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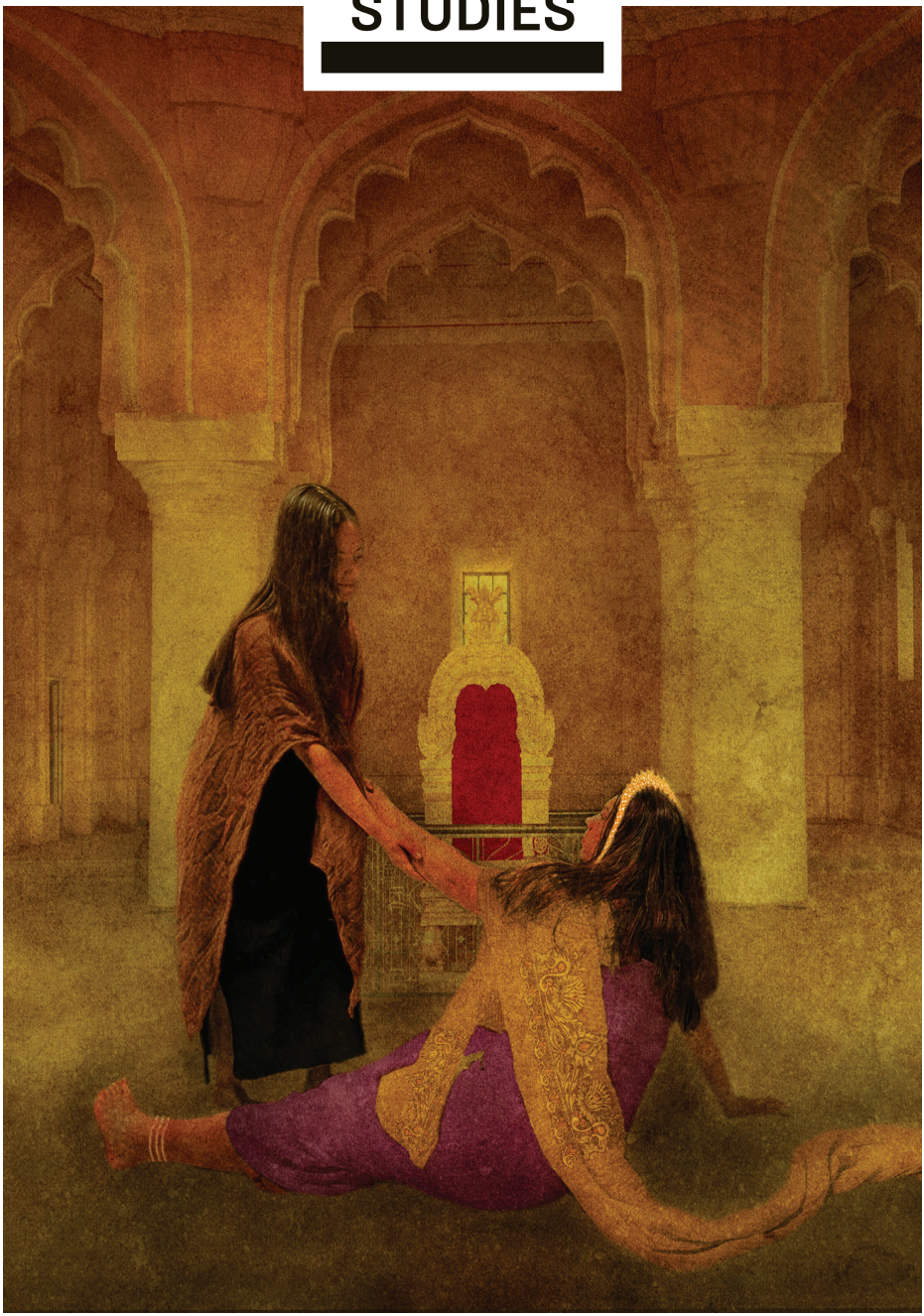

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Lamoni's Queen—"He Stretched Forth His Hand unto the Woman" by James H. Fullmer. Used by permission.

Practical Faith for the Real World

Reading *As If,* Believing *As If*

Kylie Turley

A few years ago, I was talking with some friends about the Book of Mormon. Actually, if you know me much at all, then you know that those last five words are unnecessary. Of course I was talking about the Book of Mormon. My children have been known to complain that the Book of Mormon is all I talk about. But let's continue the story: One of my friends indicated that we "cannot read the Book of Mormon down to the word level." She insisted that it was just not possible to read it "as if individual words are meaningful."

I listened until she paused. Then I said, "That has not been my experience."

My friend explained how she thought the translation process worked, and why the authoritative people supported the theory she was advocating. She ended by restating her original opinion that "you simply cannot read down to the word level."

As mildly as I could, I restated my original response, "That has not been my experience."

When my friend began to explain again—this time with emphatic gestures and vigorous diction—I figured it was time to slip away. I could see she was not suddenly going to ask, "And, Kylie, what has your experience been with the Book of Mormon?" Ironically, I find her assessment of translation theories to be fairly persuasive; her ideas make sense. Nevertheless, I cannot say, "I am convinced! My personal experience is wrong!" That is because my study of the Book of Mormon has convinced me—time and time again—of the opposite: Not only *can* I study down to the word level, I *should*.

I believe that I praise God and his son Jesus Christ, who is named the Word,[1] by reading as carefully and attentively as I can. Far from falling apart under such scrutiny, the Book of Mormon has instead flourished in amazing and wonderful ways. That is my experience. And that is how I came to my (self-assigned) challenge in this speech.[2] I have two aims: (1) to discuss faith by explaining what I have learned from reading the story of King Lamoni's wife, and (2) to show you how careful reading brought me to that understanding of faith. By the end, I hope you will note not only the content (faith) but also the process by which I reached this content. I hope you will notice that this discussion of faith is the byproduct of "reading small"; that is to say, I think there is much to learn about faith by reading slowly and carefully, by (in the words of my friend) "reading down to the word level." One of the Book of Mormon's purposes is to "show" its messages to the intended audiences (title page). As most any first-year writing student can explain, it is a very different thing to *show* rather than to *tell.* Thus, my plan is to *tell* you about faith and to *show* you how to read at a word level.

Exceeding Faith

In the story of King Lamoni, Ammon praises the queen's "exceeding faith," claiming that "there has not been such great faith among all the people of the Nephites" (Alma 19:10). Does anyone else find this statement confusing? The source is Ammon! The Ammon who sees angels, who leads a missionary expedition to the land of enemies and bitter dissenters, and who fights sheep-stealing brigands single-handedly. Is the queen's "exceeding faith" merely another example of Ammon's enthusiasm?[3] Is "exceeding faith" an appropriate way to address the sorrow (and most likely the denial) overwhelming a recent widow?

If faith is the question, most members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints know where to find the answer: Alma 32. That chapter is Alma's famous sermon to the Zoramites about faith and the metaphoric planting of seeds. If the seeds sprout, the metaphor continues with the tending of the seedling until it grows into a tree. This growth

1. See, for example, John 1:1; Alma 32:28, 41; 33:23; and Doctrine and Covenants 93:8.

2. This essay was originally a lecture given on November 1, 2024, as part of the Wonder of Scripture lecture series sponsored by the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship and held at Brigham Young University.

3. Examples of Ammon's expressive, exaggerated language: "I desire to dwell among this people . . . perhaps until the day I die" (Alma 17:23); "I know that I am nothing" (Alma 26:12); "I cannot say the smallest part which I feel" (Alma 26:16).

process is what Alma uses to explain his idea that "faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things." Lacking perfect knowledge leaves people in a position to "hope for things which are not seen, which are true" (Alma 32:21). When Ammon says the queen has faith, what is he saying? What does the queen's faith have to do with Alma's words? Does wishing one's husband is alive relate to planting seeds and seed growth? Is faith a seed that the queen needs to plant? Or is faith the work of planting? What is the difference between the queen's faith and a "perfect knowledge of things" (Alma 32:2)? What *things*? Any *things?* Why does Alma say that faith is "not *to have* a perfect knowledge" rather than simply saying "faith is not perfect knowledge"? And then he says that "if ye have faith, ye hope for things"? Is "hoping for things" equated with faith? Or is it an outgrowth of having faith? And there are those *things* again. Why *things*? This definition may not be as helpful as we thought.

Even a quick perusal of Alma 32:21 demonstrates why this definition confuses some modern readers, just as it confused Alma's ancient listeners. Alma's direct audience in the Book of Mormon wondered "how they should plant the seed, or the word of which he had spoken" (Alma 33:1). Do readers feel similarly? What does Alma's definition of faith mean, and what does it have to do with the queen and her faith?

Alma's definition and Ammon's comment to the queen need something more if they are going to work together and help us understand faith. While Ammon's comment to the queen is embedded in Alma 19, the whole story spreads beyond a single chapter to involve modern-day chapters Alma 17–20 (original chapter Alma XII).[4] It is within Alma 18:42 and 18:43 that we find a tiny, two-word phrase, *as if.* This tiny phrase seems to be the missing element. When Alma's definition is connected to *as if,* and also to this Lamanite queen's conversion narrative, we find a faith that is active, rational, agentive, and relational—and that faith involves a deliberate choice to act *as if.* Readers who do not notice *as if* are unlikely to see that what Alma calls faith defines precisely what is going on in the queen's story. If readers will combine *as if,* the story of the queen, and Alma's definition of faith, they will see that the three inter-define each other, working together to explain faith better than any one of them does alone. Together, they explain a practical, lived, *as if* faith—and that faith has some surprising implications.

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4. The Book of Mormon had different chapter breaks when it was first published. The "original" chapter breaks are more narrative-based and tend to be longer than modern stories. When I refer to the "queen's conversion narrative," I am referring to modern day chapters Alma 17–20. It is within Alma 18 that we find *as if* used twice.

The deliberate choice to act *as if* allows what is hoped for to become—or to remain—real. It explains why more faith will not make more things happen more quickly, why a fleeting thought of doubt has little impact on faith, and why, contrary to what many assume, disbelief—not faith—can be a self-fulfilling prophecy with a predictable outcome.

Definitions and Beginnings

The phrase "as if"[5] is used fifty times in the Book of Mormon, and despite its small size, it can carry a heavy load. For example, the phrase can be used for exclamatory statements of disbelief. Some of us may be thinking of Alicia Silverstone's use in the movie *Clueless,*[6] while a few others may be thinking of the use found in Isaiah 10:15. (Is this the first time that *Clueless* and Isaiah have been used in the same sentence?) *As if* can be used with intent to deceive (see Alma 56:30) or as a way for an honest narrator to explain what another character thinks or feels (see 1 Ne. 8:25).[7] It can indicate an interrupted action (see 1 Ne. 11:12) or be a way to heighten the dramatic (see 3 Ne. 8:6).[8] There are other phrases, such as *as though,* that work similarly.[9] In this story of King Lamoni's wife (Alma 17–20), *as if* works as a type of paranarrative communication. It does so by sharing something with readers that is beyond the scope of the story.[10]

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5. Hans Vaihinger's 1911 work, *The Philosophy of "As If"* is considered one of the foundational texts regarding this phrase. See H. Vaihinger, *The Philosophy of "As If": A System of the Theoretical, Practical and Religious Fictions of Mankind*, trans. C. K. Ogden (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1924). See also Hans Vaihinger, *The Philosophy of "As If,"* 2nd ed. (Routledge Classics, 2021).

6. *Clueless,* directed by Amy Heckerling (Paramount Pictures, 1995).

7. See Gary Yamasaki, *Perspective Criticism: Point of View and Evaluative Guidance in Biblical Narrative* (Cascade Books, 2012).

8. See Louis Jacobs, "The 'As If' Concept," *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe* 6, no. 1 (1971/72): 44–49.

9. The Book of Mormon writers often differentiated between *as if* and *as though,* reserving *as if* for narrative and *as though* for doctrinal issues and for time references concerning Christ. Oddly, that relatively stable consistency is not maintained through the extraordinarily similar stories of King Lamoni and the (young) queen as compared to King Lamoni's father and the (older) queen of all the land. See María José López-Couso and Belén Méndez-Naya, "On the Use of *As If, As Though,* and *Like* in Present-Day English Complementation Structures," *Journal of English Linguistics* 40, no. 2 (2012): 172–95, https://doi.org/10.1177/0075424211418976.

10. See Ralph Müller and Tobias Lambrecht, "'As if': Mapping the Empathic Eloquent Narrator through Literary History," *Language and Literature* 22, no. 3, 175–90, https://doi.org/10.1177/0963947013489236.

As and *if* are excellent words. Separated, *as* signifies a comparison or metaphoric statement, while *if* hints at a hypothetical or a consequential phrase (an if-then type of statement). When those two elements are combined, the result is much more potent than the sum of their parts. The combination creates an unreality, or, in this situation, a statement that should "not be taken factually."[11] While all that sounds complicated, it is actually intuitive. For example, Moroni addresses future readers in Mormon 8:35, stating, "I speak unto you *as if* ye were present, and yet ye are not" (emphasis added). Moroni understands *as if.* He is suggesting that *if* his future readers were present, then he would speak *as* he is speaking regarding the topic he is speaking about. He is certain that if future readers were a visible, tangible audience sitting right in front of him, he would call them "pollutions" and "hypocrites" and tell them that they "adorn [them]selves with that which hath no life" while forgetting to serve or help their neighbors in need (Morm. 8:38–39). This is the topic about which he would speak and the hostile style in which he would address them. But his future readers are not present and will never be present to hear Moroni speak in his present. It is impossible. Modern readers should pause and understand: Something unreal (you and I and other modern readers being Moroni's real, in-person audience) impacted something that is absolutely real (the words of Mormon 8). A world in which *as if* is used is a world in which the unreal, the hypothetical, and the conditional can impact—and change or alter—the real world.

These tiny words—*as* and *if*—play out in the same manner in the queen's story. Ammon teaches her husband, King Lamoni, who offers a repentant prayer and then falls "unto the earth, as if he were dead" (Alma 18:42). The servants take the king's limp body to the queen and "he lay as if he were dead for the space of two days and two nights" while his family mourns his death (18:43). The question of faith arises when the queen begins to doubt whether her husband is dead. She does not know that he is only *as if* dead, but something makes her wonder if he is dead.

Others around her presume he is dead. Why they believe the King is dead is hidden within the use of *as if.* There is a condition or hypothetical possibility implied by the *if. If* a person dies, then he or she will fall to the earth. The metaphoric aspect—the *as*—suggests that King Lamoni

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11. Douglas Biber, Stig Johansson, Geoffrey Leech, Susan Conrad, and Edward Finegan, *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (Pearson, 1999), 840, quoted in Laurel J. Brinton, "The Extremes of Insubordination: Exclamatory *As If!*" *Journal of English Linguistics* 42, no. 2 (2014): 98.

looks *as* someone looks when they die. Combining those two elements creates something that is unreal: King Lamoni falls to the earth like he is dead, but he is not. He certainly appears to be dead. Lots of people think he is dead. He lays "as if he were dead for the space of two days and two nights" (Alma 18:43), a time frame that readers should notice. But no matter how dead he appears on those two days and two nights, he is not.

Despite appearances, King Lamoni is only *as if* dead, not actually dead—something that the queen must wait until Alma 19:12 to discover. Readers, on the other hand, have known this since Alma 18:42, the verse describing King Lamoni's *as if* death. When this verse says the king "fell unto the earth, as if he were dead," the reading audience understands that the king is still alive. Readers who move too quickly may miss just how significant this moment is. The discrepancy between what readers know and what the people in the story know is as vast as the difference between life and death. For thirteen long verses, modern audience members are reading a different story than the queen is living.

Despite the fact that both the queen and the readers are moving through the exact same events—the queen as she lives them and the readers as they read the text—they are not facing the same conflict from the same point of view. They are not even facing the same conflict from different points of view. The queen's concern is whether the king is alive. Modern readers wonder what the queen will do with her husband's supposedly dead body. The queen wonders if there is room for hope, despite appearances. The queen certainly wants to know what she should do, but that question will take care of itself if she can figure out whether to believe what her eyes see and what her nose does not smell. Readers do not care about the queen's question because it was answered before they thought to ask it. The queen does not have the answer to the readers' question because she has no idea they are in her future. She is just trying to get through this tragedy. She gathers the sons and daughters of the king and they "[mourn] over him, after the manner of the Lamanites, greatly lamenting his loss" (Alma 18:43). And yet, she begins to wonder if hope for a different outcome is possible. The queen wonders if her husband is dead or alive, if there is room for hope. Readers wait anxiously, wondering what the outcome might be.

Why the Queen Needs Faith

Lamoni's wife knows her husband looks dead, and yet, for some reason, she begins to doubt what her eyes see. She calls for Ammon, believing he may be a "prophet of a holy God," a God who gives him "power to do

many mighty works" (Alma 19:4). Ammon tells the queen that her husband is "not dead" and that she should "bury him not" because "on the morrow he shall rise again" (Alma 19:8).

What should the queen do? From the reader's perspective, the queen's most rational choice is obvious: wait for a few more days. But waiting a few days is not as simple as it seems. There are many reasons to suspect that that advice will not be received well in this fractured society. From a practical point of view, bodies decompose. They begin to smell, a reality that is upsetting some people already. This society—like many others—may be one in which practical concerns are supported by social or religious traditions. Fears about disease and cleanliness may give rise to the tradition that those who have passed away be buried quickly, even the same day as the death.[12] If this society still has remnants of Israelite traditions, then they believe that "to be unburied [is] the ultimate disgrace."[13] Moreover, they also believe that any who touch a dead body are rendered unclean for seven days (Num. 19:11). If the queen disallows the burial, her actions could be interpreted as dishonoring her husband, violating Mosaic law, instigating a health hazard, and creating a situation that causes many people to become ritually impure.

The queen seems aware of the fractures and instability in her society. Before she sends servants to fetch Ammon, she has already "heard of the fame of Ammon" (Alma 19:2), talked to "the servants of [her] husband" (Alma 19:4), and heard what "some say" as well as what "others say" about her husband's body (Alma 19:5). Likely, she is aware that these people are quick to assume evil has come upon them and to blame someone for that evil. Some ascribe evil to King Lamoni because he "slew his servants who had had their flocks scattered" (Alma 19:20), while others believe evil came upon them because King Lamoni "suffered that the Nephite should remain in the land" (Alma 19:19). The group of Lamanites who "delighted in the destruction of their brethren" and purposefully scattered flocks with that intent (Alma 17:35) were also "exceedingly angry with Ammon" for fighting back (Alma 19:22). Between weeping and scared servants, bloodthirsty Lamanite outlaws, and those who blame the king for various evils, this situation is wildly unpredictable. The explosive political

12. See Deuteronomy 21:23, which insinuates that people—or, at least, criminals—should be buried on the same day that they die. Jon Davies explains that the Mishnah reaffirms the practice of same-day burial, although the grave remained open for three days to ensure that the death had actually taken place. See Jon Davies, *Death, Burial and Rebirth in the Religions of Antiquity* (Routledge, 1999), 102.

13. Davies, *Death, Burial and Rebirth,* 103.

environment, hostile populace, and general uncertainty at a time of grief and mourning make this situation complex and even volatile. Any choice is going to offend some, but aligning with the Nephite is sure to provoke many. This is the situation facing the queen, and it seems almost impossible to untangle.

The queen's situation is politically perilous and perhaps even physically dangerous. But readers may overlook it all, not realizing that two tiny words, *as if,* convey information that changes the story for them. Does anyone inside the story understand that reality and unreality are twisting together and tangling the plot? Readers do not know why King Lamoni collapsed, and the people inside the story are unaware that there is a need to ask. Cause and effect sequencing are not working correctly in this plot. The cause—the death of King Lamoni—is not real. It did not happen. But only readers (and Ammon) seem to know that. Oddly, an unreal cause is about to break into reality. King Lamoni is *not* dead, which should lead this story to a happy ending: a non-burial for a non-dead king. But if those who want to bury the king actually do so, they will leave this story with a very unhappy ending: a real burial for a non-dead king.

What should be done? In Alma's theology of Alma 32, the definition of faith leads to a metaphor of planting seeds and growing a tree. The fulfillment of faith is a mature tree of life that produces fruit, which fills one in such a way "that ye hunger not, neither shall ye thirst" (Alma 32:42). Having faith is acting in a manner that "[looks] forward . . . to the fruit" (Alma 32:40), namely by planting, tending, and nourishing the seed. Alma tells readers that planting "a true seed, or a good seed" means "not cast[ing] it out by [their] unbelief" (Alma 32:28). Besides equating *true* with *good*, Alma says that knowledge of the goodness of the seed is "real" and argues that it is real "because it is light" and is also "discernible" (Alma 32:35), intimating that these words are near synonyms.

In the high-pressure circumstances surrounding Lamoni's *as if* death, the queen has a big problem: She does "not . . . have a perfect knowledge of things," even very important things, such as whether her husband is dead or alive. If she knew what was real or true, she could make her decision easily: If the king is dead, she should bury him. If the king is not dead, she should not. But in this situation, what is real or true cannot be discerned. Lacking perfect knowledge leaves the queen with a choice and with the consequences of that choice. The queen can allow the servants to "take his body and lay it in a sepulchre" (Alma 19:1). If he is dead, this action will not change anything. But what if he is only *as if* dead? Burying him alive will cause his actual death.

