites are righteous and peace-loving and the Nephites wicked and warlike; at other times this conflict erupts within the tribes themselves.

Over the six hundred years prior to the coming of Christ, this fraternal and at times fratricidal conflict seesaws back and forth between war and peace, with the former dominating. Islands of

1. "Tragedy," accessed July 4, 2008, http://www.answers.com/topic/tragedy.

2. An anonymous descriptive note under the entry for Paul Woodruff's *The Necessity of Theater* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), accessed October 28, 2010, http://www.humanitiestexas.org/programs/past/bookfair/descriptions.php#theater. As a long-time teacher of dramatic literature, I believe that the imaginative engagement with written drama can also produce such effects.

peace are noted throughout the text with such phrases as "Thus we did have continual peace in the land for the space of twenty and two years" (Mosiah 10:5) and "And now king Limhi did have continual peace in his kingdom for the space of two years" (Mosiah 19:29). More typical is the following: "And thus ended the seventh year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi; and there was continual peace in all that time," followed by "And thus, in this eighth year of the reign of the judges, there began to be great contentions among the people of the church; yea, there were envyings, and strife, and malice, and persecutions, and pride, even to exceed the pride of those who did not belong to the church of God" (Alma 4:5, 9). As Omni states, "We had many seasons of peace; and we had many seasons of serious war and bloodshed" (Omni 1:3).[3] In a way, this is not unlike the history of our own country. Although there have been periodic seasons of peace since its founding in 1776, the United States has been almost continuously at war. Drawing on government reports, Latter-day Saint scholar Gordon Thomasson observes that "American troops, without invitation and with the exception of our Congressionally declared wars, have invaded foreign territory" at least three hundred times since 1798.[4] Similar

3. The reference to "seasons" here may be a reference to traditions of warfare in the ancient world (and to some extent in ours) where there were designated times of the year for warfare. As Gordon C. Thomasson states, the Book of Mormon narrative "suggests the emergence of what may be a New World seasonal pattern in the times when kings go forth to battle (2 Samuel 11:1, 1 Chronicles 20:1). Such a pattern is predictable, both due to climate facilitating or rendering nearly impossible the movement of men and material during the dry and rainy reasons respectively, and the characteristic reticence of agricultural peoples to fight during the times of peak labor demands that extend from when land clearing and sowing begin until the harvests are in. The season of traditional warfare in all equatorial regions is usually after the harvests on which the troops can forage are stored, and before the coming of the next rainy season for war." Gordon C. Thomasson, "Nephite Observance of the 'Performance and Ordinances of God': Pre-Exilic Israelite Religious Patterns in the Book of Mormon" (unpublished manuscript, copyright 1988, 1996, 2004), 17–19.

4. Gordon C. Thomasson, "America's One Overseas War/Invasion Each Year, 1798–1993: Addenda to and commentary on Ellen C. Collier's 'Instances of Use of United States Forces Abroad, 1798–1993'" (unpublished manuscript, copyright 2001, in author's possession). According to Collier, from 1798 to 1993, there have been 234 "instances in which the United States has used its armed forces abroad in situations of conflict or potential conflict or for other than normal peacetimes purposes."

to our history of warfare, as Hugh Nibley observes, "the Nephites lived in a polarized world, in which they were perpetually engaged either in hot or cold wars with the Lamanites."[5]

Given the near continuous war during the first four hundred years of Nephite history, some have suggested that the claim of a sustained period of peace following Christ's appearance in the New World is unrealistic.[6] It might also be considered unrealistic given the place of war in the history of humankind. As the historians Will and Ariel Durant have noted, there have been fewer than three hundred years in recorded history in which war has not been waged somewhere on the planet.[7] Nevertheless, I believe the Book of Mormon itself provides a convincing rationale for such a sustained period of peace and does so by using the elements of drama to show the historical conflict between the forces of darkness and light.

To begin with, as is typical of dramatic literature, the events preceding the peaceful period described in 4 Nephi are foretold and foreshadowed in earlier portions of the Book of Mormon. Thus Nephi, in his vision of what would transpire in the promised land, foresees the darkness and destruction that will befall the children of Lehi:

> And it came to pass that I saw a mist of darkness on the face of the land of promise; and I saw lightnings, and I heard thunderings, and earthquakes, and all manner of tumultuous noises; and I saw the earth and the rocks, that

---

"Instances of Use of United States Forces Abroad, 1798-1993," Naval Historical Center Home Page, accessed October 28, 2010, http://www.history.navy.mil/wars/foabroad.htm.

5. Hugh W. Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 339.

6. See, for example, the sarcastic comments (nos. 9, 11, 12) under "Absurdity in 4 Nephi" at "Skeptics Annotated Book of Mormon," accessed August 24, 2010, http://skepticsannotatedbible.com/BoM/4ne/abs_list.html.

7. "In the last 3,421 years [up to 1968] of recorded history only 268 have seen no war." Will Durant, *The Lessons of History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968), 81. Of course, this does not mean that war has been waged everywhere. Some countries, such as Switzerland, have been relatively free of war, and some peoples, such as the Nez Perce Indians, have rejected war as a strategy.

> they rent; and I saw mountains tumbling into pieces; and I saw the plains of the earth, that they were broken up; and I saw many cities that they were sunk; and I saw many that they were burned with fire; and I saw many that did tumble to the earth, because of the quaking thereof. And it came to pass after I saw these things, I saw the vapor of darkness, that it passed from off the face of the earth; and behold, I saw multitudes who had not fallen because of the great and terrible judgments of the Lord. (1 Nephi 12:4–5)

The peace that flows from Christ's appearance is also foreshadowed, even foretold, in these earlier scriptures. Again, quoting Nephi: "But the Son of righteousness shall appear unto them; and he shall heal them, and they shall have peace with him, until three generations shall have passed away, and many of the fourth generation shall have passed away in righteousness" (2 Nephi 26:9). In some ways, what happens in 3 Nephi is a culmination of everything that precedes it, with the forces of darkness gathering to defeat the forces of light and with light eventually triumphing—at least for a long season.

The penultimate conflict among the Nephites between darkness/war and light/peace is symbolized by the parallel sustained period of light that comes at Christ's birth ("a day and that night and that day which should be as one day as if there were no night," 3 Nephi 1:8; see also Helaman 14:4) and the three days of darkness that come at his crucifixion (3 Nephi 8:23). It is significant that the light precedes the darkness (a reversal of Genesis) because it intensifies the darkness. In other words, having experienced the promise of endless light (symbolized by the two days without an intervening night), the Nephites later experience what must have seemed like endless night. It appears that it is the extent and intensity of the darkness during those three days that cause them to once again embrace the light when they are given the opportunity to do so, and it is the bold and imaginative juxtaposition of these two archetypal symbols that gives the narrative much of its dramatic power.

Great literature always awakens and enlivens the imagination. Thus, this story compels us to try to imagine what it must have been like to have experienced those three hours in which there was "terrible tempest" and "terrible thunder" and earthquakes that changed the face of the whole earth; in which cities were covered with earth, destroyed by fire, or swallowed by the sea; and in which people were drowned, carried away in whirlwinds, crushed by falling buildings, and consumed by fire (3 Nephi 8:6-19).

Following this cataclysmic destruction "there was darkness upon the face of the land" (3 Nephi 8:19). This was not an ordinary darkness but a "thick darkness," a "vapor of darkness" so heavy that "there could be *no* light, because of the darkness, *neither* candles, *neither* torches; *neither* could there be fire kindled with their fine and exceedingly dry wood, so that *there could not be any light at all*" (3 Nephi 8:20-21). Total, engulfing darkness on earth and in the heavens: "And there was *not any* light seen, *neither* fire, *nor* glimmer, *neither* the sun, *nor* the moon, *nor* the stars, for so great were the mists of darkness which were upon the face of the land" (3 Nephi 8:22; note the cumulative effect of those ten negatives!). It must have seemed to these New World peoples as if some dark power had swallowed the sun.

Now, imagine yourself, or one of your own children or grandchildren, as a child in such darkness, not for an hour or a day but for three days, wondering if you would ever see light again. The terror you would experience is incomprehensible. No wonder "there was great mourning and howling and weeping among all the people continually; yea, great were the groanings of the people, because of the darkness and the great destruction which had come upon them. . . . And thus were the howlings of the people great and terrible" (3 Nephi 8:23, 25).

Besides the terror of the darkness and destruction, these lamentations were caused by the remorse of the sinners: "And in one place they were heard to cry, saying: O that we had repented before this great and terrible day, and then would our brethren have been spared, and they would not have been burned in that great

city Zarahemla. And in another place they were heard to cry and mourn, saying: O that we had repented before this great and terrible day, and had not killed and stoned the prophets, and cast them out; then would our mothers and our fair daughters, and our children have been spared, and not have been buried up in that great city Moronihah" (3 Nephi 8:24-25). As a child completely alone in the dark hearing such lamentations, you would be aware that many children like you had died in the holocaust, perhaps among them your brothers and sisters and friends.

Imagine crying out in this encompassing darkness, not being able to find your mother or father, or perhaps any other living soul, although you grope in the darkness toward other voices also crying out in despair. You have just witnessed death and destruction of all that you have known, seen unimaginable terror, been thrust into the very heart of darkness. What would be your psychological state? Again, imagine that you are a child who has endured three days of such dark terror and then out of the darkness you hear a penetrating voice recounting the horrific scene of destruction and speaking to you as one of the few who has survived:

> O all ye that are spared because ye were more righteous than they, will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you?[8] . . . Behold, mine arm of mercy is extended towards you, and whosoever will come, him will I receive; and blessed are those who come unto me. Behold, I am Jesus Christ the Son of God. . . . I am the light and the life of the world. (3 Nephi 9:13-15, 18)

Enveloped in complete darkness, you would instinctively be drawn to the voice of a personage proclaiming to be the light of the world. Nevertheless, the darkness continues and is made more intense because "there was silence in all the land for the space of

8. It is important to note that at least some of the children under the age of eight who would have been unaccountable for sin would have been among those saved.

many hours" (3 Nephi 10:2), a silence that allows you to ponder these words from a voice of light speaking into the darkness. And then you hear the voice again; this time it is a tender voice that speaks of himself as a mother hen who would gather you under her wings of love if you will turn to him "with full purpose of heart" (3 Nephi 10:6).[9] This metaphor is exquisitely comforting to you since you don't know if your own mother is alive or dead, and because you long for her comforting love. After such terror, you cannot imagine what it would feel like to be sequestered in such love, but you long for it with all your heart and soul.

When the morning finally comes, the darkness disperses and the earth ceases to shake, the "dreadful groanings . . . and the mourning, and the weeping, and the wailing of the people" cease, and the "tumultuous noises" pass away, replaced by expressions of joy, "praise and thanksgiving unto the Lord Jesus Christ, their Redeemer" (3 Nephi 10:9-10).

Now imagine that it is a short time later[10] and once again you hear the voice, "not a harsh voice, neither . . . a loud voice, [but] a small voice" that nevertheless pierces your "very soul" and causes you and your fellow survivors' hearts to burn within you (3 Nephi 11:3). And then you see "a Man descending out of heaven . . . clothed in a white robe" who comes down and stands near you. Once again he identifies himself as Jesus Christ, again describing himself as "the light and the life of the world" (3 Nephi 11:8, 10-11).

As you listen to the Savior, you hear him teach the adults around you, and then, turning to you, he tells them that unless they become like you they cannot "inherit the kingdom of God" (3 Nephi 11:38). You hear him speak beautiful words about those who are blessed, and you hear him call you and others "to be the light of this

9. See Jane Allis-Pike, "'How Oft Would I Have Gathered You as a Hen Gathereth Her Chickens': The Power of the Hen Metaphor in 3 Nephi 10:4-7," in this volume.

10. S. Kent Brown reviews the debate over when Jesus visited the Americas and concludes that he appeared to the Nephites "only after a substantial period of time." "When Did Jesus Visit the Americas?," in *From Jerusalem to Zarahemla: Literary and Historical Studies of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1998), 154.

people" (3 Nephi 12:14), a charge that will stay always in your heart. You hear many other marvelous things but are reminded of what you had recently experienced when he says that if your eye is single to his glory, your "whole body shall be full of light," but if not then your light will be darkness (3 Nephi 13:22-23).

As you and the other survivors of the darkness gather around Jesus, you hear him call for all the children to be brought to him. He asks you to sit on the ground in front of him. As you look up at this man in the white robe with a luminous face, he asks everyone to kneel. You hear him pray in language more beautiful than you have ever imagined, words like the songs of unknown birds and the whisper of wind through great trees. Then he looks directly at you and calls you to come to him. When you do so, he places his hands on your head, and it seems as if his heart speaks directly to your heart. When he finishes, he embraces and kisses you, and as you look up, you see angels of fire descending from the sky and they too embrace and kiss you and all the other children with you.[11]

Among the things Jesus teaches to those who survive the cataclysmic destruction prior to his coming is that they should cease from fighting one another ("There shall be no disputations among you, as there have hitherto been," 3 Nephi 11:28). He condemns such conflicts as originating from "the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another" (3 Nephi 11:29). This reminds us of President

11. Gordon Thomasson argues persuasively that what happens in 3 Nephi amounts to a transfiguration: "When, at the turn of the year after the crucifixion and destruction, the people gather at the temple and Christ comes down, then he prays and first the children are transfigured (I know of no other name for what occurs to/with the Nephites than to compare what the apostles witness when Elijah and Moses are on the mount with Christ) and the adults witness the children as did the apostles Christ (3 Ne 17:24-25), and later the adults are similarly blessed (19:14, 25, 30), and finally the testimonies (?) or keys which the children possess [—all this lays] the foundation for consecration (26:14-20). Not only are—I believe—any wounds from those three days directly healed, but both the faith and the keys are confirmed on these survivors to build a perfect society in which none of them will ever suffer such a horrendous event again" (personal communication, May 15, 2007).

Gordon B. Hinckley's statement "that war is the devil's own game and that among its most serious victims is truth."[12]

What is significant for our understanding is that Christ is teaching his New World children, both ancient and modern, that it "is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another" (which leads to conflict and war); "but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away" (3 Nephi 11:30). In a powerful rhetorical manner, Christ ties the rejection of such contention, anger, and conflict to the first principles and ordinances of the gospel. He does this by repeating the phrase "my doctrine" six times within a few verses. In doing so, he subtly shifts the focus from avoiding contention and conflict (which he says are clearly not his doctrine) to the first steps in the process of salvation confirmed by the witness of the Father and the Holy Ghost (which he identifies as "my doctrine," 3 Nephi 11:32-36). Further, he associates these first principles with becoming "as a little child" (3 Nephi 11:37-38), repeated twice for emphasis.

This point is fascinating because in speaking to both adults and children, Christ identifies the contention and warlike anger that led to the Nephites' destruction with the adults, and the peace that salvation through him promises with the children. This is confirmed by teaching his new apostles the Beatitudes, including "And blessed are all the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God" (3 Nephi 12:9). Having earlier identified them (and by extension all the remaining Nephites) as "children of light," he

12. Gordon B. Hinckley, "We Believe in Being Honest," *Ensign*, October 1990, 5. It is interesting to note that "contention" and "war" are linked not only in the scriptures but in the addresses of modern prophets. What the scriptures condemn as contention is not verbal disputation but physical violence or the creation of schisms in the church. In the Book of Mormon, "contention" usually means an armed skirmish or battle. We are told, for example, that Alma and "his guards, contended with the guards of the king of the Lamanites until he slew and drove them back" (Alma 2:33). Here contention means "combat," not argument. This is why over twenty times in the Book of Mormon we find the coupling "wars and contentions" (1 Nephi 9:4; 12:3; 19:4; 2 Nephi 5:34; 26:2; Jacob 3:13; 7:26; Enos 1:23; Jarom 1:13; Omni 1:17; Mosiah 9:13; 29:7, 36; Alma 3:25; 28:9; 28:20; 51:22; 62:44; Helaman 3:14, 22; 48:20; 3 Nephi 2:11; Ether 11:7). Jesus warns against the outbreak of such contention—or "conflict"—as a result of doctrinal disputes (3 Nephi 11:28-30).

now gives them a commission: "I give unto you to be the light of this people. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid." Perhaps reminding them of the recent experience in which they were unable to even light a candle, he asks, "Behold, do men light a candle and put it under a bushel? Nay, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house; therefore let your light so shine before this people, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (3 Nephi 12:14-16). Later, he connects the higher principles of the gospel ("Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you") with the purity and innocence of children: "That ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven" (3 Nephi 12:44-45).

Return in your imagination to the scene in Bountiful: Jesus breaks bread and pours wine, which he gives to you and all those present and asks you to partake of these emblems often in remembrance of him. You notice as he talks that he repeats the word *always* many times, and you make a promise to yourself that you will always remember him and that you will always, as he asks you to, "hold up your light that it may shine unto the world" (3 Nephi 18:24).

When Jesus finally ascends into heaven, everyone is so excited that they stay up all night talking about what has happened, each telling the other what it felt like to be in his presence. Thus, they bring the light of that immense day into the night.

The next day Jesus returns and quotes Isaiah. Among the words he speaks are these:

> How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings unto them, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings unto them of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion: Thy God reigneth! (3 Nephi 20:40)

> And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children. In righteousness shalt

> thou be established; thou shalt be far from oppression for thou shalt not fear, and from terror for it shall not come near thee. (3 Nephi 22:13–14)

Suddenly you realize that you are fulfilling this ancient prophecy, that you are one of those whose feet are beautiful upon the mountains, one of those called to bring good tidings and publish peace, one of those promised freedom from the kind of terror that so recently enveloped you. Jesus's message to you is that you and others of your generation have been transformed from children of darkness into children of light and that your society has been transformed from a warring to a peaceful people. Looking directly at you, you hear him say, "And now, behold, my joy is great, even unto fulness, because of you, and also this generation; yea, and even the Father rejoiceth, and also all the holy angels, because of you and this generation; for none of [you] are lost" (3 Nephi 27:30). Because of the dramatic transformation from darkness and hatred to light and love, you and the other children of your generation hold in your hearts a remembrance of the absolute terror of that night within a night, of that darkness at noon, as it were. Because you also hold in your hearts a more vivid memory of being in the presence of divine light, of being blessed by the Lord of Light in the glory of heaven's own fire, you determine and covenant to have peace for the duration of your lifetimes and to pass it on to your children and grandchildren so that it rolls forth like a mighty river for two hundred years.

