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Author(s) Daniel C. Peterson

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Abstract This article portrays the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as a restoration of ancient Christianity and explains why Mormonism is not simply a generic sect.

MORMONISM AS A RESTORATION

Daniel C. Peterson

In his 1996 book on *The Rise of Christianity*, the noted sociologist Rodney Stark repeatedly uses the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as a model for understanding the growth of the early Christian movement.¹ The church, he has written elsewhere, represents “that

Frequent reference will be made in what follows to several surveys, including Noel B. Reynolds, ed., *Book of Mormon Authorship: New Light on Ancient Origins* [hereafter *Authorship*] (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1982); John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne, eds., *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon* [hereafter *Rediscovering*] (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991); John W. Welch, ed., *Reexploring the Book of Mormon* [hereafter *Reexploring*] (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992); Noel B. Reynolds, ed., *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited: The Evidence for Ancient Origins* [hereafter *Authorship Revisited*] (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1997); John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne, eds., *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon: The FARMS Updates of the 1990s* [hereafter *Pressing Forward*] (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999); Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and John W. Welch, eds., *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon* [hereafter *Echoes and Evidences*] (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2002); also the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*. The acronym FARMS refers to Brigham Young University’s Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, now a part of the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship; *Insights* is the Foundation’s newsletter. The essays I cite should not be regarded as an exhaustive list of books and articles contending for the truth of Latter-day Saint claims. At most, it constitutes a representative sample of certain strands of argument. The relevant literature is, by now, considerable. And, virtually without exception, each cited reference here offers further primary data and bibliographical hints for continued pursuit of the topics mentioned.

1. Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

incredibly rare event: the rise of a new world religion”; the Latter-day Saints “stand on the threshold of becoming the first major faith to appear on earth since the Prophet Mohammed rode out of the desert.”² Early in the twentieth century, the famous historian of antiquity Eduard Meyer took a year’s leave from the University of Berlin to study the Latter-day Saints in Utah. “Mormonism . . . is not just another of countless sects,” he concluded, “but a new revealed religion. What in the study of other revealed religions can only be surmised after painful research is here directly accessible in reliable witnesses. Hence the origin and history of Mormonism possess great and unusual value for the student of religious history.”³

Such comments do not surprise Latter-day Saints. From the beginning, they have understood their church and the doctrines it teaches as restorations of ancient originals, and most specifically of a Hebraic Christianity as yet largely untouched by Greek philosophy. “Mormonism, a nickname for the real religion of the Latter-day Saints, does not profess to be a new thing,” said Lorenzo Snow, the fifth prophet-president of the church, at the dawn of the twentieth century,

except to this generation. It proclaims itself as the original plan of salvation, instituted in the heavens before the world was, and revealed from God to man in different ages. That Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and other ancient worthies had this religion successively, in a series of dispensations, we, as a people, verily believe. To us, the gospel taught by the Redeemer in the meridian of time was a restored gospel, of which, however, He was the author, in His pre-existent state. Mormonism, in short, is the primitive Christian faith restored, the ancient

2. Rodney Stark, “The Rise of a New World Faith,” *Review of Religious Research* 26/1 (September 1984): 18–27, at 18, 19. Compare Rodney Stark, “Modernization and Mormon Growth: The Secularization Thesis Revisited,” in *Contemporary Mormonism: Social Science Perspectives*, ed. Marie Cornwall, Tim B. Heaton, and Lawrence A. Young (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 13–23.

3. Eduard Meyer, *Ursprung und Geschichte der Mormonen* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1912), 2. For a critical evaluation of Meyer’s work on the Latter-day Saints, see James K. Lyon, “Mormonism and Islam through the Eyes of a ‘Universal Historian,’” *BYU Studies* 40/4 (2001): 221–36.

gospel brought back again—this time to usher in the last dispensation, introduce the Millennium, and wind up the work of redemption as pertaining to this planet.⁴

During their trek to the West, Latter-day Saints were the Camp of Israel, led by an American Moses, Brigham Young.⁵ The initial pioneer companies crossed the Mississippi without getting their feet wet, aided by an ice bridge that seemed to them like the “dry ground through the midst of the sea” that enabled the Israelites to escape the armies of pharaoh.⁶ Many later recalled miraculous supplies of quail and of a substance called “honeydew,” reminiscent of the biblical “manna,” that, as in the story of ancient Israel’s exodus, saved them from starvation (see Exodus 16). The Great Basin is studded with Old Testament place names such as Enoch, Ammon, Manassa, Moab, Ephraim, Ophir, Goshen, Mount Nebo, Samaria, and Zion, names reflecting that self-understanding. Temples and tabernacles ornament their landscape. Prophets, seers, apostles, deacons, priests, bishops, and patriarchs, apportioned between two orders of priesthood named after the Old Testament figures Aaron and Melchizedek, are among their ordained officers.⁷ When they found a river draining from a freshwater lake into a huge body of saltwater, they naturally called it the Jordan. In the view of those who led it and participated in it, the Mormon settling of the Intermountain West—by an influx of English,

4. *The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1984), 100. Compare Joseph Smith’s remark in *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1972), 59–61, and Brigham Young’s comments in *Journal of Discourses*, 5:229, 10:324, and 13:269. The early Christians likewise believed that the “gospel” they knew had been revealed previously to prominent figures among the Hebrews. See, for instance, 1 Corinthians 10:1–4; Galatians 3:8; Hebrews 3:6–17, 4:2; Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.4.14–15.

5. See, for example, the 14 January 1847 revelation received by Brigham Young and canonized as Doctrine and Covenants 136; see also Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Knopf, 1985).

6. The biblical account occurs in Exodus 14. The phrase quoted comes from 14:16.

7. Lee A. Palmer, *Aaronic Priesthood through the Centuries* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1964), a textbook formerly used for church instruction, and John A. Tvedtnes, *The Church of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1980), will serve to illustrate a very strong version of the claim of structural continuity between ancient Israel, the early Christian church, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Scandinavian, German, and other pioneers—was a literal gathering of modern Israel from its lengthy dispersion.⁸ The authority to initiate and guide this gathering was conferred upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, Latter-day Saints believe, through a visit by Moses to their temple in Kirtland, Ohio, in April 1836. Even today, the return of the Jews to Palestine and the continued remarkable missionary success of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are regarded as facets of the same ongoing process.⁹

But it is not Latter-day Saints alone who recognize resemblances between their church and more ancient movements. For Joseph Smith, as the great German social theorist Max Weber recognized, “resembled, even in matters of detail, Muhammad and above all the Jewish prophets.”¹⁰ Similarly, the non-Mormon Old Testament scholar Lester L. Grabbe has recently argued that an understanding of Joseph Smith can shed light

8. The theme recurs constantly in such accounts of the westward trek as Wallace Stegner, *The Gathering of Zion: The Story of the Mormon Trail* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964); William Mulder, *Homeward to Zion: The Mormon Migration from Scandinavia* (1957; repr., Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press and BYU Studies, 2000); and Eugene E. Campbell, *Establishing Zion: The Mormon Church in the American West, 1847–1869* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1988).

9. For a Latter-day Saint scholar’s analysis of the concept of “gathering” in the biblical prophets, see Stephen D. Ricks, “The Prophetic Literality of Tribal Reconstruction,” in *Israel’s Apostasy and Restoration: Essays in Honor of Roland K. Harrison*, ed. Avraham Gileadi (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 273–81. Mormon apostle Orson Hyde, commissioned and sent by Joseph Smith, offered up a lengthy, formal prayer on the Mount of Olives in 1841, dedicating Palestine for the return of the Jews; see *History of the Church*, 4:456–59. The Zionist movement arose over the following several decades.

10. Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, trans. Ephraim Fischoff (Boston: Beacon, 1968), 54. Meyer, too, was fascinated by what he regarded as parallels between Mormonism and Islam. “Mormonism,” he wrote, “excited my interest at an early age before all else because of the surprising analogy, extending even to the smallest details, between it and the fundamental drives, external forms, and historical development of Islam: here one might hope to discover significant clues for a proper understanding of Muhammad and his religion. . . . There is hardly another historical parallel as instructive as this one. . . . It is impossible to undertake the scholarly investigation of the one without a closer acquaintance with the other.” Meyer, *Ursprung und Geschichte der Mormonen*, 1. For a brief narrative biography of Muhammad with some scattered comparisons to Joseph Smith and Mormonism, see Daniel C. Peterson, “Muhammad” and “Final Thoughts: Response to McClymond’s ‘Prophet or Loss?’” in *The Rivers of Paradise: Moses, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus, and Muhammad as Religious Founders*, ed. David Noel Freedman and Michael J. McClymond (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 457–612, 675–81.

on prophecy in ancient Israel.¹¹ The prominent American literary critic Harold Bloom calls Joseph Smith “an authentic religious genius” and marvels at his mysterious ability to restore what Bloom calls “the archaic Jewish religion.”¹² The Finnish scholar Heikki Räisänen, too, has written about the uncanny way in which Joseph Smith hit upon salient issues and problems in ancient scriptural texts and moved to resolve them.¹³ The Saints’ westward exodus or *hegira*, as it is often and significantly termed, formed them into a people, and not merely another American denomination.¹⁴ Although they come “out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation,” they have themselves become a distinct group, with their own history and common culture, as the *Harvard Encyclopedia of Ethnic Groups* insightfully recognizes.¹⁵ In this light, it is understandable that Latter-day Saints frequently cite the words of the apostle Peter, addressing the Christians of his day, with reference to themselves:

Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:

Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. (1 Peter 2:9–10)

11. Lester L. Grabbe, “Prophecy: Joseph Smith and the *Gestalt* of the Israelite Prophet,” in *Ancient Israel: The Old Testament in Its Social Context*, ed. Philip F. Esler (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 117–27. (I thank John Gee for bringing this article to my attention.) It should be noted that Professor Grabbe’s article suffers from some serious misapprehensions, notably with respect to the Book of Mormon witnesses.