This is critical for readers to understand. Burying the king's body has one, guaranteed outcome: death.[14]

Queen (Lamoni) and Alma's *As If* Faith Model

Perfect Knowledge		Queen's Choices		Consequences
The king is dead.	→	Bury him!	→	The king is dead.
The king is *as if* dead.	→	Do not bury him!	↗	The king may be dead.
			↘	The king may be *as if* dead.

Alma's definition of faith describes the queen's situation. Readers understand that the queen is willing to "hope" her husband is alive, even though she has "not seen" that reality. The queen's hope is what informs the decisions she must make. The queen "[has] had no witness save [Ammon's] word, and the word of [the] servants," but she tells Ammon that she will "believe that it shall be according as thou hast said" (Alma 19:9). Of course, she has her sensory perceptions, and it seems that those perceptions are what cause her to question Lamoni's death, but she does not rely wholly upon her eyes or her nose. Instead, she is willing to risk faith in Ammon's word. This is what Ammon declares is "great faith" (Alma 19:10), and it is according to Alma's definition. The queen states her faith in terms of *believing* what Ammon says, and then *acting* in faith when she chooses to not bury her husband but, instead, to "[watch] over the bed of her husband, from that time even until that time on the morrow which Ammon had appointed that he should rise" (Alma 19:11).

Fortunately for the king, the queen believes what Ammon says. The queen's belief in Ammon's words allows time for her husband to recover, and thus the queen's faith "saves" the king's life—sort of. At least, her belief halts those who are sure that Lamoni's body "stinketh, and that he ought to be placed in the sepulchre" (Alma 19:5). The queen is

14. This chart may introduce concerns about binary choices and either-or logic. Close reading points out that there are significantly more factors influencing the queen, but Alma (or Ammon or Mormon) is most interested in a discussion of faith. The author seems to present the queen's choices in this manner to highlight faith. Even though the queen's choices are presented as either burying the king or not, those choices do not lead to only two predictable outcomes, even in this simplified model. As discussed, there are clearly multiple factors influencing the queen and her decision making, but the simplification presented by the author is a helpful way to clear away the clutter and focus on faith.

determined to wait and watch (Alma 19:11), which halts the burial and the king's possible death. It is the queen's belief and her actions that save Lamoni. She does not raise him from the dead, but she does save him from being killed. She acts *as if* what Ammon says is real *is real,* and that is what allows her husband's life to be spared.

Implication 1:
Faith Is Choice and Action,
Not (or Not Only) Patience, Thinking, or Feeling

This story might make faith seem synonymous with patience. Confusing patience and faith can occur because, depending on the situation, the action required of faith may be the action of patience. The Book of Mormon recognizes the connection. For example, Alma's people learn that "the Lord seeth fit to chasten his people; yea, he trieth their patience and their faith" (Mosiah 23:21). In his sermon to the Zoramites, Alma's son, Alma, says—three times in three consecutive verses—that nurturing the seed requires "patience," "diligence," and "faith" (Alma 32:41, 42, 43). Patience is near and connected to faith, but despite similarities, faith and patience are not the same. Even the connection between patience and faith inherently recognizes that both words are needed because they are not so similar that only one word is needed.

Moreover, in other situations, the action of faith is not simply waiting, no matter how it may appear in the queen's story. Indeed, even in the queen's story, her faithful action is not merely passive and patient. She could sit and wish that what she wants will happen. But patience alone is not her best option. If the queen does not talk to Ammon, does not choose to believe him, does not communicate what she wants, and does not sit beside her husband, then her hoped-for outcome has a dismal chance of success. Those people who are more motivated will decide to do what they think ought to be done, and that means that the body of King Lamoni will most likely be buried in the sepulcher by the third day. If the queen simply waits, her husband will end up as dead as some assumed he already was.

Combining the queen's story with Alma's explanations suggests that faith is choice with action. The queen makes a tough decision in an unpredictable situation and then ensures that her faithful decision is given the time needed to manifest what is real or true. The queen stays beside her husband all night, watching the man she loves, but possibly "watching" to protect, as well. Patience was a characteristic of her faith—her choice to act *as if.*

We could consider another *as if* situation and see that faith requires action. For example, consider this less religious but realistic event from my own life: I grew up in Wyoming, and my family hunted wild game. Hunting was never my favorite thing to do, so after I was married, I decided to send my husband to participate in the hunt. My husband agreed to go—not because he loved hunting, but because he wanted to get to know his new in-laws. My mother thought that was a marvelous idea, which is how and why my husband and my mom spent a few days together in the mountains of Wyoming, traipsing up and down trails and through meadows, fording streams and riding horses—chatting the entire time about the gospel, life, growing up, family, and whatever else suited them. My father was not amused. He tried to shush them, explaining time after time that their chatter made the hunt pointless. Hunting requires people to act *as if.* There may or may not be animals present in the next thicket of trees or in the valley just over that next hill. But—as my dad tried to reiterate—if people value finding wild game, they must behave *as if* the animals are there. If they behave otherwise, then the animals will not be there. The skittish wild game will be frightened by the sound or smell of people, and the animals will slip away into the forest. Intriguingly, that occurs not because wild game is imaginary but because loud people act in a manner that alters or changes their ability to find what is real.

In a similar manner and for some of the same reasons, faith is not simply thinking. It is also not a magical power, an intense cognitive focus, an absence of doubt, or an emotional connection with deity. The relationship between belief and action is not something explored in great detail in the queen's situation. But it seems that once she has settled on her faithful and active commitment to non-burial, her thoughts and doubts will not matter. A random stray thought or a feeling of creeping doubt does not change what is real. The queen must believe enough to act, but forcing herself to pray harder or believe stronger will not make what is real somehow more real. Whether she sings hymns all night, recites scripture, or sits beside her husband simply holding his hand, it will not make Lamoni more—or less—alive. She may think about her fears—for her children, her people, and everyone in this fractious society. As long as she remains committed to her chosen course of action, Lamoni will rise when he rises. The queen's thoughts do not alter that reality—at least they do not until those thoughts become powerful enough to convince her to change how she is behaving.

Implication 2:
Disbelief Is Predictable, but It Hides Reality and Creates Tragedy

Ironically, it is disbelief or lack of faith that has the power to change reality in predictable and yet devastating ways. An unwillingness to believe that King Lamoni is only *as if* dead ensures the worst outcome. King Lamoni will be dead after he is buried, even if he was not dead before. In this situation, disbelief will create the tragedy that the queen and her children are lamenting. If the queen rejects what Ammon has told her, she will alter what is real, run roughshod over what was true, and fulfill her own worst nightmare. Her disbelief could very well cause the situation she desperately hopes is not real.

It is in this manner that disbelief creates a situation in which an unbeliever may never know what is real. In this Book of Mormon scenario, King Lamoni's wife makes the faithful choice not to bury him. But if she had lacked faith in Ammon's words, if she had buried her husband, then how could she ever know with certainty that King Lamoni was dead when he was buried? The king may have been alive or dead, but doubt hides what is real. The queen's story demonstrates that a lack of faith distorts and hides what is true, even as it changes and ruins what could have been real. It takes fear of the unknown and exchanges it for predictability and tragedy.

Implication 3:
Faith Is Relational

Once Ammon gives his message to the queen, he fades into the background, leaving the queen momentarily in the spotlight. But Ammon's perspective is unique: When he "went in to see the king according as the queen had desired him," he "*knew* that [the king] was not dead" (Alma 19:7, emphasis added). Ammon also "perceive[s] the thoughts of the king" (Alma 18:16), has "a portion of that Spirit dwell[ing] in [him]," and has the "knowledge, and also power" of God (Alma 18:35). Ammon seems to have an almost godlike perspective. Nevertheless, he is "overpowered with joy" (Alma 19:14) when he sees the queen's choice and the result. Is he surprised? Despite knowing what is real, Ammon did not know what King Lamoni's wife was going to do. Even with his amazing point of view, Ammon also lives by faith, acting *as if* the queen will believe, hoping that this woman he barely knows will preserve the life of his friend. When she does, he is overjoyed.

It seems that Alma's faith has a hidden aspect: It is relational. When the queen acts *as if* her husband is alive, she is risking trust in Ammon and his God. That is inherently unpredictable. Trusting in a person means being vulnerable. It is opening oneself up to being hurt or betrayed or let down. Can the queen stand to do it? What if she believes Ammon and then learns that her husband really is dead? She would then have to suffer through the shock and lamenting of those first few days all over again. Faith is not easy. There is no guarantee. But in these stories, faith is not irrational wishful thinking, either. It is a deliberate choice to trust a person and make decisions based on a relationship.

Disbelief, or refusing to believe *as if,* is typically described in terms of cognitive thought. But in these stories, the lack of belief seems to have more to do with *distrust*. In the *as if* story about King Lamoni's father, the queen of all the Lamanites rushes to her husband who—like his son—has collapsed on the ground and appears to be dead. The queen "saw him lay as if he were dead, and also Aaron and his brethren standing as though they had been the cause of his fall" (Alma 22:19). This queen clearly believes what she sees with her own eyes and is willing to act quickly upon her own perceptions. In the story of King Lamoni's father and mother, disbelief relies on one's self and often on one's own perceptions, rather than on relationships and trust. Disbelief is predictable, which can make it seem safe. But the price for that safety is high: Disbelief leads to certain tragedy and certain pain.

Implication 4:
Faith Is Not About the Outcome

Many want certainty of outcome, and we want it so much that we tend to work backwards. We assume that someone has faith *if* the outcome is positive. But if faith is acting *as if,* then it is not dependent on outcome. Faith is the *belief-inspired action.* It is the act of being faithful that deserves praise. The outcome is not our business. We do not decide what is real or true in these types of situations—God does. In fact, not only do we *not know* what is real or true, but, according to Alma, at first we "*cannot* know" (Alma 32:26, emphasis added). God "desireth . . . that ye should believe, yea, even on his word" (Alma 32:22). We do not know, we cannot know, and God—in his mercy—wants it that way. Alma explains why in his honest, straightforward way: "How much more cursed is he that knoweth the will of God and doeth it not, than he that only believeth, or only hath cause to believe, and falleth into transgression?" (Alma 32:19).

Nowhere in Alma's pithy, one-verse definition (Alma 32:21) of faith is there anything indicating that people are responsible for the *result* of their initial faithful action. Alma begs the Zoramites to plant a seed. That is the faithful action he hopes they will perform. Yet he recognizes that acting in faith to plant a seed does not guarantee the conclusion. Alma explains that "if a seed groweth, it is good, but if it groweth not, behold it is not good and therefore it is cast away" (Alma 32:32). The Zoramite responsibility at the beginning is simple: plant a seed. Whether that seed is "good" or "bad" is not up to them. Notably, when the seed grows, they learn the seed is good and that their knowledge is "perfect" about that particular seed. But they still need faith. Acting in faith becomes the action of nourishing that small seedling.

In a similar manner, the young queen acted faithfully when she extended trust in Ammon's words, not knowing what was true and yet believing enough in Ammon's words and trusting enough in Ammon that she acted. Regardless of how this faith-filled story concludes, the queen's actions remain faithful. Even if the action of faith uncovers a different reality than what the queen hoped for, even if the action of faith determines that the "seed" is "not good" and should be "cast away" (Alma 32:32) or that the king is dead and ought to be buried after all, the queen acted in faith. Her choices allowed what was true to manifest itself, to become "discernible" (Alma 32:35). Her responsibility was to act faithfully. It was not her job to somehow force her husband to not be in his death-like state.

Faith is difficult, and any person—even a queen with exceeding faith—may doubt. But faithful action is strong. Some people may worry that they will sabotage what they want most if they wonder or question. What if a thought of doubt flits across the stage of the mind? In Alma's faith model, a random stray thought does not unplant a seed, nor does a moment of questioning move a king's body from his bed to a sepulchre. Thoughts and beliefs absolutely matter. But until thoughts rise to the level of action, they do not change the outcome of prior faithful actions.

Implication 5:
As If Faith Seems to Be Transferable to Other Situations

Is Alma's definition of faith as understood through the *as if* decision-making process transferable to other faith-necessitating situations? Perhaps. In the last chapter of the Book of Mormon, Moroni exhorts readers to ask "if these things are *not* true" (Moro. 10:4, emphasis added).

This phrasing is why many pray to know if the Book of Mormon *is true* and then wait for a witness from the Holy Ghost to know.

I have nothing against that process. I have no reason to doubt the experiences of others. It just did not work for me. I prayed and prayed and prayed—on multiple occasions, for various lengths of time, in my closet, at the church, outside in nature. I never felt like I received an answer—at least not in the way that other people do. One of my sisters noted the *not* phrasing years ago and asked me, "Is God really sitting in his heaven *not* answering heartfelt prayers because of a slight wording issue?"

My answer then and now is "I really don't know."

But I do know that Alma says that "faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things" (Alma 32:21). And I also know that Alma says that "there are many who say: If thou wilt show unto us a sign from heaven, then we shall know of a surety; then we shall believe" (Alma 32:17). I am afraid that was exactly what I wanted God to do for me. I wanted to know the Book of Mormon was true so that then I could believe. I wanted proof of the real and the true before I committed. I wanted to see and to know beforehand so that I would not be disappointed. But that is not how faith works, at least not according to Alma.

I should warn you that I might be wrong. I guess I should have told you that in the beginning, right? When Moroni tells readers to ask if these things are *not* true, he might be using this phrasing rhetorically, as if he were exclaiming, "How could these things not be true!"[15] Another scholar suggests that this phrasing could be a "negative *if*-clause" which "implies that these things are indeed true."[16]

But what if Moroni meant exactly what he said?

What would it look like to see Moroni's proposition in light of Alma's *as if* model of faith? Moroni suggests we ask God if the Book of Mormon is *not* true. Like the queen, we are stuck in the middle, without a "perfect knowledge" regarding this book. Perhaps we should strip away the clutter and consider where that leaves us. If God did not mercifully bring this book into your life and into mine, what should we do? If this is not a book from God, a reasonable reaction might be to throw it in the trash

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15. Joseph Spencer suggested this reading to me.

16. Royal Skousen, *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon,* 2nd ed., vol. 6, *3 Nephi 8–Moroni 10,* The Critical Text of the Book of Mormon 4 (The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies; BYU Studies, 2009), 4092.

can or the recycling bin and move on. (Actually, please do not throw it in the trash. Just bring it to me. I'll take care of it for you.) Why would you waste so much time and effort on something that is not true? But—similar to the queen's decision—this comes with a warning: If you throw it in the trash, the Book of Mormon becomes trash to you. The book will be dead to you. That is all it can be. The result is predictable, guaranteed, and secure—but at what price?

Are you willing to risk faith instead? Faith is not an assurance of result. Faith is choosing to believe that the Book of Mormon is *not* "not true." What then? If the Book is not "not true," then plant a seed or two. Maybe try watering the seed. How about putting it outside in the proper amount of sunlight and giving it the appropriate nutrients? What does Alma's seed metaphor mean about the Book of Mormon? Well, first, because this is metaphoric or symbolic language, we should not take it literally. In other words, do not plant your Book of Mormon in your front planters. That will just turn your book into a soggy mess.

The metaphor means we should try out the word of God. We should try it out because we have learned that the book is *not* not true. If that critical question is answered, then we should try to learn from the queen. We can act in faith, which means making a choice and acting *as if.* It means reading your scriptures, studying and gaining insight, trying to understand this book, and then living by the teachings and principles you are inspired to understand.

Alma's metaphoric experiment does not grow a bean plant. That makes me a little sad. I believed my faith could grow into edible, healthy food within a few short months, a vivid object lesson emblazoned in my heart and mind by multiple Primary lessons and their soil-filled Dixie cups. I loved the little white bean seeds that peeked out of the dark soil. But somehow, we missed an important point: Alma's seed becomes a *tree*—a tree of life (see Alma 32:40). Faith in Alma's metaphor leads to life. How long does it take to grow a tree of life? I do not know. But I do know that growing trees requires some amount of time and patience and faith. What this means is that for some of us, the truth of the Book of Mormon is discovered as we live life. As we read the Book of Mormon and try out its principles, we will discover whether the Book of Mormon is "true" or "good" or "light" or "real" (Alma 32:31, 35). This option is uncertain. It is not perfect knowledge. The Book of Mormon may still end up being something other than true, but at least there is the opportunity to discover that reality. Acting *as if* the Book of Mormon is

true means planting a seed and experimenting. Will the seed grow into a tree? Maybe. Maybe not.

Of course, as the queen's story demonstrates, there is another way. You could not plant a seed. But be aware that not planting leads to one sure outcome: There will not be a tree. Planting a seed is the only possible way to learn if a tree will grow.

Implication 6:
Faith and Truth? Faithful and True?

King Lamoni's father and mother face an almost identical situation. Unlike his son, who seems to spontaneously erupt into prayer, King Lamoni's father must be taught by Aaron. Aaron tells the king to pray "in faith, believing that ye shall receive" (Alma 22:16), a definition of faith that does not sound like Alma's choice-and-action kind of faith. How is King Lamoni's father supposed to marshal his mind and his thoughts into order and then shove everything into a container of belief and make it fit? How is he supposed to pound his heart, his hot temper, and his other emotions into submission? How can he make them bow to a God he knows little about? Is Aaron telling readers a secret about how to squeeze belief out of unbelief?

King Lamoni's father may not know the answer to these questions. I doubt he does because he seems to blithely ignore Aaron's instructions. Instead of believing in God and believing that he will receive, this king "bow[s] down before the Lord upon his knees" and offers a breathtakingly honest prayer. He says, "O God, Aaron hath told me that there is a God; and if there is a God, and if thou art God, wilt thou make thyself known unto me?" (Alma 22:18). We could quibble about some minimal level of faith necessary to say the prayer at all, but, regardless, the prayer is shockingly faithless—at least it is, if faith means the type of firm belief in God that Aaron describes. King Lamoni's father does not focus intently on Jesus, he does not mindfully block out stray thoughts of doubt, and he does not step back and wait patiently to see what happens. Instead, he fully admits that he does not know if God exists. And, rather than hypocritically pretending to believe in a God that he does not believe in, King Lamoni's father prays truth because *he* is true. This king of the Lamanites prays effortlessly. He prays without an ounce of showmanship or insincerity. Rather than praying the "right" way in front of Aaron and then wondering whether he really believes or not, he prays what is real or true to him. He is utterly congruent.

For King Lamoni's father, acting *as if* is not *knowing* what God will do or even knowing that there is a God. It is not knowing if the Book of

Mormon is not true or true or not *not* true. Acting *as if* is *knowing himself.* He binds himself with the surety of someone who has scoured his soul. He knows the depths of his own sinful nature and is unflinchingly honest with himself about that nature. When he prays, he offers to give away all his sins—the ones he secretly enjoys, the ones he is ashamed of, the ones he did not even know were sins until Aaron started expounding the scriptures. From the depths of his well-searched, magnificently honest soul, King Lamoni's father prays to a God who may or may not exist and who, even if he does exist, may or may not be Aaron's God. Nevertheless, for the chance to know this God, for the chance "to be raised from the dead" and "be saved," King Lamoni's father "will give away all [his] sins" (Alma 22:18). How can he promise such a thing? He knows who he is and what he is. He knows what it means for him to be true.

Conclusion

The story of King Lamoni can create confusion when readers are told that the queen has such amazing faith. If they overlook *as if,* misunderstand its power, and misjudge who is saying it to whom, they will know the king is not dead but feel unsure about why the queen has exceeding faith. The queen cares immensely about whether her husband is dead or *as if* dead, but she does not know which he is, and she does not have access to the words that make King Lamoni's state clear. The queen's grief at Lamoni's passing (Alma 18:43), her refusal to leave his side (Alma 19:11), and their mutual joy at his revival (Alma 19:13) make this the most loving husband-wife relationship in the Book of Mormon. Indeed, even before he was fully standing, King Lamoni "stretched forth his hand unto" his beloved wife, praising God and this woman of exceeding faith (Alma 19:12). He testifies of Jesus Christ, swearing on the life of his beloved that he has "seen [his] Redeemer," and that this Redeemer shall "redeem all" (Alma 19:13). This is the moment the queen had hoped for, the moment in which she "reaped the rewards of [her] faith, and [her] diligence, and patience, and long-suffering, [and] waiting" (Alma 32:43). This is a good and glorious end. It is a miracle.

But those of us who read a different story for thirteen verses need a different miracle. We cannot let the outcome be mistaken for the message. Our miracle is the process and the story.

We need to believe *as if* we were the queen of the Lamanites. We are not her. We will never be her. Despite extreme pressures from within and without, she chose to believe Ammon. We can too. Despite what is

obvious to her eyes, she acts with faith. We can too. Her faith is evident in her actions. We see her watching and waiting beside the body of the man she adored. She watched all night for signs of life. I imagine that each minute felt as if it were an eternity.

Ammon has a word for what the queen is doing. He calls it faith. So does Alma. And so do I.

There are plenty of words in plenty of books. I like lots of them. I love some of them. But the words of the Book of Mormon are not just words. That is why I read the Book of Mormon *as if* words matter. I have no guarantee that they do. But I am not as worried about that as much as I used to be. If I want certainty, I know where it is. But I do not think I want it anymore. If I understand what Alma is saying, then I am willing to walk through uncertainty, wait in the discomfort of vulnerability, and attempt the risky way. I find that I want to believe. I want faith. I want to plant little words, even if they are as tiny as mustard seeds. And I have. Time and time again, I have planted the words, studying *as if* the words do more than tell a story about a tree. I study *as if* the words are good, true, real, and alive. In my experience, they are. I love the slow work of nourishing my soul with the small and simple words of God. In these words, I find life.