Had you been a child during this momentous time, imagine what your life would be like for the remainder of your days;[13] imagine the stories you would tell to others about that all-encompassing

13. We can get some idea as to how light and love could have transformed these Nephite children through Ishmael Beah's *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2007). Beah, who was kidnapped at the age of twelve and, along with hundreds of other children, forced to murder others in the war between the government and the Revolutionary United Front rebels in Sierra Leone, speaks of his descent into the dark world of the African killing fields as a time when his "heart was frozen" (p. 126). Through the love and light of caring people, Beah ultimately escaped the horror of his living nightmare and was transformed into a child of light.

darkness that enshrouded you in night and how, in your moment of deepest despair, the light came, first as a voice and then as a ray that blossomed into a person as bright as the sun, and how his light flowed into your eyes and into your heart, making your whole body as luminous as sunlight.

As the generations unfold for the next two hundred years, especially for a society that depended on storytelling as the Nephites must have, these great events, these powerful personal narratives of light overpowering the darkness, would have been told and retold, sung and danced, expressed in powerful poetry, in graphic images, in weaving and other expressive arts, told down through the ages.

Of the great transformation among the Nephites, we read that, abiding by the doctrine of Christ, "the people were all converted unto the Lord, . . . and there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another. And they had all things common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift"; further, "there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people. And there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God" (4 Nephi 1:2-3, 15-16). Note the rhetorical power both of the inclusive nouns ("all" and "every man") and the string of negatives, which, in contrast to the earlier example that emphasized the absence of light and fire, here is used to define the extent to which the Nephites had rejected unrighteousness. As apostle Orson F. Whitney described it, "for two hundred years peace spread her white wings over the great continents of North and South America, and the entire people, Nephites and Lamanites, were converted unto Christ, were brethren and sisters, and all socially equal."[14]

14. Orson F. Whitney, "Zion and Her Redemption" in *Collected Discourses*, ed. Brian Stuy (Burbank, CA: BHS, 1987), 1:364.

Although the Nephite peace lasted for two centuries, like all mortal periods of peace, it came to an end when the Nephites again began to engage in secret combinations, "began to build up churches unto themselves to get gain, and began to deny the true church of Christ, . . . insomuch that they did receive all manner of wickedness" (4 Nephi 1:26-27). The use of *receive* is a telling verb, suggesting they not only sought wickedness but passively accepted it when it came to them in various forms. As a result, "the wicked part of the people began again to build up the secret oaths and combinations of Gadianton. . . . And it came to pass that the robbers of Gadianton did spread over all the face of the land; and there were none that were righteous save it were the disciples of Jesus" (4 Nephi 1:42, 46). The total conversion described in 4 Nephi 1:2-3, 15-17 to the near universal apostasy described in verse 46 represents as precipitous a decline and fall of an empire as one could imagine.

All of this leads the Nephites to turn once more to war and its destructive darkness. Even though they know the endgame of spilled blood that destroyed the Jaredites and has plagued their own history, they once more surrender to pride and class divisions, to inequality and injustice, to hatred and war. And so they descend into deeper and deeper darkness for the next two hundred years until, full circle, the Nephites become more degenerate and warlike than the Lamanites. As Mormon states, they have become so brutal and depraved that they "are without civilization" (Moroni 9:11), a startling condemnation.

As suggested above, this great dramatic conflict between darkness and light found in 3 Nephi has many of the elements of classical drama. Aristotle first described tragedy as "a process of imitating an action which has serious implications, is complete, and possesses magnitude; . . . through a course of pity and fear completing the purification [*katharsis*] of tragic acts which have those emotional characteristics."[15] In both classical and modern tragedy, a central character

15. Artistotle, *Aristotle Poetics*, trans. Gerald F. Else (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 25. Although Aristotle makes a distinction between narrative and dramatic forms, there is no question that many of the elements of tragedy are also

undergoes a transformation, generally from a state of favor and power to a fallen or corrupt state. However, there is no reason to exclude the possibility of an entire people doing so. Since Aristotle's concept of tragedy included the possibility of a transition from a noble figure to a tragic one (as in *Oedipus Rex*) and vice versa (as in *Eumenides*), one could look at the entire sweep of Nephite history, especially as recounted in 3 Nephi through Moroni, as including both since the Nephites undergo a transformation from evil to good and then, following their prolonged peaceable kingdom, from good back to evil.

The dramatic narrative in 3 Nephi seems particularly compelling for modern readers. By its own account (Mormon 8:34-35) and by the confirmation of modern prophets, we know the Book of Mormon was written for future generations, perhaps especially for our own.[16] As Hugh Nibley says, "Suddenly the Book of Mormon has become as modern as today's newspaper,"[17] or as Stephen Walker says, "History repeats itself with a vengeance in 4th Nephi, which reads like a twenty-first-century news report."[18]

Since the purpose of drama is to engage us intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually so that we may see ourselves in the distant mirrors of the past and learn from them, the dramatic narrative presented in 3 Nephi places a special burden on us to be among those who work to end war and establish peace. How do we do this? To begin with, we can do what the Lord and his prophets have urged us to do: "Renounce war and proclaim peace, and seek diligently to turn the hearts of the children to their fathers, and the hearts

---

found in epic poems such as the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and *Beowulf*, as well as in fiction (for example, the novels of Melville, Hardy, and Dostoevsky), and even in musical forms (for example, Bach's Passions and Verdi's *Otello*). While these are tragedies involving central figures, the principles of tragedy can also be applied to groups and, as in the case of the Jaredites and Nephites, to entire nations.

16. For one example, see Ezra Taft Benson, *A Witness and a Warning: A Modern-Day Prophet Testifies of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 19.

17. Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, 339.

18. "Last Words," in *The Reader's Book of Mormon*, ed. Robert A. Rees and Eugene England, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2008), 7:xiv.

of the fathers to the children" (D&C 98:16).[19] Note the strength of these imperatives: renounce, proclaim, diligently seek. Renouncing war does not mean silently sitting by while war does its destructive work. It means using our voices to counter those who argue for and support war. It means supporting those individuals, groups, and organizations committed to ending war. Proclaiming peace is more than hoping or praying for it; it is actively using the energy of our hearts and souls as well as our time and economic means to work for it. As Hugh Nibley elaborates, "'Renounce' is a strong word: we are not to try to win peace by war, or merely to call a truce, but to renounce war itself, to disclaim it as a policy while proclaiming . . peace without reservation."[20]

During the First World War, President Joseph F. Smith stated, "For years it has been held that peace comes by preparation for war; the present conflict should prove that peace comes only by preparing for peace, through training the people in righteousness and justice, and selecting rulers who respect the righteous will of the people." In times of war "the righteous will of the people"[21] is often ignored and even silenced. As Chris Hedges says in *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*, "States at war silence their own authentic and humane culture. When this destruction is well advanced they find the lack of critical and moral restraint useful in the campaign to exterminate the culture of their opponents. By destroying

19. I see a special meaning in these words. As I have written elsewhere: "What this scripture means, I believe, is that one way in which the Lord proves or tests our obedience to his word and our willingness to 'abide in [his] covenant' is whether we renounce war and proclaim peace. There also seems to be a direct connection between these two actions (and I think both are necessary) and the turning of intergenerational hearts to one another. Since in Mormon doctrine the turning of such hearts is the key to vicarious, participatory redemption through temple work, this scripture seems to imply that our refusal to renounce war and proclaim peace may hinder such work. It also hinders the turning of the hearts of the living fathers and mothers and their children to one another, as I believe it certainly did during the Vietnam War." Robert A. Rees, "America's War on Terrorism: One Latter-day Saint's Perspective," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 36/1 (2003): 26.

20. "Renounce War, or a Substitute for Victory," in *Brother Brigham Challenges the Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 267; first published in 1971.

21. "Editor's Table," *Improvement Era*, September 1914, 1074-75.

authentic culture—that which allows us to question and examine ourselves and our society, the state erodes the moral fabric. It is replaced with a warped version of reality. The enemy is dehumanized; the universe starkly divided between the forces of light and the forces of darkness."[22]

Another lesson we can learn from the drama presented in 4 Nephi is that pride leads to social inequality and injustice, discrimination against the poor, violence, and, ultimately, war. Note that it is the reemergence of class distinction that begins the Nephites' rapid descent toward their fatal end: "And now, in this two hundred and first year there began to be among them those who were lifted up in pride, such as the wearing of costly apparel, and all manner of fine pearls, and of the fine things of the world" (4 Nephi 1:24), leading to a "great division among the people" (4 Nephi 1:35).

Thus, an additional step we can take toward ending war and establishing peace is to work for greater economic and social equity, both at home and abroad. President Lorenzo Snow stated that what led to the sustained peace among the Nephites was their willingness to have all things in common: "When the Church was established among the Nephites, as recorded in the Book of Mormon, this doctrine was preached by them, and practiced nearly two hundred years, resulting in peace, union, great prosperity, and miraculous blessings, greater than were ever experienced by any people of whom we have record. The most remarkable miracles were constantly wrought among them. . . . These extraordinary manifestations of the approbation of God continued so long as they remained one in their temporal interest, or were control[l]ed in their financial matters according to the Order of Enoch."[23]

While the Nephite peace is an ideal likely beyond our power given the present condition of the world, including our own society, we could at least strive for greater balance so that instead of a large portion of wealth being concentrated in the hands of an

22. Chris Hedges, *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2002), 63.

23. Lorenzo Snow, in *Journal of Discourses*, 16:274.

increasingly small percentage of the population, there could be a more just and equitable distribution of wealth, resources, and opportunities. As of 2008 in the United States, according to one estimate, the top 1 percent of the population holds more than a third of the nation's wealth, while the bottom half holds less than 3 percent.[24] According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2009 43.6 million Americans, or 14.3 percent of the population, lived below the poverty line.[25] We could strive for the kind of society the Nephites enjoyed following Christ's visit by, first, sharing our abundance with the poor, the destitute, and the disadvantaged and, second, by supporting the efforts of the government and nongovernmental organizations committed to eliminating poverty and injustice.

Finally, I would like to suggest that we consider following an even more radical lesson from the Book of Mormon—that we love our enemies. I have been struck in my recent reading of the Book of Mormon by how the Nephites and Lamanites, striving to be Christlike, respond to their enemies—not with contempt but with compassion, not with loathing but with love. Although some Lamanites and some Nephite dissenters plunder, enslave, and wage all-too-frequent war against the Nephites, the more noble Nephites refuse to respond in kind. In spite of the damage and destruction they experience at the hands of the Lamanites, and in spite of the fact that the Lamanites seek their utter destruction, the Nephites continue to try to heal their fraternal bonds, speaking of the Lamanites as their "beloved brethren," forgiving them easily and often, and continually trying to persuade them to make peace.

---

24. "15 Mind-Blowing Facts about Wealth And Inequality In America," *Business Insider*, accessed August 16, 2010, http://www.businessinsider.com/15-charts-about-wealth-and-inequality-in-america-2010-4#half-of-america-has-25-of-the-wealth-2. According to another source, "This is the greatest concentration of income, excluding capital gains, since 1929" (see http://extreminequality.org). See also "The New Inequality" special issue of the *Nation* (June 11, 2008) for a number of reports demonstrating the growing gap between the rich and poor, http://extremeinequality.org.

25. "Record Number of Americans Living in Poverty," MSNBC, accessed October 10, 2010, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/39211644/ns/us_news-life.

This principle is reflected in a 1981 Christmas message from the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: "To all who seek a resolution to conflict, be it a misunderstanding between individuals or an international difficulty among nations, we commend the counsel of the Prince of Peace, 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven' (Matthew 5:44-45). This principle of loving one another as Jesus Christ loves us will bring peace to the individual, to the home and beyond, even to the nations and the world."[26] It is important to note that Christ did not say blessed are the peace lovers or peacekeepers, but rather "blessed are the peacemakers." James says, "Righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (James 3:18). Making peace is not a passive activity. It is interesting to note that the scriptures use strong, active verbs like *proclaim*, *execute*, and especially *establish* peace. King Benjamin suggests that making peace should be integral to our lives when he says we should "live peaceably" (Mosiah 4:13).

One might argue that the prolonged peace among the Nephites was possible only because Jesus came and dwelled among them and that we cannot hope for such peace until he comes again, but the people of Enoch achieved such peace. The promise is that we too can have it if we will but choose to do so. If what turned the hearts of the Nephites from darkness was the light of Christ, which the prophets tell us is the birthright of all humanity,[27] then that light can shine through us as well. As Paul says, "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light" (Ephesians 5:8). Walking in his light, I believe we can work for peace and forge that peaceful messianic future that the scriptures promise. As Stephen Mitchell says, "The messianic dream of

26. *Church News*, December 19, 1981, 2.

27. For two examples, see Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation: Sermons and Writings of Joseph Fielding Smith*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1999), 1:51; and Boyd K. Packer, "The Light of Christ," *Ensign*, April 2005, 8.

the future may be humanity's sweetest dream. But it is a dream nevertheless, as long as there is a separation between inside and outside, as long as we don't transform ourselves."[28] As Abinadi says of Christ, "He is the light and the life of the world; yea, a light that is endless, that can never be darkened; yea, and also a life which is endless, that there can be no more death" (Mosiah 16:9). May we strive for that light and the peace it promises.

Robert A. Rees received his BA from Brigham Young University and his MA and PhD from the University of Wisconsin. He teaches Mormon studies at Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California.

28. Stephen Mitchell, *The Gospel according to Jesus: A New Translation and Guide to His Essential Teachings for Believers and Unbelievers* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 11.

Manifestations of the Powers of Godliness and the Establishment of Zion

Ron Bartholomew

In a revelation received by the Prophet Joseph Smith on September 22–23, 1832 (later published as Doctrine and Covenants, section 84), the Lord indicated that "in the ordinances [of the priesthood], the power of godliness is manifest" (D&C 84:20). Exactly what is the "power of godliness," and in what ways is it manifest in priesthood ordinances? This paper will argue that godliness is the quality or state of being godly or godlike, and that power can be manifest in priesthood ordinances in one or more ways:

- The power the godly or godlike priesthood holders possess because of their personal righteousness, as described in D&C 121:36, 41–46;
- The supernatural godly or godlike power to make natural elements conform to your will and ways, such as healing the sick or raising the dead;[1]
- The sanctifying power of God's redeeming grace by which a person can be purified and even perfected, having imputed to them the power to become like God.[2]

1. For example, see Charles Nibley, in Conference Report, April 1927, 26–27, where he referred to the healing of the sick as a manifestation of the power of godliness through Melchizedek Priesthood ordinances.

2. This aspect of the power of godliness is illuminated in the writings of several General Authorities and scholars of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. See, for example, Bruce C. Hafen, *The Broken Heart: Applying the Atonement to Life's Experiences* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 172; Richard O. Cowan, *Answers to Your Questions about the Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996), 97; and

The following is a comparative analysis of the manner in which the powers of godliness, as described above, were manifest in the ordinances performed by the Savior and his disciples during their Jewish and Nephite ministries. The thesis of this paper is that the establishment of the two separate Zionlike communities following those ministries can be at least partially explained as resulting from these manifestations of the power of godliness associated with the ordinances of the priesthood.

A Pattern for the Establishment of Zion

On both continents, a parallel pattern for the establishment of Zionlike communities becomes evident from the analysis that will follow:

1. The personal ministry of Jesus Christ began with a formal introduction by the Father.
2. The Savior then called twelve priesthood leaders who were given power and authority to administer the first principles and ordinances of the gospel, with a command that they do so. Subsequently, many people on both continents entered into sacred covenant relationships with Deity by and through the ministration of these first principles and ordinances of the gospel. The resulting conversion, or acquisition and bestowal of godlike characteristics, was one aspect of the manifestation of the powers of godliness required to establish a Zionlike community. In addition, the Lord and his chosen leaders performed the ordinances of blessing and healing,[3] which were also attended by great manifestations of godly power.

Hoyt W. Brewster Jr., *Doctrine and Covenants Encyclopedia* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), 428–29.

3. The difficulty with references to healing in the Book of Mormon is that they often do not specify what physical act the Savior performed to heal them. However, the Bible does record what Jesus and his apostles did to bring about the healing. See, for example, Mark 5:23; 6:5, 13; 7:32; 8:23; and 16:18; Luke 4:40; 13:13; Acts 3:7; 9:17; and 28:8. All of these scriptural citations record that the Savior or his apostles laid hands upon them or anointed the sick with oil. Therefore, it would be inconsistent to

3. At some point following the inauguration of these priesthood ordinances, the Savior taught those principles required for the establishment of Zion.[4] According to John W. Welch, this occurred formally during the Sermon on the Mount and at the temple in Bountiful. In these sermons the Savior introduced those principles upon which Zion is predicated; namely, the law of consecration and the united order, which included caring for the poor, eliminating evil or hatred from among members of the church, and devoting oneself fully to the Savior, his church, and God's children.[5] The higher laws of the gospel and chastity were also introduced at this time.
4. Once the people had been instructed regarding the principles of Zion, temple ordinances were introduced. These ordinances institutionalized the principles upon which Zion is successfully established.[6]
5. It appears from these two accounts that through the revelation and performance of these ordinances initiated by the Savior and perpetuated by his chosen leaders, the powers of godliness were manifest sufficiently to establish Zionlike communities.

Formal Introduction by the Father

The Savior's ministries in both the Old and the New Worlds began with his formal introduction by the Father. In the Old World this occurred at the Savior's baptism (see Matthew 3:4-46 JST), and in the New World it occurred just prior to his bestowal of authority to baptize and his instructions regarding that ordinance (see 3 Nephi 11:3-7). In both hemispheres it was accompanied by and

---

conclude that his Nephite ministrations would have varied from the pattern he established and his apostles perpetuated in the Old World.

4. Compare Doctrine and Covenants 105:5.

5. See John W. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 54-55, 64-67, 72-74, 78-79, 83-84, and 92.

6. This idea, which will be expanded later in this paper, is attributed to John W. Welch and his work relative to this three-day ministry. See Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple*.

associated with the establishment of restored truths regarding the first principles and ordinances of the gospel.