12. Bloom’s rather eccentric analysis of Joseph Smith and the faith he founded, bristling with sharp insights and serious errors, occurs at Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 79–129, at 80, 99.

13. Heikki Räisänen, “Joseph Smith und die Bibel: Die Leistung des mormonischen Propheten in neuer Beleuchtung,” *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 109/2 (1984): 81–92.

14. For a discussion of this phenomenon, and of how the migration to the Great Basin separated members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints even from the followers of Joseph Smith who did not experience it, see Jan Shipps, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 84–85.

15. Dean L. May, “Mormons,” in *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, ed. Stephan Thernstrom (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 720–31; see Revelation 5:9.

For believing members of the church, it is no insult but rather a matter of quiet satisfaction that others recognize that their history and doctrines recapitulate what has gone before. Writing about the Dead Sea Scrolls and about the community at Qumran that seems to have produced and guarded them, the Austrian scholar Georg Molin reflected in 1954 that the title “Latter-day Saints,” although it belongs to a modern religious movement, could also properly have been given to the ancient authors and custodians of the Scrolls.¹⁶ And, indeed, the story of a prophetic figure who leads his followers to an arid wilderness beside the shore of a saltwater lake where they might find refuge from persecution does offer undeniable parallels to the history of the Latter-day Saints.¹⁷

The Book of Mormon

But comparisons to the story of the Book of Mormon, the charter document of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, seem even more striking. Impelled, like Qumran’s “Teacher of Righteousness,” both by revelation and by a sense of peril, apostasy, and impending judgment at Jerusalem, the Book of Mormon’s Lehi led his followers into the Judean desert. Like the people of the Dead Sea, he and his successors produced a considerable religious literature, some of it on metal plates. Finally, the last keepers of those records—faced with military destruction like the doomed sectarians of Qumran—buried them in a hillside to come forth at some later time. In fact, this story of a book inscribed on metal, hidden in a stone box, buried in a hillside, and guarded by an angel has fascinating parallels in many other documents from antiquity. We now know that the writing of religious texts on metal plates (sometimes on gold) was an authentic ancient practice that, indeed, seems to appear at precisely the time and in exactly the

16. See Georg Molin, *Die Söhne des Lichtes: Zeit und Stellung der Handschriften vom Toten Meer* (Vienna: Herold, 1954), 146.

17. A concise and judicious discussion of the parallels and divergences between Latter-day Saint ideas and those of the Qumran community is Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Questions and Responses for Latter-day Saints* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2000).

place from which the Book of Mormon peoples emerged.¹⁸ Even the form of the Book of Mormon plates, as described by those who saw them and in the book itself, seems to reflect ancient Israelite practice in remarkable ways.¹⁹

Joseph Smith obtained the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated from the angel Moroni on 22 September 1827—which was not only the autumnal equinox but Jewish New Year’s Day, Rosh Hashanah, the so-called “birthday of the world.”²⁰ More and more, the Book of Mormon appears to fit the ancient world from which it claims to have emerged.²¹ This is a remarkable fact, considering that

18. For a discussion of these and other related themes, see John A. Tvedtnes, *The Book of Mormon and Other Hidden Books: Out of Darkness unto Light* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2000); H. Curtis Wright, “Ancient Burials of Metal Documents in Stone Boxes,” in *By Study and Also by Faith*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 2:273–334; William J. Hamblin, “Sacred Writings on Bronze Plates in the Ancient Mediterranean” (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1994); William J. Adams Jr., “Lehi’s Jerusalem and Writing on Metal Plates,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3/1 (1994): 204–6; Adams, “More on the Silver Plates from Lehi’s Jerusalem,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4/2 (1995): 136–37; *Pressing Forward*, 20–28; David B. Honey and Michael P. Lyon, “An Inscribed Chinese Gold Plate in Its Context: Glimpses of the Sacred Center,” in *The Disciple as Scholar: Essays on Scripture and the Ancient World in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Parry, and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2000), 19–65; Stephen D. Ricks, “Converging Paths: Language and Cultural Notes on the Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Book of Mormon,” in *Echoes and Evidences*, 406–7. A popular statement on the subject was Paul R. Cheesman, *Ancient Writing on Metal Plates: Archaeological Findings Support Mormon Claims* (Bountiful, UT: Horizon, 1985). See the discussion of inscriptions on metallic plates by C. Wilfred Griggs, “The Book of Mormon as an Ancient Book,” in *Authorship*, 79–87.

19. John W. Welch, “Doubled, Sealed, Witnessed Documents: From the Ancient World to the Book of Mormon,” in *Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson*, ed. Davis Bitton (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 391–444, supplies an intriguing instance of this. See Welch, “A Steady Stream of Significant Recognitions,” in *Echoes and Evidences*, 374–79.

20. There is no evidence that Joseph Smith was aware of the Jewish significance of the date. See *Reexploring*, 209–11.

21. A very brief summary of selected evidence for this proposition is Daniel C. Peterson, “Mounting Evidence for the Book of Mormon,” *Ensign*, January 2000, 18–24. The works of Hugh Nibley constitute an indispensable introduction to the question of the antiquity of the Book of Mormon but cannot be recapitulated here. See his *Lehi in the Desert; The World of the Jaredites; There Were Jaredites* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988); *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 3rd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988); *Since Cumorah*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988); and *The*

its translation and dictation appear to have been accomplished in roughly 63 working days—a torrid pace that, with neither rewrites nor significant corrections, produced nearly 8.5 pages (of the current English edition) daily.²² And it was produced in what might justly be termed an “information vacuum” by a semiliterate young farm boy who had essentially no access to data of any kind about antiquity.²³ Yet Joseph Smith’s account of the translation process, according to which he made use of a priestly implement that the Hebrew Bible terms the Urim and Thummim, now finds remarkable circumstantial support from contemporary scholarship on that rather mysterious object.²⁴

And the book that resulted from the process is littered with what can now be recognized as authentically ancient names, many of them unknown in the Bible or in any other source available to Joseph Smith.

Prophetic Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1989). In very many ways, on the other hand, the Book of Mormon does not seem to fit the culture of early nineteenth-century America. For instance, the military romanticism of Joseph Smith’s America (the War of 1812 was a fresh memory; veterans of the American Revolution still lived in almost every family) is absent from the Book of Mormon. Instead, we see grimly realistic portrayals of war’s devastation and suffering. And, in the Gadianton robbers, we have a detailed, realistic portrayal of a prolonged guerrilla struggle—lacking any trace of life and drum, uniforms, or parades—published well over a century before the great guerrilla theorists of the twentieth century put pens to paper. See Daniel C. Peterson, “The Gadianton Robbers as Guerrilla Warriors,” in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 146–73. Other examples of the Book of Mormon’s premodern character appear in Richard L. Bushman, “The Book of Mormon and the American Revolution,” in *Authorship*, 189–211; Royal Skousen, “The Original Language of the Book of Mormon: Upstate New York Dialect, King James English, or Hebrew?” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3/1 (1994): 28–38; Noel B. Reynolds, “By Objective Measures: Old Wine into Old Bottles,” in *Echoes and Evidences*, 143–45; also Daniel C. Peterson, “Authority in the Book of Mosiah,” in this number of the *FARMS Review*, pages 149–85.

22. See John W. Welch, “The Miraculous Translation of the Book of Mormon,” in *Opening the Heavens: Accounts of Divine Manifestations, 1820–1844*, ed. John W. Welch with Erick B. Carlson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and BYU Press, 2005), 77–213; and Neal A. Maxwell, “By the Gift and Power of God,” in *Echoes and Evidences*, 5–12.

