

Joseph Smith: Prophecy, Process, and Plenitude

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Joseph Smith was an explorer, a discoverer, and a revealer of past worlds. He described an ancient America replete with elaborate detail and daring specificity, rooted and grounded in what he claimed were concrete, palpable artifacts. He recuperated texts of Adam, Abraham, Enoch, and Moses to resurrect and reconstitute a series of past patriarchal ages, not as mere shadows and types of things to come, but as dispensations of gospel fullness equaling, and in some cases surpassing, present plenitude. And he revealed an infinitely receding premortal past—not of the largely mythic Platonic variety and not a mere Wordsworthian, sentimental intimation—but a fully formed realm of human intelligences, divine parents, and heavenly councils.

My topic focuses first on this process of recovery, not its products. That will lead me to say a few things about the cumulative meaning for Joseph Smith of the past, of the worlds he discovered.

One of the great challenges in dealing with Joseph Smith, historically, has been the difficulty of meeting him on his own terms. More than anything else, Joseph labored to free himself from the burdens of theological convention, intellectual decorum, and—perhaps most especially—the phobia of trespassing across sacred boundaries. Although several attempts have been made to situate Joseph with respect to the paradigm shift of the early nineteenth century that we

call Romanticism, these efforts have still failed to fully appreciate Joseph and to meet him in the context of what we could call Romantic discourse. From Jean Jacques Rousseau's meandering "Reveries" to Samuel Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" and other partial dream-visions, to Schlegel's literary magazine, *Athenaeum Fragments*, the entire era was dominated (in literature but also in music and even landscape) by images of the remnant, the fragment, the ruin, the shard. Such indications of tentativeness, of searching exploration, or of residual hints and vestiges reaffirmed the Romantics in their refusal to ever see writing as final, utterance as complete, or discursive thought as definitive. Systematization is, in this regard, stultifying, deadening, and almost always derivative. "I must create my own system," insisted the mercurial William Blake, "or be enslaved by another man's."¹ The dynamic, active, ongoing *process* of creating meaning is primary to the Romantics—not the finality or polish of the final product.

Like Blake, Joseph Smith almost always put himself in an agonistic, if not antagonistic, relationship to all prior systems. Consistent with other Romantic thinkers from Malthus to Hegel to Darwin, Joseph believed that struggle, opposition, and contestation are not just the essence of personal probation and growth but also describe an intellectual dynamic that moves us ahead in our quest for understanding. "I am like a huge, rough stone rolling down from a high mountain," Joseph said, "and the only polishing I get is when some corner gets rubbed off by coming in contact with something else, striking with accelerated force against religious bigotry, priestcraft, . . . the authority of perjured executives . . . and corrupt men and women."² These words are not a description just of his character development, but also a delineation of his intellectual modus operandi—exploring the limits, challenging conventional categories, and engaging dynamically with the boundaries, all in the interest of productive provocation. Or as he said more simply, shortly before his death, "By proving contraries, truth is made manifest."³

Let me illustrate this epistemology in the case of Joseph Smith. Joseph paid as much attention to the process of true religion as to the content. I have argued elsewhere that the Book of Mormon is the prime instance of this.⁴ The history of that scripture's reception clearly demonstrates that the Book of Mormon was both valued and reviled

for the same reason: not its content, but its dramatic enactment of the principle of continuing revelation and an open canon.

I think it is clear that Joseph considered this process, not the particulars revealed thereby, as the cardinal contribution of his calling. So did his closest associates. On New Year's Day 1844, Parley P. Pratt published Mormonism's first piece of fiction in the *New York Herald*. It was a comic dialogue entitled "Joseph Smith and the Devil." In this humorous but earnest piece, the devil insists to the Prophet Joseph that contrary to popular beliefs, he, the devil, really is in favor of "all creeds, systems and forms of Christianity, of whatever name and nature; so long as they leave out that abominable doctrine which caused me so much trouble in former times, and which, after slumbering for ages, you have again revived; I mean the doctrine of direct communication with God."⁵