Ordinations, Ordinances of Salvation, Blessing, and Healing

The ordination and setting apart to priesthood office appears to precede the performance of ordinances on both continents. In the Old World, John the Baptist was ordained to his calling by an angelic ministrant (see D&C 84:28), and the apostles were similarly ordained and set apart by the Savior himself in both the Old and New Worlds (see Mark 3:14; Luke 6:13; John 15:16; and 3 Nephi 11:21-22).[7] Ordinations to the priesthood were among the first

7. Of this ordination, Joseph F. McConkie, Robert L. Millet, and Brent L. Top wrote: "Reading these verses, one may wonder whether Nephi did not already have priesthood authority and whether the ordinance of baptism was not already being practiced among the Nephites. The answer to both questions would be yes. Nephi already had authority, and baptism was already being practiced. The doctrinal significance of these verses is not merely to reiterate the importance of baptism by the proper priesthood authority but rather to demonstrate the establishment of a new gospel dispensation among the Nephites and the accompanying ordinations and ordinances that a new dispensation necessitated. Of the events described in these verses, President Joseph Fielding Smith taught: 'There is nothing strange in the fact that when the Lord came to the Nephites, Nephi was baptized and so was everybody else although they had been baptized before. The Church among the Nephites before the coming of Christ was not in its fulness and was under the law of Moses. The Savior restored the fulness and gave them all the ordinances and blessings of the gospel. Therefore, it actually became a new organization, and through baptism they came into it. We have a similar condition in this dispensation. The Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were baptized by command of the Angel John the Baptist. Several others were baptized before the organization of the Church. However, on the day the Church was organized, all who had been previously baptized were baptized again, not for the remission of sins, but for entrance into the Church. In each case the reason was the same.' (*Answers to Gospel Questions* 3:205-6; see also 4:96-97.) Nephi was not being given any additional priesthood by the Lord, but rather he was receiving new authority to perform ordinances associated with the 'new organization' that Christ established among them. With 'old things' done away, Nephi was given power and authority to administer in the 'new things' in a dispensation with the fulness of gospel ordinances. Nephi, in turn, was then able to ordain (or in our terminology 'set apart') others to establish and set in order this new Church." Joseph F. McConkie, Robert L. Millet, and Brent L. Top, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992), 4:55-56. Later the same day, their ordination to perform the ordinance of the sacrament is mentioned in 3 Nephi 18:5 and their ordination to perform confirmation and bestowal of the Holy Ghost is recorded in 3 Nephi 18:36-37.

ordinances performed by the Savior on both continents.[8] Thus, the powers of godliness could be manifest through the recipients' personal worthiness, as well as through the priesthood power imbued upon them by Jesus.

In terms of those ordinances, the ministries of Christ on both continents were preceded by and established through the ordinance of baptism. In the Old World, John the Baptist came as one "crying in the wilderness" to prepare the way of the Lord (Matthew 3:3; see Mark 1:1-4; Luke 1:76, 3:4; John 1:24 JST; see also Isaiah 40 and Malachi 3:1).[9]

The stated purpose of John's baptismal ministry was to prepare the way for the greater mission of Jesus Christ (see Matthew 3:11-15; Mark 1:7-9; Luke 3:16-17, 21). Although not expressly stated as such, the prophet-historian Mormon describes the last event occurring prior to the destruction that preceded the Savior's three-day ministry: "Therefore, there were ordained of Nephi, men unto

8. There is no need to make a differentiation between "ordinations" and "ordinances," since ordinations to the priesthood are considered ordinances. Elder Richard G. Scott explained: "What are the essential ones? They are related to doctrine. They are centered in ordinances and embrace critical covenants. Those ordinances are baptism and confirmation into His Church and kingdom on earth. For men they include worthy ordination to the Melchizedek Priesthood and honoring and using it in service to others. For each adult man and woman, they entail all of the ordinances of the temple, including one's own personal endowment. They embody the sealing ordinance of the temple where a man and wife are bound so that through obedience they can live together for time and all eternity. When faithful, the children born to that union or later sealed to their parents are joined in love and rejoicing throughout all eternity. To receive all of the blessings of His atoning sacrifice, we are only asked to be obedient to His commandments and to receive *all* of these essential ordinances." Richard G. Scott, "Jesus Christ, Our Redeemer," *Ensign*, May 1997, 54; emphasis in original.

9. Elder Bruce R. McConkie noted: "As an everlasting covenant, baptism began on this earth with Adam (Moses 6:64-67) and has continued ever since whenever the Lord has had a people on earth. (D.&C. 20:23-28; 84:26-28.) It was not a new rite introduced by John the Baptist and adopted by Christ and his followers. The Jews were baptizing their proselytes long before John, as is well attested from secular sources. The Inspired Version of the Bible, the Book of Moses being a part thereof, contains ample evidence of the practice of baptism in Old Testament times. The part of the Book of Mormon of the pre-Christian Era contains some of the best information we have relative to this eternal law." Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 71.

this ministry, that all such as should come unto them should be baptized with water, and this as a witness and a testimony before God, and unto the people, that they had repented and received a remission of their sins. And there were many in the commencement of this year that were baptized unto repentance" (3 Nephi 7:25-26). In this context, these baptisms could be seen as preparatory to the Savior's ministry.

After the Savior appeared and ministered to those assembled at the temple in Bountiful, his inaugural ritual act was renewing the ordinance of baptism (see 3 Nephi 11:18-28), which he did by giving twelve chosen leaders the authority to perform the ordinance with instructions pertaining to it. According to Elder Jeffrey R. Holland,

> Clearly the foundational doctrine of baptism is at the heart of Christ's saving ministry, for he repeated the phrase "my doctrine"—particularly as applied to baptism—at least eight times in his unequivocal counsel to the Nephites.
>
> This clear, resonant call to baptism was important not only because of baptism's role as the first of the saving ordinances of the gospel but also because it provided the context for Christ's Sermon at the Temple. . . .
>
> Clearly the last half of 3 Nephi 11 and the significant first two verses of 3 Nephi 12 indicate that the covenant and doctrine of baptism—over which there was to be no disputation—is fundamental to the full meaning and realization of what we then hear the Savior promise in the Sermon at the Temple or the Sermon on the Mount.[10]

Incident to the Savior's baptism in the Old World, "the heaven was opened" (Matthew 3:16) and "the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased" (Luke 3:21-22; see Matthew 3:16-17). As already mentioned, this

10. Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 261-62.

same pronouncement of the Father occurred in the New World (3 Nephi 11:7) just prior to the Savior's renewing ministry in relation to the ordinance of baptism. The following day, "Nephi went down into the water and was baptized. And he came up out of the water and began to baptize. And he baptized all those whom Jesus had chosen. And it came to pass when they were all baptized and had come up out of the water, the Holy Ghost did fall upon them, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost and with fire. And behold, they were encircled about as if it were by fire; and it came down from heaven, and the multitude did witness it, and did bear record; and angels did come down out of heaven and did minister unto them" (3 Nephi 19:11-14). In addition to these outward, miraculous displays of God's power, the 3 Nephi account also demonstrates the other aspect of the manifestation of the power of godliness—the acquisition of godly purity, or the sanctification required for complete conversion:

> And it came to pass that Jesus blessed them as they did pray unto him; and his countenance did smile upon them, and the light of his countenance did shine upon them, and behold they were as white as the countenance and also the garments of Jesus; and behold the whiteness thereof did exceed all the whiteness, yea, even there could be nothing upon earth so white as the whiteness thereof. . . . And he turned from them again, and went a little way off and bowed himself to the earth; and he prayed again unto the Father, saying: Father, I thank thee that thou hast purified those whom I have chosen, because of their faith, and I pray for them, and also for them who shall believe on their words, that they may be purified in me, through faith on their words, even as they are purified in me. . . . And when Jesus had spoken these words he came again unto his disciples; and behold they did pray steadfastly, without ceasing, unto him; and he did smile upon them again; and behold they were white, even as Jesus. (3 Nephi 19:25, 27-28, 30)

The importance of the purifying power of godliness associated with this ordinance cannot be overstated in the context of the Savior's establishment of a Zion community among these Saints. In order for these people to sustain a Zion community, they must first possess the qualities of a Zion people, which would require them to be completely unified in righteousness (see Moses 7:18). As Alma stated, it would require them to be "changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness," becoming "new creatures" (Mosiah 27:25-26). It is significant that this change, as connoted in these and subsequent verses, came about because of their participation in priesthood ordinances administered by the Savior and his chosen twelve.

Following the Savior's baptism in Palestine, his ministry was accentuated by the performance of the ordinances of blessing and healing.[11] Similarly, these ordinances and subsequent displays of God's power followed the Savior's renewal of baptism in the Americas. A pattern is found in this sequence of ordinances performed and the subsequent manifestation of the powers of godliness. In the Old World, the recorded order of ordinances associated with the Savior's ministry was first baptism and then healing the sick and blessing the children. The apostles in Palestine also began their postascension ministry by performing baptisms first (see Acts 2:37-41) and then healings (see Acts 3:1-7; 5:15-16). Mark suggests that this was according to the Savior's final instructions to them, where this sequence is set forth (see Mark 16:15-20). The Savior's New World ministry also began by first renewing the ordinance of baptism (see 3 Nephi 11:21-27, 33-41; 19:7-9), followed by the ordinances of healing the sick and blessing the children (see 3 Nephi 17:7-9; 26:15).

In this regard, two different types of ritual acts appear to be termed ordinances. First are those required for salvation and exaltation, which include baptism, bestowal of the gift of the Holy

11. For examples of healings, see Matthew 4:23; 8:8, 16; 9:22, 30, and 35; 10:1, 8; 12:10, 22; 14:36. An equal number of incidents are recorded in the books of Mark, Luke, and John. For examples of Jesus blessing children, see Matthew 19:13-15 and Mark 10:13-16.

Ghost, priesthood for males, the sacrament, and the ordinances of the temple. In addition, other ritual acts that priesthood holders perform include the formal anointing with oil and praying for the sick and afflicted, blessings given for comfort or guidance, and the blessing of infants. Although the ordinances of blessing and healing were not requisite for salvation, they were attended by demonstrative manifestations of the power of God. At the end of his first day with the Nephites, the Savior stated:

> Behold, my bowels are filled with compassion towards you. Have ye any that are sick among you? Bring them hither. Have ye any that are lame, or blind, or halt, or maimed, or leprous, or that are withered, or that are deaf, or that are afflicted in any manner? Bring them hither and I will heal them, for I have compassion upon you; my bowels are filled with mercy. For I perceive that ye desire that I should show unto you what I have done unto your brethren at Jerusalem, for I see that your faith is sufficient that I should heal you. And it came to pass that when he had thus spoken, all the multitude, with one accord, did go forth with their sick and their afflicted, and their lame, and with their blind, and with their dumb, and with all them that were afflicted in any manner; and he did heal them every one as they were brought forth unto him. (3 Nephi 17:6–9)

The Savior's blessing and healing ministry continued the second and third days, accompanied by equally magnificent manifestations of the powers of God:

> Therefore, I would that ye should behold that the Lord truly did teach the people, for the space of three days; and after that he did show himself unto them oft, and did break bread oft, and bless it, and give it unto them. And it came to pass that he did teach and minister unto the children of the multitude of whom hath been spoken, and he did loose their tongues, and they did speak unto their fathers great

> and marvelous things, even greater than he had revealed unto the people; and he loosed their tongues that they could utter. And it came to pass that after he had ascended into heaven—the second time that he showed himself unto them, and had gone unto the Father, after having healed all their sick, and their lame, and opened the eyes of their blind and unstopped the ears of the deaf, and even had done all manner of cures among them, and raised a man from the dead, and had shown forth his power unto them, and had ascended unto the Father—Behold, it came to pass on the morrow that the multitude gathered themselves together, and they both saw and heard these children; yea, even babes did open their mouths and utter marvelous things; and the things which they did utter were forbidden that there should not any man write them. (3 Nephi 26:13-16)

Evidence that these ordinances of blessing and healing contributed to the purifying manifestation of the powers of godliness necessary for the establishment of Zionlike communities is illuminated by the fact that they immediately precede the following text: "And it came to pass that the disciples whom Jesus had chosen began from that time forth to baptize and to teach as many as did come unto them; and as many as were baptized in the name of Jesus were filled with the Holy Ghost. And many of them saw and heard unspeakable things, which are not lawful to be written. And they taught, and did minister one to another; and they had all things common among them, every man dealing justly, one with another. And it came to pass that they did do all things even as Jesus had commanded them" (3 Nephi 26:17-20). It is apparent from their inclusion immediately prior to this text that the manifestation of the powers of godliness are not limited to, or even exclusively associated with, participation in or the performance of ordinances required for salvation. This text clearly associated the beginnings of the establishment of a Zion community among these people, at least partially, with the administration and participation in the ordinances

of blessing and healing. In this respect, these ordinances, although they are not normally considered "saving ordinances," became saving in that the powers of godliness manifest through them contributed to the mighty change of heart experienced by these people and were required to sustain a Zion community. This concept is also taught in the Epistle of James, which suggests that in addition to physical healing, the power of godliness is manifest to the sick who receive that priesthood administration because they also receive a remission of sins (see James 5:14-15).

Significantly, the powers of godliness were manifest through the performance of these ordinances on two different levels. Persons participating in ordinances received direct manifestations of the power of godliness, whether it was remission of sins, divine healing, or the bestowal of the gift of the Holy Ghost. Additionally, those who witnessed the blessing and healing of others were also recipients of the power of godliness through the attendant manifestations of the Holy Ghost, ministration of angels, and prayers and ministrations of the Savior. Therefore, the hearts of all—those who received ordinances and those who witnessed the performance of them—were imbued with the purifying power of God.

Just as the Savior's mortal ministry included the introduction of the sacrament and the bestowal of the Holy Ghost in Jerusalem (see Matthew 26:26-28 and John 20:22), these were also part of his ministry among the Nephites.[12] In the Old World, the initial establishment of the ordinances of the sacrament and the gift of the Holy Ghost were not accompanied by immediate displays of the powers of godliness. In the New Testament record, apostles participated in the ordinance of the sacrament just prior to the Savior's suffering in Gethsemane and on the cross and had the gift of the Holy Ghost bestowed upon them shortly after his resurrection. However, the apostles did not experience the actual reception of the gift of the Holy Ghost (perhaps one of the greatest expressions of the power

12. The record of the introduction of the sacrament is found in 3 Nephi 18:1-11 and the bestowal of the power to give the Holy Ghost in 3 Nephi 18:36-37.

of godliness that is promised implicitly and explicitly in both of these ordinances) until after a waiting period, which culminated in a remarkable display of the powers of godliness. Luke records: "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:2-4). This, of course, was followed by the miraculous conversion of about three thousand souls that day and many later (see, for example, Acts 2:5-41, 47).

Similarly, when the Savior instituted the sacrament and gave the twelve disciples the power to bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost on the first day of his Nephite ministry, the outward powers of godliness were not evident at that time. In the Nephite instance, however, the waiting period was much shorter. After laboring all night to spread the news of the resurrected Savior and gather the people to the anticipated place of his next appearance, the Nephite twelve disciples taught the assembly all the words Jesus had spoken the day before, and then prayed "for that which they most desired; and they desired that the Holy Ghost should be given unto them," and "the Holy Ghost did fall upon them, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost and with fire" (3 Nephi 19:9, 13). Subsequently the Nephites "were encircled about as if it were by fire; and it came down from heaven" in a manner comparable to the experience of the apostles in the Old World. They also received the ministrations of angels followed by the reappearance of the Savior himself (see 3 Nephi 19:14-15). In addition to these outward manifestations, evidence of the inward purifying power of godliness associated with this ordinance is also demonstrated in the words of the Savior's prayer, as well as Mormon's commentary regarding the effect this ordinance and that prayer had on the hearts of the people:

> Father, I thank thee that thou hast given the Holy Ghost unto these whom I have chosen; and it is because of their

> belief in me that I have chosen them out of the world. Father, I pray thee that thou wilt give the Holy Ghost unto all them that shall believe in their words. Father, thou hast given them the Holy Ghost because they believe in me; and thou seest that they believe in me because thou hearest them, and they pray unto me; and they pray unto me because I am with them. . . . And tongue cannot speak the words which he prayed, neither can be written by man the words which he prayed. And the multitude did hear and do bear record; and their hearts were open and they did understand in their hearts the words which he prayed. Nevertheless, so great and marvelous were the words which he prayed that they cannot be written, neither can they be uttered by man. (3 Nephi 19:20-22, 32-34)

The powers of godliness were displayed in two significant ways later that day when they partook of the sacrament. First, the record indicates that "when the multitude had all eaten and drunk, behold, they were filled with the Spirit; and they did cry out with one voice, and gave glory to Jesus, whom they both saw and heard" (3 Nephi 20:9). It is important to note the distinction in the text stating that on this occasion they were "filled with the Spirit," in contrast with the record of the preceding day, which indicates that they ate and drank "and were filled."[13]

Scholars generally agree on this point. S. Kent Brown notes:

> During the second day, we are told only that "the multitude had all eaten and drunk" and were thereafter "filled with the spirit" (20:9). But the text seems clear enough. In the case of the first day, the statement is clearer still. The disciples were the first to partake of the bread and be filled, afterwards giving the bread to the multitude of twenty-five hundred people until they were filled (3 Ne. 18:3-5). The wine was similarly abundant (18:8-9). We must bear

13. Compare 3 Nephi 18:5, 9 with 3 Nephi 20:9.

in mind that by this point in the day the crowd had been without food for several hours, having gone forward "one by one" and felt Jesus' wounds (11:15), listened to his "sermon on the mount" address (chapters 12-14) and to his further words (15-16), seen him heal the infirm among them (17:5-10), and witnessed him blessing their children (17:11-24). Hence, when the record says that the multitude was "filled"—whether on day one or day two—by partaking of the bread and wine it is to be understood at least in terms of satisfying their hunger and thirst.[14]

Joseph Fielding McConkie concurred:

Following Christ's breaking and blessing the bread, we read: "And when they [the twelve] had eaten and were filled, he commanded that they should give unto the multitude. And when the multitude had eaten and were filled. . . ." (3 Nephi 18:4-5). In like manner, following his administering of the wine, we read that after the Twelve were "filled," they "gave unto the multitude, and they did drink, and they were filled" (v. 9). . . .

It should also be noted that there would have been a need for physical nourishment, if not for the adults, then certainly for the children. Consider the time it would take for approximately 2,500 people to personally handle and feel the wounds in his hands and his feet. For each of them to have shared ten seconds with the Savior would have consumed nearly seven hours.[15]

---

14. S. Kent Brown, "The Exodus Pattern in the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies* 30/3 (1990): 126 n. 39.