23. See, for example, Robert Paul, “Joseph Smith and the Manchester (New York) Library,” *BYU Studies* 22/3 (1982): 333–56; *Pressing Forward*, 283–84.

24. See Cornelius Van Dam, *The Urim and Thummim* (Kampen: Uitgeverij Van Den Berg, 1986); Cornelius Houtman, “The Urim and Thummim: A New Suggestion,” *Vetus Testamentum* 40/2 (1990): 231. For a useful summary, see *Pressing Forward*, 280–82. See also Tvedtnes, *The Book of Mormon and Other Hidden Books*, 195–225.

The name of Lehi's wife Sariah, for example, previously invisible outside the Book of Mormon, has now been found in ancient Jewish documents from Egypt.²⁵ Likewise, the nonbiblical name *Nephi* belongs to the very time and place of the first Book of Mormon figure who bears it.²⁶ Other uniquely Book of Mormon names—such as *Abish*, *Aha*, *Ammonihah*, *Chemish*, *Hagoth*, *Himni*, *Isabel*, *Jarom*, *Josh*, *Luram*, *Mathoni*, *Mathonihah*, *Muloki*, *Sam*, and *Shule*—are now attested in ancient materials.²⁷ Two male characters named *Alma* appear in the Book of Mormon. And, of course, this seems to run counter to what we might have expected: If Joseph Smith knew the name at all from his environment, he would most likely have known it as a Latinate woman's name. (Many will recognize the phrase *alma mater*, which means “beneficent mother.”) Recent documentary finds demonstrate, however, that *Alma* also occurs as a Semitic masculine personal name in the ancient Near East—just as it does in the Book of Mormon.²⁸ As a final example, *Jershon* designates a place that was given to the people of Ammon as a “land . . . for an inheritance” (Alma 27:22). In Hebrew, *Jershon* means “a place of inheritance.”²⁹ It is simply inconceivable that Joseph Smith could have known this in the late 1820s.

The presence in the Book of Mormon of the characteristically ancient literary structure or technique known as chiasmus—a complex rhetorical device largely overlooked by biblical scholarship until

25. Jeffrey R. Chadwick, “Sariah in the Elephantine Papyri,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2/2 (1993): 196–200 (cf. *Pressing Forward*, 6–10); Ricks, “Converging Paths,” 402–3.

26. John Gee, “A Note on the Name *Nephi*,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1/1 (1992): 189–91 (cf. “Four Suggestions on the Origin of the Name *Nephi*,” in *Pressing Forward*, 1–5).

27. See the discussion between Paul Y. Hoskisson, Jeffrey R. Chadwick, Dana M. Pike, John A. Tvedtnes, John Gee, and Matthew Roper, in *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9/1 (2000): 28–51; E. Jan Wilson, “Inside a Sumerian Temple: The Ekishnugal at Ur,” in *The Temple in Time and Eternity*, ed. Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2000), 319.

28. Paul Y. Hoskisson, “Alma as a Hebrew Name,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 7/1 (1998): 72–73.

29. Stephen D. Ricks and John A. Tvedtnes, “The Hebrew Origin of Some Book of Mormon Place Names,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 6/2 (1997): 255–59 (cf. *Pressing Forward*, 88–92).

decades after Joseph Smith's martyrdom in Illinois—is another powerful indicator of the record's antiquity and almost certainly did not arise by random chance.³⁰ (The same literary structure has now been identified in pre-Columbian America.)³¹ In one intriguing example of chiasmus, the crucial wordplay rests on an equivalence between the word *Lord* and the royal name *Zedekiah* (see Helaman 6:10). But those words are only equivalent to readers aware that the term *Lord* probably stands (as it does in the King James Bible) for the divine name *Jehovah* or *Yahweh*, and that the *-iah* element in *Zedekiah* is the first portion of that same divine name. This chiasm thus works better in Hebrew than in English, which seems an important clue to the original language of the Book of Mormon.³²

A number of details from the Book of Mormon text appear to support a view of the book as a rather literal translation from an ancient document.³³ In an ancient Hebrew idiom, for example, arrows

30. The literature on chiasmus is now extensive. Consult John W. Welch and Daniel B. McKinlay, eds., *Chiasmus Bibliography* (Provo, UT: Research Press, 1999). See also John W. Welch, ed., *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis* (1981; repr. Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999); Noel B. Reynolds, "Nephi's Outline," in *Authorship*, 53–74; John W. Welch, "Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon," in *Authorship*, 33–52; Welch, "A Masterpiece: Alma 36," in *Rediscovering*, 114–31; Boyd F. Edwards and W. Farrell Edwards, "Does Chiasmus Appear in the Book of Mormon by Chance?" *BYU Studies* 43/2 (2004): 103–30. Donald W. Parry, *The Book of Mormon Text Reformatted according to Parallelistic Patterns* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1992), illustrates chiasmus and many other sophisticated and genuinely ancient literary patterns in the Book of Mormon. One of these is "enallage." On this, see Kevin L. Barney, "Enallage in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3/1 (1994): 113–47; Barney, "Divine Discourse Directed at a Prophet's Posterity in the Plural: Further Light on Enallage," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 6/2 (1997): 229–34 (cf. *Pressing Forward*, 43–48). John A. Tvedtnes, "Colophons in the Book of Mormon," in *Rediscovering*, 32–37, identifies yet another. See also *Reexploring*, 13–16; John W. Welch, "A Steady Stream of Significant Recognitions," in *Echoes and Evidences*, 340–47.

31. Allen J. Christenson, "The Use of Chiasmus by the Ancient Maya-Quiché," *Latin American Literatures Journal* 4/2 (1988): 125–50; Christenson, "Chiasmus in Mayan Texts," *Ensign*, October 1988, 28–31; Christenson, trans. and ed., *Popol Vuh: The Mythic Sections—Tales of First Beginnings from the Ancient K'iche'-Maya* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2000), 15–17; Christenson, *Popol Vuh: The Sacred Book of the Maya* (Winchester, UK: O Books, 2003), 46–48.

32. *Reexploring*, 230–32.

33. In addition to the specific examples following, see John A. Tvedtnes, "The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon," in *Rediscovering*, 77–91.

are “thrown” (see, for example, Alma 49:22). Also, just as in ancient Hebrew and other Semitic languages, in a construction known as a “cognate accusative,”³⁴ the word denoting the object of a verb is sometimes derived from the same root as the verb itself. “Behold,” says the prophet Lehi, “I have dreamed a dream.”³⁵ Similarly, the (to us) redundant *that* in such expressions as “because that they are redeemed from the fall” and “because that my heart is broken” is a Hebraism (see, respectively, 2 Nephi 2:26 and 4:32).

But some Hebrew constructions that appeared in the first (1830) edition of the Book of Mormon have been erased from later printings, in a bid to make the book read more smoothly as English. One striking example of this involves a series of conditional sentences in Helaman 12:13–21. Such sentences, in English, typically feature an *if*-clause (either using the word *if* itself, or something equivalent), which expresses a hypothetical condition, and a result clause that describes what will occur if the hypothetical condition comes about. For example, “If you don’t study, you will fail.” The result clause may contain a word such as *then*, but commonly does not. By contrast, the result clause of a conditional sentence in ancient Hebrew can be introduced by the word *wa* (and), so that the sentence takes what might be termed an *if-and* form.³⁶ The occurrence of *if-and* conditionals in the 1830 Book of Mormon seems to indicate that it did not originate in the mind of a native English-speaker, but is a quite literal translation from a Hebrew original:

13. yea and *if* he saith unto the earth move *and* it is moved
 14. yea *if* he say unto the earth thou shalt go back that it
 lengthen out the day for many hours *and* it is done.

34. See Donald W. Parry, “Hebraisms and Other Ancient Peculiarities in the Book of Mormon,” in *Echoes and Evidences*, 176–77.

35. For this and other illustrations, see *Pressing Forward*, 29–31.

36. See, for instance, the original Hebrew of Genesis 18:26; 24:8, 41; 28:20–21; 31:8 (twice); 34:17 (twice); 44:26; 47:6. The *if-and* conditional construction is invisible in the King James Version of the English Bible—the version with which Joseph Smith would have been familiar—just as it is in all other translations that I have checked. In current editions of the Book of Mormon, it has been anglicized. See Daniel C. Peterson, “Not Joseph’s, and Not Modern,” in *Echoes and Evidences*, 212–14.

16. and behold also *if* he saith unto the waters of the great deep be thou dried up *and* it is done.

17. behold *if* he saith unto this mountain be thou raised up and come over and fall upon that city that it be buried up *and* behold it is done.

19. and *if* the Lord shall say be thou accursed that no man shall find thee from this time henceforth and forever *and* behold no man getteth it henceforth and forever.

20. and behold *if* the Lord shall say unto a man because of thine iniquities thou shalt be accursed forever *and* it shall be done.