Certainly what Joseph revealed was important—and frequently revolutionary. A quick overview of his teachings on God and man, for instance, shows not just eruptions of novelty, but a thoroughgoing endeavor to overturn the most sacred tenets of cultural Christianity. He summarily repudiated the God of the creeds by preaching a deity who has a body, parts, and passions. Then he—almost cursorily—evaluated, dismissed, and reconceptualized answers to the three great questions of human existence. First, where do we come from? St. Augustine asked the question, "Did my infancy follow some earlier age of life? Before I was in my mother's womb, was I anywhere? Was I anyone?"⁶ But Augustine gave it up as a great unknown. Second, what is our nature and purpose? "What could be worse pride," Augustine asks in bitter self-reproach, "than the incredible folly in which I asserted that I was by nature what You are?"⁷ Contrast this with Joseph's emphasis on innocence, freedom, agency, accountability, liberty—these are the words that filled Joseph's mind, while other religionists were painting a portrait of "utter depravity," "corrupted nature," inherited guilt, predestination, and determinism. Not just Christendom, but as Louis Menand writes, "almost every nineteenth-century system of [Western] thought" was haunted by fatalism, mechanical or materialist determinism.⁸ Third, where are we going? In reference to the final judgment, Joseph writes in the "Olive Leaf" revelation, "And they who remain shall also be quickened; nevertheless, they shall return again to

their own place, to enjoy that which they are willing to receive, because they were not willing to enjoy that which they might have received" (*Doctrine and Covenants* 88:32). The question he poses to the human family is, what are we willing to receive? The divine potential of human destiny is limited only by our own unwillingness to receive the infinite opportunities God lays before us—even godhood itself.

Human acceptance of the serpent's invitation to "be as gods" (*Genesis* 3:5), according to the commentators, was the primal instance of human sinfulness. This audacity was likewise the most heinous of all human evils in Dante's catalog of evil. So profoundly wrong was it, his angelic guide explained, that "man, in his limits, could not recompense: / for no obedience, no humility, / he offered later could have been so deep / that it could match the heights he meant to reach / through disobedience."⁹ As one of Dante's editors paraphrases, "Only the act of infinite humility whereby Christ became incarnate and suffered the Passion, could compensate for the infinite presumptuousness of man."¹⁰ This fearsome presumption is what motivated an entire tradition of indignation. Jonathan Edwards, echoing Dante's horror, found "human rebellion against such perfection [holiness that was infinitely beyond human standards] so infinitely evil as to warrant eternal punishment."¹¹ Only Lucifer's attempted emulation of deity ("I will be like the most High" [*Isaiah* 14:14]) can equal, even as it foreshadowed, such titanic insolence.

I rehearse these specific examples, not to establish a basis for appraisal or a historical context, but to emphasize their common denominator: the ongoing elaboration of theological positions that stood in dramatic juxtaposition—in audacious or brash or blasphemous opposition some would say—to the status quo. Joseph knew that it was this collapse of sacred distance, the enunciation of the forbidden, the articulation of the ineffable, the concretization of the abstract, and the invasion of sacred space, that characterized both the bane and boon of his calling. In a letter to his attorney, Mr. Butterfield, he wrote,

I stated that the most prominent difference in sentiment between the Latter-day Saints and sectarians was, that the latter were all circumscribed by some peculiar creed, which deprived its members the privilege of believing anything not contained therein, whereas

the Latter-day Saints have no creed, but are ready to believe all true principles that exist, as they are made manifest from time to time.¹²

This resistance to formal creeds, to a closed canon, and to conventional opinion are all so many versions of resistance to finality, to fixity, or what he called “circumscription”—being bound and hemmed in by orthodoxy. Elsewhere, he declared that “the first and fundamental principle of our holy religion” is to be free “to embrace all, and every item of truth, without limitation or without being circumscribed or prohibited by the creeds or superstitious notions of men, or by the dominations of one another.”¹³

But Joseph also recognized that the agonistic nature of his thinking was beyond the capacity of even his followers to fully absorb:

But there has been a great difficulty in getting anything into the heads of this generation. It has been like splitting hemlock knots with a corn-dodger for a wedge, and a pumpkin for a beetle. Even the Saints are slow to understand.

I have tried for a number of years to get the minds of the Saints prepared to receive the things of God; but we frequently see some of them, after suffering all they have for the work of God, will fly to pieces like glass as soon as anything comes that is contrary to their traditions: they cannot stand the fire at all.¹⁴

At other times and places Joseph similarly hinted that he was constrained by a world, and even a following, that was unwilling, or incapable, of countenancing his ever-growing audacity, heterodoxy, and innovation.