15. Joseph F. McConkie, "The Doctrine of a Covenant People," in *The Book of Mormon: 3 Nephi 9-30, This Is My Gospel*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1993), 172-73. He also noted: "In the context of the covenant traditions of Israel, it seems a natural thing to suppose that this was a covenant meal after the pattern of the one recorded in Exodus 24 where Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy princes or elders of Israel went up on the side of Sinai (symbolically the holy place) and there saw God and 'did eat and

In addition to the multitude being "filled with the Spirit," the bread and water were provided miraculously (see 3 Nephi 20:6-7) on the second day, whereas the disciples had been required to furnish it the day before (see 3 Nephi 18:1-3).

Temple Ordinances Institutionalize the Principles of Zion

In addition to the ordinances overtly mentioned, Mormon indicated that things occurred that he was forbidden to include in his abridgment (see 3 Nephi 26:6, 11)—many of the things the Savior said and did were "not lawful to be written" (3 Nephi 26:18). In connection with this, Welch has asserted that the text of the sermon at the temple in Bountiful implies teachings about, if not the performance of, the initiatory, endowment, and sealing ordinances.[16] To support his thesis he referred to Hugh W. Nibley's findings of several connections between the Savior's three-day ministry among the Nephites and the forty-day postresurrection ministry

---

drink' (Ex 24:11). This text is almost universally understood as referring to the eating of a covenant meal by the representatives of Israel in the presence of God on the Holy Mountain. One commentary notes: 'By means of the meal, Yahweh takes the whole community, represented by the clan elders, into his family. The meal is the assurance and support given by the superior, Yahweh, to the inferior, Israel.' The idea of two parties eating and drinking together to formally ratify a covenant is common to both the Bible and the customs of the ancient Near East. To eat together was to be bound together by mutual obligation. The meal was a seal of the alliance whereby 'the weaker is taken into the family of the stronger' who provides the meal. The Old Testament and the Book of Mormon occasions have obvious similarities. The place of the meal in both cases is the temple or the holy mount (which represents the temple). Both meals are in the presence of the God of Israel. The occasion in both instances is the introduction of a new gospel dispensation. Symbolically, both represent a ratifying seal of the covenant they have made. After the three-day ministry it appears that the more traditional sacrament observance became the order of the day. Indeed, we read that Christ continued to appear on many occasions to break bread and bless it for them (see 3 Nephi 26:13)." McConkie, "Doctrine of a Covenant People," 173-74. See Catherine Thomas, "Theophany (3 Nephi 17-19)," in *Studies in Scripture, Alma 30 to Moroni*, ed. Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 176.

16. See Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple*, particularly his comparison of the teachings and presentation of the sermon in chapter 4, and his personal reflections on pages 115-18 for references to the endowment. References to the initiatory ordinances can be found on pages 54 and 82-83; and a discussion with possible implications for sealing ordinances can be found on pages 98-99.

as recorded in the so-called Forty-Day literature. These include the idea that the Savior blessed the apostles in the Old World "with an initiation or endowment, generally called the 'mysteries,' which emphasized garments, marriage, and prayer circles."[17] He also pointed out that this corroborates Joseph Smith's statement that "Peter and John received the 'fulness of the priesthood or the law of God' at the Mount of Transfiguration and that Peter 'washed and anointed' all the apostles and received 'the endowment' on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem."[18] This coincides with Heber C. Kimball's assertion that Jesus had "inducted his Apostles into these ordinances [the holy endowments]."[19] Welch asserts that many similarities between the Forty-Day literature and the Savior's three-day ministry among the Nephites, taken together with his demonstration of the sermon at the temple as a temple text, invite the conclusion that the performing of temple ordinances was likely part of the Savior's ministration among the Nephites.[20]

For example, Welch suggests that the following incident could not be recorded in its fulness possibly because of the covenant of sacred silence associated with temple ritual:

> He prayed unto the Father, and the things which he prayed cannot be written, and the multitude did bear record who heard him. And after this manner do they bear record: The eye hath never seen, neither hath the ear heard, before, so great and marvelous things as we saw and heard Jesus speak unto the Father; and no tongue can speak, neither can there be written by any man, neither can the hearts of men conceive so great and marvelous things as we both

17. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple*, 33.

18. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple*, 33-34, citing Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1980), 211, 246, 285 n. 8, and 331. James is apparently inadvertently omitted in the transcription of Joseph Smith's August 27, 1843, sermon.

19. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple*, 34, citing Heber C. Kimball, in *Journal of Discourses*, 10:241.

20. See Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple*, 33-34.

> saw and heard Jesus speak; and no one can conceive of the joy which filled our souls at the time we heard him pray for us unto the Father. And it came to pass that when Jesus had made an end of praying unto the Father, he arose; but so great was the joy of the multitude that they were overcome. (3 Nephi 17:15-18)

Welch argues that while it is impossible to know exactly what happened that day, it is possible it may have been more than just a prayer—perhaps even the ordinance of sealing children to their parents—accompanied by the presence of angelic witnesses.[21] Regardless, the obvious effect this manifestation of the power of godliness had on their hearts is evident in this passage, as it speaks of the joy that filled their souls to the point that the entire multitude was overcome.

After this, he commanded "that their little children should be brought. So they brought their little children and set them down upon the ground round about him, and Jesus stood in the midst; and the multitude gave way till they had all been brought unto him. . . . And he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them" (3 Nephi 17:11-12, 21). Evidence of the miraculous manifestation of the powers of godliness immediately follows: "He spake unto the multitude, and said unto them: Behold your little ones. And as they looked to behold they cast their eyes towards heaven, and they saw the heavens open, and they saw angels descending out of heaven as it were in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled those little ones about, and they were encircled about with fire; and the angels did minister unto them" (3 Nephi 17:23-24).

Apostles Continue This Ministry

Prior to his ascension on both hemispheres, the Savior commanded his chosen twelve apostles to continue to administer these

21. John W. Welch, "Seeing 3 Nephi as the Holy of Holies of the Book of Mormon," in this volume.

ordinances in behalf of those who believed in him. These apostolic ministrations resulted in the establishment of Zionlike societies on both continents.[22] A pattern appears to emerge relative to (1) the continued administration of the performing of ordinances, (2) the subsequent display of the powers of godliness, and (3) the resulting establishment of Zion. This pattern is more readily seen when the New Testament and Book of Mormon texts are compared side by side.

Acts 2:41-47	3 Nephi 26:17-21
Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.	And it came to pass that the disciples whom Jesus had chosen began from that time forth to baptize and to teach as many as did come unto them; and as many as were baptized in the name of Jesus were filled with the Holy Ghost.
And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.	And many of them saw and heard unspeakable things, which are not lawful to be written.
And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.	And they taught, and did minister one to another; and they had all things common among them, every man dealing justly, one with another.
And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily.	And it came to pass that they did do all things even as Jesus had commanded them. And they who were baptized in the name of Jesus were called the church of Christ.

22. The Savior reiterates the command to his twelve disciples to continue to perform ordinances among the Nephites as recorded in 3 Nephi 27:16-23; and among the Jews, as well as all nations, as recorded in Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-19; and Luke 24:47-49. Significantly, all these scriptural references include the specific mention of the manifestation of power in conjunction with specific ordinances.

Perhaps one notable aspect of the powers of godliness associated with the performing of ordinances is that they appear to continue during the apostolic ministries even in the Savior's absence. The displays of the powers of godliness were dramatic during the personal ministries of the Savior; however, they appear to be equally efficacious after the ascension of the Savior. For example, the New Testament record includes the following regarding the apostles' postascension ministry in Jerusalem:

> When they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet. (Acts 4:31–37)

Similarly, the Book of Mormon records the following pertaining to the ministry of the Nephite disciples after the Savior's ascension in the New World:

> And it came to pass that the thirty and fourth year passed away, and also the thirty and fifth, and behold the disciples of Jesus had formed a church of Christ in all the lands round about. And as many as did come unto them, and did truly

> repent of their sins, were baptized in the name of Jesus; and they did also receive the Holy Ghost. And it came to pass in the thirty and sixth year, the people were all converted unto the Lord, upon all the face of the land, both Nephites and Lamanites, and there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another. And they had all things common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift. (4 Nephi 1:1-3)

Significantly, the Savior taught the required principles for the initiation of these Zionlike communities and introduced the essential ordinances; however, after his ascension the expressions of the powers of godliness incident to the continued performing of priesthood ordinances, when directed by the chosen twelve apostles, were sufficient to more fully establish these Zionlike societies. That the creation of an environment in which a Zionlike community could exist was instigated in the Savior's presence is not questioned; what is remarkable is that the administration of these ordinances by him personally or in his presence was not required for these Zion communities to be established. In light of this, some other factor or set of factors contributed to the further continuation and establishment of Zion after his ascension, and in his absence. Both the New Testament and Book of Mormon seem to suggest that the effects of the manifestation of the powers of godliness incident to performance of ordinances was at least one of those dominant factors.

The Disintegration of these Zionlike Communities

While the New Testament record includes some details surrounding the beginnings and the existence of that Zionlike society (see Acts 2:41-45; 4:31-37), only fragmentary details exist regarding its deterioration; for example, Ananias and Sapphira holding back part of the price of something intended for consecration (see Acts

5:1–11). After this, the issue of having all things in common is never mentioned again. However, there is evidence of the perversion of priesthood ordinances in the early Christian church as part of the ongoing apostasy. This would have led to a loss of the manifestation of the powers of godliness, which were a necessary part of establishing these Zionlike communities. Although no evidence exists for this type of community in Corinth, Paul's reprimand to the Corinthians, for example, for their perversion of the intent and meaning, if not also the performance of the ordinance of the sacrament, was likely indicative of the ongoing problems in the church at that time:

> For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread,

> and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come. (1 Corinthians 11:18–34; v. 20 reflects JST wording)

Richard Lloyd Anderson noted that these were just the beginnings of the perversions of the ordinances introduced and administered by the Savior and his apostles. Anderson carefully chronicled changes in the performance and meaning of two of these ordinances, baptism and the sacramental Eucharist. He summarized his findings this way:

> We have examined two changed covenants. One is the baptismal commitment to Christ for those old enough to have faith, repent, and make the promise to keep the commandments. This has been radically modified by the legal fiction of a stand-in for an unaware baby. Catholics and most major Protestant churches have perpetuated infant baptism by rationalizing it instead of correcting it. In addition, the sacrament covenant of remembrance and recommitment was expanded with elaborate practices that tended to produce awed onlookers, forcing individual repentance into nonscriptural channels like scheduled penance and the last rites. Here the biblical accounts were a standard for Protestant reemphasis on the personal promises of the sacrament stressed by Christ and by Paul.[23]

23. Richard Lloyd Anderson, "Religious Validity: The Sacrament Covenant in Third Nephi," in *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley*, ed.

In addition to the alterations that occurred in the New Testament church and its later adherents, Mormon points out that deviations in the performing of ordinances also occurred among the Nephites within the first decade of the decline of their Zion, in that there were those who "did administer that which was sacred unto him to whom it had been forbidden because of unworthiness" (4 Nephi 1:27). Perversions increased among the Nephites, according to Mormon, until they eventually lost all manifestations of the powers of godliness. He records: "But wickedness did prevail upon the face of the whole land, insomuch that . . . the work of miracles and of healing did cease because of the iniquity of the people. And there were no gifts from the Lord, and the Holy Ghost did not come upon any, because of their wickedness and unbelief" (Mormon 1:13-14). The ongoing perversion of priesthood ordinances and the subsequent loss of the manifestation of the powers of godliness coincide with the demise of the Zionlike community in the Americas. In addition, the fragmentary evidence of the fading of the Old World Zionlike community also appears to have coincided with the ongoing apostasy, which obviously included the perversion of priesthood ordinances and the subsequent loss of the manifestation of the powers of godliness necessary to sustain this type of a society.

Conclusion

The New Testament and Book of Mormon accounts of the Savior's ministry began with his formal introduction by the Father, followed by the priesthood ordinations of chosen leaders for the express purpose of performing ordinances. These priesthood ordinations were followed by the performance of the ordinances of baptism, blessings and healings, the sacrament, the bestowal of the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the Melchizedek temple ordinances. In each of these instances, dramatic powers of godliness were manifest in the outward, miraculous manifestations of God's power and the

---

John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 2:40. Two excellent discussions of the ordinances of baptism and the sacrament are contained on pages 12-16 (baptism) and pages 29-38 (sacrament).

sanctifying, inner cleansing and conversion of the Saints required for the establishment of Zionlike communities. In addition, it is important to note that not only did the person receiving the ordinance receive manifestations of the power of godliness, but those attending the ordinances were also the beneficiaries of the manifestations of these powers. Subsequently, the establishments of Zionlike communities where the followers of Christ were of one heart and one mind, dealt justly with one another, and had all things in common resulted on both continents.

Significantly, these Zionlike communities were established after the ascension of Christ, even in his absence, as his chosen twelve apostles continued to minister the same ordinances among his followers with the accompanying manifestations of the powers of godliness. Therefore, although the Savior's presence was necessary in both circumstances to initiate the ministration of these ordinances with their attendant displays of the powers of godliness necessary for the founding of these Zionlike communities, the fact that his apostles' continued ministry had an expanding effect would suggest that the powers of godliness manifest through these ordinances could be given as at least one explanation for the successful establishment of these Zionlike communities. This is further demonstrated by the fact that as these ordinances were changed or eliminated, these Zionlike communities declined and eventually ceased to exist, despite the fact that they had been established during the period that the powers of godliness were demonstrated through the performance of the ordinances instituted by the Savior and his apostles.

Ron Bartholomew is an instructor at the institute of religion adjacent to Utah Valley University. He received his doctorate in the sociology of education from the University of Buckingham in London, England.

The End from the Beginning in 3 Nephi and Beyond: The Words of Christ as Musical Architecture

Jerry L. Jaccard

Introduction

Through this paper, I endeavor to verbalize how, as a teaching musician, I think structurally about the scriptures as I read them. Doing so helps me make essential doctrinal connections, enjoy the artistry, and seek the Spirit as I derive meaningful applications for my life from the revealed word. This way of thinking has occurred naturally, without forcing; one day I simply became aware that I was reading the scriptures in the same way I perceive a musical score: lines and layers, repetitions and variations, microcosmic and macrocosmic forms containing motivic groupings and thematic strands energetically weaving forward and backward through time and space.

We are being nurtured in a universe designed to accomplish the Lord's purposes for us. In it we discern abundant artistry, musical and otherwise, that seems to manifest itself even in what we consider to be scientific phenomena, such as in the colors, textures, and patterns of the observable cosmos. Frederick Turner makes a case for the artistic universe in this way:

> I want to propose that the experience of beauty is a recognition of the deepest tendency or theme of the universe as a whole. . . . There is a gathering movement across many of the sciences that indicates that the universe

> does indeed have a deep theme or tendency, recognizable by the human neurobiological sensitivity to beauty.[1]

László Dobszay of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences provides some insight into the musical implications of Turner's statement:

> Good music reflects and, at the same time, expresses the order of the universe and the harmony of the human body and soul. The proportions of the universe, the beauty of the cosmos arranged in accordance with weight, number and measure . . . all become a tangible experience in music. Music reflects order and therefore creates order in man.[2]

The scriptures do seem to have such musiclike features that highlight and emphasize some of the Lord's recurring themes and concepts. These may be glimpses of the Lord's own musical involvement, such as when he and the apostles sang a hymn at the last supper (Matthew 26:30) or when he inquired of Job: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth[,] . . . when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job 38:4, 7). Sometimes they suggest the existence of a variety of Hebrew musical forms, as for instance, the Psalms themselves, the song of Moses and the children of Israel (Exodus 15:1-19), and the answering song of Miriam and the women of Israel (Exodus 15:20-21). Isaiah wrote: "The Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song" (Isaiah 12:2), echoed centuries later by Alma the Younger, who asked church members if they "felt to sing the song of redeeming love" (Alma 5:26). When Mary went to visit Elizabeth, she greeted her cousin with an extraordinary hymn of praise beginning with "My soul doth magnify the Lord" (Luke 1:46-55), the text of which is now immortalized in music as the *Magnificat* by almost every serious composer.

---

1. Frederick Turner, *The Culture of Hope: A New Birth of the Classical Spirit* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 217.

2. László Dobszay, *After Kodály—Reflections of Music Education* (Kecskemét, Hungary: Zoltán Kodály Pedagogical Institute of Music, 1992), 83.

Similarly, a variety of literary forms have been identified in the scriptures, including in the words of Christ recorded in the Old and New Worlds. Third Nephi is particularly important because it records what he was unable to deliver to the people of Palestine because of their unbelief (3 Nephi 19:35-36). Occurring as it does in the meridian of time, the Nephite record of his visit among them provides a wealth of connections to previous and subsequent scripture. The resulting cohesion of motives and themes can also be compared to basic musical structures, most of which, like many literary forms, are of ancient origin. The comparison is possible because the recurrent layering and interweaving of scriptural concepts often behave in musical ways, such as thematic statement and development, repetition and variation, recapitulation, and others. The continual reappearance of conceptual imagery from Jacob 5 throughout the standard works is a case in point.[3] When Nobel prize-winning playwright Václav Havel was asked how he wrote his plays, he replied in a way that is particularly germane to this topic:

> Something close to music and musical thought enters my plays. I really enjoy things like the . . . interweaving and mingling of motifs, phasing them in and out, developing them rhythmically, mirroring motifs in their opposites, . . . recapitulating bits of dialogue, repeating them, interchanging them, putting words spoken by one character in the mouth of another and then back again, dialogue running backward or contradicting itself, stressing the rhythmic alternation of conversational themes. . . . All of this, to a greater or lesser degree, can be found in my plays.[4]

3. Many aspects of this recurring imagery are treated in *The Allegory of the Olive Tree*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994).