Kylie Turley has thoroughly enjoyed teaching classes such as the Literature of the LDS People, the Book of Mormon, and various writing and rhetoric courses at BYU for nearly thirty years.

Far West

It's hard to imagine five thousand Saints in this place
Where wind whips sloping hills and fallow fields.

All that's left are four temple cornerstones embedded
In the middle of nowhere, like the opposite of tombs.

Could this really have been Church headquarters
For two years, like a missionary come and gone?

If I said *desolate,* you wouldn't think of the spot
Where tithing was revealed or where Sidney Rigdon

Delivered his famous Fourth of July oration. No,
The Restoration clearly moved on from this place,

Much farther west, unfurling across plains and
Mountains to terrains and truths only prophets could

Envision. Perhaps that's a metaphor: what was once
Far away is no longer distant. God works that way,

Coaxing us beyond the boundaries of the known.
We think *globe,* He thinks *galaxy.* His dreams are

Grander than our dreams. Not the Midwest, Far
West, or even West Coast, but worlds without number.

Don't be myopic, the four stones sing in silent harmony.
Immortality is a prairie on a continent called Eternity.

—Isaac James Richards

The Heyday of the MIA

Latter-day Saint Youth Programs in the Postwar Era

Lisa Olsen Tait and Amber C. Taylor

On Saturday, June 16, 1956, a crowd of twenty thousand spectators filled the University of Utah football stadium, nestled against the foothills to the east of Salt Lake City, to witness the Mutual Improvement Association (MIA) Dance-Drama Festival of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Hopes were high that the weather would hold, since Friday night's performance had been canceled because of rain. The weather did cooperate, and for over two hours, a massive procession of brightly costumed young women and men, representing almost every stake in the Church, presented a spectacular program of intricately choreographed dances and a dramatic fantasy play—brightly lit by an extra light pole specially erected for the event. Those who had been prevented from performing by rain the night before now joined with Saturday's group in something of a double feature. The program built to an impressive finale in which over seven thousand young women and men dressed in red, white, and blue, created a diamond formation around the huge center stage. "It was a rare sight to behold," reported the *Deseret News,* noting that the audience applauded "generously" throughout the show.[1]

Although the largest, the Dance-Drama Festival was not the only big event at that year's June conference. The music festival held in the Salt Lake Tabernacle on Temple Square featured twenty-five hundred singers from 143 stakes and three missions. Hundreds of others, chosen

1. "Dance-Drama Festival Thrills Huge Crowd," *Deseret News–Salt Lake Telegram,* June 18, 1956, 5, https://newspapers.lib.utah.edu/ark:/87278/s6sv2n71/25468151.

for their excellence, participated in speech and drama events.[2] Nor was this extravaganza a one-time event. Sixty years after the Young Women's and Young Men's Mutual Improvement Associations had begun holding their annual June gathering, the festival was still the focal point of the entire MIA program as an opportunity to showcase young Latter-day Saints and the Church's youth programs. It was also a weekend of intensive leadership training, when thousands of ward, stake, and mission leaders from throughout North America and beyond descended on Salt Lake City for meetings, workshops, and spiritual uplift.

The Saints' fellow Americans took note. Despite the vibrant expansion of middle-class living standards and widespread celebration of teenage culture, there were dark undercurrents of worry in American society at mid-century, such as the Cold War, simmering racial tensions, changing standards of morality and propriety, juvenile delinquency, and teenage rebellion. Latter-day Saints seemed to have tamed these threats. "Mormonism is not just a creed," wrote one observer in 1958. "It is a complete way of life" and "one of the most amazing religious-social-economic organizations in history."[3] The MIA was central to establishing this way of life. The same writer noted the Saints' "snobless social order" and the "beehive of sociality" created by the MIA.[4] A writer in the *New York Times* characterized the MIA as "undoubtedly one of the most efficiently organized youth movements in the world."[5]

In our research to write the new book, *Carry On: The Latter-day Saint Young Women Organization, 1870–2024,* we quickly identified the mid-twentieth century as a high point in the history of the Church's youth organizations—the heyday of the MIA, we came to call it.[6] Seventy years after that crescendo, the size, scope, and ambition of the Church's youth programs in this era are part of an increasingly distant and unfamiliar past. How did these thousands of young people come to be dancing in the stadium and singing in the tabernacle? What was

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2. "Dance-Drama Festival," 5. See also "MIA Conference Opens Today in S.L.," *Salt Lake Tribune,* June 15, 1956, 2A, https://www.newspapers.com/image/599020939.

3. Hartzell Spence, "The Mormon Church: A Complete Way of Life," *Reader's Digest,* April 1958, 1–2.

4. Spence, "Mormon Church," 3.

5. Rebecca Franklin, "'A Mighty People in the Rockies,'" *New York Times,* April 3, 1955, 26, https://www.nytimes.com/1955/04/03/archives/a-mighty-people-in-the-rockies-mighty-people-in-the-rockies-the.html.

6. Lisa Olsen Tait, Amber C. Taylor, Kate Holbrook, and James Goldberg, *Carry On: The Latter-day Saint Young Women Organization, 1870–2024* (Church Historian's Press, 2025).

happening in ward meetinghouses from week to week, and how was such an elaborate program brought to fruition? In this article, we look closely at the heyday of the MIA and consider further questions, such as how the experience on the ground corresponded to extensive lesson outlines in MIA manuals, how leaders understood what they were doing, and the reasons behind it. We will also consider how the grand heyday era contained the seeds of its own undoing.

History of the MIA

The Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association (YWMIA) was founded in 1870 amid Latter-day Saints' efforts to socialize their young people into the Church community.[7] A parallel Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association was organized in 1875. These groups were originally local and autonomous, but from the beginning, they focused on spiritual and religious formation along with cultural and recreational activities. After two decades of growth and development along separate, if parallel, trajectories in the mid-1890s, the two organizations began to work more closely together in what was called the conjoint movement and came to be known collectively as "the MIA." The signal development of this effort was the establishment of the annual June conferences, which would remain a pillar of the Latter-day Saint calendar for eighty years. At the turn of the century, the organizations also developed stronger, more centralized leadership, with general boards that grew in size and scope, centrally produced curriculum, and increasingly standardized calendars and programs for each annual "Mutual" season.

In the early twentieth century, MIA leaders embraced the national progressive recreation movement, which viewed organized recreation as a key to the physical, social, and moral development of individuals and society.[8] Latter-day Saint leaders of youth developed a theory (and theology) of "teaching the gospel through activities"—that is, engaging young people in wholesome programs that developed them into well-rounded

7. At its founding, the organization was known as the Young Ladies' Department of the Ladies' Cooperative Retrenchment Association. In 1877, it adopted the name Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Association, and in 1934, the name was changed to the seemingly more modern Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association. See Lisa Olsen Tait, "Origins and Myths: Revising the Founding Story of the Latter-day Saint Young Women's Organization," *Journal of Mormon History* 51, no. 1 (2025): 40; Tait and others, *Carry On,* 3–175.

8. See Henry S. Curtis, *The Play Movement and Its Significance* (The MacMillan Company, 1917), v.

persons with spiritual strength, physical fitness, and cultural refinement.[9] This emphasis gave Latter-day Saints an optimistic, progressive response to generational concerns about dress, dancing, social behavior, and sexual morality in the wake of World War I.

In 1922, the First Presidency formally designated the MIA as the recreational agency of the Church, and MIA leaders proceeded to develop robust programs. Their focus on progressive recreation laid the groundwork for beloved traditions such as girls' camp; achievement programs like the Bee Hive, Gleaner, and M Men programs; Boy Scouts; Gold and Green Balls; road shows; and speech and music festivals—all of which remained central in the heyday of the MIA under the banner of "spiritualized recreation." In many ways, this all-encompassing program of cultural, social, and recreational engagement represented the Saints' nineteenth-century dream of self-sufficiency. It was never possible to be geographically, economically, or politically independent, but by the mid-twentieth century, through the MIA and other Church programs, they came close in the social and cultural realms.

MIA in the 1950s: Centralized and Standardized

What did the MIA look like in its heyday? We created the following snapshot using the *YWMIA Executive Manual* for 1955–56, which was identical to the *YMMIA Executive Manual* in all respects except for a description of the gender- and age-specific group programs.[10] The manual represents an ideal set by the boards that may not have always functioned on the ground as envisioned. Still, it is worth examining what that ideal looked like.

Fundamentally, the organizations were highly centralized and standardized, originating with the general leadership in Salt Lake City—a YWMIA presidency and YMMIA superintendency, both consisting of a president/superintendent, two counselors, and two secretaries.[11] In

9. Mary E. Connelly, "Teaching the Gospel Through M. I. A. Activities," *Young Woman's Journal* 26, no. 8 (1915): 506–8, https://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/digital/collection/YWJ/id/18513/rec/28; see also Tait and others, *Carry On,* 63–64.

10. *YWMIA Executive Manual* (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1955). The text of the *YMMIA Executive Manual* was identical in presenting the overview of the MIA.

11. The term *superintendent* in Latter-day Saint history needs further investigation. In the context of the MIA, it referred to a leadership office that did not inherently require priesthood but that was held by men who were usually already ordained to the priesthood.

addition to the executive leadership, each organization had a large general board that grew throughout the postwar period. From thirty-four members in 1950, the YWMIA general board expanded to forty-two in 1957, fifty-four in 1961, and sixty-seven in 1967; the numbers for the YMMIA general board were similar.[12] Each board member served on one or more committees to oversee age-specific group work or activities (dance, drama, music, or speech), and collectively, the boards planned and directed the extensive programs, classes, and activities of the MIA. They oversaw the production of manuals and handbooks, set the calendar for MIA meetings and events, and planned and carried out the training and activities at the annual June conference.

Stake leadership mirrored the general-level structure of executives and boards. Each year, stakes were to hold a convention in which members of the general boards traveled to the stakes and introduced plans for the upcoming year. Stake leaders then conveyed the program plans to the ward MIA leaders. By the postwar period, various programs were well established. There was also a great deal of program continuity from year to year, even though specific aspects of the programs might vary—for example, a new scriptural theme. That continuity was key to the programs' consistent functioning, since they were quite elaborate and, by this time, steeped in decades of tradition.

The heart of the MIA, of course, was the ward, where the leadership structure was no less elaborate than at the general level. A "complete ward organization" required up to thirty-four adult or youth leaders in designated leadership roles, and the number may have been significantly larger if including committees that sometimes worked under the activity leaders[13] (see fig. 1). As these numbers show, the organizations were structured around adult leadership and animated by the leaders' sense of responsibility to carry out the programs as prescribed and provide high-quality experiences for the youth.

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12. "General Board Committees," January 10, 1951, in Young Women General Board Minutes, vol. 16, 1946–1952, 391 [image 427], typescript, Young Women General Board Minutes, 1891–1992, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/287461ab-f0f1-412e-a610-6b0bc7bcd654/0/426; Young Women General Board Minutes, vol. 17, 1953–1961 October, 288 (June 25, 1957); 17:527–28 (July 19, 1961); "MIA General Board Committees," in Young Women General Board Minutes, September 20, 1967.

13. The manual stipulated that the activity director positions could be filled by young people, though it did not specify what ages that meant. A single activity director (for example, speech or dance) could serve for both YW and YM under the direction of the executives for both. *YWMIA Executive Manual,* 18.

A COMPLETE WARD ORGANIZATION

Superintendent
Age-group Assistant Superintendent†
Activity Assistant Superintendent†
Secretary-Treasurer
Special Interest Supervisor°
M Man Leader
Junior M Man Leader
Explorer Advisor
Asst. Explorer Advisor
Scoutmaster
Asst. Scoutmaster
Era Director°
Athletic Director
Dance Manager
Dance Instructor°
Drama Director°
Music Director°
Speech Director°

President
Age-Group Counselor†
Activity Counselor†
Secretary-Treasurer
Attendance Secretary
Special Interest Supervisor°
Gleaner Leader
Junior Gleaner Leader
Mia Maid Leader
Two Bee Keepers
Era Director°
Dance Instructor°
Drama Director°
Music Director°
Speech Director°
Sports Director

A more complete explanation of age-group and activity departments will be found on pages 99 and 129.

†May be either first or second assistant or counselor.

°It is advisable to have a young man and a young woman serve these departments. However, in small wards with limited leadership one person can serve both boards. Where one person serves both boards, as for instance, a young woman drama director, neither the superintendent nor the president would ever discuss directly with this person any plans or make any decisions without having first discussed these plans and suggestions with each other. In other words, any directions going to such person representing both organizations could come from either the YM or the YW, but before such directions are given, the decision for them should be made by both executives.

Figure 1. *YWMIA Executive Manual* (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1955), 18.

The MIA maintained a dual focus on age-specific programs and on cultural or recreational activities. In the YWMIA, there were four age groups: Bee Hive girls (ages 12–13), Mia Maids (ages 14–15), Junior Gleaners or (after 1959) Laurels (ages 16–18), and Gleaners (ages 19–25, with the option of staying in the group until age 29). Each of the classes had a corresponding Young Men's MIA class: Scouts (ages 12–13), Explorers (ages 14–15), Junior M Men (ages 16–18), and M Men (ages 19–25).[14] Each age group had an achievement program, with extensive requirements to receive prestigious awards. A Special Interest department provided activities and lessons for women and men over the age of 26, with no upper age limit—making MIA night a whole-family affair in some cases.

Even though each organization—the YW and the YM—maintained its own identity and gender-specific programs, some of the groups worked closely together. For example, reflecting the era's heavy emphasis on dating and marriage (at a time when early marriages were common), the Junior Gleaner and Gleaner classes, which served high school and college-age participants, met together with the Junior M Men and M Men to discuss their joint courses of study and participate in social activities.

Complementing the age-group structure of the MIA were the activity departments: dance, drama, music, speech, and sports, as well as camp for girls and scouting for boys (see fig. 2). Each department under the general board outlined a number of activities for the year. For example, in the drama department the manual specified the performance of at least one three-act play on both ward and stake levels; one or more one-act plays in each ward; a drama festival, which could include one of the plays or an evening of drama skill demonstration; a Christmas program given jointly with music and speech departments; and a road show (a stake event with each ward participating). In addition, drama leaders might assist with assembly programs (that is, opening exercises) and drama activities within each age-group. Music and speech departments likewise recommended several activities for the year, including a spring Music and Speech Festival, speech competitions, and speech lessons. The dance department was involved year-round, providing dance instruction and multiple dancing parties, in addition to their own dance festival

14. After 1959, the Junior Gleaner class was replaced by the Laurel class, and the Junior M Men disappeared altogether, replaced simply by extending the Explorer class to include young men to 18 years of age.

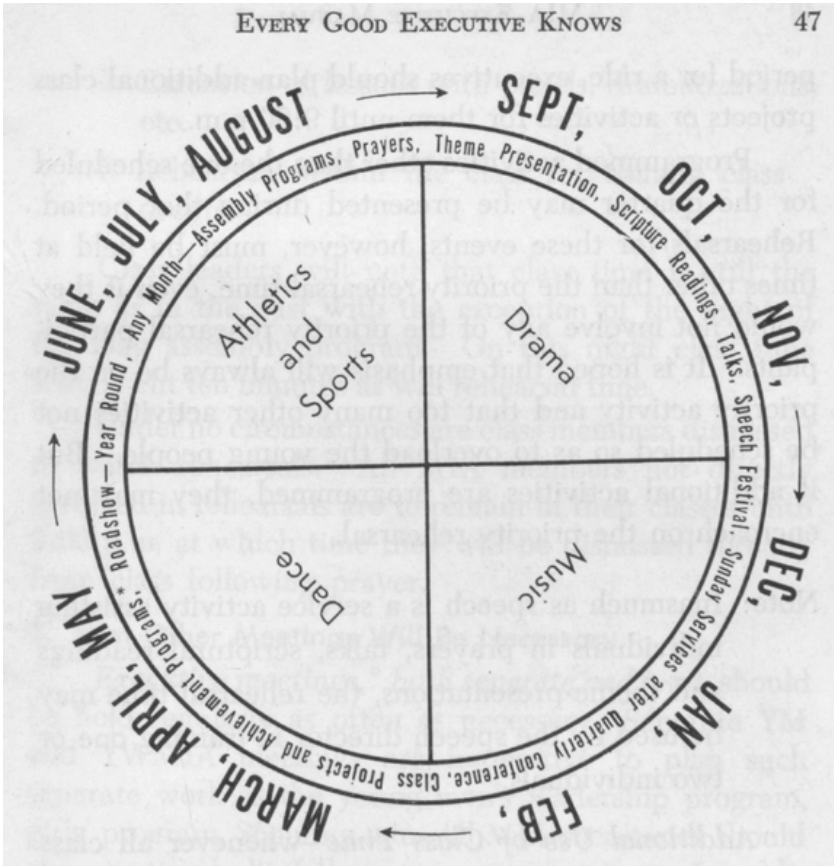

Figure 2. Year-round schedule. *Executive Manual* (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1955–56), 47.

in the spring.[15] Ideally, young people participated in all these activities and remained engaged in MIA year-round.

MIA (or simply, Mutual) night, designated as Tuesday night, followed a weekly schedule outlined in the *Executive Manual,* with some allowance for local adaptation of date and program. Officers (leaders) met at 7:00 p.m. for a twenty-minute prayer and preparation meeting, followed at 7:30 by a fifteen-minute assembly program in which both leaders and youth gathered for an opening hymn and prayer, then a presentation of the year's MIA theme and, sometimes, an additional scripture or thought. Once a month, this assembly program lasted thirty

15. *YWMIA Executive Manual,* 136–38.

minutes and was presented by one of the assigned age-group classes. At 7:45 (except for the night of the longer assembly program), attendees were dismissed to classes. From 8:40 to 9:30, rehearsal for the featured activity of the quarter was held—for example, in January the focus was on music. Attendees who did not need to participate in rehearsals would stay in class until 9:00 (or 9:30 if waiting for a ride)—meaning that teachers would need to prepare additional lesson material or activities for them. Mutual ended at 9:30 p.m.[16]

In January 1956, for example, the program was outlined as follows. On the 24th, everyone was to meet for the short Assembly Program and then dismiss to classes. Gleaners held a stake-level "Bride Night," and the M Men held a parallel "Stag Night." Junior Gleaners and Junior M Men participated in a joint lesson, "My Testimony." Explorers planned vocational interviews, Mia Maids had a lesson on "The Friends a Girl Chooses," Scouts received wood carving instruction, while Bee Hive Girls had lessons on "Virtue" (second year) and "A Happy Tomorrow" (first year). For the last thirty minutes, the Bee Hive classes and Scouts held a joint party. The priority rehearsal for the evening was music. The following week, January 31, was a long assembly, to be conducted by the speech department under the theme of "Meet Me at Mutual," followed by age-group sessions and a music rehearsal. The general event for the month (to be scheduled as determined on the stake level) was a Gold and Green Ball, the traditional formal dance of the year[17] (see fig. 3).

The MIA Experience

We wondered what the execution of these ambitious programs looked like on the ground as compared to the outlines in the manuals, so we looked at records—primarily YWMIA—from seven local units in Utah, Arizona, California, and Mexico between 1956 and 1967.[18] This was not a

16. *YWMIA Executive Manual,* 60–61.

17. *YWMIA Executive Manual,* 204–5.

18. All local records we consulted are held at the Church History Library: Belvedere Ward (Wells Stake), Record of Members Collection, 1836–1970, 300–8 and 373–78, and YWMIA Minutes and Records, vol. 14, 1956–1957, 12–57, and vol. 16, 1966–1967, 166–213; Bonneville Ward (Bonneville Stake), Record of Members Collection, pp. 164–74 and 226–32, and YWMIA Minutes and Records, 1950–1970, vol. 8, 1957–1958, 31–68, and vol. 11, 1965–1966; Ogden 60th Ward (Ogden Stake), Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association Minutes and Record, Weber Stake 1959–1973, 186–215; Mesa 2nd Ward (Mesa Stake), Record of Members Collection, 343, and YWMIA Record Book 1956–1957, 116–17; San Bernardino 1st Ward (San Bernardino Stake), Record of Members Collection, 138, 208, and San Bernardino 1st Ward, Local Records, 8:51, and San Bernardino 1st Ward, YWMIA

Figure 3. "Boise First Ward Gold and Green Ball," 1952, Boise 1st Ward (Idaho) Boise Stake, Church Local Units photograph collection, Church History Library.

systematic or comprehensive study, but it did yield some helpful insights. Fundamentally, despite some variation, we found that the experience of most wards did, in fact, share some common foundations.

First, a few numbers. As at the general level, the ward MIA program required large numbers of leaders to function. In the Utah wards and one in Mesa, Arizona, the average number of YWMIA adult officers and teachers in these years was fourteen—close to the complete ward organization specified in the manual. Since the YMMIA generally employed similar numbers, the total of MIA officers in those wards numbered close to thirty. Compared to a ward Young Women organization in 2025—where there is provision for a one-to-three-member presidency and advisors as needed,

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Minutes and Records 1934–1973, 10:29–30. The American Fork 9th Ward (Alpine Stake) is a bit complicated, as it was divided in 1963 to make the new 12th Ward. American Fork 9th Ward (Alpine Stake), Record of Members Collection, 1836–1970, 300, 308, 373, 378, and American Fork 9th Ward, YWMIA Minutes and Records, 1957–1958, 114–15; American Fork 12th Ward, Manuscript and Historical Reports, 1963–1966, 40–41.

and the Young Men are led by the bishopric and a handful of advisors—an MIA organization in the heyday period might require as many as two to three times the number of leaders to function.