21. and *if* the Lord shall say because of thine iniquities thou shalt be cut off from my presence *and* he will cause that it shall be so. (Helaman 12:13–14, 16–17, 19–21, 1830 edition)

4. and *if* ye shall ask with a sincere heart with real intent having faith in Christ *and* he will manifest the truth of it unto you by the power of the Holy Ghost. (Moroni 10:4, 1830 edition)³⁷

It is difficult to imagine a native speaker of English (such as Joseph Smith, though poorly educated at the time, indisputably was) producing such sentences. Yet they represent perfectly acceptable Hebrew.

Lehi's vision of God and his accompanying prophetic call, we now know, could serve as a textbook illustration of such visions and calls as they are recounted in ancient literature, complete with motifs of the heavenly book and the divine council that have only garnered scholarly attention in recent decades.³⁸ The imagery of Nephi's subsequent vision, too, is deeply rooted in ancient Near Eastern symbolism with

37. On this matter, see *Pressing Forward*, 201–3.

38. The relevant passage in the Book of Mormon is 1 Nephi 1. See John W. Welch, "The Calling of a Prophet," in *The Book of Mormon: First Nephi, the Doctrinal Foundation*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1988), 35–54; Blake T. Ostler, "The Throne-Theophany and Prophetic Commission in 1 Nephi: A Form-Critical Analysis," *BYU Studies* 26/4 (1986): 67–95; *Reexploring*, 24–28; compare Daniel C. Peterson and Stephen D. Ricks, "The Throne-Theophany/Prophetic Call of Muhammad," in *Disciple as Scholar*, 323–37.

which Joseph Smith could not conceivably have been familiar but that seems to point directly to an origin in preexilic Israel (see 1 Nephi 11).³⁹ Not surprisingly, in that light, the account of Jerusalem just prior to the Babylonian captivity that is given early in the Book of Mormon narrative gains in plausibility as research accumulates.⁴⁰ Although it is generally supposed, for instance, that the captured Judahite king Zedekiah was forced to watch the execution of all his sons before his eyes were put out and he was taken off to Babylon, the Book of Mormon says that one of them, named Mulek, survived. A careful reading of the Bible, particularly in the original Hebrew, suggests that the claim is plausible, to the point, even, of including the detail of the prince's name.⁴¹ Even Nephi's slaying of Laban, and the justification given to him for doing so, can now be seen to fit very specifically into that period.⁴² The book claims, moreover, to have been written in "reformed Egyptian" (Mormon 9:32). Most who have studied the subject conclude that this signifies writing the Hebrew language in modified Egyptian characters. In recent years, we have learned that several indisputably ancient documents were written in precisely that fashion.⁴³

The account of Lehi's Arabian sojourn after his hasty departure from Palestine is remarkably accurate—in fact, likely Book of Mormon locations have been identified along the coasts of Arabia—but no scholar

39. See, for example, Griggs, "Book of Mormon as an Ancient Book," in *Authorship*, 75–101; "The 'Lamb of God' in Pre-Christian Texts," *Insights* (August 1998): 2; Daniel C. Peterson, "Nephi and His Asherah: A Note on 1 Nephi 11:8–23," in *Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World*, 191–243; Peterson, "Nephi and His Asherah," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9/2 (2000): 16–25; and Peterson, "Not Joseph's, and Not Modern," 214–19.

40. See, for instance, Hugh Nibley, "Two Shots in the Dark: i. Dark Days in Jerusalem: The Lachish Letters and the Book of Mormon (1 Nephi)," in *Authorship*, 103–21; and John W. Welch, David R. Seely, and Jo Ann H. Seely, eds., *Glimpses of Lehi's Jerusalem* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004).

41. *Reexploring*, 142–44.

42. *Pressing Forward*, 17–19.

43. John A. Tvedtnes and Stephen D. Ricks, "Jewish and Other Semitic Texts Written in Egyptian Characters," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5/2 (1996): 156–63; William J. Hamblin, "Reformed Egyptian" (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1995); John Gee, "Two Notes on Egyptian Script," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5/1 (1996): 162–76; *Pressing Forward*, 237–47; John A. Tvedtnes, "Ancient Texts in Support of the Book of Mormon," in *Echoes and Evidences*, 233–35.

in the nineteenth century, let alone Joseph Smith, could have known any of this.⁴⁴ And Lehi's epic journey from Jerusalem to the New World endured for a millennium in the memory of his descendants, who saw it as a signal instance of God's miraculous power much like the Israelites' earlier deliverance from Egyptian bondage.⁴⁵ Indeed, careful modern readings show that the very terms in which it was described and remembered derive from the biblical account of the exodus. The literary crafting of the story is both sophisticated and authentically Near Eastern.⁴⁶

44. Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert*, 1–149; Warren P. Aston and Michaela J. Aston, *In the Footsteps of Lehi: New Evidence for Lehi's Journey across Arabia to Bountiful* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994); Eugene E. Clark, "A Preliminary Study of the Geology and Mineral Resources of Dhofar, the Sultanate of Oman" (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1995); Warren P. Aston, "The Arabian Bountiful Discovered? Evidence for Nephi's Bountiful," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 7/1 (1998): 5–11, 70; Aston, "Newly Found Altars from Nahom," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 10/2 (2001): 56–61; George Potter and Richard Wellington, *Lehi in the Wilderness: 81 New Documented Evidences That the Book of Mormon Is a True History* (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 2003), 31–51, 107–62; S. Kent Brown, Terry B. Ball, Arnold H. Green, David J. Johnson, and W. Revell Phillips, "Planning Research on Oman: The End of Lehi's Trail," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 7/1 (1998): 12–21, 70; Brown, "The Place That Was Called Nahom," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8/1 (1999): 66–68; Brown, "Lehi, Journey of, to the Promised Land," in *Book of Mormon Reference Companion*, ed. Dennis L. Largey et al. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 511–16; and Brown, *Voices from the Dust: Book of Mormon Insights* (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2004), 1–63; Lynn M. Hilton and Hope Hilton, *In Search of Lehi's Trail* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976); *Reexploring*, 47–51; Ricks, "Converging Paths," 404–6; also Alan Goff, "Mourning, Consolation, and Repentance at Nahom," in *Rediscovering*, 92–99. For Lehi's ocean voyage, see John M. Lundquist's appendix, entitled "Biblical Seafaring and the Book of Mormon," to Raphael Patai, *The Children of Noah: Jewish Seafaring in Ancient Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 171–75. See, too, Eugene England, "Through the Arabian Desert to a Bountiful Land: Could Joseph Smith Have Known the Way?" in *Authorship*, 143–56; and S. Kent Brown, "New Light from Arabia on Lehi's Trail," in *Echoes and Evidences*, 55–125. See the new FARMS DVD entitled *Journey of Faith* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2005), which was filmed on location in Arabia, and the companion volume *Journey of Faith: From Jerusalem to the Promised Land* (Provo, UT: Maxwell Institute, 2006).

45. Louis Midgley discusses the very Hebraic importance of "memory" in the Book of Mormon in "The Ways of Remembrance," in *Rediscovering*, 168–76; "O Man, Remember, and Perish Not," in *Reexploring*, 127–29; and "'To Remember and Keep': On the Book of Mormon as an Ancient Book," in *Disciple as Scholar*, 95–137.

46. George S. Tate, "The Typology of the Exodus Pattern in the Book of Mormon," in *Literature of Belief: Sacred Scripture and Religious Experiences*, ed. Neal E. Lambert (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1981), 245–62; Terrence L. Szink, "To a Land of Promise (1 Nephi 16–18)," in *Studies in Scripture: Volume Seven, 1 Nephi to Alma 29*, ed. Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 60–72; S. Kent Brown, "The Exodus Pattern in the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies* 30/3 (1990): 111–26; Terrence L.

A bare list of several more features of the Book of Mormon will perhaps serve to illustrate a bit more of the richness of its ties to the vanished world of the ancient Near East, from which it claims to come. The system of market exchange set out in Alma 11:3–19 recalls ancient Babylonian economic legislation.⁴⁷ After Zemnarihah's execution, the tree upon which he had been hanged is ritually chopped down, as ancient Jewish law required (see 3 Nephi 4:28).⁴⁸ The manner of blessing food in the Book of Mormon resembles that followed among ancient Israelites.⁴⁹ The lengthy allegory of the olive tree given in Jacob 5 betrays a knowledge of olive cultivation considerably beyond what Joseph Smith, growing up in the American Northeast, could have possessed. But it is remarkably consistent, in detail, with what we learn from ancient manuals on Mediterranean olive cultivation.⁵⁰ The shining stones in the account of the Jaredite voyage across the sea have numerous parallels in ancient lore.⁵¹ The book features authentically pre-Christian terminology and ancient Semitic imagery.⁵² It seems to know remarkably much about the Jewish Passover and about the

Szink, "Nephi and the Exodus," in *Rediscovering*, 38–51 (compare Goff, "Mourning, Consolation, and Repentance at Nahom"); 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 (cf. *Pressing Forward*, 54–58); S. Kent Brown, *From Jerusalem to Zarahemla: Literary and Historical Studies of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1998), 75–98; Peterson, "Not Joseph's, and Not Modern," 192–97. Recent literary appreciations of the Book of Mormon include Marilyn Arnold, *Sweet Is the Word: Reflections on the Book of Mormon—Its Narrative, Teachings, and People* (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 1996); Eugene England, "A Second Witness for the Logos: The Book of Mormon and Contemporary Literary Criticism," in *By Study and Also by Faith*, 2:91–125; Richard Dilworth Rust, *Feasting on the Word: The Literary Testimony of the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1997).