4. Václav Havel, *Disturbing the Peace—A Conversation with Karel Hvisdala* (New York: Knopf, 1990), 192.

Musical Form and Function

Music, whether oral tradition or composed, generally fits within certain spatial-temporal frameworks called *musical form*, a sort of sonic architecture. Collegiate music students in many countries take required form and analysis classes to learn to dissect and understand the various components and their interrelationships found in musical form. Further, through coursework in aesthetics and music history and through master classes, private lessons, and rehearsals, they learn how to perform and to teach musical works in such a way as to bring forth not only their architectural features but also the many levels of meaning encoded in them. The particular work of composers is to understand the intricacies of musical forms and to fill them with content in ever more innovative ways.[5]

Music "means" in ways other than verbal and is primarily expressive of emotion at the nonverbal level. Moreover, the combination of well-crafted text and music also has particularly transcendent emotional potential. Musical meaning is encoded in musical form according to the social, political, and artistic conventions of a given culture in a particular era of its history:[6] its musical language—the particular way musical sounds are combined, its calendar customs and daily or seasonal rituals, and the interplay between its formal and informal music making.[7] The most ancient, authentic layers of a culture's orally transmitted folksong contain certain microcosmic forms that often evolve into the macrocosmic forms composers strive to fill with meaningful content. These dynamics hold fairly constant in many cultures. In Western European music, the complex, large-scale musical forms we know as *aria*, *sonata*, *concerto*,

5. Zoltán Kodály in László Eösze, *Zoltán Kodály—His Life and Work* (Budapest, Hungary: Kossuth Printing House, 1962), 13-14.

6. In Western composed music, specific stylistic periods emerged within which are grouped a wide range of substyles and national variations. These include but are not limited to *Early Music*, *Renaissance*, *Baroque*, *Viennese Classical*, *Romantic*, *Impressionistic*, and *Twentieth-Century Music*.

7. National musical life develops out of a healthy reciprocity between the more informal oral-aural and formal composed musical life of a people. This apparently held true in ancient Israel and Greece and is certainly verifiable in Western music.

symphony, and *fugue* derive from simpler, less-elaborated prototypes that abound in its ancient oral traditions. Space precludes a discussion here of the reciprocal influence of musical form and performance practices on each other, but it is a matter of prime consideration where ancient literary traditions are concerned, especially since they were essentially a culturally generated synthesis of oral, aural, and literate events, which also often included ritual dance. But it seems essential to point out that Western composed music is deeply rooted in the ancient oral traditions of the Mediterranean Basin.[8] These are the Hebrew, Greek, Byzantine, Roman, and multitudinous other musical cultures abounding there, including scale systems, tonalities, song forms, and performance traditions.

Thus, simple form and analysis techniques may serve to make comparisons between musical form and scriptural content because of their common origins in oral tradition and early written literature. The use of such tools can reveal parallels between musical composition and the Savior's own thematic statements and restatements of his purposes such as those recorded in 3 Nephi. Moreover, to make such comparisons increases the range of available pedagogical means for better understanding the way the words of Christ permeate the scriptural record from the most ancient up to the most present times, since musical form is particularly useful for simultaneously tracking large concepts and small details. In this way, one could consider the scriptures to be an entire symphony interwoven with recurring motives and themes; or one could look at the microcosmic musical and poetic form of a single psalm; or then again, one could look holistically at the role of that single psalm as a motivic unit within the larger symphony.

Building Blocks of Musical Form

The three basic constituents of music are *rhythm, melody,* and *harmony.* Music psychologist-pedagogue Edgar Willems has characterized rhythm as being *corporeal,* melody as being *spiritual,* and

8. L. Vikár, "Folk Music and Music Education" (paper, Dana School of Music teacher training workshop, Boston, MA, 1969), 5.

harmony as being *intellectual* in nature. These correspond to the well-known *psychomotor, affective,* and *cognitive* learning modalities. Because rhythm exists elsewhere than in music, melody necessarily stands alone among the two as the proprietary element of music,[9] even though it has much more interest when combined with rhythm. In archaic oral tradition, song rhythm is usually determined by the syllabification of the text, but melody still tends to somewhat override natural speech rhythm.[10] Although harmony in Western music originally evolved out of melody, it did gradually take on a life of its own, becoming a compositional factor capable of generating melody in certain stylistic contexts. For the sake of brevity and because spirituality is such a crucial dynamic of scripture study, this discussion is oriented toward melodic line—whether melodically or harmonically conceived—as the essential affective element.

Melody is constructed of chains of notes, the individual links of which are called *intervals,* or distances between pitches. Complex, mostly unspoken cultural "rules" determine which combinations and sequences of these intervals the "fundamental strata of society"[11] will accept in their oral tradition. Since the late Renaissance, composers have tended to push beyond those boundaries, giving rise to an increased harmonic presence in melody. Either way, melodic construction usually occurs in two textures: *motivic* or *thematic. Motives* are short groupings of notes that often recur within a single melody. A longer chain of notes or of motives can often appear as a *theme* in a large-scale musical work such as a symphony. However, some symphonies are quite motivic in structure; many people can hum or whistle the opening four-note motive of Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony,* upon which the entire first movement

9. Edgar Willems, *Les Bases Psychologiques de l'Éducation Musicale* (Bienne, Switzerland: Éditions "Pro Musica," 1956, 1987), 4, 18.

10. Zoltán Kodály, *A Magyar Népdal Strófa-Szerkezete* (dissertation, Eötvös Lorand University, Budapest, Hungary, 1906), 1.

11. Walter Wiora, *Das Echte Volkslied* (Heidelberg, Germany: Müller-Thiergarten-Verlag, 1950, 1962), 17–24.

is built through clever use of repetition and various compositional devices. The rhythm of that same four-note motive is also the basis of the third movement. On the other hand, Beethoven was also fond of using thematic texture as exemplified by the "Ode to Joy" melody of the last movement of his *Ninth Symphony*. Brahms and Sibelius are representative of other composers who mastered both motivic and thematic construction and often mixed them within the same musical work. This textural duality also occurs in the scriptures, and the more one learns to recognize which one is in play, the more unified the scriptures become to the reader in spite of the number of millennia separating the mortal writers who wrote on behalf of their Author.

The Primacy of Line in Music, Myth, and Scripture

In serious music and in the scriptures, general form and conceptual content usually emerge more readily to listeners and readers than do the intricacies of individual style. This is because whether motivic or thematic in texture, music and story move in linear fashion, even though they may be embedded in vertical textures.[12] One of the most difficult issues in musical interpretation is to strike the right balance between musicality and technique so that line emerges clearly and convincingly. Line is connective—it unifies large expanses of sound in music, and it ties together large blocks of thought in scripture, thereby assisting a listener or a reader to recognize related concepts occurring over a long span of time.

Whether verbal (storyline) or musical (melodic-rhythmic-harmonic motion), line is essential to capturing and keeping recipients' interest and to increasing their understanding. One of the difficulties with certain scriptural bodies is that the storylines have been scrambled, sometimes as a reveal-conceal device. Such is the

12. Folksong is essentially a linear melodic synthesis that includes, but often alters, natural speech rhythm. The oral traditions of some societies have naturally occurring vertical structures, usually layers of independent melodic or rhythmic lines moving along at more or less the same time. Harmonic music in the refined, studied sense of Western music is mostly deliberately constructed, or "composed," according to given rules and stylistic conventions.

case with Isaiah, and it is an understatement to say that there are several stories going on there. But why is line so powerful to the human experience? Perhaps because it is spiritual rather than corporeal, something more eternal than mortal. Psychoanalyst Clarissa Pinkola Estés is a post-trauma specialist whose work is, as she says, "helping to repair torn spirits," and she explains, "From repeatedly seeing how the psyche yearns when it is inspired, confused, injured, or bereft, I find that, above all, *the soul wants stories.*"[13] She further explains:

> Why stories? Because the soul's way of communicating is to teach. And its language is symbols and themes—all of which have been found, since the beginning of time, in stories. I would even go so far as to say, the soul *needs* stories. That radiant center we call soul is the enormous aspect of psyche which is invisible, but which can be palpably felt. When in relationship with the soul, we sense our highest aspirations, our most uncanny knowings, our mystical understandings, and our spontaneous inspirations and unleashings of creative ideas.[14]

She goes on to speak of our "psyche's innate yearning to be taught its greater and lesser parts, to be comforted, lifted, and inspired" and that "there is a 'hearing capacity' in the psyche," which compels it "to listen to all manner of nourishing, startling, and challenging dramatic patterns—the very ones found in tales."[15] Her studies have led her to the ancient Hebrew worldview of how storyline is essential to the practice of *tikkum olam*, or repair of the world soul, in which one commits to develop "spiritual sight," a love of others, "to translate suffering into meaning," to have profound hope, "to find insight through struggle"—in short, to let one's inner

13. Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces—Commemorative Edition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), xxxi; emphasis in original.

14. Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, xxxi-xxxii; emphasis in original.

15. Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, xxxii.

and outer life reciprocally strengthen each other.[16] The clear implication is that all of us have a spiritual architecture that responds most efficiently when literature, art, and music are structured according to line. Then our individual, eternal selves personalize this innate framework through our exercise of agency, our innate gifts and sensitivities, and our life experiences.

With those factors in mind, the revelation of John contains a superb example of the unifying power of line. How many readers have suffered sensory overload when confronted with the sheer quantity of symbolic imagery in this book? And how many private interpretations of it have been devised to fit within the closed system of the book itself, disconnected from its linear context of the entire scriptural corpus, which is already not always easy to discern? It is a visually noisy, almost jarring reading experience when the focus stays on the symbolism. But where is the line? The line is a gentle, barely discernible melody, a beautiful metaphor for its source in the "sayings of the prophecy."[17] This line conveys a message of promised blessings to those who overcome the world through the merits of Christ by elaborating the Savior's declaration "I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Not surprisingly, the sayings of the prophecy are arranged in three sections, already a highly symbolic number in Hebrew numerology, but also in perfect ABA ternary musical form down to the last details. In the ABA *da capo aria*, a product of the Baroque era but rooted in ancient oral tradition and one of the most purely melodic of composed musical forms, the last section is a highly varied and ornamented version of the first but always recognizable as a summation of the same melodic material. This same structural arrangement is reflected in John's Revelation. The first "A section" is a message to the Saints in all ages in which Christ details seven promised blessings to those who overcome the world, plus an eighth blessing

16. Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, xliv-xlv; emphasis in original.

17. Jerry L. Jaccard and G. Russell Sheen, "How Do You Keep a Dragon? (Or, a Hidden Message in the Revelation of John)" (unpublished manuscript, 1986), 2-3.

that encapsulates the seven into one great conceptualization.[18] The B section contains the seven sayings of praise to the Redeemer.[19] The concluding A section—the seven exhortations to obedience—corresponds to the first by specifying seven ways to overcome, is repetitive, is full of variations on the same line of thinking as the first, and is summative.[20] So this aspect of the book of Revelation seems to be a discernible parallel to ternary musical form, symbolically structured as it is around the highly charged numbers three and seven, suggesting further evidence of architectural crafting.

This is not all, for the conceptual line of thought set up by John transcends the New Testament to connect backward in time with Lehi's and Nephi's dreams in several important ways, only one of which is that John specifies the source of the river of filthy water that, Nephi tells his brothers, their father had forgotten to notice (compare 1 Nephi 15:26-29 and Revelation 12:15). Further, Nephi, looking forward along the same line, actually saw and identified John as the future prophet appointed to write the remainder of Nephi's extended vision (1 Nephi 14:19-30). So here we have an instance of how the concept of line can provide connectivity and continuity over a great span of time. It suggests a way to study a significant portion of the revealed word and, in the process, hints at even more connective possibilities. Through it, we realize that prophets are sent to tell designated parts of the same story and that it is our task to discern how to reassemble them back into the whole.

Dynamic Elements of Musical Form and Scriptural Composition

Musical form obeys laws of proportion and cohesion. These more or less relate nicely to Lehi's statement of the law of contrast: "For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things" (2 Nephi 2:11). Well-crafted music abounds in themes and counterthemes, tension and resolution, loss and restoration, revelation and concealment. Through masterful employment of compositional

18. Jaccard and Sheen, *Keep a Dragon*, 3.
19. Jaccard and Sheen, *Keep a Dragon*, 4-5.
20. Jaccard and Sheen, *Keep a Dragon*, 5-6.

devices, composers can make a musical line seemingly disappear only to reappear in a new tonality, or to be temporally distorted, or to "change clothes" through orchestral coloration and/or harmonic shifts, to name just a very few. Standard compositional devices used in music include ornamentation, variation, imitation, fragmentation, diminution, augmentation, modulation, extension, inversion, and retrograde inversion. Some of these are also recognizable in scriptural composition. In either case, the results are the same: highly nuanced and intricate bodies of literature full of what King Benjamin called "types and shadows," of which he also specified that the Lord God is the author (Mosiah 3:15).

I have come to understand that musical line behaves in much the same way as a scriptural figure on a classic hero journey. In Joseph Campbell's description of the archetypal hero journey, one is called to accomplish a task or participate in an adventure, receive divine help to do so, undergo transformative tests and trials, and ultimately return home having been changed in the process.[21] In musical forms, motives and themes undergo similar processes that musicians engage in tracking in order to interpret the possible meanings of a composition. Many things can happen to a musical line through the application of some or all of the previously mentioned compositional devices. Likewise, along the way of life, many things happen to each of us, engaged as we are in the pursuit of our individual hero journey through mortality. Observing Christ as the archetypal hero, we follow his progress from his premortal activities as Creator, his acceptance of a commission from the Father, his mortal sojourn wherein he fulfilled that commission to atone for all of Father's children and to gain victory over death and hell, and his triumphant return to his heavenly home. That, in outline form, is the perfect hero journey. Our own journey is a variation of the same theme, since the theme exists for our eternal benefit. It is also

21. Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 33–35; and Rex A. Wadham, "Memorandum: Outcomes from My Research to Uncover a Natural, Gospel Centered, Learning Process: An End of Year Report" (unpublished manuscript, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, 1986), 3, 18.

a reflection of what happens to a musical motive or theme within musical form.

The Special Role of Repetition and Variation in Music and Scripture

One of the most fundamental features of music is variation. Variation is a repetition of motive or theme with ever-so-nuanced alteration or elaboration. In the oral tradition, the same singer will subtly vary a melody differently for each verse without disturbing the identity of the melodic line. One single culture's authentic oral tradition may contain tens of thousands of such tune variants. Among composers, the theme and variations form is a favorite compositional challenge, the challenge being to maintain a clear sense of line throughout the variations. On a grander scale, the universe, the earth, and all living things testify of infinite variety based on large motivic or thematic constructs. Consider, for instance, how people are all easily identified as members of the human family—the theme—but are so infinitely varied as to individual physical characteristics—the variations. We are collectively and individually a miracle, and because of the attributes being discussed here, the musical form of theme and variations itself becomes a metaphor of all living things.

Taken as a whole, the entire scriptural record is a giant theme and variations, an ongoing conversation between the Creator and his children about how to return to his presence and the uncountable blessings he desires to bestow. In the Pearl of Great Price, we find details of the Abrahamic covenant, including a stunning glimpse of our Father's universe and its central themes of limitless abundance and infinite variation. The discussion continues elsewhere with repetitions and elaborations of promises to Abraham and his seed, with prophecies concerning the house of Israel and its own hero journey, with Joseph's blessing as "a fruitful bough whose branches run over the wall," and with Jacob's allegory (Jacob 5) as a recapitulation of them all. Such abundant, overflowing fruitfulness—*Abbondanza*—is one of the pivotal themes of Italian Medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque visual art and architecture,

along with their musical counterparts. And when astronomers and particle physicists peer ever deeper into the outward and inward universes, they only find more prototypes and their variations, the relentlessly energetic theme of creation.

In the pedagogy of literacy acquisition, variation is a desirable trait because it continually feeds our inborn cognitive compulsion to make sense out of what we read. Readers who feel successful at comprehension are motivated to keep reading. Those who do not succeed in making sense of text tend to lose confidence. Text that is inherently repetitive and redundant—rich in thematic variation and elaboration—is highly predictable. Predictability feeds the cognitive motor to surge ahead of the eyes as it strives to make sense of text and to discern the line of thinking behind it.[22] When reading scripture under the influence of the Holy Ghost, this spiritual urge to know and comprehend becomes powerful indeed. Scripture seems purposefully composed to be repetitive, redundant, and therefore highly predictable, while at the same time providing limitless variation and insight. And it also appears that formal constructs common to literature and music are in full play in the scriptures.

How Music "Means"

It was previously stated that music "means" differently than text, that musical meaning is affective rather than verbal. It has also been established that both are most meaningful when cast within certain forms. Psycholinguist Noam Chomsky characterizes the construction of meaning as occurring between layers of deep and surface structure.[23] To be brief, this means that readers of scripture, when looking at the text (surface structure), must strive to discern the author's original intent underlying the text (deep structure). An added layer in scripture reading is to discern what the Spirit intends an individual reader to understand and to do in the here and now.

---

22. Jerry L. Jaccard, "A Conceptual Model for Literature-Based Musical Education" (dissertation, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, 1995), 161–69.

23. Noam Chomsky, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1965), 15–17.

This is the bedrock issue of scripture: it is not a static assemblage of words on pages; rather, it is living revelation activated by a reader's readiness to go even deeper into its Author's meaning, in both personal and general ways.

Music can behave in much the same way. Because music speaks directly to the emotional receptivity of the human psyche,[24] it has the potential to enhance one's sensitivity to the Holy Ghost. Like scripture, well-composed music has layers of clarity and layers of ambiguity. As with reading scripture, one has to work at listening to music to begin to hear more clearly. Musicologist Viktor Zuckerkandl wrote: "Hearing music is a many-layered process. We may distinguish four layers: hearing tones, hearing dynamic qualities, hearing motion, and hearing organic structure."[25] If this were recast for scripture readers, it might read: "Reading is a many-layered process. We may distinguish four layers: seeing words, imagining tone and inflection, discerning line of thought, and understanding intent."

Musical and scriptural forms are architectural spaces existing in perception, thought and feeling, spaces that we grow into over time and after repeated explorations. Isaiah, Nephi, and Joseph Smith each taught how we progress toward the spaciousness of the Father's revealed thought "precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little" (Isaiah 28:10; see 2 Nephi 28:30, D&C 98:12). As in a symphony, so in the scriptures; the actual journey, rather than the arrival, of listening or reading is how we come to hear, feel, understand, and know at many different levels during the various times of our lives.

The notions of line, layer, and journey combine to help us discern the intended meaning of scripture, as described in Daniel Mendelsohn's commentary on Rabbi Richard Elliott Friedman's explanation of the first two chapters of Genesis:

---

24. Susanne K. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key—A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942), 235, 243.

25. Viktor Zuckerkandl, *Sound and Symbol Volume Two: Man the Musician*, trans. N. Guterman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), 88.