In San Bernadino, California, outside the core Latter-day Saint culture region, we found a pattern that may have been replicated elsewhere in a decade that saw significant increase in Church membership across the board. The size of the San Bernadino Ward increased by fifty-six percent between 1957 and 1967. Meanwhile, the total number of Young Women officers and teachers increased from seven to fifteen. Thus, while the ward membership increased by half, the investment of ward leadership in the YWMIA more than doubled. The Pittsburgh Branch in Pennsylvania also vividly illustrates the high investment of ward leadership. In a branch of eighty-five members in 1955, fourteen women and twelve men served in the MIA—meaning that approximately forty percent of attending adults were involved in the MIA.[19]

Did the investment of these wards in leadership of young women pay off? It is difficult to say definitively, but attendance numbers suggest a positive correlation. Starting with an average weekly attendance of fifty percent of enrolled young women in Utah during the 1950s, the average attendance grew to seventy-one percent by the mid-1960s. In San Bernardino, the change was even starker, with an average of eight percent weekly YWMIA attendance that grew to forty percent.

Regarding the outlined program, we found that local wards' adherence to the standardized calendar was mixed, and none of them kept to it with exactness. Local needs and circumstances likely necessitated adaptation, and the individual creativity and experiences of local leaders no doubt influenced decisions. For example, the Belvedere Ward in Salt Lake City was unique in holding a series of Red Cross courses over the 1956–1957 year. Bonneville (also in Salt Lake City) and Belvedere were the only two wards out of the seven we looked at to hold a Junior Gold and Green Ball—something specified in the manual—though most wards did hold the traditional Gold and Green Ball. Some stakes held regular dances; some did not. In the mid-1950s, three of the seven wards held Junior Gleaner (later Laurel) "Sacred to Me" nights and Mia Maid "Dear to My Heart" nights. These were fireside-type events for girls focused on standards, especially modesty and chastity. Ten years later, only one ward held the "Sacred to Me" night, though three did hold "Dear to My Heart" evenings.

19. Tait and others, *Carry On,* 154.

Despite the variation, certain activities appeared consistently on the records of all the wards. Competing with other wards and stakes in sports like volleyball and basketball remained standard, and wards and stakes held several dances (often with instruction) and parties (particularly for holidays) each year. Young women were honored for their work in achievement programs in formal events like Rose Tying (Mia Maid) or Sheaf Binding (Gleaner) ceremonies, and they attended several firesides or "standards nights" each year.[20]

The staple events were, above all, yearly Gold and Green Balls, road shows, camp, and the festivals—dance, music, speech, and drama. Our broader research for *Carry On* bore this out as well: The centrality of these events is evident from both personal reminiscences and saved materials like photos and formal invitations, as well as descriptions of these activities in the handbooks. Young women and men donned their most formal attire for the elegant Gold and Green Ball, where they gathered and danced in ornately decorated halls to music that was often provided by a live orchestra. A "floor show" (a rehearsed dance performance) was also a frequent part of the festivities. It was not unusual for entire wards to be invited to the Ball, though children usually stayed home. Entire families might also join in the theatrical road shows, rehearsing together for weeks, then traveling from one ward house to another to present the show and compete against other wards on performance night. Yearly dance, music, speech, and drama festivals (the largest and most prestigious of which were at June conference) allowed youth to display the fruits of their efforts, giving their parents and leaders delight in the young people's performances. One of the most iconic traditions, and the only one to remain to the present in some form or other, was camp each summer. Though many young women and scouts could attend camp at Church-owned properties with cabins and other facilities, for many, camp meant "roughing it" in tents, with hand-made firepits and latrines.[21]

It is difficult to overemphasize the significance of these major annual events. For many participants, these were what it meant to take part in the MIA, and those staples, in many ways, epitomized the grandiosity and pageantry of the MIA in its heyday. Youth from this period often

20. This is based on information gleaned from local records of Belvedere, Bonneville, American Fork 9th/12th, Ogden 60th, Mesa 2nd, and San Bernardino 1st wards. See Tait and others, *Carry On,* 96, 146–48, 165.

21. These events are described in Tait and others, *Carry On,* chaps. 3–4.

remembered with great fondness things like the Gold and Green Balls and road shows, even lamenting their loss after the program was significantly reduced and simplified years later. For their part, ward leaders counted on the draw of these events to keep youth participating. As one leader in the Belvedere Ward in Salt Lake City put it, "If we have a good road show, they will come."[22]

In the "mission field"—anywhere outside of the Latter-day Saint cultural region in the intermountain West—MIA was more than just a youth program. Though it required a high investment of local adult leadership and a great deal of adaptation, missionaries and mission leaders found that the MIA program, with its emphasis on spiritualized recreation, could be a powerful missionary tool (see fig. 4). Recognizing the opportunities but also the challenges of implementing MIA in missionary efforts, the general leadership in Salt Lake City provided materials to help. Monthly newsletters and standard manuals offered guidance and inspiration for missionaries and local leaders, many of whom were new to the Church and its programs. The 1961 Mission Manual outlined the MIA structure, including its place in the overall Church. It explained that "MIA serves an important and UNIQUE function in the Church" and "a SPECIAL function in the missions." It could attract and introduce new friends to the gospel, integrate and unify new and old members in a branch, revitalize activity for less active members, and nurture fellowship and social graces through participation in the various activities.[23]

Again, local records offer some illustrations. In 1961, branches throughout Mexico sent reports to the mission president about the activities they held that year. Members of these branches attended dozens of talent shows and dramas, as well as holiday parties and dances, all organized by the MIA. Such activities were also used to raise funds for chapel construction, and MIA groups joined local Relief Societies in selling handmade and baked goods, as well as items like lunch baskets.[24] Part of the image that emerges is the central role that "Mutual" played in establishing the Church during this period. In several interviews of

22. Belvedere Ward YWMIA Minutes and Records, vol. 16, 1966–1967, 222.

23. *Mission MIA Manual: For Missions Outside of the United States and Canada* (The General Boards of the Mutual Improvement Association of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1961), 7 [image 9], emphasis original, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/e1a4cf64-5059-448c-b298-682a639a0ae2/0/8.

24. Mexican Mission Manuscript History and Historical Reports 1874–1977, vol. 7, 1960–1971, part 1, 1960–1962, images 153–249, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/94f243fb-1770-433f-904a-83ab2c58063e/0/0.

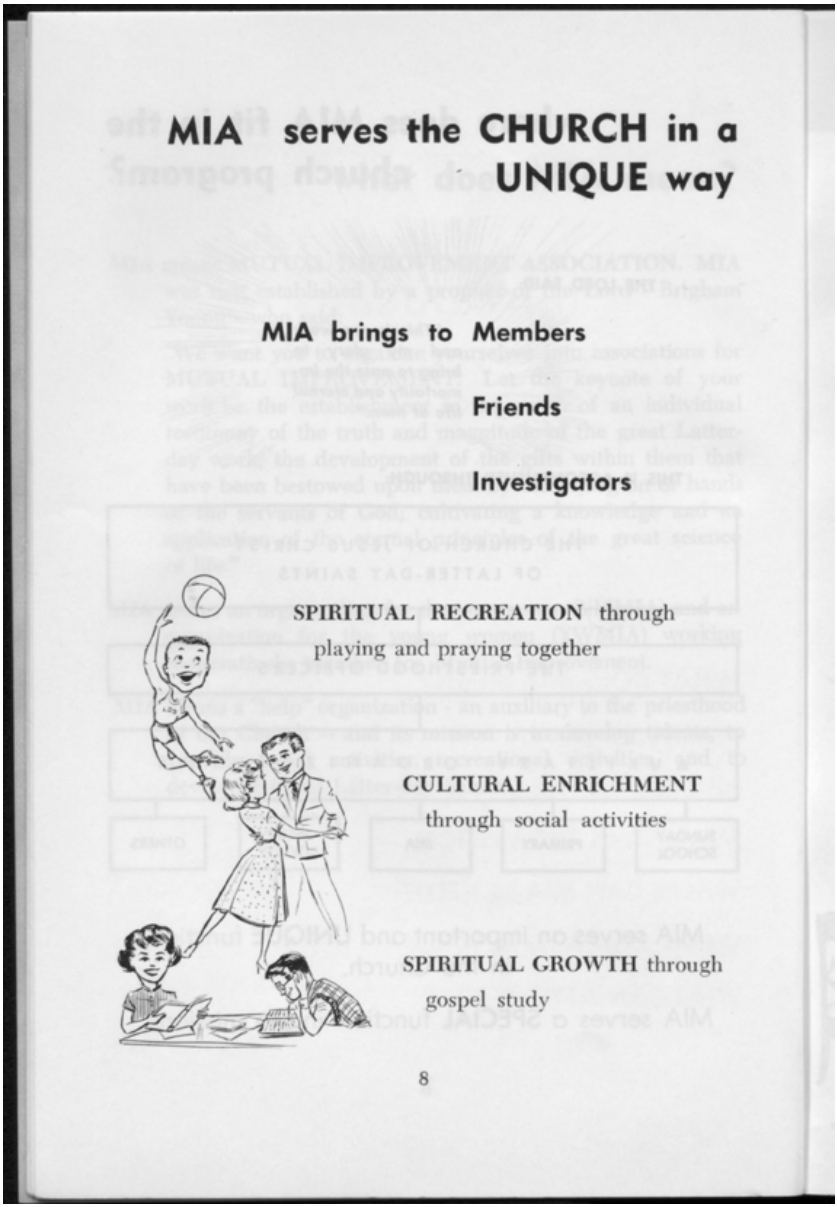

Figure 4. This image is representative of messaging from general Church leadership about missionary opportunities presented through MIA programming. From Mission MIA Manual (General Boards of the Mutual Improvement Association of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1961), 8.

early converts in and around Mexico City, people spoke warmly about their memories of gathering for activities at the chapel or rented "house of prayer" on Tuesday evenings, emphasizing that it wasn't simply youth who attended but children and adults as well.[25] Moreover, as these members danced and sang, cooked and ate, sold baked goods and played games and sports, they forged an identity as Latter-day Saints.

Interpreting the Heyday of MIA

In November 1972, a major reorganization of the Mutual Improvement Associations took place. Henceforth, the Aaronic Priesthood MIA would serve youth from ages twelve to eighteen, and a Mutual Interest Association—which existed only on the stake and local levels—would serve young adults and single adults.[26] Two years later, the "Mutual Improvement" nomenclature for the younger groups was discontinued altogether, and they became simply Young Women and Aaronic Priesthood.[27] The cultural and recreational focus of the MIA was reoriented toward service and more overtly spiritual goals, with a new emphasis on youth leadership. June conference ended in 1975. The imperative was to make the programs adaptable to local needs and circumstances in the midst of explosive international growth of the Church.[28]

After more than fifty years of streamlining and reconfiguration, it is a bit mind-boggling to see the extensive, regimented MIA programs of the 1950s. It is also tempting to view those programs with some nostalgia and idealization. There is much to admire in the heyday of the MIA. Unquestionably, many of the young people who came of age in this era developed strong Latter-day Saint identities, firm commitment to the gospel and the Church, meaningful skills and experiences—and had a lot of fun. Subsequent generations have heard their parents and grandparents reminisce with affection and happiness about this time in their lives and lament the demise of the MIA.

As historians, rather than make value judgments, we seek to understand the meaning and significance of this era in its own context. Why

25. Interviews conducted by Javier Romero and Amber Taylor, May 26–29, 2024, recordings in possession of coauthor, Amber Taylor.

26. "'Constancy Amid Change,'" Church News Editorial Page, *Church News,* published by *Deseret News,* November 11, 1972, 16, https://newspapers.lib.utah.edu/details?id=26400012.

27. J. M. Heslop, "Priesthood to Direct Youth of the Church," *Church News,* June 29, 1974, 3.

28. These developments are covered in Tait and others, *Carry On,* chaps. 6–7.

did this heyday of the MIA happen? What did Latter-day Saints—especially youth leaders—understand themselves to be doing? What were the implications of size and spectacle for the Church? Why did the MIA's heyday come to an end? Time and space preclude a more thorough analysis, but we offer here a few necessarily brief and suggestive ideas.[29]

First, while the MIA always looked to the growth and development of young Latter-day Saints as its primary mission, during the heyday, it did so with a heavily outward-looking consciousness. The massive spectacle of June conference, with thousands of happy young people singing, dancing, and testifying, provided both qualitative and quantitative evidence for the effectiveness of the MIA—and, by extension, the truth of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. As the news pieces cited at the beginning of this article show, Americans took note. Latter-day Saints basked in every bit of positive press and a sense of greater acceptance in the national culture.

It was no accident that MIA came to hold a prominent position in the Church's missionary efforts, attracting many converts and providing a built-in venue for fellowshipping as missionary efforts began to accelerate. But it was no less important in the Latter-day Saint cultural corridor. MIA brought people together and gave them shared goals, projects, and experiences under the banner of the Church. The MIA was undoubtedly an effective system for socializing young people and transmitting religious identity and commitment generationally; it planted a sense of Latter-day Saint identity and "solidarity that no amount of talking could induce."[30]

The heyday of the MIA shows what it looked like to be a high-investment religion in the middle of the twentieth century. June conference was only the culminating event on a busy, year-round calendar of MIA activities at the ward and stake levels, where the ground-level work of youth development took shape week after week in meetings, lessons, rehearsals, and performances. Young people invested incalculable amounts of time and energy in their MIA participation. But it was also a powerful unifying force for their adult leaders. At every level, service in the MIA involved countless hours of teaching, coaching, mentoring, and counseling as they worked with the youth and each other. Service in the MIA engendered strong camaraderie and devotion to the Church.

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29. For a more thorough analysis, see Tait and others, *Carry On,* 169–75.

30. Marba C. Josephson, "Youth in Action," *Improvement Era,* August 1949, 512, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/ca28d671-4d31-4f66-bfb2-8b351c6b73fa/0/0.

Figure 5. YWMIA Service Pin.

This may have been especially important for women. YWMIA leaders were part of a substantial cohort of recognized leaders in their wards and stakes, and undoubtedly for some individuals, that service gave them a place to belong in the Church. That this service was deeply meaningful to many can be seen, for example, in the commemorative pins YWMIA leaders could receive for each five years of service—up to thirty years (see fig. 5) And if we add the contributions of women who served in the MIA to those made by women in the Relief Society, Primary, and Sunday Schools (among other venues)—whose organizations were likewise extensive in this era—we see that, in a very real sense, from week to week, women kept the Church running.

Moreover, even as the trend toward married women working outside the home gained steam in the 1950s, many Latter-day Saint women benefited from the rising living standards and increasing conveniences of postwar American life and found themselves with time, energy, and resources to pour into their Church service. If there was a stigma in some cases attached to women working for wages, performing voluntary service may not have been seen the same way, even if it took a woman out of her home for significant amounts of time. As economic contexts in the United States changed and more women entered the workforce, and as the circumstances of members around the world became more visible, the extensive efforts often dedicated to Church service became increasingly unsustainable. Men in the United States and other industrialized countries and beyond were already feeling the strain of this juggle as they balanced Church service with full-time jobs to provide for their families.

Thus, even in its heyday, the MIA contained the seeds of its own demise. For one thing, it was probably just too big and too elaborate—and too American-centric—to be replicated in international settings and in fledgling units anywhere. The Church reached one million members in 1947, 117 years after its founding. Just 16 years later, in 1963, Church membership

reached two million and continued to grow exponentially.[31] By the time Elder Harold B. Lee announced the establishment of the correlation movement in October 1961, international growth had begun to overtake all other considerations, and by the early 1970s, it was clear that many aspects of the Church had to be reconsidered for a rapidly expanding membership in settings vastly different from the Wasatch Front.[32]

In tandem with the concerns about international growth, Church leaders came to believe that the organizational structure of the Church needed to be realigned. The auxiliaries, including MIA, had been founded at various times during the nineteenth century to meet specific needs. They had grown to become large, vibrant entities with self-perpetuating imperatives of curriculum, publishing, leadership training, and fundraising that claimed vast amounts of resources. Running the MIA could be a heavy burden for fledgling congregations outside of the Latter-day Saint cultural region, particularly in terms of the number of leaders required. In addition, the efforts of these auxiliaries sometimes overlapped or competed with each other. Through the correlation movement, these entities were brought under direct supervision of priesthood leaders at all levels, and strenuous efforts were made to unify and simplify their programs. Ultimately, this meant a dramatic reduction in the size of general boards and the scope of initiatives they directed.[33]

Finally, there was another very important thread in the unwinding of the MIA. This one is harder to quantify or articulate, but it involved a profound shifting of sensibilities in the context of cultural change. While Latter-day Saints had always worried about worldly influences on youth and the wickedness of the surrounding society, by the early 1970s, the dissonance had become acute. Praised in the 1950s for their wholesome, patriotic youth spectacles, Latter-day Saints felt themselves increasingly at odds with a culture that seemed to be turning to sexual revolution, political unrest, and deepening cynicism. In fact, when he announced the correlation movement in 1961, Harold B. Lee framed it as "a program of defense" and declared, "the forces of our opposition to the forces of evil must be consolidated in order to give them the most effective

31. Tait and others, *Carry On,* 169.

32. Elder Lee said that in 1961, each year enough people were joining the Church to constitute seventeen to twenty new stakes. Harold B. Lee, in *One Hundred Thirty-first Semi-Annual Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1961), 78, https://archive.org/details/conferencereport1961sa/page/78/mode/2up.

33. Tait and others, *Carry On,* 181–84; 197–201.

possible defense."[34] Young people were seen as the primary targets of these evil forces.

In this context, even some general-level leaders of youth felt that the "spiritualized recreation" focus of the MIA was too lightweight. In the heyday, as had been the case for at least a generation, youth leaders had seen spirituality as a proposition involving the whole person. They certainly emphasized faith, testimony, prayer, and service, but they believed that young people would internalize those spiritual characteristics through *doing*—and, frankly, through having fun. These leaders believed that if they provided wide-ranging opportunities to participate in wholesome activities, young people would be drawn in to experience spiritual things organically and in ways that would lead them to internalize spirituality.

In the waning years of the heyday era, the perspective shifted. Cultural and recreational activities were often seen as "fun and games" that did not provide the best setting for feeling the Spirit in a way that could plant and grow a deeply rooted testimony of Jesus Christ and his gospel. Certainly, it is true that the extensive MIA achievement programs, which involved a lot of monitoring of attendance and tabulating activities, could devolve into checklists. Receiving "credit" for showing up or marking off requirements could foster a culture of conformity for its own sake and orientation to external behavior and appearances without necessarily fostering deep spiritual conversion and commitment—even if that was the intended goal.

At the same time, broadcasting Latter-day Saint success as model Americans through massive festivals increasingly lost appeal as America began to feel more and more like "the world." The result was a turn inward to emphasize distinctive Latter-day Saint doctrines, defining spirituality more exclusively in terms of devotional beliefs and behavior, and intensifying an oppositional stance to the surrounding culture. The youth programs were on the front lines of this shift.

Conclusion

The historical moment represented by the heyday of the MIA is gone and cannot be retrieved or replicated. For better and for worse, too much has changed—in the Church and in the larger society. But history is a useful lens to think with. We believe that the single biggest takeaway from studying this period is that building Zion requires infrastructure—especially

34. Lee, in *One Hundred Thirty-first Semi-Annual Conference,* 81.

human infrastructure. Shared service and shared experiences are powerful agents in drawing down spiritual power and cultivating faith, love, and commitment. The heyday of the MIA shows the power of community and of collective, *mutual*, intergenerational investment—something increasingly rare as societies become more individualistic, with stark divides in terms of resources and opportunities.

Moreover, there is much to be said for the idea of teaching the gospel through activities and providing a scaffolding to support that goal. This might look different in various time periods and places, and there absolutely was a need for more local autonomy and adaptation than the heyday framework allowed. But what else is lost when the framework is dismantled? This model held out high expectations and high standards for young Latter-day Saints—and gave them the tools to reach those heights. It also demonstrated a truth attributed to Brigham Young at founding of the organization that would become the YWMIA, and one that would become its central mission: "More testimonies are obtained on the feet than on the knees."[35]

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35. Susa Young Gates, *History of the Young Ladies' Mutual Improvement Association of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: From November 1869 to June 1910* (Deseret News, 1911), 9.

Where Risk and Reward Meet

Interfaith Engagement and Learning

Andrew C. Reed

The Lutheran Bishop of Stockholm, Krister Stendahl, sought to accomplish one grand thing in the world. He hoped to help human beings learn to see others, to use Elder Dale G. Renlund's words, "through Heavenly Father's eyes."[1] While that may appear at first glance simple enough, the practice of doing so presents real challenges. Learning to see others as God does requires a curious empathy, one that fosters a desire to both know and appreciate. Stendahl publicly modeled what would become known as his "rules" for interfaith relationships in 1985 when he stood up for Latter-day Saints and their desire to build a temple in Stockholm. In a later interview, Stendahl summarized those rules this way: When seeking information about another faith, we ought to "let the other define herself; compare equal to equal; and find beauty in the other so as to develop 'holy envy.'"[2] Stendahl modeled for those who heard

1. Dale G. Renlund, "Through God's Eyes," *Liahona,* November 2015, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/liahona/2015/11/sunday-morning-session/through-gods-eyes.