47. *Pressing Forward*, 147–49; see John W. Welch, "Weighing and Measuring in the Worlds of the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8/2 (1999): 36–46.

48. See *Reexploring*, 250–52; *Pressing Forward*, 208–10.

49. *Pressing Forward*, 142–46.

50. Stephen D. Ricks and John W. Welch, eds., *The Allegory of the Olive Tree: The Olive, the Bible, and Jacob 5* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994).

51. See Tvedtnes, *The Book of Mormon and Other Hidden Books*, 195–225. For a scientific comment on the shining stones, see *Pressing Forward*, 253–55.

52. See, for example, David Rolph Seely, "The Image of the Hand of God in the Book of Mormon and the Old Testament," in *Rediscovering*, 140–50.

significance of the New Year in antiquity.⁵³ In ancient Israel, although it seems odd to us, iron was a precious substance used for decoration. Iron is used in the same way in the Book of Mormon.⁵⁴ Even the curse of speechlessness placed upon Korihor in Alma 30:49 finds striking ancient parallels.⁵⁵ The Book of Mormon uses the terms *statute*, *ordinance*, *judgment*, and *commandment* in the same way that the Hebrew Bible uses (and distinguishes) equivalent terms.⁵⁶ It contrasts thieves and robbers in the same manner as did ancient Hebrew law.⁵⁷

King Benjamin's classic address (Mosiah 2–5) occupies roughly eleven pages in the current English edition, which means that Joseph Smith must have dictated this doctrinally rich nearly 5,000-word text in slightly more than one day. The sermon appears to be intimately linked with the ancient Israelite Feast of Tabernacles and the Day of Atonement, as well as with archaic treaty and covenant formulas, Israelite farewell addresses, and early Near Eastern coronation festivals.⁵⁸ (Throughout the Book of Mormon, seemingly ancient attitudes toward covenants and covenant ceremonial can be identified.)⁵⁹ Even the physical setting of the speech—delivered while the king stood upon a tower (Mosiah 2:7)—is ritually appropriate to the occasion, though Joseph Smith would not have known that from the English Bibles available to him.⁶⁰ Likewise, he could not have known that the ancient Hebrew term *moshia* signifies a champion of justice against oppression, appointed by God, whose mission it is to liberate a chosen

53. *Reexploring*, 196–98, 209–11.

54. *Reexploring*, 133–34.

55. *Pressing Forward*, 154–56.

56. *Reexploring*, 62–65.

57. *Reexploring*, 248–49.

58. John A. Tvedtnes, "King Benjamin and the Feast of Tabernacles," in *By Study and Also by Faith*, 2:197–237; Stephen D. Ricks, "The Treaty/Covenant Pattern in King Benjamin's Address (Mosiah 1–6)," *BYU Studies* 24/2 (1984): 151–62; Ricks, "King, Coronation, and Covenant in Mosiah 1–6," in *Rediscovering*, 209–19; Ricks, "Kingship, Coronation, and Covenant in Mosiah 1–6," in *King Benjamin's Speech: "That Ye May Learn Wisdom"*, ed. John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 233–75; *Reexploring*, 120–26; *Pressing Forward*, 103–9.

59. See Blake T. Ostler, "The Covenant Tradition in the Book of Mormon," in *Rediscovering*, 230–40.

60. *Pressing Forward*, 97–102.

people from oppression, especially by nonviolent means. For the term does not occur in the English of the King James Bible. But such nonviolent deliverance by a God-ordained champion is a major theme of the Book of Mormon book of *Mosiah*.⁶¹

Alma 7:10 predicts that Jesus “shall be born of Mary, at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers.” Although this would have seemed an obvious mistake for at least a century after the publication of the Book of Mormon, it is now plain that Bethlehem could be, and indeed was, regarded as a town in the “land of Jerusalem.” A recently released text from the Dead Sea Scrolls, for example—a text claiming origin in the days of Jeremiah (and, therefore, in Lehi’s time)—says that the Jews of that period were “taken captive from the land of Jerusalem.”⁶² Joseph Smith could not have learned this from the Bible, though, for no such language appears in it.

Each of the two major narratives in the Book of Mormon ends in a military cataclysm. Depictions of military conflict in the Book of Mormon, while foreign to many modern notions, strikingly suggest a dual heritage from the ancient Near East and pre-Columbian Mesoamerica.⁶³ The oath of allegiance taken by Nephite soldiers in Alma 46:21–22 is almost identical in form to military oaths among ancient Israelite and Hittite warriors.⁶⁴ The painstaking research of

61. John Sawyer, “What Was a Mošia ?” *Vetus Testamentum* 15 (1965): 475–86. *Reexploring*, 105–7, summarizes and applies Sawyer’s article.

62. For the original text and a translation of 4QApocryphon of Jeremiah C (4Q385b [4QapocrJer C]), see Robert Eisenman and Michael Wise, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered* (Shaftesbury: Element, 1992), 57–58. Florentino García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*, trans. Wilfred G. E. Watson (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 285, inadequately renders the Hebrew. See, too, Daniel C. Peterson, William J. Hamblin, and Matthew Roper, “On Alma 7:10 and the Birthplace of Jesus Christ” (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1995); John A. Tvedtnes, “Cities and Lands in the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4/2 (1995): 147–50 (cf. *Pressing Forward*, 164–68); *Reexploring*, 170–72; *Pressing Forward*, 139–41.

63. For a convenient summary, see William J. Hamblin, “Warfare in the Book of Mormon,” in *Rediscovering*, 241–48. See, too, the above-mentioned anthology *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*; and *Reexploring*, 180–81, 189–92.

64. Terrence L. Szink, “An Oath of Allegiance in the Book of Mormon,” in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, 35–45; Mark J. Morrise, “Simile Curses in the Ancient Near East, Old Testament, and Book of Mormon,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2/1 (1993): 124–38; *Reexploring*, 189–92, 199–201, 206–8.

John L. Sorenson and others has demonstrated the plausibility of the complex geographical data contained in the Book of Mormon and suggested fascinating correlations, both in the big picture and in the details, with what we are learning about life in ancient Mesoamerica.⁶⁵

The Book of Abraham

But the Book of Mormon is not the only canonical Latter-day Saint text that claims ancient origin. Later, in the 1830s, Joseph Smith produced the Book of Abraham, which, he said, was a selection from actual writings of the biblical patriarch bearing that name.⁶⁶ As with the Book of Mormon, the Book of Abraham clearly seems to reach back into ancient materials regarding its hero and his environment to which Joseph Smith could not have gained access through natural means. Within its brief text, for instance, the book tells us that Abraham's own fathers had turned aside from worship of the true God to the service of "the god of Pharaoh, king of Egypt" (Abraham 1:6, 13; also Fac. 1, fig. 9). The Bible, on the other hand, appears to know

65. See, for example, John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1985); Sorenson, "Animals in the Book of Mormon: An Annotated Bibliography" (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1992); Sorenson, ed., "Metals and Metallurgy Relating to the Book of Mormon Text" (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1992); Sorenson, "The Book of Mormon as a Mesoamerican Record," in *Authorship Revisited*, 391–521; Sorenson, *Images of Ancient America: Visualizing Book of Mormon Life* (Provo, UT: Research Press, 1998); Sorenson, "How Could Joseph Smith Write So Accurately about Ancient American Civilization?" in *Echoes and Evidences*, 261–306; also portions of Ricks and Hamblin, *Warfare in the Book of Mormon; Reexploring*, 236–38; *Pressing Forward*, 196–200, 248–52. See John E. Clark, "Archaeology, Relics, and Book of Mormon Belief," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 14/2 (2005): 38–49; Clark, "Archaeological Trends and the Book of Mormon Origins," *BYU Studies* 44/4 (2005): 104; and Brant A. Gardner, "Multi-dimensional Commentary," at frontpage2000.nmia.com/~nahualli/commentary.htm (accessed 12 July 2006).