> For Friedman, the opening of Bereishit [the creation] brings to mind a technique we all know from the movies: "Like some films that begin with a sweeping shot that then narrows," he writes, "so the first chapter of Genesis moves gradually from a picture of the skies and earth down to the first man and woman. The story's focus will continue to narrow: from the universe to the earth to humankind to specific lands and peoples to a single family." And yet, he reminds his readers, the wider, cosmic concerns of the world-historical story that the Torah tells will remain in the back of our minds as we read on, providing the rich substratum of meaning that gives such depth to that family's story.
>
> Friedman's observation implies, as is certainly true, that often it is the small things, rather than the big picture, that the mind can comfortably grasp: that, for instance, it is naturally more appealing to readers to absorb the meaning of a vast historical event through the story of a single family.[26]

And isn't that exactly where the Book of Mormon begins, with a family in a desert at the other end of a line begun millennia before with a family in a garden?

Musical Form and 3 Nephi

The position of 3 Nephi in the scriptural record suggests possible parallels with two significant organizational schemes of musical form. Form itself is symbolic, and both schemes are richly so in relation to 3 Nephi. The first one is the musical Golden Mean, the approximately two-thirds, one-third aesthetic proportion of classical Greek architecture, mirroring abundant variations found in nature, such as those identified in science as following the Fibonacci sequence. For example, in Zoltán Kodály's *Missa Brevis*, the climax

26. Daniel Mendelsohn, *The Lost: A Search for Six of Six Million* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), 18. See Richard Elliott Friedman, *Commentary on the Torah: With a New English Translation* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 3.

of the melodic line occurs in exactly the measure that marks the Golden Mean proportional turning point on the word *Christus*.

The second scheme is the musical version of chiasmus, in itself a symbol of symmetry and equilibrium. In Bach's large-scale *B Minor Mass*, the name of Christ occurs at the exact midpoint. Of course, there are smaller-scale chiastic compositions as well. Occurring as it does in the meridian of time, 3 Nephi could be considered along with the four Gospels as the crossover point of the larger scriptural chiasmus. There is no question that 3 Nephi fully reports the mortal mission of Christ as the turning point—the crux, the cruciform chiastic crossover—of this creation. He is the when, the where, and the what at which this earth and its inhabitants reach the halfway point on their collective hero journey back to their heavenly home. Musicians similarly track the point in which a simple melodic line begins its return to its home tone, or in a symphony, how a theme returns to its home key away from which it has wandered. Fine musical interpretation hinges on conductors and musicians being able to navigate such artistic journeys with musicality and clarity.

Additionally, 3 Nephi has two ancient scriptural schemes paralleled by the musical forms of *fugue* and *rondo*. Fugal form is a complex of two or more voices simultaneously singing and/or playing the same or modified melodic lines that become increasingly more elaborated.[27] This is certainly the case in most of 3 Nephi, where the first appearance of the main theme occurs in 3 Nephi 9 with the Savior's own statement of who he and the Father are, what their purpose is, and what is required of mankind to return to them. From this point on through chapter 27, Christ continues to elaborate upon this same line as he explains the intertwined past, present, and future destinies of the house of Israel and the Gentile nations. Alongside this global theme, he introduces his personal explanation of his visit in the immediate present to the Nephites, including angelic ministrations and

27. Some non-Western cultures also have complex linear musical forms that differ from Western polyphony in concept. These may be polyrhythmic complexes such as those found in West African drumming, Forest Pygmy layered communal vocal improvisation, or Indonesian heterophonic gamelan music.

many other profoundly personal events, some of which surpass the ability of mortal language to express. So the first similarity to musical form in 3 Nephi is this fugal interplay of global and personal lines whereby the Redeemer of the world continually keeps the geographically isolated Nephites aware of their larger context within the human family. The same things happen in musical fugues, where the thematic framework is always evident, often fragmentary, but kept cohesive through tonal context until a restatement of the main subject brings it all into clarity. Musical form and scriptural content are always about line and context!

Besides the fugal analogy, another musical form, the *rondo*, can be used to describe the repetitive features of the scriptural account of Christ's visit to the Nephites. In a rondo, the various melodic lines continually return to the A section, the main melodic material of the composition that maintains its overall cohesiveness. This form is expressed in musical analysis as something like ABACADAEAFA, etc., as a composition continues to circle back on itself.[28] This circular dynamic is evidenced in 3 Nephi as the Savior continually returns to his central themes of covenant and redemption. In chapters 15 through 16 he repeatedly comes back to how the law of Moses is fulfilled but his covenant with Israel is not and how he has come as the resurrected Lord to visit and gather the lost sheep of the house of Israel in order to fulfill his covenant with them. In successive chapters, he returns to these same topics to elaborate upon them by adding details in classic line-upon-line fashion. He goes on in chapter 20 to detail how the land and people of Joseph and the New Jerusalem fit into his covenant with Jacob, the eventual redemption of Jerusalem, and the role of the Gentiles in bringing to pass his designs. Chapter after chapter, he describes the accelerating fulfillment of the covenant during the latter days, including the coming of Elijah to attend to the redemption of the dead. The layering of additional material continues through to the

28. Haydn and Mozart were especially fond of composing rondos, often as movements embedded in larger works like symphonies.

end of chapter 27, always returning to the essential themes of covenant, gathering, restoration, and redemption. In chapter 27, his last restatement of the A section theme reveals that the covenant people are to gather into his church, bear his name, do his works, and progress in righteousness until the end.

This circular, rondolike returning form is a feature of Hebrew literature found as early as in Genesis, according to Mendelsohn's discussion of Rashi's (Rabbi Shlomo ben Itzhak's) rule number thirteen for explaining the Torah. This rule implies that when statements or stories are followed by repetitions of the same, the subsequent iterations are meant to contain more detailed explanations of the first.[29] Rule 13 affirms the existence of circular motion, as in Genesis (chapters 1 and 2), the Book of Moses (chapters 2 and 3), and 3 Nephi. Of course, in Genesis and Moses we have an additional explanation that all things were created spiritually before being created physically, and that is why the two chapters *seem* repetitive. A similar prototype is found in a half-spoken, half-sung oral story type called a *conte-chanté* in Creole.[30] In this traditional Caribbean song form, the story is told and retold with increasing embellishment and often by several characters in turn, using a technique called *mise en abîme*, "endless text."

Third Nephi could be analogous to what musicians call a thematic catalog, in which the main themes of a composer's works or the main themes of same-form works by different composers are classified. Folksong ethnomusicologists similarly compile detailed melodic typologies, organized by motives, general structural types, and subtypes. This is essentially what one can find in 3 Nephi and, for that matter, in Isaiah, which figures prominently in 3 Nephi: a

29. Mendelsohn, *Lost*, 18; Abraham M. Silbermann and Morris Rosenbaum, trans., *Chumash with Targum Onkelos, Haphtaroth, and Rashi's Commentary* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1934), 10, compare p. 8; see also the Rashi Database at www.Rashiyomi.com.

30. Claude Dauphin, "Ethnopedagogy of Creole Singing Tales: From the Musical Life of Everyday to a Symbolic Way of Self-Expression," in *Intersections: Music, Tradition and Education*, ed. Jerry L. Jaccard and Hilda Mercedes Morán Quiroz (Guadalajara, Mexico: Universidad de Guadalajara, 2011), 2.

listing, with explanations, of the essential scriptural themes pertaining to Jehovah's relationship and dealings with his covenant people throughout the ages. But unlike musical catalogs that are usually compiled centuries after a composer's death, 3 Nephi was compiled by its Author as a living document. Moreover, it is at once globally, nationally, and individually applicable.

In this capacity, 3 Nephi is a nexus document in which multiple lines of divine thought from past declarations are recast from the lesser law into the newness of Christ, then sent forward into the future to prepare the Saints for the restoration of all things. At the same time, it is simultaneously linear yet deeply textured, structured to cause a reader to perceive it horizontally and vertically, as in Chomsky's model of deep and surface structures or in a great Bach fugue. In his theory of cognitive development, Howard Gardner speaks of artistic composition as "the arrangement of elements with attention to their effects on one another and on a work as a whole" in order to produce "multiple meanings," which he characterizes as "ambiguity or layers of significance."[31] This aptly describes the richness of 3 Nephi, not to mention much of the scriptural corpus and much of parallel musical and literary forms.

Conclusion

Is the Lord also a musician? It seems more proper to ask whether we mortals are because the Lord is! I have come to believe so, for out of the seeming chaos of the universe we are increasingly able to clearly discern visual and auditory patterns, lines, and forms that seem to also exist as organizational schemes in our scriptures. In other words, not a few formal aspects of the scriptures correspond to basic musical structures. As also occurs with other artistic disciplines and scientific theories, the recognition of musiclike elements and sections in the scriptures serves to help us make sense of the parts and the whole. As implied above in the Turner and Dobszay citations, there does seem to be an underlying

31. Howard Gardner, *To Open Minds: Chinese Clues to the Dilemma of Contemporary American Education* (New York: Basic Books, 1989), 99.

and intentional tendency toward beauty, proportion, and order not only in the creation as a whole, but in the scriptural account of it as well.

In recent decades, cognitive scientists have discovered how knowledge is constructed through an individual's employ of fundamental ways of knowing, which all people are believed to possess in varying degrees, among which the musical one plays an important organizational role.[32] If the Lord has commissioned us to seek to comprehend him—"learn of me" (Matthew 11:29)—it is reasonable to assume that he would also employ a multitude of compositional devices and cognitive schema to present information about himself in order to make knowing about him as accessible as possible to the wonderful human minds he helped to create. Musical architecture and its reliance on human musicality seems to be one of those naturally occurring portals through which he endeavors to make himself and his ways known and understood.

Jerry L. Jaccard is an associate professor of music education in the Brigham Young University School of Music. He received a doctor of education degree in instructional leadership from the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

32. Howard Gardner, "Is Musical Intelligence Special?," in *Ithaca Conference '96, Music as Intelligence—A Sourcebook*, ed. Verna Brummett (Ithaca, NY: Ithaca College, 1997), 9.

3 Nephi Conference Panel Discussion

The following is a transcript of the panel discussion held at the conclusion of the 3 Nephi Conference. The editors have removed some of the tangential conversational material, added footnotes, summarized the questions from the audience, and made some changes in the quotations to have them match the published versions.

Daniel C. Peterson: Let me first of all introduce the panelists. My name is Daniel Peterson. Sitting next to me is John W. Welch, who is familiar to many of you as professor of law at BYU. He was the founder of FARMS and is a prolific author. Next to him is Robert L. Millet, former dean of Religious Education at BYU, former holder of the Richard L. Evans Chair for Religious Understanding at BYU, and again an author of many, many works relating to the gospel. Next to him is Richard Dilworth Rust, who has retired from the English Department at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and who has written extensively on the Book of Mormon as literature and made major contributions there. Next to him is Grant Hardy, former chair of the History Department of the University of North Carolina at Asheville, who has also made real contributions to Book of Mormon study, particularly with his reader's edition of the Book of Mormon.[1] And then at the end is S. Kent Brown, recently retired from BYU, where he was the director of the Willes Center for Book of Mormon Studies and professor of ancient

1. Grant Hardy, ed., *The Book of Mormon: A Reader's Edition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

scripture. He is also a past director of the Jerusalem Center. So it is a very distinguished panel.

The topic that we are asked to address is "3 Nephi: An Incomparable Scripture." This topic gets me to thinking, and I thought that what we can do here is I will ask a question, to see if I can prime the pump, and then we will see where it goes from there. This is really unstructured. I have not given the panelists any instructions, because I don't have any to give, and I think we would like to open it up to questions from the audience as well. If you have any questions you'd like to ask about 3 Nephi, about the attitudes of people here on the stand toward this or that issue, this would be a way to do it.

As moderator, I get to ask the first question, I suppose, and so this idea of the incomparability of 3 Nephi interests me. I'm thinking, "Okay, precisely wherein does the incomparability of the scripture consist?" My background, as some of you may know, is in Islamic studies, and a big issue for Muslims is the incomparability of the Qur'an—what's called *iʿjāz*, the idea that the Qur'an is literally incomparable—nobody can write anything like the Qur'an. And you have stories in early Islamic history that are very reminiscent of a certain story some of you are familiar with in Latter-day Saint history, when William McLellin is challenged to produce a revelation like the revelations of the Doctrine and Covenants and professes himself eventually unable to do that.[2] But it strikes me that the incomparability that might be referred to is probably not incomparability of style. The style is, as most people have tended to think, somewhat like the King James Bible, although Royal Skousen has thrown an interesting wrench into discussions of that, recently arguing that it's actually a style from a generation or two previous to the publication of the King James Bible, whatever you want to make of that. I don't think that's the focus. Is it the content? Well, some people would vigorously object to that. They'd say, "But look, the centerpiece of 3 Nephi is a retelling—in effect, a redelivery—of the Sermon on the Mount," which it is essentially. I'm not going to

2. See Doctrine and Covenants 67 and *History of the Church*, 1:224-26.

push this, because we have someone here who can speak to this authoritatively. But some people would say, based on a superficial glance at it, that it's the same thing as you get in Matthew 5-7. So it's not incomparable at all: it's very easily comparable to Matthew 5-7, where you have the same sermon. So is it a question of content?

Let me throw out one thing about it. Is it incomparable in its status as a second witness? This is the heart of the Book of Mormon's status as a second witness for Christ, that you have a post-resurrection visitation of Christ in the New World. If the Book of Mormon is true, then the question of whether Christ really rose from the dead is settled. If the Book of Mormon account is true, then a whole host of questions about Jesus's status as Son of God, divine, so on and so forth, are settled by the account in 3 Nephi. So it has unusual status there; it is in that sense the heart of the Book of Mormon. There are other things I think could be said about it. I found Bob Rees's presentation in the previous session quite moving actually, in which he described the use of dramatic techniques in a way to frame the story of Christ's visit to the New World and the spectacular experience that these events must have been for those involved. What it reminded me of, I have to say, was near-death experiences—the darkness and the Being of light and the life-transformational aspect that's reported in so many cases from those experiences. That seems very much like the life-transformational aspect of that experience for a whole generation or two or three or four in the New World, quite spectacular there. My question to the panel would be, where do you think the incomparability resides? Is it true to say that 3 Nephi is an incomparable scripture, and if so, in what sense? Bob?

Robert L. Millet: I remember years ago one of the apostles saying that in order to get at the doctrine of Mormonism we need to get into the Book of Mormon more. I remember thinking, "Book of Mormon? No, you really want to go to the Doctrine and Covenants if you want to get to the doctrine." Third Nephi is just packed with doctrine, much more so than the canonical Gospels. There are

things that are clarified, expanded upon, built on, broadened, deepened in 3 Nephi about Christ, about his atoning sacrifice, about the nature of rebirth, about dozens of subjects that aren't spelled out so well in the New Testament. I think it's an incomparable doctrinal work on the ministry of Christ. Our beloved friend Bob Matthews used to say that the Bible will tell us *what* happened, but the Book of Mormon will say *why* it happened.

S. Kent Brown: One of the big clues lies in 3 Nephi 17 when we're told that there are some things that were beyond expression. This whole experience was in a way ineffable. Bob cited this earlier in his own presentation when he was talking about Jesus praying. The important passage lies in verses 16–17, where there's language about people being unable to express what they had just experienced. I've wondered, in fact, whether the entire passage was inscribed on a stela somewhere. It's such a striking piece to write. I wonder if it sat as a commemorative stela for two hundred years until somebody finally defaced it or whatever. In a way it sort of passes in the path that Bob Rees explored a bit, that is, trying to understand this whole experience in terms of the people who were there, what was it like. In a memorable way, it was beyond expression.

Grant Hardy: I hope people who have come to the conference haven't been disappointed, because clearly, from the presentations I heard, and I only heard half of them, 3 Nephi *is* comparable to other texts. That's sort of what we do. To try and understand it, we compare it to the New Testament, or we compare it to prophets from the Hebrew Bible and such. But maybe there's a sense in which that process, that mode of analysis, as important as it is, may not be the only one. As important as comparison is in literary studies, it doesn't exhaust the message of 3 Nephi. One other specific thing that might make it different, in fact, perhaps unique in terms of text, is that in none of the sessions that I went to did anyone actually get to the end of 3 Nephi, but something dramatic happens there. Jesus becomes not just the focus of his visitation to the Nephites just after his resurrection, but he actually enters into the writing process

as well because he stops Mormon and says, "No, don't write that. This is what I want you to write." And then in those last chapters Mormon says, "I'm going to now speak the words of God." Jesus is doubly present both as the subject and also as an editor, or maybe even a coauthor. And that seems like a really unusual thing to happen for an author. I wish that Mormon had told us more about this aspect. I'm a historian. It would be wonderful to write about something that happened four hundred years earlier and still have an eyewitness there that you could ask questions of to clarify this or that. So that makes it a very different piece of writing.

R. Dilworth Rust: While some of the language and phrasing in 3 Nephi is comparable to that found in other scriptures, to me the book is incomparable in its perfection or completion. Essentially all the major themes and concerns of the Book of Mormon culminate in 3 Nephi. The range of the book reminds me of how the resurrected Savior "did expound all things, even from the beginning until the time that he should come in his glory" (3 Nephi 26:3). Third Nephi begins with reference to Lehi's leaving Jerusalem and contains other markers of important events; the book illustrates extreme wickedness and great righteousness; it recounts the fulfilling of prophecies concerning Christ's birth, crucifixion, and appearance as a resurrected personage to the Nephites; it develops the doctrine of Christ; and it contains many prophecies applicable to the house of Israel and Gentiles in the last days. Most of all, it presents in perfection the main purpose of the Book of Mormon—which is to invite all to "come unto Christ, and be perfected in him" (Moroni 10:32).

John W. (Jack) Welch: Regarding incomparability, one can, of course, always compare something with something else, but in the end we compare partly to find the differences. We typically overlook a lot of the differences between the texts of the Sermon at the Temple in 3 Nephi and the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew; I mention some of these in my writings on this subject. In my view, we actually get a better text in 3 Nephi. It is an amazing book. I ask myself, could Joseph Smith have known about the daily sacrifice

offerings that Matthew Grey talked about this morning? Could Joseph Smith have known about the holy of holies and what goes on in the temple in ancient Israel? In an important way, 3 Nephi is incomparable in that it just couldn't have happened any other way than through revelation, and there's no other book like it that ever happened that way.