2. Among those who promote the significance of Krister Stendahl's approach from the Christian perspective are Barbara Brown Taylor, *Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others* (HarperOne, 2019), 64–67; Mauro Properzi, "Learning about Other Religions: False Obstacles and Rich Opportunities," *Religious Educator* 16, no. 1 (2015): 130, 144–46; Mary C. Boys, "Turn It and Turn It Again: The Vital Contribution of Krister Stendahl to Jewish-Christian Relations," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 51, no. 2 (2016). Others have examined Stendahl's perspectives in light of other religious traditions. See, for example, Dow Marmur, "Teaching Is Not Instruction: A Jewish Perspective on Teaching Religion in the Light of Krister Stendahl's Three Rules of Religious Understanding," *Consensus: A Canadian Journal of Public Theology* 39, no. 1 (2018).

him speak, and for us today, the most charitable way to engage honestly and with care toward people who believe differently than us.

Often lost in this story is the context of protest and anger toward the idea of building a Latter-day Saint temple in Stockholm, Sweden. Further lost are the foundational relationships that were built before that day among Latter-day Saints and Stendahl, which contributed to his willingness to step courageously into a hotbed of public protest and defend a tradition that was not his own. It is possible to trace contributing factors for Stendahl's principles to Brigham Young University. Stendahl's invitation to visit BYU in 1978 was part of a conference of scholars organized by Truman G. Madsen.[3] This occasion allowed Stendahl to create a natural bond between himself and Church members that he knew personally.[4] It seems likely that because Stendahl knew about the Church, its history, and teachings through conversations with Latter-day Saints from this earlier conference in Provo, Utah, he was willing to leverage his position as bishop and Harvard divinity professor to defend the Church in such a public manner.

Elder David A. Bednar recently asked Latter-day Saints to foster better relations with people of other religious communities. During the 2024 World Interfaith Harmony Week, Bednar invited Saints to "engage in acts of learning and service, bridging gaps of understanding between different traditions and world views."[5] Today, there are instances of anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and other forms of religious bigotry that are, according to Elder Bednar, fueled by "misinformation, unfounded accusations, and societal divisions."[6] At the core of his message, Elder Bednar

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3. Stendahl published an article in the proceedings from this conference in 1978. See Krister Stendahl, "The Sermon on the Mount and Third Nephi," in *Reflections on Mormonism: Judaeo-Christian Parallels,* ed. Truman G. Madsen (Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1978), 139–54.

4. For the history of Richard L. Evans and Truman G. Madsen as the Evans Chair for Religious Understanding, see J. B. Haws, "Embers and Bonfires: The Richard L. Evans Professorship and Interfaith Work at BYU," in *Let Us Reason Together: Essays in Honor of the Life's Work of Robert L. Millet,* ed. J. Spencer Fluhman and Brent L. Top (Religious Studies Center, Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, Brigham Young University, Deseret Book, 2016), 291–310.

5. David A. Bednar (@davidabednar), Instagram, January 31, 2024, https://www.instagram.com/reel/C2xUE5sLutb/?igsh=eng1MTljOTJpeWd0. This post was highlighted and summarized on "An Apostle of Jesus Christ's Invitation for World Interfaith Harmony Week," Newsroom, January 31, 2024, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, https://news-ph.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/an-apostle-of-jesus-christ-s-invitation-for-world-interfaith-harmony-week.

6. "Apostle of Jesus Christ's Invitation."

encouraged Latter-day Saints to follow President Russell M. Nelson's call to be peacemakers by focusing on the qualities of true disciples and not allowing differences of opinion, belief, or politics to divide us from being first and foremost charitable friends. To combat these forms of hate mentioned that are so prevalent in the world today, Elder Bednar suggested that we begin by seeking "opportunities to listen, learn, and extend our love, as we seek to see others in the way God sees them."[7]

Such invitations call to mind the charitable view of other traditions encouraged by Stendahl decades earlier. How can Latter-day Saints better engage in interfaith relations with neighbors, friends, colleagues, and others as part of their life of faith? We might start by seeking reliable information about other faiths from valid and authoritative sources. Reliable sources are best obtained by talking directly with people who practice the principles of their religion in their daily walk and talk. The motivation to seek out truth and reliable information about other faiths can also be drawn from one's own religious tradition, including teachings, scripture, and prophetic voices. For Latter-day Saints, there are many faithful patterns and effective models to follow among Church leaders highlighted on the Church's Newsroom and website.[8]

There are those who may wonder just how far such an effort can go before it becomes a challenge to one's own faith. It is, after all, easy to see the positive outcomes of Stendahl's invitation to learn, be fair and generous in our comparison, and allow adherents to describe their tradition and practice. As a set of practices, Stendahl's rules broaden the possibilities for those who seek to build positive relations. Occasionally, Latter-day Saints are conflicted around two distinct claims that might appear to be pulling in two directions. This is entirely normal and stems from strong ideas about the centrality and essential nature of the gospel message.

Latter-day Saints can learn from the approach taken by Elder Dallin H. Oaks regarding our private convictions and public engagement. He suggested, "In dedicated spaces, like temples, houses of worship, and our own homes, we should teach the truth and the commandments plainly and thoroughly as we understand them from the plan of salvation revealed in the restored gospel. . . . In public, what religious persons

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7. Bednar, Instagram, January 31, 2024.

8. To learn more about how Latter-day Saint leaders participate in interfaith relations, see "Interfaith Relations," Newsroom Topic, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, accessed May 5, 2025, https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/interfaith.

say and do involves other considerations. The free exercise of religion covers most public actions, but it is subject to qualifications necessary to accommodate the beliefs and practices of others."[9]

We see that we can be, indeed must be, committed and convicted by our most sacred truths, and, when we engage with those outside of our tradition in public spaces, we must accommodate their particularities without abandoning all that we hold dear. Elder Oaks taught it this way: "We should all follow the gospel teachings to love our neighbor and avoid contention. Followers of Christ should be examples of civility. We should love all people, be good listeners, and show concern for their sincere beliefs. Though we may disagree, we should not be disagreeable."[10]

Elder Oaks was asking for Latter-day Saints to be both exemplary in their convictions and deeply empathetic in their discipleship. We must always remember that the existence of truth in one religious community does not negate the truths that are held in other traditions. The hard work for believers is to invest the time and energy to understand the resonances of truth that can be discovered through all of God's children.

Relief Society General President Camille N. Johnson, speaking in an interfaith setting in 2023, highlighted these two claims: (1) "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a universalist movement in the sense that we believe we have a message and mission for all people in all places." (2) "The motivation for our humanitarian work is the two great commandments found in the New Testament: to 'love the Lord thy God' and to 'love thy neighbor as thyself.' The way we love our neighbors who are very different from us is evidence that we indeed love God."[11] In her global ministry, President Johnson has sought to model and teach people throughout the world how these two commands reinforce each other.[12]

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9. Dallin H. Oaks, "Loving Others and Living with Differences," *Ensign,* November 2014, 26, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2014/10/loving-others-and-living-with-differences.

10. Oaks, "Loving Others and Living with Differences," 27.

11. Camille N. Johnson, "Remarks at the 2023 Notre Dame Law School Religious Liberty Summit," Newsroom, July 13, 2023, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, https://news-uk.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/camille-johnson-2023-notre-dame-law-school-religious-liberty-summit. President Johnson gave this address as part of a panel speaking on "Religious Responses to the Rise of Autocracy."

12. There are many points of evidence for this opinion regarding President Johnson's public ministry. For examples of her first claim, see Camille N. Johnson, "Jesus Christ Is Relief," *Liahona,* May 2023, 81–83, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2023/04/42johnson; Camille N. Johnson "Spiritually Whole in

Communities of faith may not so easily jump at the opportunity to understand others' faith traditions, even when their resulting understanding promises to be a salve for wounded communities. On the surface, it is hard to find reasons why these outcomes would not be desired, encouraged, or sought after. And yet there is a paradox. Doesn't our universalist message require that "every knee should bow . . . and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Philip. 2:10–11)? Can one's desire to love others lessen a commitment to the great commission to proclaim Jesus? Some scholars argue that American religious affiliation and participation is on the decline, a fact they attribute in part to increasing religious diversity, including the rise of the "nones" and those who claim no religious affiliation.[13] However, learning to appreciate religious diversity and seeking to understand how people engage with their practice and with their devotions to God can and often does foster a deeper appreciation for one's own tradition as well. There are some who believe that allowing or encouraging believers to learn about and from others may cause some in the community to lose their way.[14] Where pluralism is sought, they believe, relativism is sure to be found. And, when the seeds of relativism are sown, the gardener loses the garden to the weeds.

However, pluralism is not a precursor to relativism. People can, and very often do, find deeper faith in their own tradition by learning about another religious community. Inquiry about others' religious practices does not lead to apostasy or apathy. People who do interfaith work well possess a disposition of openness. They also remain committed to the existence of truth in the world, including the truths taught by scripture.

Him," *Liahona,* May 2025, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2025/04/14johnson. For examples of her second claim, see "Empowering Women's Freedom of Religion and Belief," address given at the European Union Parliament, Brussels, Belgium, March 4, 2024, https://www.religiousfreedomlibrary.org/documents/empowering-womens-freedom-of-religion-and-belief.

13. Daniel A. Cox, "Generation Z and the Future of Faith in America," Survey Center on American Life, American Enterprise Institute, March 24, 2022, https://www.americansurveycenter.org/research/generation-z-future-of-faith/; on the diversity question, see Daniel A. Cox, "Religious Diversity May Be Making America Less Religious," FiveThirtyEight, August 23, 2016, https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/religious-diversity-may-be-making-america-less-religious/.

14. One such example during the 1960s emerged out of an anti-ecumenical stance within Latter-day Saint culture and the desire to lean into the ideas of being a peculiar or particular people. See Neil J. Young, *We Gather Together: The Religious Right and the Problem of Interfaith Politics* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 30–35.

Truth in my tradition and truth in my neighbor's tradition are not mutually exclusive realities. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, when asked about multicultural society and breaking down barriers as Christians, responded, "I don't think there would ever be a suggestion, certainly not from us and I do not think from any of you, that Christianity, the Judeo-Christian tradition, or the Western world generally has some corner on the market of truth. We will be open to truth wherever it is and from whatever persuasion, whatever culture, whatever religious faith it comes from. That seems to me to be a given for *contemporary* issues, *current* social issues in the world in which we live."[15]

President Dallin H. Oaks modeled this openness to truth from other religious traditions when he employed Catholic sources such as the Vatican II declaration *Dignitatis Humanae* in his call for greater unity among faith leaders and practitioners in defending religious freedom.[16] President Oaks's effort to find, study, and then appreciatively share Catholic thought, even as he represented Latter-day Saint doctrine and thought to people from both traditions, exemplifies how to do this well. Latter-day Saints can look to Church leaders who unabashedly engage with people of faith and goodwill all over the world to bring greater peace, fellowship, and cooperation as they seek to solve pressing issues such as poverty or racism.

At times, it seems possible that the dual command for Christian love directed to God and neighbor is necessarily in tension with itself because our efforts fall short on both accounts. Sometimes, the best we can muster is a tolerant stance to those who are different in their worldview, practice, and belief. One scholar suggested that "tolerance is a limited imaginative register, at best a stopgap first step, at worst a failure to ask why some hold the upper hand and so have perks, power, and privilege to tolerate those they'd rather not."[17] This hardly seems like the most ideal outcome of our learning about and from other religious traditions. Elder Patrick Kearon, in his address that focused on refugees, encouraged Latter-day Saints to "come out from our safe spaces and share with

15. Andrew Teal, ed., *Inspiring Service: Interfaith Remarks with Elder Jeffrey R. Holland at Oxford* (Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Deseret Book, 2019), 64, emphasis in original.

16. Dallin H. Oaks, "Pursuing Religious Liberty Worldwide," Newsroom, July 20, 2022, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/dallin-h-oaks-notre-dame-religious-liberty-summit.

17. John J. Thatamanil, *Circling the Elephant: A Comparative Theology of Religious Diversity* (Fordham University Press, 2020), 2.

them, from our abundance, *hope* for a brighter future, *faith* in God and in our fellowman, and *love* that sees beyond cultural and ideological differences to the glorious truth that we are all children of our Heavenly Father."[18] It is this love that sees divine work in the differences, leading to a reconciliation of seeming internal tensions. Such an approach, if applied to engaging across religious lines, would help individuals open up to conversations, to cooperative projects, and to a deeper understanding of how God inspires people to act in their own spheres out of fidelity to their religious morals and ideals.

One fact in the world today is that religious affiliation and practice are not universally held values. The realities of religion in the modern world are connected to the fact that people don't just simply belong to a community of faith. They make conscious choices to belong and to remain within their community. There is pressure to abandon things that demand more of us than they seem to give back. It is too easy to fall into this self-centered, reward-based thinking about religion in the world. Though religions do promise blessings by following prescribed patterns and behaviors, they often ask more of people's time and energy. And, across the world, people of faith consistently give more in terms of donated time, charitable offerings, and other forms of service.[19]

In a world that questions the utility of faith and that makes remaining within a tradition more difficult than it once was, opening oneself to understanding new forms of religious life can be intimidating or frightening for some. One way to help find greater meaning and reflection on one's religious worldview is to learn from my neighbor about their faith. Though it is often quoted, Max Müller's belief that, when it comes to religion, "he who knows one, knows none" rings more and more true today.[20] Learning to recognize the differences that exist between us without needing to disparage or dismantle is not a natural inclination, and

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18. Patrick Kearon, "Refuge from the Storm," *Ensign,* May 2016, 13–14, emphasis in original, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2016/05/sunday-afternoon-session/refuge-from-the-storm.

19. Michael Lipka, "How Highly Religious Americans' Lives Are Different from Others," Pew Research Center, April 12, 2016, https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2016/04/12/how-highly-religious-americans-lives-a re-different-from-others/. See also the earlier research discussed in Arthur C. Brooks, "Religious Faith and Charitable Giving," Hoover Institution, October 1, 2003, https://www.hoover.org/research/religious-faith-and-charitable-giving.

20. F. Max Müller, *Introduction to the Science of Religion: Four Lectures Delivered at the Royal Institution with Two Essays on False Analogies, and the Philosophy of Mythology* (London, 1873), 16.

it is exacerbated in the modern argument culture that pervades society today. Knowing another religion requires significant time in conversation, study, and appreciative observation of how people live their lives. Patience can be a virtue here because this kind of learning takes time and experience. Developing an appreciative approach allows us to cherish our unique experience and deeply value the significance of another's witness.

The Book of Mormon warns that we cannot fail to see God at the center of the collective human experience. In 2 Nephi 29:4–7, we are reminded that God reveals his word to *all* nations and uses *all* of his children to bring about his purposes. We are invited, as I read this passage, to remember that God's work is facilitated through many people, across broad swaths of time and geography, and that our role may be miniscule but no less important. His work is comprehensively inclusive because of his deep investment in individual lives, who are, according to Moses 1:39, the object of his eternal purpose. God wants all his children back, and that work is facilitated broadly across time. Our effort to love God also demands that we recognize God's covenant with all humanity, as indicated in God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 22:17–18.[21]

The shared challenge for people within religious communities that maintain boundaries of difference is to remember that those boundaries matter for many reasons, and that those boundaries are also spaces to investigate what is real and what is perceived.[22] We are people with identities that have been shaped by experience and discourse, and our boundary-making efforts help solidify the shape of those identities. Yet God still invites us to focus our common origins and central identities as children of God.[23] As we pursue a relationship with God, sometimes we lose track of the common human story because we are inheritors of noble traditions. Those deeply felt beliefs and narratives tell us about ourselves and our place in the world and cosmos. We need those assurances that come as we yearn to find our place in God's family.

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21. This teaching is echoed in "Statement of the First Presidency Regarding God's Love for All Mankind," February 15, 1978, typescript, image 1, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/06d52821-9342-4f20-9cb3-358e6f8c8bfa/0/0.

22. Thatamanil, *Circling the Elephant,* 4.

23. Russell M. Nelson, "Choices for Eternity," Worldwide Devotional for Young Adults, May 15, 2022, 2022 Devotionals, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/broadcasts/worldwide-devotional-for-young-adults/2022/05/12nelson.

The invitation of interfaith experience is to avoid destructive attitudes by fostering genuine opportunities to see others' experience and journey in pursuit of God. What pluralism demands of each of us is the humility to walk with fellow travelers while we patiently wait upon greater understanding. Perhaps opening the door to the stranger is an invitation to learn more deeply how to love and serve.

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Figure 1. Portrait of Elder Maxwell by Matthew Grant that hangs in the lobby of the Maxwell Institute (oil on canvas, 36″ × 25″, 2018). Courtesy of Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship.

Words Never to Be Forgotten

The Thoughtful Legacy of Neal A. Maxwell

John W. Welch

Many people in the world today cherish precious memories of times when Elder Maxwell (1926–2004) indelibly touched their lives. In so many cases, the thoughtful and thought-filled legacy of Neal A. Maxwell has left us all with a trove of *words* never to be forgotten.[1]

In subtitling this article "The Thoughtful Legacy of Neal A. Maxwell," the ambiguity embedded there is intentional. His legacy is not only full of thought but also thoughtful. Everything he said and did was perfectly framed and eloquently stated; and, more than that, it was also perfectly thoughtful, kind, and concerned about other people. I hope my comments will help perpetuate and strengthen his extraordinary legacy, which is celebrated annually in memory of Neal and Colleen Maxwell. The Maxwell Institute at Brigham Young University carries forward Elder Maxwell's legacy. His picture hangs prominently in the Maxwell Institute lobby (fig. 1), and all are invited to share in his legacy.

Elder Maxwell would want everyone to feel welcomed and thanked. Indeed, each of his many books contains an opening page of acknowledgments where he generously thanked all kinds of people who had helped him in the most minute ways, even down to the proofreaders and the editors, and who thanks them? But he was so very thankful. I hope all can become equally thankful.

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1. This essay is based largely on the 2024 Annual Neal A. Maxwell Lecture, delivered on November 16, 2024, sponsored by the Neal A. Maxwell Institute at Brigham Young University. A video of that lecture, produced by the Maxwell Institute, is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=32xhq5AMa_g.

Above all, it is well known how careful Elder Maxwell was, as an Apostle of Jesus Christ, to protect and cultivate another virtue—that of having unity and oneness in heart and mind. He taught us to strive to get even opposites together. While Joseph Smith had talked about "p[r]oving contrarreties,"[2] Elder Maxwell asks us to ponder further; what are we doing when we set out to prove an opposite? I imagine we are probing to find out how those contraries actually can work together, learning how that opposition "must needs be" (2 Ne. 2:11) and is somehow a necessary part of the puzzle or picture.[3] And without being unified in mind *and* heart, we won't succeed as a people.[4] In his 1975 book, *Of One Heart: The Glory of the City of Enoch,* he wrote, very much as a model for today's world, about this fundamental principle of the Enoch-characteristic of Zion—namely, for all to be of one heart.[5] And he truly modeled for us how to live so as to avoid the Lord's cautionary warning found in Doctrine and Covenants 38:27, "If ye are not one ye are not mine."

I also wish to give a nod here to Oliver Cowdery, who wrote an important part of our early Church history and began by exulting, "these were *days* never to be forgotten" (JS–H 1:71n, emphasis added). I equally celebrate the many words of Neal A. Maxwell as *words* never to be forgotten—not implying that words and deeds are somehow opposite, but rather that they necessarily go hand in hand, together. Elder Maxwell loved the history of the Church as well as the thought and scriptures of the Church. His words offer us an everlasting legacy of both thought and deed, of both theology and history.

Elder Maxwell also loved King Benjamin (as discussed below), and Benjamin emphatically used the word "remember" seven times. For example, "*remember, remember* that these things are true" (Mosiah 2:41,

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2. "Letter to Israel Daniel Rupp," in *Documents, Volume 15: 16 May–28 June 1844,* ed. Brett D. Dowdle, Adam H. Petty, J. Chase Kirkham, Elizabeth A. Kuehn, David W. Grua, and Matthew C. Godfrey, Joseph Smith Papers (Church Historian's Press, 2023), 129, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-israel-daniel-rupp-5-june-1844/1; "Selections from Times and Seasons, 1 September 1842," in *Documents, Volume 11: September 1842–February 1843,* ed. Spencer W. McBride, Jeffrey D. Mahas, Brett D. Dowdle, and Tyson Reeder, Joseph Smith Papers (Church Historian's Press, 2020), 21.

3. For a glimpse in this direction, see David L. Paulsen, "Harmonization of Paradox," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism,* ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, 4 vols. (Macmillan, 1992), 1:402–3.

4. 4 Nephi 1:15–16; Moses 7:18; see also Hugh W. Nibley, "What Is Zion? A Distant View," in *Approaching Zion,* ed. Don E. Norton (Deseret Book; Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1989), 25–62.

5. Neal A. Maxwell, *Of One Heart: The Glory of the City of Enoch* (Deseret Book, 1975), 44–45.

emphasis added), and "O man, *remember,* and perish not" (Mosiah 4:30, emphasis added). Likewise, I hope to inspire all to remember the words of Neal A. Maxwell, to find out how to do that, and to see it as a matter of some urgency. Neal himself was not only eloquent but also urgent. His words have an engaging rhetorical style all their own, producing confluences of sounds and thoughts that both enrich and encourage. At the same time, his words inspire action and not just reaction. His style entices all to do good, provokes all to do better, and rewards all who do so.