66. For brief summations of selected data regarding evidence of the antiquity of the Book of Abraham, see Daniel C. Peterson, "News from Antiquity ['Evidence supporting the book of Abraham continues to turn up in a wide variety of sources']," *Ensign*, January 1994, 16–21; John A. Tvedtnes, Brian M. Hauglid, and John Gee, comps. and eds., *Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2001); John Gee and Stephen D. Ricks, "Historical Plausibility: Historicity of the Book of Abraham as a Case Study," in *Historicity and the Latter-day Saint Scriptures*, ed. Paul Y. Hoskisson (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2001), 63–98.

nothing about the idolatry of Abraham's ancestors.⁶⁷ However, their polytheism, along with Abraham's conversion to the worship of the true God and his attempt to convert his family, is a common theme of many very old Jewish stories.⁶⁸

The Book of Abraham mentions "the plain of Olishem" (Abraham 1:10). No such place name occurs in the Bible, but it does occur, appropriately timed and located, in an inscription of the Akkadian ruler Naram Sin, dating to about 2250 BC.⁶⁹ Similarly—and strikingly, in a book produced by an uneducated farmer at the very time when the discipline of Egyptology was being born across the Atlantic Ocean—the Book of Abraham correctly identifies the Egyptian crocodile deity Sobk as "the idolatrous god of pharaoh" (Fac. 1, fig. 9).⁷⁰ The Book of Abraham tells of an attempted sacrifice of the patriarch (see Abraham 1:7–20; Fac. 1). While the Bible is silent regarding the incident, post-biblical literature repeatedly mentions Abraham's miraculous deliverance from an attempt to kill him.⁷¹ And the name of Abraham has actually been found in a third-century AD Egyptian papyrus in

67. A passing reference occurs at Joshua 24:2.

68. See, for instance, *Jubilees* 11:4, 7–8, 16–17; 12:1–8, 12–14; English translation at *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* [hereafter *OTP*], ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City: Doubleday, 1983–85), 2:78–80. See also *Jasher* 9:6–19; 11:15–61; Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 1.7.1; *Apocalypse of Abraham* 1–8 (*OTP* 1:689–93); Qur'an 6:75; 9:114; 19:42–51; 21:52–68; 26:70–83; 37:84–97. See, generally, Tvedtnes, Hauglid, and Gee, *Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham*.

69. See John M. Lundquist, "Was Abraham at Ebla? A Cultural Background of the Book of Abraham (Abraham 1 and 2)," in *Studies in Scripture, Volume 2: The Pearl of Great Price*, ed. Robert L. Millet and Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City: Randall Book, 1985), 233–35; Paul Y. Hoskisson, "Where Was Ur of the Chaldees?" in *The Pearl of Great Price: Revelations from God*, ed. H. Donl Peterson and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1989), 136 n. 44; John Gee, "A Tragedy of Errors," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 4 (1992): 115 n. 64.

70. Intriguingly, Middle Kingdom Egypt, at around the time of the Twelfth Dynasty—most likely the time of Abraham—saw a great deal of activity in the large oasis to the southwest of modern Cairo known as the Fayyum. Crocodiles were common there, and Sobk or Sobek was the chief local deity. The last king of the Twelfth Dynasty even adopted the name of the crocodile god, calling himself Nefru-sobk, and five pharaohs of the Thirteenth Dynasty took the name Sebek-hotpe. Compare Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973–80), 1:40, 201.

71. *Jasher* 12:1–43 (cf. *Jasher* 8); *Pseudo-Philo* 6 (*OTP* 2:310–12); Qur'an 21:69–72; 37:98–99. These sources, however, differ from the Book of Abraham in saying that he was

association with a lion-couch scene much like the sacrificial scene depicted in the Book of Abraham's Facsimile 1.⁷²

According to the Book of Abraham, in order to preserve the patriarch's life the Lord advises him to conceal the fact that Sarai is his wife and instead to tell the Egyptians that she is his sister. By contrast, the Bible records the story of Abraham's "lie" but is silent regarding the divine counsel that authorized it (compare Abraham 2:22–25 and Genesis 12:11–20). However, the *Genesis Apocryphon*, a document found among the Dead Sea Scrolls in the mid-twentieth century, supports the claim of the Book of Abraham that the patriarch's behavior in this matter was divinely ordained.⁷³

The third chapter of the Book of Abraham offers a remarkable portrait of what might be termed "Abrahamic astronomy," and its Facsimile 3 shows an Egyptian scene in which "Abraham is reasoning upon the principles of Astronomy, in the king's court." Very old Jewish and Christian materials sustain this claim.⁷⁴ Furthermore, recent research indicates that the astronomical model portrayed in the Book of Mormon fits exceedingly well among ancient geocentric (earth-centered) notions. And, once again, while nothing in the Genesis account of Abraham's life suggests that he had any special astronomical interests or knowledge, many postbiblical texts preserve precisely that image of him.⁷⁵ The fourth and fifth chapters of the Book

cast into a furnace. The only possible biblical reference to Abraham's escape from death is the vague comment of Isaiah 29:22 about "the Lord, who redeemed Abraham."

72. John Gee, "References to Abraham Found in Two Egyptian Texts," *Insights* (September 1991): 1, 3; Gee, "Abraham in Ancient Egyptian Texts," *Ensign*, July 1992, 60–62.

73. For a discussion of the incident, see Thomas W. Mackay, "Abraham in Egypt: A Collation of Evidence for the Case of the Missing Wife," *BYU Studies* 10/4 (1970): 429–51.

74. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 1.8.1–2; Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 9.17.8; 9.18.1–2 (OTP 2:881–82); cf. *Jasher* 15:22. See Tvedtnes, Hauglid, and Gee, *Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham*, 544–45.

75. See John Gee, William J. Hamblin, and Daniel C. Peterson, "'And I Saw the Stars': The Book of Abraham and Ancient Geocentric Astronomy," in *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, ed. John Gee and Brian M. Hauglid (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2005), 1–16. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 1.7.2; 12:16–19 (OTP 2:81); Qur an 6:76–80; *Apocalypse of Abraham* 12, 15–24 (OTP 1:694–701); Ab Ja far Mu ammad b. Jar r al- abar , *J mi al-Bay n f Taf s r al-Qur n* (Beirut: D r Ma rifa li al- ib a wa al-Nashr, 1978), 7:160; cf. Ab Abd All h Mu ammad b. A mad al-An r al-Qur ub , *Al-J mi li-A k m al-Qur n* (Cairo: D r al-Sha b, n.d.), 3:2459. *Testament of Abraham* 9–10 (OTP 1:886–88)

of Abraham recount a modified version of the familiar Genesis story of creation. Ancient traditions preserve reports that the patriarch was granted a vision of those momentous events.⁷⁶

The Restoration of the Ancient Church

On the foundation of such scriptural texts as the Book of Mormon and the Book of Abraham, which Latter-day Saints regard as restorations of inspired ancient documents, accompanied by the Bible and modern revelations, stands the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It proclaims itself the restoration of the church originally founded and led by Jesus and his disciples, itself a restoration of earlier dispensations, with a priesthood authorized by God and restored to the earth by the ancient biblical figures John the Baptist and Peter, James, and John. In several ways, it is undeniably similar to the ancient church.⁷⁷ It practices baptism by immersion, and it ordains its officers and—like the elders mentioned in James 5—anooints and blesses the sick by the laying on of hands. Its missionaries take its message to the ends of the earth, “baptizing . . . in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19).

Like the original Christian movement founded by Jesus, the church today is led by prophets and by a council of twelve apostles. When they occur, vacancies in the apostolic council are filled, so that the council continues from generation to generation. (This was attempted in ancient times, too—as at Acts 1:15–26—but, with persecution, scattering, and death, the council of the apostles nonetheless soon ceased to exist as an organized body.)⁷⁸ Echoing both New Testament Christianity and the Old Testament’s wandering desert Israel, quorums of seventy perform significant portions of the church’s work (see

refers to the fulfillment of Abraham’s request “to see all the inhabited world and all the created things which you established.”

76. Al- abar , *J mi al-Bay n*, 7:160.

77. A brief survey of relevant materials is Daniel C. Peterson and Stephen D. Ricks, “Comparing LDS Beliefs with First-Century Christianity,” *Ensign*, March 1988, 6–11.

78. See Hugh Nibley, *Apostles and Bishops in Early Christianity* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 2005).