Now I come back to what Bob was saying about doctrinal things. Actually we've got a lot of different readings going on here, and Jesus, of course, is the centerpiece, as Grant says, of the whole Book of Mormon, but especially the book of 3 Nephi. A lot of Christians out there think, "Yes, well, Christ might have been resurrected, but he left his body behind when he ascended into heaven, and that's why we shouldn't believe that Jesus still has a physical body." But in 3 Nephi, Jesus appeared after his ascension. We know that because he says in 3 Nephi 15, "I now have taught you the things that I spoke before I ascended." Well, he still has his body when he said this, and that was *after* the ascension. We have a scripture that tells us that. Now that's incomparable, and there are a lot of things like that in 3 Nephi that we only get from 3 Nephi. Where in all of scripture is there a commandment that you should pray in your family? Only in 3 Nephi 18, and that's incomparable.

Millet: Obviously, we love all the scriptures within the standard works. Part of its incomparable nature to me is that it has a spirit about it that's not like any other book of scripture. For one who loves the Doctrine and Covenants or loves the Pearl of Great Price, like I do, or loves the New Testament, I have to say I feel a greater sense of holiness when I read the Book of Mormon. I don't know all the reasons why. For some reason it carries the Spirit differently than any other book of scripture. Maybe part of that is the very fact that we have a book addressed to the latter days, where the prophet doing the writing stops, pauses for a bit, and talks to us.

Welch: To follow up on Bob's point, might we suggest that that spirituality comes because of the immediacy of this record? When we read the Gospel of Luke, we suspect that Luke is writing after

the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, maybe as much as 40–50 years after Jesus's life. In that case, there's been time between the actual events and what he's telling us—and he's processing that to write to the Greeks in a certain way. But in the Book of Mormon we have the immediate words; they're coming right from Christ. Not only is Jesus talking directly to us as readers of this text, but we know he gave all of the Sermon on the Mount as a single text, something that no other Christian group can feel confident of. Most people feel that the Sermon on the Mount was a scrapbook put together in a random way later. But to me the immediacy of it brings me closer into a feeling of being in the presence of God. That's what spirituality is about, and that's incomparable.

Hardy: I was just going to say that sometimes we don't always notice the differences between the Bible and the Book of Mormon, because we like to think of them as being together. But one of the real differences is that in the narrative portions of the Hebrew Bible the narrators tend to be anonymous. They don't introduce themselves; they don't talk about why they're writing. Well, they seem like real people, but not people that you could have a conversation with. They don't tell us enough about themselves, whereas with the Book of Mormon narrators, we get to know them pretty well through the course of the book, and perhaps that makes it more immediate as well. It seems like it's told to us by someone who knows us.

Peterson: And you can actually feel, I think, different personalities. I mean, I have a very strong sense of who Mormon was because he makes comments all throughout.

Millet: Or Jacob's anxiety.

Welch: Or this Nephi who lived through all of those destructions that we've so graphically heard about. We sometimes forget that he's the one who reported all this. How joyous this whole experience in 3 Nephi must have been for him—what a relief.

Peterson: May I just make a comment responding to Bob about the personal power of the Book of Mormon? This comes from someone

else, but it just seems to me an anecdote that sort of fits: I have a person that I've been corresponding with for easily ten years now. He lives in a foreign country. I've had the opportunity to actually meet with him in his home. He's a former member of the church. He's very far out of the church now in terms of his lifestyle and so on and so forth. But the one thing he will tell you, and he's told other people, is the Book of Mormon haunts him; he can't get rid of it. He struggles with his testimony (he's a convert, then fell away—fell very, very far), but he bears a kind of odd testimony to the Book of Mormon that the book is just there all the time; he cannot get away from it. It's had more impact on his life than any other book he's ever read. He doesn't know whether he believes all of its claims, but he can't leave it alone, and that's a remarkable thing.

Millet: When I was a stake president, I had a very valuable experience. I had a young man that a bishop insisted see me, and the young man was bitter and angry, distant. He came in and said, "I have great sin in my life, serious sin, but I'm not going to tell you about it." He said: "So you can do with me as you choose, but . . ." We talked for a while. I tried to determine where he was in terms of what he believed. I just had this strong feeling. I said, "Well, you seem like a pretty bright guy that's used to challenges, but I'm not sure you're up to this one that I am thinking of."

And he said, "Well, what do you mean?"

I said, "Have you read the Book of Mormon?"

"Oh, I've read it several times."

I said, "Well, I want you to read it again, but this time I want you to read it in two weeks. And I want you to come back and see me, and then we'll talk about things and see how things . . ."

"Well, why are we doing that?"

"Oh," I said, "it's just a little experiment."

In two weeks that young man came back like a little puppy, dragging his tail behind and said to me, "I want to talk to you first about my sins, and then I want to talk about getting my life right."

Now, that's pretty good therapy, is it not? There's something within the Book of Mormon that is remarkably conducive to conversion and conviction.

Brown: I want to say something about text. Jack brought up the topic and some others touched on it, plus Grant said something about an "eyewitness" as one's coach. Jesus himself is the text because he bears in his body the proof of the atonement. And his body, of course, is the first thing he allows people access to—to touch the scars in his hands and his feet and his side. But when one thinks about ancient texts, one thinks about texts that are inscribed on stone, clay tablets, metal, wood, eventually papyri, which is a softer, more perishable material. Each one of those kinds of surfaces can be destroyed, but the resurrected, glorified body of Jesus cannot. And it bears, as it were, witness of itself, and it carries, in its own way, the text of his suffering and death and resurrection. In a concrete way, the immediate and eternal text is the Risen Jesus, bearing in his body marks that will never go away.

Welch: I'd like to think, and I hope everyone here will be thinking, "What do I owe to 3 Nephi? What do I have that I wouldn't have if I didn't have this book?" Kent, your mentioning of reading this text as a text of the body of Jesus reminds me that without 3 Nephi we would not fully have that experiential text. When I go to the temple, I think of that as being my trip this month or week to Bountiful; what I experience at the temple is my opportunity to come as close as I can to what happened in 3 Nephi. Likewise, when I partake of the sacrament, I like to remember that the sacrament prayers that we offer every Sunday don't come initially from D&C 20, but from Moroni, chapters 4 and 5. And where do the words in Moroni 4 and 5 come from? Compare those words with 3 Nephi 18. The words in our sacrament prayers are a transformed version of Jesus's first- and second-person language recast as a third-person text. So we celebrate the sacrament, not only of the Lord's supper, but also of the Lord's appearance in 3 Nephi. And when we partake of the bread, we should remember that we eat not only in

remembrance of the body that has been broken for us—that's the New Testament language. What does it say in 3 Nephi? "This ye shall do in remembrance of the body which I have *shown* unto you." That is, in remembrance of the physical, tangible body that, to use Kent's expression, they were able to "read." And to me, I wouldn't have that if I didn't have 3 Nephi. Every Sunday I rejoice in that.

Rust: I appreciate what Jack Welch has just taught me. It reminds me of what I learned from him about chiasmus when he was a law student at Duke University in the early 1970s, and I was a member of the bishopric in the ward that he and Jeannie attended.

And now, this whole program has been a learning experience. I'm grateful for what's been put together, and I am moved by the interconnectedness of what has transpired. After the session in which Bob Millet, Matt Grey, and I spoke, someone asked me if we had collaborated. We hadn't, but we did serve as three witnesses testifying to the power, beauty, and truthfulness of 3 Nephi. The other papers as well were part of the web that is 3 Nephi, and they resonated or connected with each other. And since *how* something is said is essential to the effective communication of *what* is said, I appreciated Vic Ludlow's revealing the perfect and beautiful chiastic structure of the third sermon of the Savior. Likewise, I appreciated Bob Rees's speaking out of his soul as he poetically projected himself into the lives of the children in 3 Nephi.

Hardy: Let me just add something: Jack has talked about feeling similar experiences when he goes to the temple. One of my favorite biblical scholars is E. P. Sanders. He wrote a book about Paul and disagreed a bit with Paul's occasional dismissals of biblical ways of studying the scriptures. Sanders says that study and prayer and temple service bring Israelites into the presence of God, and then he says this: "To study the Torah is to be in the presence of the God who gave it."[3] And I think that's what 3 Nephi is like. To read 3 Nephi and to hear those direct quotations of the Savior is to put

3. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (London: SCM Press, 1977), 222.

yourself there in Bountiful at the temple. To study 3 Nephi is to be in the presence of the God who gave it, and that may make it incomparable.

Peterson: Well, there's the phrase that Nephi uses about likening the scriptures unto ourselves [1 Nephi 19:23]. The point is you're not reading about just old dead events—you should see yourself as a participant in this story. There's a phrase (and I don't know if Nibley ever actually wrote it or if I just heard it from him offhand—it just swims across my mind right now; maybe it's not even Nibley) talking about the scriptures as the field notes of the priesthood,[4] notes of people who went before but who had the same experience in some sense that we are having now. And so I can feel myself in solidarity with them across time and across space and across differences of culture. But also, I'm entering into the experiences that they had. You know, on one level you can study the scriptures as you would study homework or you could study any significant text—but on another level we enter into them more deeply, existentially in a way, than into any other text, and it's God speaking to us. He can speak to us through them.

Millet: I was thinking of the unusual statement in the 84th section of the Doctrine and Covenants that President Benson was so fond of quoting, concerning the condemnation that rested upon the church because of our near neglect of the Book of Mormon and modern revelation. He says, "They shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say, but to do according to that which I have written" [D&C 84:57]. Now, it hit me one day as I was reading this that there was a deeper meaning. The Book of Mormon, and maybe particularly 3 Nephi, is not just something to read and study, it is something to be *lived*. And until you engage the Book of Mormon, or I should say the Book of Mormon engages you, it's still a book.

4. The editors have been unable to find a reference for this remembered comment.

The Book of Mormon is not a book about religion. The Book of Mormon *is* religion. Does that make sense?

Welch: And in the concluding parable [in 3 Nephi 14:24-27] of the man who builds his house upon *the* rock, Jesus says, "I will liken the person who hears and *does* these words." The doing is important here. And it's not just following the specific instructions, but, as you were saying, Bob, it's ultimately about learning from Jesus by following what he did. How did he pray? In this text we can watch what he did. He's the pattern. He's the exemplar. And so he doesn't have to spell out to us, "You should always thank the Lord." Instead, it says, "And he [Jesus] prayed and thanked the Lord." And we say, "We ought to do that too." Or back to my point about the sacrament: as a bishop I thought, "You know, it would be a lot easier if we had the Relief Society bring the bread for the sacrament, instead of the teachers."

Hardy: And more reliable too.

Welch: Yes, how many times have you waited while a teachers quorum adviser had to go home and get some bread? Well, reading 3 Nephi 18, the practical doing of this text struck me because Jesus sends the twelve disciples that he's called to go and get some bread. That's why it's a priesthood responsibility, because we do what Jesus did. He didn't say to the women (and they were there), "Go get some bread." Better than the disciples, they would have known where the bread was. The essence of 3 Nephi is practical, so much so that I would say that this book is not just a collection of field notes, but in a lot of ways, 3 Nephi can be called the first Melchizedek Priesthood handbook of this dispensation.

Peterson: Right. Right. Which reminds me, by the way, of an experience that a friend of mine told me about, who had recently been called, much to his shock, to be a General Authority. He was junior by a decade or two to just about everybody else in his quorum and was looking around wondering what he was doing there, but he said one of the things he learned immediately—I was talking with

him about what it was like and what his impressions were in that service—and he said one of the things that struck him was how seriously the Brethren were trying to live according to the scriptures. He said, "We would have discussions, sometimes about very difficult issues, and we'd go back and forth and back and forth." And the people who had been called to these positions often had been called, not because they had weak personalities or had no experience and no opinions, but precisely because they were the kind of people on one level at least who did. So he said the discussion would go back and forth until finally someone would say, "Well, actually, here's a passage that seems relevant." He would read a passage and everyone would say, "Okay, that settles it. Next topic." And he said time and again he noticed that, and that really impressed him deeply—that there was a serious effort made to be disciples to the teachings of the Lord as contained in the scriptures. Clearly relevant scriptures settled the question. We still have a little bit of time. We've gone beyond some of the recommended closing times, and so I wondered if we had questions from the floor, issues that people would like to hear addressed by these people who are up on the stand.

Audience member: *Speaking a bit more of the incomparability, it seems to me that what's so unique about 3 Nephi is that in it we've got this climactic moment with the Savior, but there is also an anticlimactic sense as he points away from himself to the importance of the covenant.*

Hardy: It does seem like we would expect that 3 Nephi would be all about the Savior, and he certainly plays a major role there, but it is striking that Jesus points away from himself to some extent. He claims that he's a prophet. And he says, "I'm the one that Moses prophesied of" [3 Nephi 20:23]—which is a little surprising because isn't being God better than a prophet? But he takes that role and then another as well. He seems to point to himself as the messenger of the covenant that Malachi spoke of. Jesus talks about the covenant, and he talks a lot about the Father. By so doing, he points beyond himself to a wider perspective. It's not all about him; he

explains how he fits into the Father's plans and the historical covenants made with Israel.

Millet: His is a constant deference to the Father in 3 Nephi, so much so that he's saying things like, "The Father made covenants with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." Well, that was Jehovah—him. "The Father gave these words to Malachi." Well, that was Jehovah.

Welch: Speaking of the broader picture, the Doctrine and Covenants tells us that "truth is knowledge of things as they are, as they were, and as they are to come" [D&C 93:24]—past, present, and future. In 3 Nephi we have all three of those. We have the past prophecies, we have the present fulfillment and the presence of God, and we have the concern about what's going to happen in the future. No other book of scripture that I know of has that totality and gives you the whole picture in quite this way. I mentioned last night in my plenary address the idea of having the puzzle picture on the box. Try to put a puzzle together without the picture; it's hard to know where the pieces fit. I think 3 Nephi gives us the totality. It's here that we see the whole picture of the Father's plan from the beginning, from the covenant with Abraham and the house of Israel on through to the ultimate building of the New Jerusalem.

Audience member: *One of the things that we didn't talk about is how the Savior leaves. There's no dramatic moment when he leaves. These people don't ever seem to lament the fact that he's gone. Is it because the Holy Ghost is so strong with them? Is it because, as we were talking about, the recollection of memory that he left with them that they could pass on through generations? It's almost like it is saying that you don't need me here anymore, personally. You have everything that you need to carry on. And they do.*

Welch: Let me suggest that Mormon wouldn't want to have closure on the visits of Jesus, because he himself saw the Savior, so the Savior hasn't really left. In Mormon's view [Mormon 1:15], Jesus is still with the people, and with him.

Millet: And I was just thinking of 3 Nephi 26. Mormon writes, "I would that ye should behold that the Lord truly did teach the people, for the space of three days." That's the part we pay attention to. "And after that he did show himself unto them oft, and did break bread oft, and bless it, and give it unto them" [v. 13]. Maybe we don't have a grand closure because there isn't one. Maybe he continues to visit them periodically in the weeks, months, and years thereafter.

Rust: I assume that in the ensuing two hundred years, Nephite saints were able to read or hear many of the words of Christ. Because of the extensive quotations from the Savior in 3 Nephi, Christ continues to be present with us today. Starting with the voice detailing the destruction of various cities, "Jesus Christ the Son of God" [3 Nephi 9:15] speaks directly throughout much of what subsequently transpires in 3 Nephi. The book of 3 Nephi ends with the words of Jesus Christ that Mormon was commanded to give to latter-day Gentiles. Mormon forcefully declares: "Hearken, O ye Gentiles, and hear the words of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God" [3 Nephi 30:1]. We continue to find the words of Christ directed to Moroni in the books of Ether and Moroni. All of this reminds us of Nephi's counsel found in 2 Nephi to feast upon the words of Christ.

Hardy: So by the end of the book we don't need Jesus himself to give us the words of Christ. Mormon is now giving us the words of Christ. It's still continuing.

Audience member: *You mentioned the word* covenant. *The second paragraph in the title page says that the Book of Mormon is so that we can remember our covenants. Brother Millet said something so wonderful. We actually engage in our religion. We go to the temple ourselves. No people have ever done that since the Old Testament days, and then it was just priests. Can you assist us in buoying us up that we can actually go to the temple and we raise our hands to these wonderful covenants and we're engaged in this wonderful work?*

Millet: I'm asked constantly as I'm dealing with people of other faiths, "Why are you people so big on Jesus now, when you weren't

twenty-five years ago? Is this a PR thing?" Beginning in the 70s, we began a correlated program of scripture study as a church, and thus our members are more scripturally literate now than they were. But I would have to say that the greatest contributor to where we are now in terms of our sensing our own Christianity has to be the ministry of Ezra Taft Benson and the emphasis upon the Book of Mormon. You can't go through nine years and all the sermons he delivered, pounding on the need for the Book of Mormon, without the Saints getting into it and discovering (a) our own fallen nature; (b) that we must be born again; (c) that we must trust in and rely upon the merits, mercy, and grace of Jesus Christ; and (d) that we can have a forestaste of eternal life, a deep abiding peace [D&C 59:23].

I thought it odd that President Hinckley should ask us, out of nowhere, just to reread the Book of Mormon.[5] Didn't you feel that way? Clearly to me, it was revealed to him that the Saints needed the illumination and fortification that comes to an individual and to an entire church when we immerse ourselves in the Book of Mormon. The more you and I immerse ourselves in scripture, then the language and the logic and the power of the book equips us to become the people that are described here. The Book of Mormon isn't just a lesson manual saying, "Here's how you get born again." In the Book of Mormon are prophets reaching out to me and saying, "Bob, I invite you to experience what I've experienced. I invite you to be changed like I've been changed. And you can do it! I invite you one day to live worthy of seeing the face of the Lord." I think that's why immersion in the scripture, particularly this scripture, makes people whole and makes them holy. Studying is one thing. Living in them, letting them remake you, that's another thing entirely.

Hardy: But the emphasis on covenants is important because it's not just a—and I don't want to mischaracterize here—but it's not a Protestant idea of it's just you and Jesus alone. As taught in the Book of Mormon, we make covenants as communities, and 3 Nephi talks all

5. Gordon B. Hinckley, "A Testimony Vibrant and True," *Ensign*, August 2005, 5-6.

about the covenant with the house of Israel, what that means in the new age, and how that applies to Gentiles in the latter days.

Millet: I keep looking back to a key verse in 4 Nephi: "They were all converted unto Christ" [4 Nephi 1:2]. It didn't say they were converted to the church, though they certainly were, but they were converted to Christ. The Spirit of the Lord expands your horizons, and you automatically become a person of community because while salvation comes to individuals, a true Christian community is made up of people who love to be with others of like faith.