To one of his friends, he lamented that “he did not enjoy the right vouchsafed to every American citizen—that of free speech. He said that when he ventured to give his private opinion on any subject of importance, his words were often garbled and their meaning twisted, and then given out as the word of the Lord because they came from him.”¹⁵ His insistence that his pronouncements did not always carry prophetic weight was not just a safety net or convenient means of prudent retreat. It meant that the process, the ongoing, dynamic engagement, the exploring, questing, and provoking dialectical encounter with tradition, with boundaries, and with normative thinking should not be trammeled or impeded with clerks and

scribes looking for a final word, interrupting a productive process of reflection, contestation, and creation. Sometimes, it would appear, he merely wanted the privilege of thinking out loud, but that is difficult when surrounded by court stenographers with their sharpened pencils. I imagine, in this regard, he would have seconded the memorable protest of Virginia Woolf: “I should never be able to fulfill what is, I understand, the first duty of a lecturer—to hand you after an hour’s discourse a nugget of pure truth to wrap up between the pages of your notebooks and keep on the mantel-piece for ever.”¹⁶

A study of Joseph Smith seems to always come back to the dynamics of the revelatory process, rather than the finality of a polished product; the structure of his thinking, rather than the end result of his thought. One of these dynamics in particular has enormous repercussions for a philosophy of history and for Joseph’s recovery of both past and future worlds. I am referring to Joseph’s integration of the divine into the historical, and the historical into the divine, a process that could be said to have begun when he experienced his first epiphany in the woods of upstate New York. Of course, any personal encounter with God represents a collapse of sacred distance, an intersection of the transcendent, the heavenly, and the divine, with the personal, the earthly, and the human. But Joseph inaugurated a pattern that would increasingly intensify the collapse of those two domains, creating in the process a radical reconceptualization of sacred history. As he translated the Book of Mormon, he found several things about the experience to be the subjects of ancient holy writ, including his own role in the process, the commencing rise of the restored church, and even the particulars of his friend Martin Harris’s visit to Columbia professor Charles Anthon. Scriptural mythology became historical script. When he reached the account of Christ’s visit to the Nephites inhabiting ancient America, the episode recontextualized the Incarnation itself. That divine condescension into mortality—the primary miracle of Christian history whereby the full eruption of the divine into human history is a unique event, producing a spate of mythic reverberations—became in Joseph Smith’s expanding vision only one of an extensive series of historical iterations, evidence of the complete and literal interfusion of the human by the divine.

This development pushes us in a direction opposite the dominant trend of modernity described by the religious scholar Wilfred Cantwell Smith. “With the relatively recent rise in Western consciousness . . . of the new sense of history,” he writes, “and the (consequent?) careful and rigorous distinction between history and myth, . . . what happened by and large was that the West opted for history and rejected myth.” Regarding a scriptural event like the earth’s creation, for example, he writes, “We may recognize now that the problem . . . [is] the notion that one is dealing here with historical time, rather than mythical time.”¹⁷ But with Joseph, *all we have* is historical time—but it is transformed into a dimension that extends infinitely in both directions.

Joseph understood the prophetic role in ways that furthered this project. We have been raised to believe that archaeologists and textual scholars recover history and the determinate and earthy past, while the future—eschatology in particular—is the province of prophets and visionaries. The Day of Judgment and millennial events are the stuff of faith and shadow. But from the day Joseph relied upon prophetic authority and sacred artifacts to recover the words and deeds of Nephi, a sixth-century-BC Israelite who migrated to the western hemisphere and founded a civilization, he elided the enormous psychological and experiential distance that separated the down-to-earth world from the metaphysical.

C. S. Lewis has suggested the enormous psychological investment we have in maintaining the fundamental distinction of separating the human and the divine and hints at the crisis their conflation would occasion:

[When] the distinction between natural and supernatural . . . [breaks] down, . . . one realise[s] how great a comfort it had been—how it had eased the burden of intolerable strangeness which this universe imposes on us by dividing it into two halves and encouraging the mind never to think of both in the same context. What price we may have paid for this comfort in the way of false security and accepted confusion of thought is another matter.¹⁸

Joseph Smith did not allow us such comfortable dichotomizing.