Luke 10:1, 17; compare Exodus 24:1, 9; Numbers 11:16; Ezekiel 8:11).⁷⁹ Like the earliest church, it features priests, deacons, and bishops. (The Reformation notion of the priesthood of all believers had clearly not yet arisen.) Before the departure of the apostles, the Christian movement possessed leaders whose authority was general, rather than local, who traveled throughout the world and among the branches of the church, giving their witness, bringing order, and resisting false doctrines. Thereafter, though we find a deep need for such general officers, there were none. The writings of the so-called “apostolic fathers,” the first literature from the post–New Testament church, are replete with appeals for unity from bishops and others who did not hold, and knew that they did not hold, the authority to bring such unity about.⁸⁰ The earliest Christian church enjoyed what are often called “the gifts of the spirit,” including ongoing prophecy and revelation for its guidance (for example, see Acts 10; 16:6–10).⁸¹ (The New Testament itself is evidence of the Christian movement’s consciousness of its right to add to the scriptural canon.) But prophecy died out in the early church. By about the middle of the second century, it was essentially gone.⁸²

Following the appearance of the Father and the Son to Joseph Smith in the spring of 1820, however, the claim of ongoing revelation became one of the notable characteristics of the movement he founded. Prophets and apostles are the general officers of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, presiding over local bishops and other leaders after the manner of early Christianity. Even the spec-

79. See also S. Kent Brown, “The Seventy in Scripture,” in *By Study and Also by Faith*, 1:25–45.

80. Exhortations to be loyal to local bishops are especially common and impassioned in the various epistles of St. Ignatius of Antioch (d. ca. AD 107)—that is, at an early age when the loss of apostolic direction was still acutely felt. See again Nibley, *Apostles and Bishops*.

81. Compare, for the general idea of spiritual gifts in the ancient church, 1 Corinthians 2:4; Galatians 3:5; and 1 Thessalonians 1:5.

82. See, for example, Eusebius, *Church History* 3.37.1; 5.17.1–4. The Montanist movement, in the second half of the second Christian century, represents both a protest against the loss of prophecy in the church and a failed attempt to bring it back. See Noel B. Reynolds, ed., *Early Christians in Disarray: Contemporary LDS Perspectives on the Christian Apostasy* (Provo, UT: FARMS and BYU Press, 2005).

tacular spiritual outpouring of Pentecost (Acts 2) had its analogue at the dedication of the temple in Kirtland, Ohio, in 1836.⁸³

“Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,” the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints demonstrably teaches doctrines today that reach back, in unique and (to its adherents) miraculous ways into ancient Christianity.⁸⁴ Although it lacks such later concepts as the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* (out of nothing), original sin, and the metaphysical or ontological Trinity preeminently associated with the Council of Nicea, the gospel as taught in the church today manifests several features that were lost after the earliest centuries of the Christian movement.⁸⁵ Edwin Hatch, in his famous 1888 Hibbert Lectures, remarked that

It is impossible for any one, whether he be a student of history or no, to fail to notice a difference of both form and content between the Sermon on the Mount and the Nicene Creed. The Sermon on the Mount is the promulgation of a new law of conduct; it assumes beliefs rather than formulates them; the theological conceptions which underlie it belong to the ethical rather than the speculative side of theology; metaphysics

83. See Milton V. Backman Jr., *The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio, 1830–1838* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983). At least two of the persons involved compared the revelation on priesthood, given in 1978, to the experience of the early Christians at Pentecost. See Leonard J. Arrington, *Adventures of a Church Historian* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 177; compare Bruce R. McConkie, “Day of Pentecost,” in *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 181–82. See also Steven C. Harper, “A Pentecost and Endowment Indeed: Six Eyewitness Accounts of the Kirtland Temple Experience,” in *Opening the Heavens*, 327–71. For notes on the restoration of spiritual gifts in the modern church, see Matthew B. Brown, *All Things Restored: Confirming the Authenticity of LDS Beliefs* (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2000), 133–57. Much, much more could be written on this topic.

84. General treatments of the specific issues that will be briefly discussed below, and many besides, include Hugh Nibley, *The World and the Prophets*, 3rd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1987); Hugh Nibley, *Mormonism and Early Christianity* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1987); Barry R. Bickmore, *Restoring the Ancient Church: Joseph Smith and Early Christianity* (Ben Lomond, CA: Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research, 1999).

85. Stephen D. Ricks, “Adam’s Fall in the Book of Mormon, Second Temple Judaism, and Early Christianity,” in *Disciple as Scholar*, 595–606.

are wholly absent. The Nicene Creed is a statement partly of historical facts and partly of dogmatic inferences; the metaphysical terms which it contains would probably have been unintelligible to the first disciples; ethics have no place in it. The one belongs to a world of Syrian peasants, the other to a world of Greek philosophers.

The contrast is patent. If any one thinks that it is sufficiently explained by saying that the one is a sermon and the other a creed, it must be pointed out in reply that the question why an ethical sermon stood in the forefront of the teaching of Jesus Christ, and a metaphysical creed in the forefront of the Christianity of the fourth century, is a problem which claims investigation.⁸⁶

Latter-day Saints see their church and its teachings as belonging to the world of the Sermon on the Mount, rather than to the later cosmos of the Nicene Creed. Indeed, it is quite helpful to regard the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as a community constituted, to a considerable extent, by a common memory—of scriptural stories (deriving from a substantially larger canon than that of surrounding Christendom) and of the stories of its own persecuted and heroic past. It is a community, by contrast to others, that is little inclined toward systematic theology.⁸⁷

Latter-day Saints practice baptism on behalf of the dead, just as some ancient Christians quite certainly did.⁸⁸ Their practice rests on a belief that the gospel is preached in the world of spirits to those who

86. Edwin Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity* (Gloucester, MA: Smith, 1970), 1.

87. Midgley, “To Remember and Keep,” 95–137; also Daniel C. Peterson, “What Has Athens to Do with Jerusalem?: Apostasy and Restoration in the Big Picture,” *FARMS Review of Books* 12/2 (2000): xi–lii.

88. See 1 Corinthians 15:29 for an oblique reference to the practice, clearly among Christians; also Nibley, “Two Ways to Remember the Dead,” in *The World and the Prophets*, 163–71; Hugh Nibley, “Baptism for the Dead in Ancient Times,” in *Mormonism and Early Christianity*, 100–167; John A. Tvedtnes, “Baptism for the Dead in Early Christianity,” in Parry and Ricks, *Temple in Time and Eternity*, 55–78. See, too, the important statement by the eminent Lutheran New Testament scholar and clergyman Krister Stendahl, “Baptism for the Dead: Ancient Sources,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1:97.

missed the opportunity to hear it in mortality—a belief that, very arguably, existed among ancient Christians as well.⁸⁹ Their patterns of temple worship strikingly echo ancient patterns from around the world, but particularly from the ancient Near East.⁹⁰ As Protestant scholar Harold Turner has observed with specific reference to Latter-day Saint sanctuaries and their ancient prototypes, temple architecture and temple functions are quite distinct from those of ordinary meetinghouses. Temples constitute set-apart spaces that are not equally accessible to all (and may even be shrouded in secrecy). They are oriented directionally, as well as to the worlds of the dead, the living, and the divine, and their designs are divinely revealed.⁹¹ Moreover,

89. For discussions of this subject, see Daniel C. Peterson, review of *Die Mormonen: Sekte oder neue Kirche Jesu Christi?* by Rüdiger Hauth, *FARMS Review of Books* 9/2 (1997): 131–39; John A. Tvedtnes, “The Dead Shall Hear the Voice,” *FARMS Review of Books* 10/2 (1998): 184–99. A Protestant philosopher suggests the possibility of a postmortem chance for those who have not heard the message of Christianity and specifically adduces Paul’s reference to baptism for the dead at 1 Corinthians 15:29, in Stephen T. Davis, *Risen Indeed: Making Sense of the Resurrection* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 159–65. See Jeffrey A. Trumbower, *Rescue for the Dead: The Posthumous Salvation of Non-Christians in Early Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), and Gaye Strathearn’s review of this book in “Did the Early Christian Church Seek Salvation for the Dead?” *FARMS Review* 16/1 (2004): 419–25; see also David L. Paulsen and Brent Alvord, “Joseph Smith and the Problem of the Unevangelized,” *FARMS Review* 17/1 (2005): 171–204.

90. For samples of a considerable and growing literature, see Truman G. Madsen, ed., *The Temple in Antiquity: Ancient Records and Modern Perspectives* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1984); John M. Lundquist, “Temple, Covenant, and Law in the Ancient Near East and in the Old Testament,” in *Israel’s Apostasy and Restoration*, 293–305; William J. Hamblin, “Aspects of an Early Christian Initiation Ritual,” in *By Study and Also by Faith*, 1:202–21; Hugh Nibley, *Temple and Cosmos: Beyond This Ignorant Present* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992); John M. Lundquist, *The Temple: Meeting Place of Heaven and Earth* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993); Donald W. Parry, ed., *Temples of the Ancient World* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994); Matthew B. Brown, *The Gate of Heaven: Insights on the Doctrines and Symbols of the Temple* (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 1999); Parry and Ricks, *Temple in Time and Eternity*; William J. Hamblin and David R. Seely, *Solomon’s Temple in History and Myth* (Thames and Hudson, forthcoming April 2007). Guy G. Stroumsa, *Hidden Wisdom: Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), offers a useful glimpse of early Christian esotericism.