To my ear, Maxwell's words have beautiful, even musical, qualities to them. I like to read them out loud and read them slowly, emphasizing their rhythms and cadences; his sentences sound good when read aloud. I find his style better than the constrained dactylic hexameter of Homer or Hesiod, or the formulaic lines of Sophocles or any of the Greek classics. I can see Neal smiling as he found ways to string spiritual scriptures symphonically together. I just wonder, as he was writing and something came to him and he put his phrases together, did he imagine that anyone would really unpack what he meant by all those scriptural allusions or alliterations? He was much more than just clever as he wove together layers of motivational wordings and sacred inspiration, in a way that so many people could enjoy. He was able to find all kinds of things in often overlooked parts of the Bible or modern-day scripture. He found plain and precious truths in the sublime vistas of the future revealed by seers, both ancient and modern, old and new—again, a combination that Elder Maxwell simultaneously and concurrently mastered. Elder Maxwell was also preeminently practical. I was amazed as I went through the long list of all the titles of his books.[6] If you look in a library, it may just tell you that the title of this book is *The Smallest Part.* But no, the full title of the book says much more. It comes from scripture. A few times, on Elder Maxwell's book covers and title pages, his editors or designers put the quote marks on some words in these titles, but most often they didn't do that. I think Neal made use of obscure scriptures in his book titles so that readers would discover for themselves where these riveting phrases come from. For example, one of his book titles quotes Alma 26:16, "*Behold, I Say unto You, I Cannot Say the Smallest Part Which I Feel.*" After Ammon's fourteen years of laboring on his mission, he tells us that language cannot express all that he feels. In Maxwell's book, he offers practical advice for how to live as a disciple of Christ in a secular

6. See the full list of his book titles in Appendix 1 below.

society, while similarly acknowledging that he too feels much "more than he could tell!"[7]

In *The Smallest Part,* part one, Elder Maxwell explains three strategies: a view of truth, a view of morality, and a view of causality. Those are big, philosophical words: truth (or epistemology); morality (or ethics); and causality (or metaphysics). But he's careful to make them all very practical. In part one of the book, he explores how beliefs about those foundational ideas affect our behavior and interactions with others.[8] And then, in part two, he offers what he calls "tactical suggestions."[9] I'm not sure exactly what he means by the word *tactical,* but I always have to remember in reading Elder Maxwell that World War II was never very far behind for him. His service in World War II indelibly impressed and changed his worldview. He was on Okinawa in the thick of one of the most vicious battles, and Bruce Hafen's biography explains graphically what he did and learned there.[10] So, when he's talking about strategy, he was likely referring to how military forces must be organized and what they need to do. They have to manage tasks and time. They must have ways of helping and communicating with each other. They need to finish their assignments. We all do well to do the same.

Following Maxwell's pattern and striving to honor his legacy, I suggest five simple, practical things that can help everyone to be as strategic and as tactical as he was.

Simple Thing Number One

First, *remember and bear well the name of Neal Maxwell.* Recall that it's quite rare here at BYU for any building or organization to be named after an Apostle. Usually, these privileges are reserved for the presidents of the Church and past BYU presidents. At the law school, I remember how much it benefited us to be able to have a building named after J. Reuben Clark; we wanted to honor him by remembering who he was. He was a formidable lawyer in Washington, D.C. He was a remarkable United States Ambassador to Mexico. He came with such a wealth of experience and a reputation that he was brought directly into the First Presidency, having

7. Neal A. Maxwell, *"Behold, I Say Unto You, I Cannot Say the Smallest Part Which I Feel"* (Deseret Book, 1973), vii.

8. See part one, "Some Strategic Matters," in Maxwell, *Smallest Part,* 1–38.

9. See part two, "Some Tactical Suggestions," in Maxwell, *Smallest Part,* 39–78.

10. Bruce C. Hafen, *A Disciple's Life: The Biography of Neal A. Maxwell* (Deseret Book, 2002), 102–16.

never served in the Quorum of the Twelve. But he had skills that were necessary to help the Church navigate through the 1930s and the Great Depression, through the 1940s and World War II, through all of the post-war reconstruction, and more. Likewise with Elder Maxwell, who was a very highly skilled educator, eloquent writer, and strategic thinker, I hope that all will appreciate what an honor it is to have an institute here on campus that bears his name.

Figure 2. Neal and Coleen Maxwell, 1950. Courtesy Cory Maxwell.

To remember and honor Elder Maxwell appropriately, I suggest we all learn more about him. For example, how many know what he was famous for in high school? Raising pigs, and he actually won medals at a county fair.[11] When he returned from World War II, and after he was married and graduated from the University of Utah, he served as a strategic aide to Utah Senator Wallace F. Bennett in Washington, D.C.[12] During those years in Washington, he and Colleen became devoted young parents to their four children, all born in the 1950s: Rebecca, Cory, Nancy, and Jane. In addition, as few people would know, they lost three children to miscarriages during that decade.[13] They didn't have it easy.

When he returned to Utah, he was hired at the University of Utah—first as the secretary to the University's Board of Regents,[14] then as a teacher in the political science department,[15] and soon he became the Dean of Students in the 1960s.[16] He was a wise educational administrator, even at a young age. He developed a campus-wide student leadership training program at the U, and this explains how he entitled his first book, "*. . . A More Excellent Way.*" Notice first that those words are

11. Hafen, *Disciple's Life,* 83–88.
12. Hafen, *Disciple's Life,* 203–17.
13. Hafen, *Disciple's Life,* 220.
14. Hafen, *Disciple's Life,* 257.
15. Hafen, *Disciple's Life,* 258–61.
16. Hafen, *Disciple's Life,* 262–71.

in quotes, and yes, that is because they come from scripture—namely, 1 Corinthians 12:31 and Ether 12:11. But that book also has a subtitle: "Essays on Leadership for Latter-day Saints."

The foreword in this book was written by none other than Senator Wallace F. Bennett. Listen to how he commended his aide's wonderful qualities of thought. The Senator praised the book's "unusual power to interweave abstract concepts of leadership principles with understandable explanations of practical techniques and thus to produce recommendations that will work."[17] Does that not correctly describe Neal? While Dean of Students at the U, he also taught the "American Political Thought" class for nine years, beginning in 1961. The Delta Gamma sorority gave Maxwell their "Favorite Professor Award" in 1967.[18] The Utah State Bar awarded him the "Liberty Bell Award" in 1967 for public service, and BYU recognized him as "public administrator of the year" in 1973.[19] Quite remarkable.

Elder Maxwell's successes at the University of Utah also explain why there is an annual Neal A. Maxwell lecture in political theory and contemporary politics at the U to this today. Their lecture series brings together speakers and commentators from various universities each year from all around the country to wrestle with political theory and issues in contemporary politics. Many are topics addressed in the written works and numerous lectures of Neal A. Maxwell. In honoring him fully, all may want to find some friends on all sides up and down I-15. In his breadth and diplomacy, there's a unifying force. As one reads Elder Maxwell, it becomes apparent that his messages truly are universal.

In addition, how many general conference speeches did Elder Maxwell give? Of course, one can go right to the Church's Gospel Library app and look for any speaker by name. How many times does Elder Maxwell appear? Fifty-three, and they're all right there, full text. Now, if one were to read one a day, that would to take two months to get through. There are hundreds of other videos and transcriptions of his numerous devotional speeches. Here at BYU, he went around speaking to many departments on campus.[20] When he was appointed Commissioner of

17. Neal A. Maxwell, *". . . A More Excellent Way": Essays on Leadership for Latter-day Saints* (Deseret Book, 1967), vii.

18. Hafen, *Disciple's Life,* 259.

19. Marjorie Cortez, "Endowed Chair Honors Elder Maxwell," *Deseret News,* July 11, 1998, https://www.deseret.com/1998/7/11/19390803/endowed-chair-honors-elder-maxwell/.

20. For example, he spoke to the annual convention of the Association of Mormon Counselors and Psychotherapists [AMCAP] on September 28, 1978, and a second time

Church Education, he was an on-the-ground leader, and many of those presentations he gave are available online.[21]

And also, as I've already mentioned Bruce Hafen's book, *A Disciple's Life,* let me mention that Bruce recently gave a lecture at the Church History Library in Salt Lake City, telling about his experiences writing that biography.[22] We praise and honor Elder Hafen for producing a written record that we can now use and benefit from. In this recent lecture, Bruce tells great stories and new details that I had never heard before. For example, he talks about how Church translators in Elder Maxwell's day had to decide who would translate each general conference talk; they divided all the conference speakers into four levels of difficulty, so the talks that were easier to translate into Spanish and Portuguese went to the newer, less experienced translators. They had four categories, and guess which one of those Elder Maxwell was in? None of them! He was in a fifth category, all by himself in a class of his own—clearly the most difficult.[23]

Karen Bradshaw Maxwell, a daughter-in-law, puts all that very helpfully into perspective. Speaking about Elder Maxwell's speeches she said, "Each of his talks is like a bullion cube. It is so compact and rich." She then explains how this can help us all as we read and work with the Maxwell legacy. What were the translators worried about? It's the same challenge we all face as readers. It's not that Neal used big academic words, but that "his language was so compressed, full of carefully chosen imagery, metaphors, and allusions." (And notice all the C's there!

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the following year. See Neal A. Maxwell, "Things as They Really Are . . . ," *AMCAP Journal* 16, no. 1 (1990): 39–48, https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1309&context=irp. He spoke to the FARMS annual Banquet, September 27, 1991. For a version of this address, see Neal A. Maxwell, "Discipleship and Scholarship," *BYU Studies* 32, no. 3 (1992): 5–9. His speech to the BYU 1993 Annual University Conference was cleverly entitled, "Out of the Best Faculty." Neal A. Maxwell, "Out of the Best Faculty," BYU Speeches, August 26, 1993, https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/neal-a-maxwell/best-faculty/.

21. For numerous articles and talks, see Neal A. Maxwell Confluence, Radio Beloved, accessed May 1, 2025, https://radiobeloved.wordpress.com/neal-a-maxwell-confluence/.

22. See Kurt Manwaring, "Elder Maxwell's Journey of Discipleship: An Interview with Bruce C. Hafen," From the Desk, September 29, 2023, https://www.fromthedesk.org/neal-a-maxwell-discipleship/; "Neal A. Maxwell: The Story of a Disciple's Life," Church History Library Men and Women of Faith lecture by Bruce C. Hafen, posted October 20, 2014, YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E42z3KxPDu4&t=4s.

23. Elder Maxwell would write several drafts of his talks. "A typical general conference talk may go through a dozen drafts over the course of several months, and only in the later drafts does the word flow really come together for him." Hafen, *Disciple's Life,* 530.

Somebody's inherited a bit of alliteration!) Indeed, how can one translate that kind of thing? Certainly not easily into any other language.[24]

Simple Thing Number Two

So let me turn to my Simple Thing number two—namely, *preserve and share unforgettable experiences about Elder Maxwell.* Let me encourage all to do so. As we've already seen, many people have stories about Elder Maxwell. In preparing for this lecture, I conducted an informal field study asking many people if they remember a personal Neal Maxwell story. And without exception, people readily said yes and were eager to tell me. Several are retold here.

Here's one such story told in detail by Dale Bradford. Recall that because of the scope of Elder Maxwell's interests and sensitivities, he was soon called as a Commissioner of Church Education, and he became the genius, I think, and the inspiration behind many of the principles that we still use. Elder Maxwell took his leadership and wisdom on the road and presented leadership training to a lot of CES and other Church leaders. Dale Bradford from the Midwest, who has served wonderfully in Brazil and all over, told me his vivid memory of Elder Maxwell from over forty years ago. On that occasion in 1983, Elder Maxwell explained what he called "the four levels of delegation."[25] His analysis is still worth knowing about because anyone in positions of responsibility must delegate, in one way or another, and Elder Maxwell had figured out the following in valuable detail. To summarize what Dale Bradford learned that day: First, sometimes you're delegating to a person who needs to learn how to do something, and in that case, you must explain clearly what and why this is being delegated to them, along with what they will hopefully learn as they carry out the assignment. Second, you might be delegating to one who is competent but needs to learn how and when to follow up with return and report. Third, when you delegate among several people with equal skillsets, they may need to learn how to work in teams or as effective presidencies or quorums. And fourth, when you delegate to an expert to provide otherwise unavailable services, it would help to explain the precise needs and reasons why their professional skills are needed.

Elder Maxwell's instruction that day was crystal clear, and one can easily see how Elder Maxwell's work at the University of Utah in

24. "Neal A. Maxwell: The Story of a Disciple's Life," 30:05–31:13.
25. Dale Bradford to John W. Welch, email, November 5, 2024.

leadership had helped him to train and sensitize leaders about their need to know each person, individually, in order to delegate—being aware of their abilities and uncertainties, and then to communicate deliberately in each unique case with helpful plans. Delegating in this manner helps everyone to succeed.

In addition, Elder Neal Maxwell was an amazingly generous mentor for me and for many others. I met him for the first time at my graduation here from BYU in the College of Social Sciences.[26] We held those exercises down in the Smith Fieldhouse. Little did either of us know in 1970 what frontiers were lying ahead of us. I count it as a great blessing that Neal and I were aware of each other so early in my life, and how generously he mentored me and countless other people. This type of mentoring is a skill we must learn.

He would call me sometimes early in the morning. He had my home phone number, and he called early enough, around 7:00 a.m., when he knew we were eating breakfast; he could even recognize the voice of my daughter Christina and others. He knew some of our children by name, and asked them politely, "Is your father there?"

He particularly mentored me through what I considered the very delicate and sensitive task of reporting and publishing the long sequence of sacred temple elements that I had discovered in the Sermon on the Mount in 1986—that's a long time ago.[27] We didn't talk about the temple outside of the temple very much in those days. Elder Maxwell was my coach on what to say and what not to say.

He mentored Stephen Ricks and me as we put together a major conference on King Benjamin's speech, and he even gave us a long presentation that we included as the lead article in that large book.[28] Elder Maxwell and Colleen followed the teachings that he emphasized there. His chapter, not surprisingly, is called "King Benjamin's Sermon: A Manual for Discipleship."[29]

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26. I spoke as the valedictorian of the college, seated next to Elder Maxwell on the stand.

27. This idea was published in "The Sermon at the Temple," in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon: The F.A.R.M.S. Updates,* ed. John W. Welch (Deseret Book; Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies; 1992), 253–56; It was then developed further and published in John W. Welch, *The Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount: A Latter-day Saint Approach* (Deseret Book, 1990).

28. John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks, eds., *King Benjamin's Speech: "That Ye May Learn Wisdom,"* (Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1998).

29. See Elder Neal A. Maxwell, "King Benjamin's Sermon: A Manual for Discipleship" in Welch and Ricks, *King Benjamin's Speech,* 1–21. Topics include prayer and revelation, submissiveness, consecration, loving-kindness, meekness, and other virtues.

Elder Maxwell and Colleen were very generous with their consecrated resources. Kirk Magleby remembers, to his astonished delight, when he opened a letter from Deseret Book stating that Elder Maxwell had assigned to FARMS all the royalties from his latest book, *We Talk of Christ, We Rejoice in Christ* (for that title, see 2 Ne. 25:26).

In addition, he was a consummate coach in helping us balance both spiritual and intellectual materials. I remember when we, as members of the editorial board for the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* in 1992, were able to meet regularly with Elder Maxwell, our principal advisor. He was an indispensable and wise counselor on how to approach various issues—on what to say and what not to say—from academic and Church points of view.

In a lighter vein, Neal dragged Elder Jeffrey R. Holland and me out onto tennis courts up at Aspen Grove and in Alan Ashton's backyard in a mostly futile campaign to keep us all healthy. On the tennis court, no competitive player I have ever seen—and Neal was certainly one of those—has ever been more complimentary of his opponents. Every shot was met with "Great shot!" even if it happened to slump into the net.

At every turn, he taught us lessons of life. I remember especially what he told me when he first learned about his cancer. He had been scheduled to leave soon to fly all the way to South Africa. In those days, that was a slow, long flight. He was going to preside at conferences there. So, he went into President Hinckley's office to see if it might be possible for someone else to go in his place. President Hinckley looked up and, as Elder Maxwell told me, said, "Is there any reason you can't go? We die with our boots on, don't we?" Now, there may very well have been people in South Africa who had special needs that only Neal Maxwell could provide. I believe that. And as I have heard Elder Bednar remark, the apostolic keys never go anywhere on accident. So Neal, the obedient servant, got on the plane and went. For me, this was an unsurpassed lesson of consecration. No doubt, he knew he was needed there, and for his unflagging service, he was blessed with seven more years to exemplify meekness.

His meekness was also in evidence on another occasion at Aspen Grove, right after he had been ordained an Apostle. As Lew W. Cramer vividly remembered for me, when a young Sunday School teacher at Aspen Grove asked Elder Maxwell—not recognizing who he was, of course—to introduce himself, Neal humbly responded, "I am Neal Maxwell. I'm number twelve of twelve, and I do what I'm told." Well, whenever we hear of meekness, we can remember that moment.

Figure 3. Hinckley and Maxwell couples. Photograph by Anne Stewart. Courtesy Cory Maxwell.

And at a formal event in New York City, as Sydney Reynolds recalls, the FARMS Islamic Text project was holding some sessions and getting some press with media people there. Sydney wrote, "I was seated with news, media, news and media people and ambassadors from Islamic countries. Elder Maxwell was the after-dinner speaker, and not very far into his speech, one of the writers leaned over to me and said, 'Who is he again?' I replied that he was an Apostle of Jesus Christ, [and] the news writer, almost reverently said, 'Well, what is certain is that he is a man of God.'"[30]

Someday, people may well want to know these and many other similar stories, and I hope you write your stories down and make them a part of your personal history. Maybe the Maxwell Institute should have an open invitation for people to share their stories.

Simple Thing Number Three

Simple Thing number three is to *appreciate and emulate Neal's outstanding personal qualities.* How many of them are there? There are many. A life that is this expansive must be thoroughly contemplated. Among

30. Sydney S. Reynolds to John W. Welch, email, October 28, 2024.

Neal's outstanding personal qualities, one finds several persistent subjects that run consistently through his life. Pick a few and follow them. On the top of our list, as my wife Jeannie and I were going over this, we certainly noted that he was a dedicated family man, and he always put family first.[31]

In fact, in 1967, his first book contained this dedication to Colleen: "To my wife, Colleen, for enduring the difference between what I have written and what I do, and for being an inconvenient but sometimes necessary second conscience to reduce that difference."[32] Neal dedicated one of his last books to her as well, thanking her "for her constant illumination, which has inspired me for well over half a century now. In our sunset years, she glows even more brightly."[33] The Neal Maxwell biography also contains this dedication for Colleen as "the story is theirs," as Neal had said, it was not just his.[34]

Elder Maxwell went on to write many things about family and friends; for example, *That My Family Should Partake* (1974). And there's another title making use of scripture, this time from the words of Lehi in 1 Nephi 8:12. In that book he writes such things as: "The home is so crucial that it is the source of our greatest failures as well as our greatest joys. It is one place that presses us to practice every major gospel principle, not just a few as may be the case in some fleeting and temporary relationships." He goes on as follows:

> The affection and thoughtfulness required in the home are no abstract exercises in love, no mere rhetoric concerning some distant human cause. Family life is an encounter with raw selfishness, with the need for civility, of taking turns, of being hurt and yet forgiving, and of being at the mercy of others' moods.
>
> Family life is a constant challenge, not a periodic performance we can render on a stage and then run for the privacy of a dressing room to be alone with ourselves. The home gives us our greatest chance, however, to align our public and private behavior, to reduce the hypocrisy in our lives—to be more congruent with Christ. Home life is high adventure![35]

While many more things can be said here, I want to mention one more Maxwell story. Rick Turley's executive assistant Andrea had many

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31. See, for example, Hafen, *Disciple's Life,* 175–99, 218–42.

32. Maxwell, *"More Excellent Way,"* dedication.

33. Neal A. Maxwell, *Whom the Lord Loveth: The Journey of Discipleship* (Deseret Book, 2003), dedication.

34. Hafen, *Disciple's Life,* dedication.

35. Neal A. Maxwell, *That My Family Should Partake* (Deseret Book, 1974), 3.

interactions with Elder Maxwell over the years. She remembers him, of course, as being always very kind, cheerful, and soft spoken. But more than that, she says:

> One time in particular, about 1998, around a year after he was diagnosed with cancer, I was dropping some things off in his office while his wife was there waiting for him. He was in a meeting with the Twelve at the time. I stayed and visited with her and with Susan Jackson, his executive assistant. As we were talking, we heard some of the Brethren's voices in the hall. We looked up just in time to see Elder Maxwell stop mid-conversation there and break into a full run toward his office. Colleen stepped out to meet him, and he grabbed her hands. "I heard your voice," he said, "and I got so excited to see you."

Figure 4. Elder Maxwell in the Church Administration Building, 2001. Photograph by John Snyder.