I want to move in another direction now and discuss the totality of his thought—conceived not exactly as system, for he was not a systematic thinker, and he does not present us with enough materials

to fashion a comprehensive theology. But I think we can nonetheless say something about what all of his thinking and revealing and speculating was tending toward. If we trace out briefly the evolution of Joseph's prophetic career, we can mark a decisive turn sometime in 1830. When he went to that grove as a fourteen-year-old youth, he was only asking a private question in a personal prayer. And what he found was, he thought, a revelation of purely personal significance. As he said to his mother, "I have learned for myself that [such and such a church] is not true" (Joseph Smith-History 1:20). He had no clear intimation of future projects and heavenly callings. It was not until he was seventeen that he tells of an angel of light appearing in his room, telling him that God had a work for him to do. That work, as he soon learned, was the translation of the Book of Mormon. It would appear as he labored on that project that he still did not dream of any greater calling or mission. It was not until March 1829, just a few months before he finished that considerable task, that the Lord first mentioned to Joseph, "the beginning of the rising up and the coming forth of [his] church out of the wilderness" (Doctrine and Covenants 5:14).

Accordingly in April 1830, Joseph complied with that directive and organized a church. But even then he did not know that this church was not just another restorationist congregation with a few dozen members and a new revelation. He had yet to learn that this church, so called, was to become much more. And so it was that in December after that humble meeting of six men and onlookers in Fayette, Joseph was commanded to gather his followers and actually "assemble together at the Ohio" (Doctrine and Covenants 37:3). Thus it came to pass that the "little flock" (Doctrine and Covenants 6:34) was now set on the path to become a people, the kingdom of God on earth, the rock cut without hand from a mountain that would roll forth and fill the earth.

But as his religious sphere of influence grew, so did his revelatory scope. Joseph Smith initially conceived of the Book of Mormon as "a record of a fallen people" (Doctrine and Covenants 20:9). It was presented to the world, in the first generation of the church especially, as a history of the American Indian. Its status as sacred scripture depended, first, on the fact that it was written by ancient prophets as sacred history, and second, on the fact that it bore the modern traces of the sacred, manifest through its miraculous transmission

and translation. Its relationship to the Bible evolved and continues to do so. Originally, the Book of Mormon derived much of its authoritative weight *from* the Bible. But at the same time, of course, the elevation of the Book of Mormon to scriptural status challenges the supremacy, the uniqueness, and most importantly, the sufficiency of the Bible. The implications of that realignment deserve a second look. The principle of *sola scriptura* (the Bible as the only and sufficient ground for authority) is clearly undermined by the Book of Mormon. But that heretical affront to the Bible's status—to the Bible's function as source and guarantor of orthodoxy—may have distracted many from exploring how, in Joseph's mind, that process of dethronement and realignment finished playing out.

As a youth of seventeen, when visited by the angel Moroni, Joseph recorded that the heavenly messenger in his room was quoting to him passages from the Old Testament but “with a little variation from the way [they read] in our Bibles” (Joseph Smith–History 1:36). True, as all discussions of this episode suggest, at this point Joseph would have become aware of the imperfection or fallibility of the King James Version. But I wonder if another seed was planted at this time, suggesting to his mind not just the deficiency of the known biblical text but also the possibility of an unknown text, one cited casually by heavenly messengers. Clearly, it would seem the angel was quoting something, of which the Bible was apparently an imperfect version or derivation.

Conventional notions of a Christian apostasy—or falling away from Christian truth—began with the premise that Christ had established his true church in Palestine, only to have errors and corruptions creep in with the passage of time. In the course of the Reformation, the question was only how far those corruptions extended and how drastic the required remedies were.¹⁹ But in the course of measuring current institutions against past incarnations of truth, those of a more liberal disposition asked how much a just God might have revealed to the ancients. Some posited that foreshadowing and fragments of the true gospel were evident among a variety of peoples scattered through time. Jonathan Edwards, like many of the Church Fathers, believed that God had in fact imparted to several ancient peoples essential gospel truths that were subsequently lost. Much

earlier, Augustine expressed a version of this idea when he wrote in his *Retractions*, “What is now called Christian religion has existed among the ancients, and was not absent from the beginning of the human race.”²⁰ While smatterings of eternal principles emerged in the religions and philosophies of antiquity, adherents of this line of reasoning held that only the Bible represented the full and complete account of God’s revelation. (Speaking of the Jews, for instance, a commentator contemporary with Edwards wrote that “we have the gospel as well as they [had], and in greater purity.”²¹)