91. See Harold W. Turner, *From Temple to Meeting House: The Phenomenology and Theology of Places of Worship* (New York: Mouton, 1979), 46. Directions for building the portable Israelite tabernacle and establishing its liturgy were given to Moses in great detail, as recorded in Exodus 25–31. First Chronicles 28:11–19 says that the plans for the

the temple embodies, in architectural form, the ancient notion of the cosmic mountain. It represents an avenue of ascent to the divine and sits upon a source of the waters of life.⁹²

Latter-day Saints believe that the “sealing power” to bind families and generations together in the temples was restored through a personal visitation of the Hebrew prophet Elijah to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland Temple during the period of the Jewish Passover, on 3 April 1836—which is to say, during the very period when Jewish families around the world had set chairs and utensils for his visit.⁹³

temple in Jerusalem were given by inspiration to David and passed on by him to his son Solomon. Specifications for the temple at Kirtland, Ohio, were given in at least two revelations received in 1833, including Doctrine and Covenants 94:3–9 and an interesting vision granted to the entire First Presidency of the church. For the latter, see Lyndon W. Cook, *The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith: A Historical and Biographical Commentary of the Doctrine and Covenants* (Provo, UT: Seventy’s Mission Bookstore, 1981), 197–98. Joseph Smith had also seen the original Nauvoo Illinois Temple in vision prior to its construction. See, for example, *History of the Church*, 6:196–97; also the mocking and dismissive account given in Josiah Quincy, *Figures of the Past: From the Leaves of Old Journals* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1883), 389; compare Doctrine and Covenants 124:25–44. The case of the Salt Lake Temple is similar. “I scarcely ever say much about revelations, or visions,” said Brigham Young in a sermon on 6 April 1853, “but suffice it to say, five years ago last July I was here, and saw in the Spirit the Temple not ten feet from where we have laid the Chief Corner Stone. I have not inquired what kind of a Temple we should build. Why? Because it was represented before me. I have never looked upon that ground, but the vision of it was there. I see it as plainly as if it was in reality before me.” See *Journal of Discourses*, 1:133. And the pattern holds true for the latest generation of temples. In the dedicatory prayer for the Colonia Juarez Chihuahua Temple on 6 March 1999, President Gordon B. Hinckley said, “It was here in Northern Mexico, that Thou didst reveal the idea and the plan of a smaller temple, complete in every necessary detail, but suited in size to the needs and circumstances of the Church membership in this area of Thy vineyard. That revelation came of a desire and a prayer to help Thy people of these colonies who have been true and loyal during the century and more that they have lived here.” The complete text of the prayer is readily available at www.ldschurchtemples.com/cgi-bin/prayers.cgi?colonia_juarez&operating (accessed 11 April 2006). For background information, see Dell Van Orden, “Inspiration Came for Smaller Temples on Trip to Mexico,” *Church News* (1 August 1998): 3.

92. John M. Lundquist, “The Common Temple Ideology of the Ancient Near East,” in Madsen, *Temple in Antiquity*, 53–76; Richard J. Clifford, “The Temple and the Holy Mountain,” in Madsen, *Temple in Antiquity*, 107–24; John M. Lundquist, “What Is a Temple? A Preliminary Typology,” in Parry, *Temples of the Ancient World*, 83–117.

93. But, again, Joseph Smith seems to have been unaware of the coincidence. At least, he never appears to have mentioned it, let alone to have attempted to capitalize upon

In their anthropomorphic view of God—holding him to be not only a personal being, but a corporeal or embodied one—Latter-day Saints clearly hold to an opinion that, while very much out of favor among mainstream theologians for many centuries now, was widely shared among the first generations of Christians.⁹⁴ “Ordinary Christians for at least the first three centuries of the current era commonly (and perhaps generally) believed God to be corporeal,” or embodied. “The belief was abandoned (and then only gradually) as Neoplatonism became more and more entrenched as the dominant world view of Christian thinkers.”⁹⁵

Anglican church historian Alan Richardson has argued that the theologians who produced such classical creeds as the famous Definition of Faith of the fifth-century Council of Chalcedon were overly influenced by contemporary philosophical fashions, and that, consequently, they exaggerated the gulf between humans and the divine. “God and man are fundamentally akin,” he writes.⁹⁶ Latter-day Saints agree with their ancient Christian forebears on this matter, and it is that belief that undergirds their most dramatic break with contemporary theological views—their doctrine, called the doctrine of “exaltation,” that humans,

it. It is also appropriate that Moses, during whose time and through whose prophetic ministry the Passover itself was instituted, appeared on the same occasion to restore the authority to direct the gathering of Israel (as alluded to above). See Stephen D. Ricks, “The Appearance of Elijah and Moses in the Kirtland Temple and the Jewish Passover,” *BYU Studies* 23/4 (1983): 483–86.

94. Edmond LaB. Cherbonnier, “In Defense of Anthropomorphism,” in *Reflections on Mormonism: Judaeo-Christian Parallels*, ed. Truman G. Madsen (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1978), 155–73; Roland J. Teske, “Divine Immutability in Saint Augustine,” *Modern Schoolman* 63 (May 1986): 233–49; David L. Paulsen, “Early Christian Belief in a Corporeal Deity: Origen and Augustine as Reluctant Witnesses,” *Harvard Theological Review* 83/2 (1990): 105–16; David L. Paulsen, “The Doctrine of Divine Embodiment: Restoration, Judeo-Christian, and Philosophical Perspectives,” *BYU Studies* 35/4 (1995–96): 6–94; Daniel C. Peterson, “On the Motif of the Weeping God in Moses 7,” in *Revelation, Reason, and Faith: Essays in Honor of Truman G. Madsen*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2002), 285–317; and Carl W. Griffin and David L. Paulsen, “Augustine and the Corporeality of God,” *Harvard Theological Review* 95/1 (2002): 97–118.

95. Paulsen, “Early Christian Belief in a Corporeal Deity,” 105.

96. Alan Richardson, *Creeds in the Making: A Short Introduction to the History of Christian Doctrine* (1935; repr., London: SCM, 1990), 86; see, generally, 85–88.

being children of God, have the potential of becoming like their Father. In the ancient church, this doctrine (or one very like it) was given the Greek name *theosis*. It was very widespread.⁹⁷

Speaking of the Latter-day concept, the late German Lutheran historian Ernst Benz commented,

One can think what one wants of this doctrine of progressive deification, but one thing is certain: with this anthropology Joseph Smith is closer to the view of man held by the Ancient Church than the precursors of the Augustinian doctrine of original sin were, who considered the thought of such a substantial connection between God and man as *the* heresy, par excellence.⁹⁸

For these and many other reasons, Latter-day Saints rejoice in their church, the doctrines it teaches, and the ordinances it administers as restorations of what was had among the saints of early Christianity and the patriarchs and prophets of ancient Israel. They recall the words of the apostle Peter, spoken at the temple in Jerusalem:

And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:

97. For some references and commentary, see Keith E. Norman, “Deification: The Content of Athanasian Soteriology” (PhD diss., Duke University, 1980); now reprinted as *FARMS Occasional Papers* 1/1 (2000); and Jordan Vajda, “‘Partakers of the Divine Nature’: A Comparative Analysis of Patristic and Mormon Doctrines of Divinization” (master’s thesis, Graduate Theological Union, 1998); now reprinted as *FARMS Occasional Papers* 3 (2002). Daniel C. Peterson, “‘Ye Are Gods’: Psalm 82 and John 10 as Witnesses to the Divine Nature of Humankind,” in *Disciple as Scholar*, 471–594. See also the references given at Daniel C. Peterson and Stephen D. Ricks, *Offenders for a Word: How Anti-Mormons Play Word Games to Attack the Latter-day Saints* (1992; repr. Provo, UT: FARMS, 1998), 75–92. The Latter-day Saint doctrine of “eternal progression” manifests unmistakable affinities with the “irenaean” view of the afterlife—the term is derived from the name of the great second-century bishop of Lyons, St. Irenaeus—identified by John H. Hick, *Death and Eternal Life* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1976), 47–48.

98. Ernst W. Benz, “*Imago Dei*: Man in the Image of God,” in *Reflections on Mormonism: Judaeo-Christian Parallels*, ed. Truman G. Madsen (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1978), 215–16; and “*Imago dei*: Man as the Image of God,” trans. Alan F. Keele, *FARMS Review* 17/1 (2005): 250.

Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. (Acts 3:20–21)

In their view, the restoration, which began with Joseph Smith's vision of the Father and the Son in a grove of trees near Palmyra, New York, in 1820, is a harbinger of the eventual second advent of the Savior and Son of God, Jesus Christ:

And when these things come to pass . . . 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 21:7)