Andrea concludes, "it was the sweetest expression of affection I had ever seen."[36]

In our family, we were blessed to have Elder Maxwell perform the sealing marriage of our daughter Allison and her husband John. After beautifully performing the words of that holy ordinance, he gave the new couple, and all of us there, an Apostolic tutorial in celestial marriage, which we all took time afterward to recollect as best we could. Working together, we created a line-upon-line record, which, to Alli and John's credit, they have always used, right there, next to their patriarchal blessings. Elder Maxwell, always an effective communicator, began by asking the couple some questions and then letting them take turns talking and listening. He gave them wise counsel such as "cultivate an affection born of admiration." Wow. "Lift each other up." "Some of the cleverest things you ever think of you must never say." "Praise your children. Praise your mothers. Pray together and alone. Private prayer is for unburdening. Be

36. Andrea Maxfield to John W. Welch, email, November 6, 2024.

kind." "Have a doctrinal discussion together at least ten minutes a week." Elder Maxwell concluded by giving Alli and John some sublime blessings, and I think he would bless you all with this as well: "That those who visit your home will feel the Spirit there, that you will yearn to return to Christ with a deeper understanding of the Atonement, that you will be personally clasped in the arms of Jesus." Now he didn't say "Mormon 5:11" there, but again he was instinctively quoting scripture, as he was always wont to do. These are precious phrases.

On another occasion a couple decades ago, Neal told John Covey that "he dedicated fifteen minutes each day to personal scripture study, no matter how busy he was." It changed John's life when he went and did the same.[37]

Rick Turley wrote me this one: "We were in a setting in which someone was criticizing a person who seemed to lack social grace. 'Be kind to him,' Elder Maxwell gently urged. 'He might have a flat spot on his DNA.'"[38]

The next impressive thing about his life was how well he kept track of time and timeliness and was yet open to the inspiration that each available moment provided. Bruce Hafen tells of the time when Neal invited him to go with him up to the LDS hospital on his lunch hour to help him give somebody a blessing. He said he needed to be back for a meeting in half an hour. But as Bruce recalls,

> as we walked quickly down a hospital corridor looking for our patients, some people in a different room, saw him and said, "Elder Maxwell, you came. How did you know we were praying for you? We're so glad you're here." He walked into that room. There was a man who was very, very sick on the bed with his family gathered around. Elder Maxwell didn't know these people at all, but he instantly knew them. He asked such honest, direct questions. We soon gave that father a blessing, and then Elder Maxwell said, "How about your mom? Does she need a blessing, too?" And we gave her a blessing. And then we embraced with that family. Hurried back to the other room, visited those we were appointed to see, and then rushed back.[39]

And, I would add, he was probably a little late getting to the meeting.

Many stories like this exist. One I know of personally, remembered by DeeAnn Slade, was where a good friend of hers was dying, and Elder

37. Personal conversation at church, October, 2022.
38. Richard Turley to John W. Welch, email, November 9, 2024.
39. Bruce Hafen to John W. Welch, email, November 7, 2024.

Maxwell had them come to his office and treated them as if they were the most important people in his life. They felt such peace there. After their visit, and to their surprise, he continued to call every week for many weeks to give further encouragement and spiritual support. And he then spoke at the funeral of that friend who was so ill. "I was so touched," DeeAnn said, "by Elder Maxwell's willingness to help someone that he didn't even know. I felt a lot of love."[40]

Neal did keep track of time and timeliness, and I think he marveled also at timely coincidences. Here's one that he might nod and smile at: At the time of his passing on July 21, 2004, Neal had just turned seventy-eight years and three weeks old.[41] I used to think that was pretty old, but now I am seventy-eight years and four weeks old. Was the timing of this lecture a coincidence meant to be? These kinds of ticker tape reminders make us all appreciate the importance of miraculous timings of the Lord that stand behind many intersections in our lives.

Of course, Elder Maxwell had many other sterling qualities we could go into. He made use of profound thoughts. One of his favorites was a quote from Austin Farrer, a British theologian philosopher. I love this one, and we've used it a lot here at BYU, but it was Elder Maxwell who introduced us to it: "Though argument does not create conviction, the lack of it destroys belief. What seems to be proved may not be embraced; but what no one shows the ability to defend is quickly abandoned. Rational argument does not create belief, but it maintains a climate in which belief may flourish."[42]

Elder Maxwell was—as we think about his interest in profound thoughts—an eternal pluralist. Together with Joseph Smith, he believed in not just intelligence, but *intelligences;* not just the spirit, but *spirits;* not just the prophet, but *prophets;* as well as dispensations; scriptures; doctrines; kingdoms; eternal progression; heavens; gods; and worlds without end. Pluralities populated his theological, religious, and spiritual life and vocabulary.

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40. DeeAnn Slade to John W. Welch, email, November 6, 2024.

41. His funeral was held in the Salt Lake Tabernacle. He passed on July 21, 2004, which "was the 23rd anniversary of his call to be an LDS apostle." His obituary was published in the *Deseret News*. Carrie A. Moore, "Elder Neal A. Maxwell Dies at 78," *Deseret News,* July 22, 2004, https://www.deseret.com/2004/7/22/19841378/elder-neal-a-maxwell-dies-at-78/.

42. Austin Farrer, "The Christian Apologist," in *Light on C. S. Lewis,* ed. Jocelyn Gibb (Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965), 26.

His next-to-last book, *Whom the Lord Loveth: The Journey of Discipleship* (this title using a quote from Proverbs 3:12), covers a wonderful synopsis of a lot of things that Elder Maxwell said.[43] Here are some key parts from his short concluding chapter in that book. Listen to and ponder what he says. These words speak for themselves: "Orthodoxy keeps the powerful doctrines of the revealed gospel in careful and much needed balance. Otherwise, if focused upon singly and exclusively, these doctrines are so powerful we can spin off and go wild. Orthodoxy, therefore, rather than being repressive, is a great adventure in handling powerful doctrines that bring great happiness when 'fitly framed' and woven together but which can bring misery if we spin them off separately (Ephesians 2:21; 4:16). When doctrines are pulled apart from each other by mankind's selections, interpretations, and implementations, the results can be tragic."[44]

Do we need each other as members of the Church? Absolutely. And, just as much, the doctrines of the Church need each other too: "The doctrines of the Church need each other as much as the people of the Church need each other. We dare not break the doctrines apart or specialize within them, because we need them all to achieve spiritual symmetry, an outcome that requires connections and corrections. Orthodoxy is felicity—in beliefs and behavior."[45]

Simple Thing Number Four

Simple Thing number four is *draw inspiring insights out of underutilized scriptural phrases.* If we look at the scriptures, not just for big stories or big pictures or big themes, but get down into the individual words and phrases, many inspiring things emerge.

How early in his life did Elder Maxwell read the scriptures this way? Well, very early, as we can see from a missionary teaching manual that Elder Maxwell wrote in 1949 while he was a missionary in Canada. He was born in 1926, so he was twenty-three years old when he wrote this. He called it *The Sword of Truth,* and it's twenty pages, single-spaced, written, of course, on a manual typewriter (fig. 5).[46] This is from his

43. Neal A. Maxwell, *Whom the Lord Loveth: The Journey of Discipleship* (Deseret Book, 2003).

44. Maxwell, *Whom the Lord Loveth,* 159.

45. Maxwell, *Whom the Lord Loveth,* 160.

46. Neal A. Maxwell, "The Sword of Truth," unpublished manuscript, 1949, copy in family hands; See also Gerry Avant, "How Elder Neal A. Maxwell Became 'Poetry

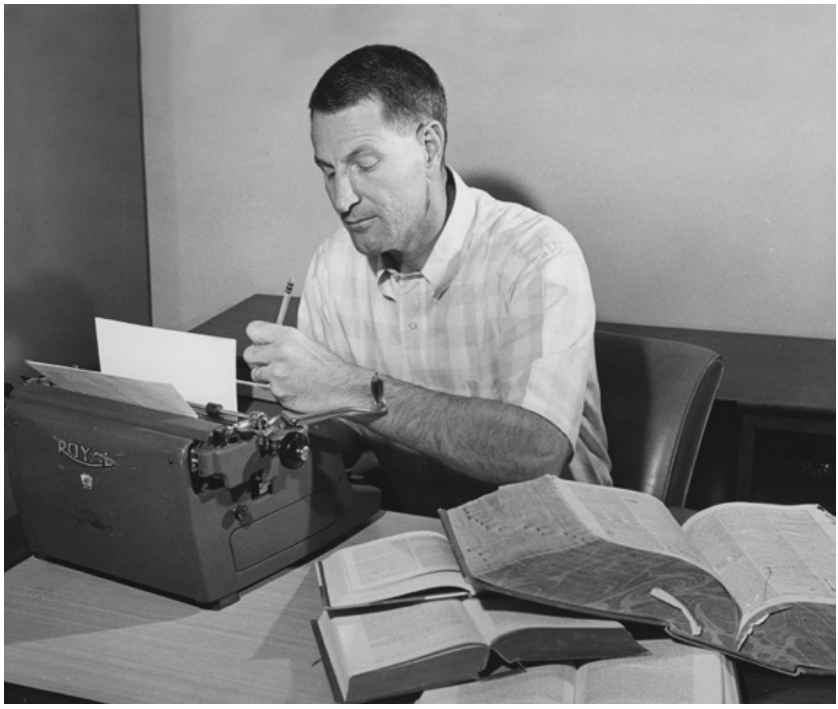

Figure 5. Maxwell at his typewriter in the 1960s. Courtesy Cory Maxwell.

foreword, where he encouraged missionaries about things they might do and gave helpful advice about what lessons they should teach. (And by the way, I like his lesson plan a lot.) Here are some of his pieces of advice to his fellow missionaries: "Add scriptural weight to your teaching." He warned them not to "get off on a tangent," and be sure to "leave listeners with a frame that will cause them to ponder the things you have said." He went on to assure them—and look at the number of words he starts with here—"Men who sail in ships of reason, who have set their sails to catch the winds of truth will eventually be driven to accept these truths as uttered by Joseph Smith, a servant of the Most High and in so doing, they shall land successfully upon the shores of salvation." This is coming from the twenty-three-year-old missionary Maxwell—seeds of what he will become. They are beautifully contained here.

Personified at the Pulpit," *Church News,* November 16, 2009, https://www.thechurchnews.com/2019/11/16/23215691/neal-maxwell-university-of-utah-twelve-apostles/.

In the last few months, I have spent time rereading carefully my shelf of books by Elder Maxwell. Consider their titles: *Meek and Lowly* (1987) from Matthew 11:29 and Moroni 7:44; *Even as I Am* (1982) from 3 Nephi 27:27; and *If Thou Endure It Well* (1996) from D&C 121:8, the words spoken to Joseph Smith in Liberty Jail. In all, two-thirds of his book titles contain phrases that come straight from scripture. Elder Maxwell did not play hide the ball in these and other titles of his talks. He wore his eternal agenda right up front, openly on his sleeves, prayerfully on bended knees, and lovingly with his heart, might, mind and strength; but most often, he left it to his readers to put the quote marks on these distinctive scriptural phrases and to adopt and internalize them. He knew that finding those things would do us good. He is cheering us on.

Simple Thing Number Five

Simple Thing number five, *rise above your most daunting challenges.* If you feel down or depressed, you can follow Elder Maxwell's example and rise above those problems in the Savior's way. We can relate to what Neal did, even if our challenges are not the same as his. He was called out of the blue when he was forty-three to become the Commissioner of Church Education in 1970.[47] He was asked to adjust and justify the overwhelming idea of creating, for the first time, a unified Church Educational System, not just in Provo, but with units in Idaho, Hawaii, Salt Lake City, as well as a single, coordinated Seminary and Institute program—all that without the use of internet or email.[48] Can you imagine? Thanks to Neal's inspiration and his repeated on-site personal visits, the system that is now under Elder Clark Gilbert's direction serves countless learners all over the world. Undaunted by so many challenges, including his final seven-year battle with cancer, Neal and Colleen and the whole Maxwell family soldiered on.

In this light, a cluster of four books would be well worth rereading. They were written just prior to his deepest struggle with cancer. One of them, *But for a Small Moment* (1986) is related to Joseph Smith's trials. During cancer treatments, he also wrote *Meek and Lowly* (1987), *Not My Will, but Thine* (1988), and *If Thou Endure It Well* (1996). He struggled

47. Hafen, *Disciple's Life,* 153; *By Study and Also by Faith: One Hundred Years of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion* (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2015), 211.

48. See Hafen, *Disciple's Life,* 361–71. For additional information on Elder Maxwell's contributions to BYU's various locations, see also Hafen, *Disciple's Life,* 372–84.

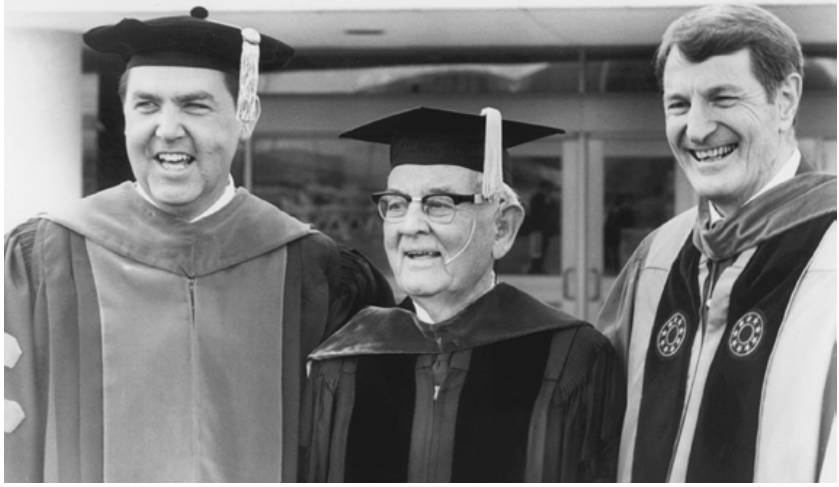

Figure 6. President Spencer W. Kimball with Elder Holland and Elder Maxwell at the 100th anniversary of Brigham Young University. Courtesy BYU Photo.

through. He followed the footsteps of the Savior in joy and in pain. He was no stranger to the extreme suffering of Joseph the Prophet, and he tried to let no murmuring word escape his tongue.

Conclusion

I hope you agree with me that Elder Maxwell's written and spoken words are indeed words never to be forgotten. His legacy is thoughtful, logical, rational, and persuasive, but it is also inspired, warm, impressed with the Holy Spirit, and guiding individual progress even in the face of adversity.

Today, of course, Elder Maxwell's speeches and articles are more readily available than ever before. There is also a website, https://scriptures.byu.edu, put together by Stephen Little and others working with him. It's a fabulous scripture index with easy navigation tools. You can set the filter by speaker to Neal A. Maxwell, and it will tell you how many times Elder Maxwell mentioned or quoted any scripture in any general conference talk or elsewhere.

And with the aid of AI, our rising generation worldwide will have the blessing of being able to find much more, and much more easily, the words of Neal A. Maxwell. Coming in 2025 is the Beacon program to celebrate BYU's 150th anniversary. Looking back fifty years, Elder Maxwell was at the 100th anniversary of BYU with Spencer W. Kimball and Elder Jeffrey R. Holland (fig. 6). Elder Maxwell didn't speak on that

occasion, but in October 1975, he published an article called "Why a University in the Kingdom?" I find it very compelling, and I certainly encourage everyone at BYU and anywhere in Church Education to read it. It is easily available online.[49] While celebrating the BYU Centennial, Elder Maxwell, as an Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve, included several prescient landmark statements regarding BYU's mission and future. For example:

> If Brigham Young University did only that which other universities do, and in the same way, there would be little reason for the Church to operate it. . . . BYU must continue to do these things well enough to meet the reasonable standards of the academic world, . . . but without being tainted by pernicious, atheistic influences.
>
> . . . BYU parallels, but is not in, the secular stream of American universities; it is instead a unique tributary to mankind that springs from the fountain of the gospel. This paralleling separateness is important to maintain. . . .
>
> BYU can provide such counterpoint, because at the Y there is concern over conduct as well as curriculum, concern for developing character in students as well as their competency. . . . In important ways, the human environment at BYU is deliberately different, and self-selection by faculty as well as students who desire such a campus is constantly in evidence.[50]

Along with that, the 2025 Beacon program is now making twenty-four selected Maxwell articles readily available.[51] That's one every other week for that year, and I hope that will continue with twenty-four more in each successive year. These are wonderfully selected talks. As I went down its list, I was impressed by the relevance of the topics for departments and classrooms all over campus. Some deal with leadership. They will be important in the business school. Others that are doctrinal discussions will go well to Religious Education and elsewhere. There are talks that relate to the School of Education and the process of educating and teaching by the Spirit. There are talks about taking especial care of our families, which will be useful in the study of marriage and family

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49. Neal A. Maxwell, "Why a University in the Kingdom?," *Ensign,* October 1975, 6–9, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1975/10/why-a-university-in-the-kingdom.

50. Maxwell, "Why a University in the Kingdom?," 6.

51. 2025 Beacons of Light, Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, accessed May 1, 2025, https://mi.byu.edu/2025-beacons-of-light.

Figure 7. Maxwell carrying the Olympic torch in downtown Salt Lake City. Photo by Zeke Studios. Courtesy Cory Maxwell.

relations. There's even one on the Constitution of the United States, "The Constitution: The Wisest Ever Yet Presented to Men."[52] Neal delivered that speech on the Constitution of the United States in 1987, the bicentennial of the Constitutional Convention in 1787, and it makes sense, given his years of working on Senator Bennett's staff in Washington D.C. So, the Law School will also find something relevant here in this collection of Beacon program readings that are part of Neal's lasting legacy. Every student at BYU and everywhere in the Church Education System can certainly find that Neal is still with us, teaching us about such things as "spiritual ecology"[53] and the eternal "brightness of hope."[54]

His books remain well worth reading and rereading, and so many of his talks and papers can be easily found today.[55] He continues to lead the way, as he did with the Olympic torch in 2002 (fig. 7).[56]

We can all deeply hope that Elder Maxwell's words and intelligence will continue to lead us onward toward further light and truth. May we all remember these five simple things: (1) remember the name of Neal A.

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52. Neal A. Maxwell, "The Constitution: The Wisest Ever Yet Presented to Men," delivered at Ricks College, September 15, 1987, https://www.byui.edu/speeches/devotionals/neal-a-maxwell/the-constitution-the-wisest-ever-yet-presented-to-men; see also Neal A. Maxwell, "For the Commandment Is a Lamp; and the Law Is Light," delivered to the Utah State Bar Association, July 17, 1980, https://mi.byu.edu/for-the-commandment-is-a-lamp-and-the-law-is-light.

53. Neal A. Maxwell, "Spiritual Ecology," Speeches, February 23, 1970, Brigham Young University, https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/neal-a-maxwell/spiritual-ecology/.

54. Neal A. Maxwell, "Brightness of Hope," *Ensign,* November 1994, 34–36, https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1994/11/brightness-of-hope?lang=eng.

55. See, for example, the Neal A. Maxwell Confluence at https://radiobeloved.wordpress.com/neal-a-maxwell-confluence/.

56. R. Scott Lloyd and Gerry Avant, "Olympic Torch Arrives in Salt Lake City," *Church News,* February 9, 2002, https://www.thechurchnews.com/2002/2/9/23212000/olympic-torch-arrives-in-salt-lake-city/.

Maxwell; (2) preserve stories about his inspiring influence; (3) emulate his many personal qualities; (4) draw inspiring insights out of underutilized words in the scriptures; and (5) rise above our challenges, whatever they may be.

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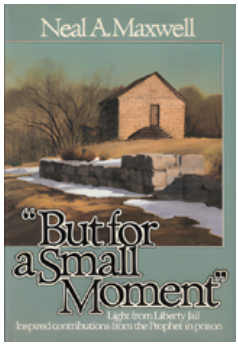

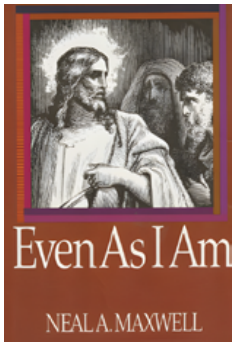

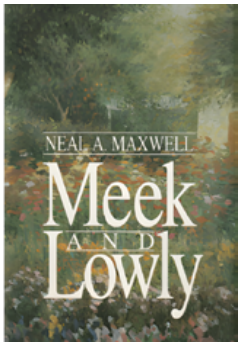

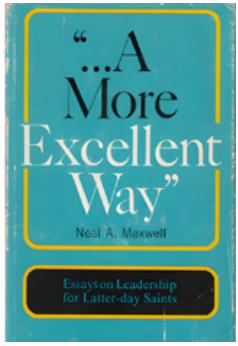

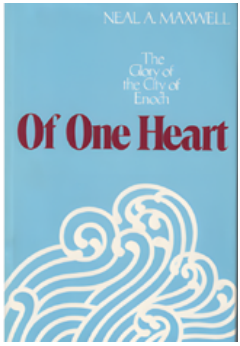

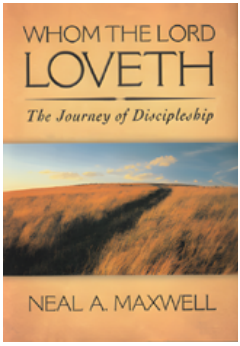

Appendix
Books by Neal A. Maxwell, Listed by Date with References for Scriptures Quoted in These Titles

CWNAM = The Collected Works of Neal A. Maxwell, 6 vols. (Eagle Gate, 2001).