Prisca theologia (ancient wisdom), as this doctrine has been labeled, or “fulfillment theology” as variations of the doctrine are called in recent formulations, were useful both to account for prevalent archetypes (such as animal sacrifice and the idea of a divine incarnation) that could otherwise impugn the uniqueness and hence the validity of Christian doctrines and to assert God’s justice and mercy in dispensing truth to Christian, Jew, and pagan alike. But whereas previous thinkers had emphasized the fragmentary nature of prior revelation and its final consummation in modern scripture, Joseph pushed the principle of *prisca theologia* in the other direction. “From what we can draw from the Scriptures relative to the teaching of heaven,” he said, “we are induced to think that much instruction has been given to man since the beginning *which we do not possess now*.²²

Joseph’s production of the Book of Mormon was the most conspicuous embodiment of this challenge to biblical sufficiency; the new scripture itself hammered home the message of God’s word as endlessly iterated and endlessly proliferating. As God declared in Nephi’s account, “I shall speak unto the Jews and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the Nephites and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the other tribes of the house of Israel . . . and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto all nations of the earth and they shall write it” (2 Nephi 29:12). But before Joseph even finished the translation, a most enigmatic revelation suggested that Joseph’s paradigm was undergoing another dramatic revision. In April 1829, he produced “a translated version of the record made on parchment” by John the Beloved (Doctrine and Covenants 7, section heading). No matter that Joseph never claimed to have the parchment itself, or that the content of the record was not theologically significant

(except insofar as it turned the *myth* of John's reputed immortality into the *history* of John's immortality). It was, again, what this fragmentary puzzle piece was suggestive of: the incompleteness of the biblical record and the corresponding totality of something that Joseph was moving toward.

Mere months after publishing the Book of Mormon, Joseph even more emphatically reversed the Christian arrow of time, with its consummation in a totalizing biblical revelation and Christian dispensation, when he recast the Mosaic narrative of Adam as one in which the patriarch of the human race was the first Christian proselyte. God himself, Joseph wrote in this restoration of ancient scripture,

called upon our father Adam by his own voice, saying: . . . If thou wilt turn unto me, . . . and repent of all thy transgressions, and be baptized . . . in the name of mine Only Begotten Son, . . . 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. (Moses 6:51–52)

This Book of Moses was unlike anything Joseph had until then produced. In contrast to the Book of Mormon, it was not rooted in a recovered ancient record. And unlike his many other revelations, it was not God speaking to his heart and mind. It was a verbal facsimile, but of what original? At this same moment in time, Joseph embarked upon a translation of the Old Testament, and later the New, but it was a translation again without any original to which he had access. He used no ancient manuscripts. Two years later, he received an elaborate revelation long honored with the simple designation “the Vision,” which detailed the kingdoms of glory in the hereafter. It was, Joseph wrote significantly of the document he dictated, “a transcript from the records of the eternal world.”²³ One year later, in a similar manner, Joseph recorded an excerpt of quotations from a first-person account written by John—yet another record that Joseph quotes from that he did not possess himself (Doctrine and Covenants 93:6–17).

A few years later, Joseph pushed the temporal parameters of the gospel even further back when he recounted in the writings of Abraham the foundational events that occurred in the Great

Council in Heaven—a scriptural production apparently inspired by, but apparently not translated directly from, ancient papyri. The particulars of these Abrahamic writings—like the recuperated Genesis material, including an account of Enoch, and also the Zenos parable from the Book of Mormon and missing writings of the apostle John—need to be evaluated on their own terms, but it is simply the grand project, the intimated master blueprint, that constitutes a major idea in its own right. The cumulative weight of these experiences seems to have created in Joseph’s mind a major paradigm shift, a wholesale inversion of the traditional model of biblical fullness and *prisca theologia*. Rather than finding in the pagans and ancients foreshadowing and tantalizing hints of God’s revelation, which would culminate in the Christian canon, Joseph worked, with growing momentum, backwards and outwards. He gradually conceived of his objective as nothing less than to point us in the direction—through the assemblage of the myriad worlds he revealed—of a gospel plenitude that transcended, preceded, and subsumed any and all earthly incarnations, the Bible included. This vision or intimation of what I would call an “Ur-Text” induced him to transgress linguistic, religious, and other boundaries in its pursuit.²⁴

This text was not only immanent in Joseph’s thought; it is in fact a powerful and prominent image in the scriptural canon itself. Only eleven verses into the Book of Mormon, Lehi is bidden by Christ to take a book and read, from which book he then reads and sees “many great and marvelous things” (1 Nephi 1:14), which give him a knowledge of the future, horror at human wickedness, and rejoicing in God’s mercy. Likewise Ezekiel is given a book, which he is commanded to eat (Ezekiel 2:8–10) as is John the Revelator (Revelation 10). Joseph’s enterprise thus takes literally the implications of these scriptural images. Since those books precede, rather than follow from, the canonical record, Joseph works backwards in quest of the wholeness they represent.