Welch: Remember also that the goal of the gospel, as Joseph Smith taught it, is to give us the fulness. One should not focus on any one part of the gospel to the exclusion of any other of its parts, whether it's covenant or Christ or whatever. It's the totality of it, the wholeness that gives us the opportunity to stand before the Lord with confidence. If there's one touchstone in the Book of Mormon, I think one thing that affected Joseph Smith more than anything else as he finished translating the Book of Mormon was the overwhelming feeling to cry nothing but repentance unto this people. That theme is a very strong Book of Mormon theme as well. So we believe in Christ, we make our covenants, we promise that we will keep the commandments, and when we don't, we repent, et cetera, and it's the whole program, the whole plan that keeps us on the right path.

Peterson: We have time for one last comment.

Audience member: *When Jesus came he had the people touch him, not just see the wounds but to touch them, to feel them, and that always struck me as different from the story of Thomas, when some people think that Thomas was sort of chastised for wanting evidence. So, as a Lutheran reading the New Testament about Thomas and then as a Latter-day Saint reading about Jesus inviting the people to come one by one and touch him, I want to know why that is. I want to know what makes that different. I want to understand the comparison and contrast there. It made me see Thomas's request differently, rather than to judge Thomas as not having*

enough faith. So I'm interested in knowing what it is about Christ inviting people to come forward and actually touch him, whereas we are used to seeing him touching them to heal them.

Millet: In a very real sense, what we have in the Book of Mormon is 2,500 apostles with a small "a." If anything, the Book of Mormon is an invitation to live for the day when we can have a similar experience. You'll remember that when the apostles were first called in this dispensation and Oliver Cowdery delivered the charge to them, his charge was "Never cease striving until you [have seen God face to face. . . . Your ordination is not full and complete till God has laid] His hand upon you."[6] Elder McConkie, in writing about that, said that while that's the responsibility of the Twelve, it's the opportunity of all the church.[7] I read chapter 11 of 3 Nephi and I find myself longing for a like experience. I asked a class, "What are the Nephites feeling at this moment, and what are you feeling?" A wonderful young lady said, "Maybe there's someone who's feeling like I think I would feel."

I said, "How would you feel?"

She said: "I think I would feel, 'I've been hearing this all my life. It's true! It's true! He really is!'" And so in many ways it's the climax experience. Maybe it's in some way symbolic of what each of us hopes to attain unto one day, something similar to what Elder McConkie said: he anticipated the day when he could feel the nail marks in his hands and his feet.[8]

Welch: In both cases, with Thomas in John 20 and also here in 3 Nephi, the invitation to come forward and touch the resurrected body was a gift of the Lord. It's his grace, his gift, that says, "I will show myself to Thomas. I will let people touch" [see also his experience with the ten disciples in Luke 24]. I think these two cases are more similar than dissimilar.

---

6. Oliver Cowdery, in *History of the Church*, 2:195-96.

7. Bruce R. McConkie, *Promised Messiah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 592-95.

8. Bruce R. McConkie, "The Purifying Power of Gethsemane" *Ensign,* May 1985, 11.

Okay, since the time is gone, let's wind up, and since I had the first word last night at the beginning of this conference, and since I believe in chiasms, I would like to take a final moment. I want to thank all of you once again for being here and all of the people who have presented. What a wonderful conference! It has really exceeded my expectations. My gratitude for 3 Nephi has always been high, but it has never been higher than today. What richness we have enjoyed in all types of interpretations and readings, but most of all, feeling the Spirit and knowing that this is true, that it is really the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, that we have records that we can read that bring us intimately and immediately into the knowledge of the truth of this and how the Book of Mormon can be our own spiritual tutor to teach us, to lead us from wherever we are, step by step, to where the Lord would ultimately like us to be. I know this is true, and I think I echo the testimonies of all of us on the panel and all of you as we testify that these things are true. What a pleasure it is to be able to testify of this in the name of the Savior who appeared. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Peterson: Amen. Thank you to the panelists. Thank you to everyone.

Index

Abrahamic covenant
  in Christ's Law and Covenant Discourse, 155
  promises of, 153–55
Against Praxeas, 194
Alter, Robert, on Bible, 237–38, 250
Anderson, Richard Lloyd, on baptism and sacrament, 350–51
Antioch, Theophilos of, 194
Apology to Autolycus, 194
apostasy, meaning of term, 68
Aristotle, on tragedy, 322–23
Athanasian Creed, 196

Bach, Johann Sebastian, 368
B Minor Mass, 368
Benson, Ezra Taft, on Book of Mormon, 383, 388
Book of Mormon, the
  as "great and marvelous work," 186
  as marred servant in 3 Nephi and Isaiah, 184, 186–90
  as sign of final gathering, 187–89
  converting power of, 380–81, 388
  fasting and prayer in, 281–82
  incomparability of, 373–91
  Joseph Smith on, 32–33
  Mark Twain on, 187
  modalism in, 199–233
  Neal A. Maxwell on, 33
  New Testament compared to, 236–58, 346–51, 375–76
  patterns of peace in, 309–28
  reference to seasons in, 311
  M. T. Lamb on, 187
  Zion in, 277–78
book of remembrance, 268–69, 273, 279
"broken heart and contrite spirit"
  Bruce D. Porter on, 56
  Bruce R. McConkie on, 52
  compared to law of sacrifice, 41–43
  early appearances in scripture of phrase, 43–48
  idolatry as obstacle to gaining, 53–54 (*see also* idolatry)
  Jeffrey R. Holland on, 48
  linguistic analysis of phrase, 49–51
  meaning of, in 3 Nephi, 48–49
  questions on meaning of, 37–40
  significance of flesh and, 55
Brown, S. Kent, on sacrament in 3 Nephi, 341–42

Charles, Melodie Moench, on modalism in Book of Mormon, 201–3

chiasmus
  as musical version of 3 Nephi, 368
  Father's Covenant People Sermon organized as, 148, 157, 166, 185
Christ, Jesus. *See* Jesus Christ
Council of Nicaea, 194
covenants
  importance of, in Father's Covenant People Sermon, 150
  Jesus Christ's teachings about, 152–56
  $Nephi_1$'s teachings about, 151–52
  of Abraham (*see* Abrahamic covenant)
Cowdery, Oliver, on diligence, 390
creation narrative
  concepts outlined in, 76–77
  influence of, in exodus narrative, 77–78
  role of, in culture, 75–77
cross
  and sacrament, 295–96
  significance of, 291–96
cultural narratives. *See* narratives

darkness
  as archetype of world, 310
  as part of Alma's conversion, 91
  as part of Lehi's dream, 82, 92–95
  at time of creation, 76
  at time of Jesus Christ's appearance in Bountiful, 23, 97, 101, 313–16
  Mormon lived in time of spiritual, 128–29
  $Nephi_1$ foresees, and destruction, 312–13
  second coming of Jesus Christ likened to, 265
  voice of Jesus Christ heard through, 5, 36, 60, 153, 316
  wickedness likened to, 4–6, 322
Day of Atonement, 28, 119
debir, 4
Dobszay, László, on music and order, 354
Dome of the Rock, 5
Draper, Richard, on Malachi in 3 Nephi, 272
dream narrative, 79, 89–96

Elohim, 160
Estés, Clarissa Pinkola, on psyche, 360
exodus narrative
  compared to Nephite narrative, 79–80, 93
  influence of creation narrative in, 77–78
  restoration theme in, 79

Father's Covenant People Sermon
  as chiasmus, 157, 172
  important questions about, 148–49
  key words in, 149–50
  teachings of, 157–72
  See also covenants
Forsberg, Clyde, on modalism in Book of Mormon, 203–4
Four Gospels, Book of Mormon compared to, 236–58
Friedman, Richard Elliott, on meaning of creation, 366–67

God
  battle between, and chaos, 76–77, 84
  Church of, 2
  Elohim, 160
  Holy of Holies as dwelling place of, 10, 17, 22, 29, 277

importance of, in Sermon on the Mount, 15–16
meaning of phrase *love of*, 114
nature of, according to Book of Mormon, 204–33
nature of, according to Joseph Smith, 192
nature of, according to modalism, 194–98, 199–203
nature of, according to trinitarianism, 198–99
our potential to become like, 67
word of, 94–96, 102, 301, 347
Godhead
in 3 Nephi, 207–12
Jeffrey R. Holland on, 132–33
Joseph Smith on, 191–92
nature of, 134
nature of, according to modalism, 194–98, 199–200
nature of, according to trinitarianism, 198–99
Parley P. Pratt on, 145
See also modalism; trinitarianism
gospel
analysis of phrase *my*, 281, 283–86, 306
and God's will, 288–92
and significance of the cross, 291–96
Bruce R. McConkie on, 290, 306–7
linguistic considerations of the term, 283–88
guarantor, meaning of, 125

Harnack, Adolf von, on modalism, 194–95
Havel, Václav, on music and plays, 355
Hedges, Chris, on war, 324–25
hekal, 3, 10, 17
hen metaphor
accountability as theme in, 70–73
agency as theme in, 69–70
analysis of components and symbolism in, 62–66
appearances in scripture of, 61–62
covenants as theme in, 68–69
inclusion of house of Israel in, 67–68
reasons for Christ's use of, in New World, 59–61
Herodotus, on proskynesis, 107–8
high priest
and Holy of Holies, 16–17, 19, 21, 28–30, 271–72
calling of new, in Temple of Jerusalem, 8
Jesus Christ as eternal, 4, 33
$Nephi_3$ as, 2–6
High Priestly Prayer, 22, 146, 282
Hinckley, Gordon B.
members asked by, to read Book of Mormon, 388
on atonement, 292
on war, 317
prayer in general conference by, 138–39
Holland, Jeffrey R.
on baptism, 334
on "broken heart and contrite spirit," 48
on Godhead, 132–33
on obedience, 296
Holy of Holies
and stone of cosmos, 6
as day one of creation, 22
as dwelling place of God, 10, 17, 22, 29, 277
in 3 Nephi, 16–31
Isaiah's vision inside, 19

symbolic aspects of, 17–31

iʿjāz, 374
idolatry
as obstacle to gaining "broken heart and contrite spirit," 53–54
Edward Meadors on, 53
Spencer W. Kimball on, 54

Jackson, Kent P., on higher law in Malachi and 3 Nephi, 274
Jesus Christ
accounts of, in New Testament vs. Book of Mormon, 236–58
and the cross, 291–96
and fulness of the Spirit, 131
appearance of, at Bountiful, 6–8
as eternal High Priest, 4, 33
as Giver of the Law, 25
as God-who-is-now-Man, 235
as Jehovah, 2, 21, 25, 43, 64, 160, 223
as Man-who-is-now-God, 235–36
as marred servant, 180, 183
as messenger of the covenant, 263–64
as "motherly father," 65
as prototype of salvation, 140
as source of peace, 327
as Sun/Son of righteousness, 266
A. W. Tozer on cross of, 294
B. H. Roberts on suffering of, 292
kissing the feet of, 127
Krister Stendahl on role of, in 3 Nephi, 236–37
light and darkness at coming of, 313–16
Martin S. Tanner on role of, in 3 Nephi, 236
Neal A. Maxwell on suffering of, 304
Richard Mouw on suffering of, 296
role of, in Godhead, 144–46, 191–232
role of, in hen metaphor, 62–67
use of metaphor by, in teaching, 58–59
justification and sanctification, 300–304

Kimball, Spencer W., on idolatry, 54
Kodály, Zoltán, 367

Law and Covenant Discourse, the, 155
law of Moses
fulfillment of, 36–38, 40, 153–54, 369
in Nephite era, 3–4, 37, 153–54, 274, 332
law of sacrifice compared to "broken heart and contrite spirit," 41–43
Lehi's dream
as narrative, 80, 88
compared to exodus narrative, 89
correlation of sequences in, 81
influence of, throughout Book of Mormon, 89–96
scenes from Christ's theophany compared to, 97–106
symbolism of scenes in, 82–88
proskynesis in, 112–16

MacArthur, John, on justification and sanctification, 302–3
Malachi
and 3 Nephi, 262
and Zion, 262–63, 276
background and propheices of, 261–62
book of remembrance in, 27–28, 263, 268–70

interpretations of teachings in, 263–76
Kent P. Jackson on higher law in, 274
Richard Draper on, in 3 Nephi, 272
Maxwell, Neal A.
on Book of Mormon, 33
on Christ's suffering, 304
McConkie, Bruce R.
on baptism, 333
on "broken heart and contrite spirit," 52
on Christ as symbol of the Father, 141
on Christ's second coming, 264
on gathering of Israel, 277–78
on gospel and atonement, 306–7
on judgment, 299
on salvation, 290
McConkie, Joseph Fielding, on sacrament in 3 Nephi, 342
McKay, David O., on spirituality, 144
Meadors, Edward, on idolatry, 53
Mendelsohn, Daniel, on Genesis, 365–66
metaphor
Christ's use of, in teaching, 58–59
definition of, 58
of broken heart, 56
of hen (*see* hen metaphor)
Richard D. Rust on use of, in Book of Mormon, 59
Millard, David, on trinity, 196
Missa Brevis, 367
Mitchell, Stephen, on messianic dream of peace, 327
modalism
Adolf von Harnack on, 194–95
and controversy at Council of Nicaea, 194–95
chronological, 194
concept of, 194
David Millard and, 196
functional, 197
in Book of Mormon, 199–233
in early Christianity, 194–98
Joseph Smith and, 196, 198–97
Kurt Widmer on Mormon, 193, 200
Mormonism and the Nature of God: A Theological Evolution, 1830–1915, 192–93
Mormonism, Seymour Young on, 309
mountain/mount
meaning of, in Sermon on the Mount, 9
significance of, in temple, 9–11
Mouw, Richard, on Christ's suffering, 296
music
and psyche, 365–67
form of, and 3 Nephi, 367–71
form of, and scripture, 359–65
László Dobszay on, and order, 354
principal components of, 357–59

narratives
Israel's exodus, 77–79
Lehi's dream, 79–106
the creation, 75–77
Nephite experience, the
as narrative, 80
compared to exodus narrative, 79
Neuhaus, Richard John, on salvation, 136
New Testament, Book of Mormon compared to, 236–58, 346–51, 375–76

Nibley, Hugh
on Nephite warfare, 312
on proskynesis in Book of Mormon, 108–9, 117–18
on term *renounce*, 324
Nicaea, Council of, 194

Pascal, Blaise, on state of man, 297
peace
Joseph F. Smith on, 324
Lorenzo Snow on, in Book of Mormon, 325
Orson F. Whitney on, in Americas, 321
Stephen Mitchell on messianic dream of, 327
Porter, Bruce D., on metaphor of "broken heart," 56
Pratt, Parley P., on Godhead, 145
prayer
exemplified by Jesus Christ, 135–46
Intercessory, of Jesus Christ, 146, 239, 245–46, 283
in the Spirit, 142
lessons on, in 3 Nephi, 133–35, 239–43
words of Jesus Christ's, not written, 29, 240–43, 344–45
proskynesis
and King Benjamin's speech, 117–20
and King Lamoni's father, 120–23
definition of, 107
Herodotus on, 107–8
Hugh Nibley on, in Book of Mormon, 108–9, 117–18
in 3 Nephi, 107, 124–25, 128–29
in Lehi's dream, 112–16
linguistic considerations of the term, 109–12
of $Nephi_3$, 127
psyche
Clarissa Pinkola Estés on, 360
music and, 365–67
psychopomp, 83

Roberts, B. H., on Christ's suffering, 292
Rust, Richard D., on use of metaphor in Book of Mormon, 59

Sabellius, 194–95
sacrament, importance of, 295–96, 340–43, 350–51
salvation
Bruce R. McConkie on, 290
complete, or exaltation, 302
Richard John Neuhaus on, 136
ordinances of, in 3 Nephi, 261, 281, 300, 332–43
process of, 318
Richard G. Scott on ordinances of, 333
sanctification, justification and, 300–304
Satan
appearences of the name, in 3 Nephi, 4
cast out from Bountiful, 6
power in temple to overcome, 33
role of, in hen metaphor, 65
Scott, Richard G., on ordinances, 333
Sermon on the Mount
correlation between the temple and, 8–16
linguistic analysis of, 12–16
significance of mount in, 9–11
servant songs in Book of Mormon, 177–81
Shema, 114

Shetiyyah stone, 6
Skousen, Royal, on Joseph Smith's editing of Book of Mormon, 230–31
Smith, Joseph
  as marred servant in 3 Nephi and Isaiah, 160–61, 165, 167, 179–80, 183
  as modalist, 196, 198–97, 228
  criticized for quoting Bible in Book of Mormon, 175
  on Book of Mormon, 32–33
  on book of rememberance, 279
  on Christ's visit to Americas, 273
  on fulness of the Spirit, 132
  on Godhead, 191–92
  on Malachi, 271, 278
  on Zion, 276
Smith, Joseph F., on peace, 324
Snow, Lorenzo, on peace in Book of Mormon, 325
Stendahl, Krister, on role of Christ in 3 Nephi, 236–37
Swedenborg, Emanuel, as influence on Joseph Smith, 197, 202

Tanner, Martin S., on role of Christ in 3 Nephi, 236
Taylor, John, on purity in Zion, 276
Theophilos of Antioch, 194
Thomasson, Gordon C., on seasons in Book of Mormon, 311
Tozer, A. W., on cross of Christ, 294
tree of life. *See* Lehi's dream
trinity
  and Greek literature, 194
  and Latin literature, 194
  Book of Mormon teachings of, 204–6
  David Millard on, 196
  See also Godhead
trinitarianism, 198–99
Turner, Frederick, on theme of universe, 353–54
Twain, Mark, on Book of Mormon, 175, 187

Vogel, Dan, on modalism in Book of Mormon, 200–201

war
  Chris Hedges on, 324–25
  Gordon B. Hinckley on, 317
Whitney, Orson F., on peace in Americas, 321
Widmer, Kurt, on Mormon modalism, 193, 200, 228, 231
Woodruff, Paul, on drama, 310
worship
  definition of, 109
  linguistic considerations of term, in scripture, 109–12

Young, Seymour B., on Mormonism, 309

Zion
  and the temple, 8, 32, 343–46
  concept of, in Book of Mormon, 277–78
  concept of, in Malachi, 262–63, 276
  importance of purity in, 336–39
  in Book of Mormon vs. New Testament, 346–51
  John Taylor on purity in, 276
  Joseph Smith on, 276
  Lord's promise of, in America, 158–59
  pattern for establishment of, 330–31