In this context, one begins to see why Joseph’s thoughts appear undisciplined and unsystematic. His major project was not the correction or enunciation of particular theological principles but the complete reconceptualization of the scope and sweep of gospel parameters themselves. The burden that he bequeathed to posterity

was an array of remarkable, tantalizing texts with consistent themes, motifs, and patterns that emerge in a whole series of entire worlds recovered from the past: premortal realms, councils in heaven, Nephite and Jaredite civilizations, an Adamic gospel dispensation, Enoch's life and ministry, Mosaic epiphanies, and weeping Gods. One searches for a vocabulary adequate to such endlessly proliferating layers of time and being, beckoning us to imagine a totality that they all share.

The remaining question is: how do the particulars of Joseph's past worlds hold up? If his collapse of the sacred into the temporal is to succeed, if we are to see his project as truly historical rather than as simply mythic, then ultimately, the worlds of the Nephites and Jaredites and of Enoch, like the words of Adam and Abraham and Moses and John that he recovered, cannot resist examination as the historical records they purport to be.

Only now, with the passage of two hundred years or more, may we have enough distance from the career of Joseph Smith to adequately assess his contributions. This is not alone because of the advantages of hindsight and historical perspective or of the development of critical tools and disciplinary sophistication adequate to the task. These are all important aids. But in the case of Joseph Smith, one simply has to step back from a canvas as large as the one he painted.

Notes

1. William Blake, *Jerusalem* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1964).
2. Joseph Smith Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 5:401 (hereafter cited as *History of the Church*).
3. *History of the Church*, 6:428.
4. Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). See especially pages 66–82.
5. Parley P. Pratt, “A Dialogue Between Joseph Smith and the Devil,” *New York Herald* (January 1, 1844), reprinted in Richard H. Cracroft and Neal E. Lambert, *A Believing People: Literature of the Latter-day Saints* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1974), 34.

6. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. F. J. Sheed, rev. ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), 1:vi.
7. Augustine, *Confessions*, 4:xv.
8. Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001), 371.
9. Dante Alighieri, *Paradiso*, trans. Allen Mandelbaum (New York: Bantam, 1984), Canto 7:97–101.
10. Dante, *Paradiso*, 335.
11. George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 112.
12. *History of the Church*, 5:215.
13. Dean C. Jessee, ed. and comp., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (1984; repr., Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2002), 458.
14. *History of the Church*, 6:184–85.
15. Hyrum L. Andrus and Helen Mae Andrus, *They Knew the Prophet: Personal Accounts from over 100 People Who Knew Joseph Smith* (American Fork, Utah: Covenant Communications, 2004), 140.
16. Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1989), 4.
17. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, “The Study of Religion and the Study of the Bible,” in *Rethinking Scripture: Essays from a Comparative Perspective*, ed. Miriam Levering (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 26.
18. C. S. Lewis, *Perelandra* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 11.
19. It became imperative, for instance, “to distinguish between corrupt Churches & false Churches,” since, as the non-separating Puritans would argue, “the corruption of a thing doth not nullify a thing.” Francis J. Bremer, *John Winthrop: America's Forgotten Founding Father* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 199.
20. Augustine, *Retractions*, 1.13, cited in Gerald R. McDermott, “Jonathan Edwards, John Henry Newman, and Non-Christian Religions,” paper delivered at the American Society of Church History Meeting, Yale University, New Haven, Conn., March 31, 2001.
21. Matthew Henry's *Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1961), 1914. The glossed verse is Hebrews 4:2. A board of non-Conformist ministers wrote the commentary on the epistles after Henry's death in 1714.
22. Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 61, emphasis added.
23. *History of the Church*, 1:252.
24. Hugh Nibley has used this term in the context of temple rituals, when he referred to “a God-given Urtext which has come down to the present day in many more or less corrupt forms.” See his “What Is a Temple?” in *The Prophetic Book of Mormon*, volume 8 of the Collected Works of Hugh Nibley (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book; Provo, Utah: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS], 1989), 215.