1967. *". . . A More Excellent Way": Essays on Leadership for Latter-day Saints.* [1 Cor. 12:31; Ether 12:11] *CWNAM 1*

1970—Appointed Commissioner of Church Education

1970. *"For the Power Is in Them . . ." Mormon Musings.* [D&C 58:28.] Reprinted in 1973. *CWNAM 1*

1972. *A Time to Choose: "Will Ye Also Go Away?"* [John 6:67.] Reprinted in 1975. *CWNAM 1*

1973. *"Behold, I Say unto You, I Cannot Say the Smallest Part Which I Feel"* [Alma 26:16.] *CWNAM 2*

1974—Called as Assistant to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

1974. *That My Family Should Partake.* [1 Ne. 8:12.] *CWNAM 1*

1975. *Of One Heart: The Glory of the City of Enoch.* [Acts 4:32; Moses 7:18.] Reprinted in 1990 with *Look Back at Sodom. CWNAM 1*

1975. *Look Back at Sodom: A Timely Account from Imaginary Sodom Scrolls.* Reprinted in 1990 with *Of One Heart. CWNAM 1*

1976—Called to the Presidency of the First Quorum of the Seventy

1976. *Deposition of a Disciple. CWNAM 1*

1977. *Wherefore, Ye Must Press Forward.* [2 Ne. 31:20.] *CWNAM 2*

1978. *"Things as They Really Are."* [Jacob 4:13.] *CWNAM 2*

1979. *All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience.* [D&C 122:7.] *CWNAM 2*

1981—July 23—Called to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

1981. *"Notwithstanding My Weakness."* [2 Ne. 33:11.] *CWNAM 2*

1982. *We Will Prove Them Herewith.* [Abr. 3:25.] *CWNAM 3*

1982. *Even as I Am.* [3 Ne. 27:27.] Reprinted in 1991. *CWNAM 3*

1983. *Plain and Precious Things.* [1 Ne. 13:28–29, 40.] *CWNAM 3*

1984. *We Talk of Christ, We Rejoice in Christ.* [2 Ne. 25:26.] *CWNAM 3*

1985. *Sermons Not Spoken. CWNAM 3*

1986. *"But for a Small Moment."* [D&C 122:4.] Reprinted in 2000. *CWNAM 4*

1987. *Meek and Lowly.* [Matt. 11:29; Moro. 7:44.] *CWNAM 4*

1988. *Not My Will, But Thine.* [Luke 22:42; Jacob 7:14.] Reprinted in 2008. *CWNAM 4*

1990. *A Wonderful Flood of Light. CWNAM 4*

1991. *Men and Women of Christ. CWNAM 4*

1992. *That Ye May Believe.* [Morm. 3:21.] *CWNAM 5*

1994. *Lord, Increase Our Faith.* [Luke 17:5.] Reprinted in 1998. *CWNAM 5*

1994. *The Christmas Scene.* Deseret Book. (pamphlet)

1996. *If Thou Endure It Well.* [D&C 121:8.] Reprinted in 2002. *CWNAM 5*

1996—September 11—Diagnosed with Cancer

1997. *Women of Faith.* Deseret Book. (pamphlet)

1997. *The Neal A. Maxwell Quote Book.* Ed. Cory H. Maxwell. Bookcraft. *CWNAM 6*.

1999. *One More Strain of Praise.* [*Hymns,* no. 156, "Sing We Now at Parting."] Reprinted in 2002. *CWNAM 5*

2001. *The Promise of Discipleship.* Reprinted 2010. *CWNAM 6*

2003. *The Precious Promise: A Message for Women*. Deseret Book. (pamphlet)

2003. *Whom the Lord Loveth: The Journey of Discipleship.* [Prov. 3:12.] Deseret Book.

2004. *Moving in His Majesty and Power.* [D&C 88:47.] Deseret Book.

2006. *The Enoch Letters.* (*Of One Heart* and *Look Back at Sodom* were reprinted together and retitled as *The Enoch Letters.*)

Using a Reconciliation Approach to Teach Evolution May Help Religious Students Remain Faithful

Danny Ferguson, Ethan Tolman,
Spencer Shumway, and Cassidy Shively

Many religious people struggle to accept the theory of evolution, and about 40 percent of Americans reject the theory outright, preferring a literalist, creationist account that confirms a young earth.[1] As Latter-day Saints ourselves, we understand the trepidation surrounding the idea that perhaps evolution contradicts our belief of an earth created by a loving Father and Savior. People may feel that the scientific theory of evolution implies that there is no need for a God or that our existence is simply an accident. As college-age youth, we are familiar with the struggles that students face as they confront evolution in their science classes. We are saddened by, but sympathize with, the growing trend in our generation to leave organized religion, preferring instead to embrace the alternative path of secularism.[2] It is no wonder that we feel such deep conflict, having been bombarded by misinformation and conflicting messages from the world around us.

Take, for instance, typical kids growing up in the United States. They may have encountered a high school science teacher who took an

1. Megan Brenan, "40% of Americans Believe in Creationism," Gallup, July 26, 2019, https://news.gallup.com/poll/261680/americans-believe-creationism.aspx.

2. Michael Lipka, "Religious 'Nones' Are Not Only Growing, They're Becoming More Secular," Pew Research Center, November 11, 2015, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/11/religious-nones-are-not-only-growing-theyre-becoming-more-secular; Alan Cooperman and Gregory A. Smith, "The Factors Driving the Growth of Religious 'Nones' in the U.S.," Pew Research Center, September 14, 2016, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/09/14/the-factors-driving-the-growth-of-religious-nones-in-the-u-s.

atheistic approach to science, telling the students that their religious beliefs have no place in the classroom and that evolution provides a complete explanation of how life (and humans) emerged on this planet and therefore an argument against the need for any supernatural power.[3] On the flip side, they may have encountered high school science teachers who take the opposite viewpoint and teach evolution flippantly, as "just a theory," or not at all, preferring to avoid the conflict they themselves might feel.[4] These students may have interacted with friends or family members who hold staunch opinions in one direction or another and who forcibly share those opinions, hoping to influence young minds. They may have church leaders who actively preach against evolution, suggesting that it is a tactic designed to deceive them and lead them away from their faith. Even in the media they consume, they are bombarded with misinformation about evolution (such as the Pokémon portrayal of evolution as more of a metamorphic event, the *Simpsons* episodes that pit religious fanatics against ardent atheists, the memes that portray monkeys morphing into man, and so on).

And as these students enter a college campus, the battle continues. Statistics show that the majority of those teaching biology courses at the undergraduate level do not believe in God, and even less so if they specialize in evolutionary science.[5] While many (and probably most) do not set out to actively discredit religious faith, there are many who preach an atheistic version of evolution.[6] It is no wonder that students feel that they are faced with a presumed dichotomy, an inescapable choice between science and their faith. Sadly, some students decide to leave their religion when they feel forced to choose. Other students choose their religious identity over the science, feeling like they need to

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3. M. Elizabeth Barnes and Sara E. Brownell, "A Call to Use Cultural Competence When Teaching Evolution to Religious College Students: Introducing Religious Cultural Competence in Evolution Education (ReCCEE)," *CBE—Life Sciences Education* 16, no. 4 (Winter 2017): 2–3.

4. Randy Moore and Sehoya Cotner, "The Creationist Down the Hall: Does It Matter When Teachers Teach Creationism?" *BioScience* 59, no. 5 (May 2009): 431–32.

5. Elaine Howard Ecklund and Christopher P. Scheitle, "Religion Among Academic Scientists: Distinctions, Disciplines, and Demographics," *Social Problems* 54, no. 2 (May 2007): 296, 299; Gregory W. Graffin and William B. Provine, "Macroscope: Evolution, Religion, and Free Will," *American Scientist* 95, no. 4 (July–August 2007): 294–97; see also Brenan, "40% of Americans Believe in Creationism."

6. M. Elizabeth Barnes and others, "'Accepting Evolution Means You Can't Believe in God': Atheistic Perceptions of Evolution among College Biology Students," *CBE—Life Sciences Education* 19, no. 2 (Summer 2020): 3.

reject the theory of evolution to be faithful to their religious beliefs. We, as past students at Brigham Young University, want to make it known that the teaching of evolution at BYU is different from most other institutions and that this difference helped us embrace the science while also increasing our testimonies of Jesus Christ and our Heavenly Father, the loving Creators of this planet. The purpose of this essay is to share with the reader this unique approach.

A Reconciliation Approach

Let's start with the approaches to teaching evolution that we have seen. Given that the theory of evolution is the central theme in biology,[7] increasing student understanding and acceptance has been a popular and productive research pursuit for decades that has led to a wide variety of proposed methods, some better than others. A particularly harmful approach is to teach that the rejection of evolution is a product of some kind of deficit (we call this a "deficit model"); that is, those who do not accept evolution lack knowledge, intelligence, or reasoning abilities.[8] Methods stemming from this approach are highly ineffective, often causing students to dig in their heels even further. Another approach is to assume a direct relationship between understanding and acceptance. In other words, you can teach the facts of evolution as a way of increasing acceptance. This method has been shown to be marginally successful among religious individuals,[9] given that worldviews are not easily changed by increased knowledge that is seemingly contradictory to those worldviews. In fact, these methods seem to ignore these conflicts in worldview and the presumed cultural conflict that religious students may be feeling. This type of education can drive away from biology many religious students who feel like they don't belong. However, focusing on how science is done, commonly called "the nature of science,"[10] has

7. See Theodosius Dobzhansky, "Nothing in Biology Makes Sense Except in the Light of Evolution," *The American Biology Teacher* 35, no. 3 (1973): 125–29.

8. See, for instance, Anton E. Lawson and John Weser, "The Rejection of Nonscientific Beliefs about Life: Effects of Instruction and Reasoning Skills," *Journal of Research in Science Teaching* 27, no. 6 (1990): 589–606.

9. Amanda L. Glaze, M. Jenice Goldston, and John Dantzler, "Evolution in the Southeastern USA: Factors Influencing Acceptance and Rejection in Pre-Service Science Teachers," *International Journal of Science and Mathematics Education* 13 (2015): 1191, 1203.

10. This refers to the process of hypothesis testing: experimentation, data gathering, data analysis, and interpretation.

shown promise in helping to increase evolution acceptance among college students.[11] Along with teaching the nature of science in biology classes or other science classes, professors at BYU use an additional approach dedicated to helping students directly overcome feelings of conflict they may have between science and religion: the reconciliation approach.

The basic idea behind a reconciliation approach is to help individuals realize that their religious beliefs and evolutionary theory are not mutually exclusive. Dr. M. Elizabeth Barnes and Dr. Sara E. Brownell provided a useful outline for this approach, which they labeled "religious cultural competence in evolution education" (ReCCEE for short), that includes six practices biology instructors can follow: (1) acknowledge that students may perceive conflict between evolution and their religious beliefs; (2) discuss students' views on evolution and religion and encourage them to explore this relationship further; (3) teach students about the nature of science and different ways of finding truth; (4) explain that there are multiple ways of viewing evolution and religion outside of atheism and a literal belief in the biblical creation story, including that evolution was guided by a creator; (5) provide examples of religious leaders and biologists who embrace both evolution and religion; and (6) explicitly discuss the compatibility between evolution and religion and share their own experience reconciling their religious beliefs with evolutionary theory.[12] Our reconciliation approach is patterned after these recommendations (but has been practiced in one form or another at BYU for decades[13]). This approach typically manifests in introductory biology classes where the professor devotes a whole class period to discussing the reconciliation of the science of evolution with our religious beliefs as Latter-day Saints. In this class period, the professor follows the six steps of ReCCEE, provides additional context about the history of evolution in the Church, highlights the fact that the Church has no

11. Ryan D. P. Dunk and others, "A Multifactorial Analysis of Acceptance of Evolution," *Evolution: Education and Outreach* 10, no. 1 (2017): 4–5; Hernán L. Cofré and others, "The Effect of Teaching the Nature of Science on Students' Acceptance and Understanding of Evolution: Myth or Reality?," *Journal of Biological Education* 52, no. 3 (2018): 255.

12. Barnes and Brownell, "Call to Use Cultural Competence," 5–6.

13. William S. Bradshaw and others, "A Longitudinal Study of Attitudes Toward Evolution Among Undergraduates Who Are Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," *PLOS One* 13, no. 11 (2018): 1–29, https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0205798.

official position concerning evolution,[14] and shares his or her personal reconciliation story and testimony.

Having been student researchers in Dr. Jamie Jensen's lab at BYU, and having had professors who used this approach, we found that this was an effective way to increase acceptance in traditional undergraduate classroom settings at BYU, at other private religious institutions of various faiths,[15] and even when taught in a religion class instead of a science class.[16] This approach is also productive in less traditional settings. In our lab, we found that a fifteen-minute live-animal presentation, which incorporated a reconciliatory model, increased acceptance of evolution among patrons at a small aquarium,[17] and Jasmine M. Truong, M. Elizabeth Barnes, and Sara E. Brownell demonstrated that a six-minute ReCCEE-based lesson at a public institution increased undergraduate acceptance of evolution.[18] In all these instances, we saw no reduction in religiosity by improving evolution acceptance. We even interviewed past students who had been through this approach to determine its effect on their testimonies. All interviewees indicated a positive effect.

As students who have been through BYU and taken a biology class in which the reconciliation approach was used, we would like to share our own personal experiences. These experiences can be found below, following our names (Danny, Ethan, Spencer, and Cassidy). Additionally,

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14. See "What Does the Church Believe about Evolution?," *New Era* 46, no. 10 (October 2016): 41; and chapters in Jamie L. Jensen, Steven L. Peck, Ugo A. Perego, and T. Benjamin Spackman, eds., *The Restored Gospel of Jesus Christ and Evolution* (College of Life Science, Brigham Young University, 2025).

15. Katie F. Manwaring and others, "Influencing Highly Religious Undergraduate Perceptions of Evolution: Mormons as a Case Study," *Evolution: Education and Outreach* 8, no. 23 (2015): 1–12; John Lindsay and others, "Using a Reconciliation Module Leads to Large Gains in Evolution Acceptance," *CBE—Life Sciences Education* 18, no. 4 (2019): 1–11.

16. Ethan R. Tolman and others, "Reconciling Evolution: Evidence from a Biology and Theology Course," *Evolution: Education and Outreach* 13 (2020): article 19, https://doi.org/10.1186/s12052-020-00133-9.

17. Ethan R. Tolman and others, "Testing the Effect of Aquarium-Based Learning on Patron Acceptance of Evolutionary Theory," *Journal of Zoo and Aquarium Research* 9, no. 2 (2021): 102–9.

18. Jasmine M. Truong, M. Elizabeth Barnes, and Sara E. Brownell, "Can Six Minutes of Culturally Competent Evolution Education Reduce Students' Level of Perceived Conflict Between Evolution and Religion?," *The American Biology Teacher* 80, no. 2 (2018): 106–15.

we will share some quotes from other students who have also experienced this same approach and documented their experiences through anonymous essays.

Danny

I am currently a postdoctoral researcher in the Department of Biology at North Dakota State University, having completed my PhD at BYU, where I studied pedagogical approaches to teaching evolution to religious audiences with the goal of preserving these students' religious identity. I also investigated the influence of popular culture like Pokémon on student understanding and acceptance of evolution.

I grew up in Mapleton, Utah, in an active Latter-day Saint family and served a mission in the Philippines. I believe that the way I was raised and my love for living organisms shaped my desire for a deeper understanding of the creation and evolution of life on earth.

Growing up, I was one of those kids who was always bringing things home that my parents didn't want (for example, snakes, frogs, and insects). Because of this, I had a multitude of pets. My curiosity was piqued during one particular summer when I was fourteen and I got fifteen chickens for my birthday. I didn't have a lot of friends, so I spent most of my summer outside in my chicken coop watching the chickens run around chasing bugs and mice. I became increasingly curious about my chickens' behaviors; for example, why did they hide when hawks would fly over the coop? I didn't teach them that. Why would they chase each other when one of them had a grasshopper? Why were our roosters so mean? The time I spent outside pondering such things really influenced my desire to better understand the world we live in.

During my mission, as I focused on teaching the gospel, my desire to learn about and understand our wonderful world waned. This was not a problem; I loved my mission, and I loved learning the gospel more fully. However, after I came home from my mission, I found it difficult to find my path forward when I realized that what I had loved most growing up had been pushed aside and forgotten. Like most parents, mine recommended taking some classes to help me find a path for myself. It wasn't until my fourth semester at Utah Valley University that my love for and curiosity about living things was rekindled in a biology class; biology spoke to me. However, the topic that made the greatest impression on me in this biology class was the theory of evolution. Up to this point, my understanding of evolution had been extremely limited. Learning the full mechanisms behind it brought my love for living organisms into

a new and wonderful light. Unfortunately, all the joy and excitement this class brought me was also coupled with agony and disappointment. Where did evolution fit into my religion? I wondered, Is religion compatible with evolution? Do I have to choose between my religious beliefs and evolution? I was lost. Thankfully, my professor held a seminar outside of class for those who wanted to know his personal views on evolution and religion. It turns out that my professor was an active member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a believer in God who accepted evolution and who had successfully reconciled it with his religious faith. When my professor shared his beliefs, my conflicted feelings about evolution abated.

That opportunity to talk to someone who understood my pain in the very moment of my struggle really pushed me onto my current path of helping others who are going through something similar. I now accept the theory of evolution as a scientifically valid theory, and I am still a believer in a loving Heavenly Father and Creator. The research I do is extremely impactful for me as a person of faith. I was given the gift of learning evolution from a faithful professor who understood the importance of teaching evolution in a way that makes everyone, including religious people, feel welcomed. Evolution is not always taught this way, and many students feel that they have to choose between religion and science. As a researcher, I want to help all religious students not only keep their identities in a science classroom but also become more accepting of science as another way of gaining truth. In one of my favorite books, *Faith of a Scientist,* Henry Eyring, a world-renowned chemist and member of the Church, said, "Since the Gospel embraces all truth, there can never be any genuine contradictions between true science and true religion."[19]

Ethan

I am currently a postdoctoral research associate in the Department of Biological Sciences at Virginia Tech University. I earned a PhD in evolution, ecology, and behavioral ecology at the City University of New York and Richard Gilder Graduate School at the American Museum of Natural History's Partner Program. At BYU, I earned a bachelor's degree in genetics, genomics, and biotechnology. Most of my research has focused on the evolution and genomics of dragonflies and damselflies.

19. Henry Eyring, *The Faith of a Scientist* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1967), 41.

I have always found biology to be a fascinating subject, and when I was younger, I would spend a lot of time learning about it. At some point, I came across the theory of evolution. It always made logical sense to me. I didn't feel that my belief in evolution and in the doctrine of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were at odds with one another until I began to notice antievolution sentiments expressed by those who held my same religious beliefs. I began noticing more anti-evolution rhetoric in church classes, in seminary, and from extended family members. Sometimes it was even suggested to me, supported with quotes from General Authorities, that it was heretical for a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to accept evolution. It didn't feel right to reject either my acceptance of evolution or my testimony of the restored gospel, but there was a time in my life when thinking about evolution or the creation stories in scripture brought a lot of discomfort and conflict.

I was fortunate enough to have parents who accepted both evolution and the restored gospel and a grandfather who was a biology professor and strongly advocated for evolution education while remaining a faithful member of the Church. Through conversations with my parents and grandfather, I came to understand that evolution and the gospel do not have to be two separate entities in my life. They are two lenses that work together to provide a clearer picture of the world. It was also helpful for me to understand that past Church leaders who rejected evolution were not speaking for the Church but offering their own opinion, since Church doctrine is established by the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve. I also discovered that Church leaders have expressed support for evolutionary theory in the past. These realizations helped me leave behind the conflict I once felt. When I learn about evolution now, it increases my reverence for, and builds my testimony of, God's role as the Creator.

Spencer

I am currently a medical student at the University of Oklahoma College of Medicine. I graduated with a bachelor's degree in biochemistry from BYU. I grew up in Utah among faithful members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Although my parents have taken classes at BYU, neither of them know much about biology. I remember, as a child, having a conversation with some family members about evolution. Based on erroneous ideas of evolution, we decided that those who accepted evolution were either mistaken or misguided. Like many people, I held a negative and distrustful view of evolution. However, I also had a natural

and intense love for science and good parents who fueled that fire with things like kids' chemistry books and trips to zoos and aquariums.

Eventually, I decided I wanted a career in medicine, and my desire to get more involved in science grew. I took biology classes in high school and came to love the subject. Despite my earlier rejection of evolution, I actually came to accept it pretty quickly in high school. I didn't dwell too much on potential conflicts between evolution and the Church, and based on the enormous amount of scientific evidence available, I figured evolution had to be an accurate depiction of the world.

After high school, I served a mission in the Four Corners region of the Southwestern United States. On my mission, I became much more aware of (and worried about) the potential conflict between the Church and the science of evolution. Without many resources available to me but with a strong belief in the Church I was representing, I came to think that maybe the Church of Jesus Christ is against evolution. This saddened me, but I was determined to investigate this further when I got home from my mission. And so I did. I read many books, articles, and resources and found differing opinions held by various members and leaders of the Church. I came out of this experience mostly confused. Luckily, shortly after my mission, I started school at BYU, and the first class I attended was Biology 130. A few weeks into the course, my professor addressed the subject using a reconciliation approach. That class became pivotal in helping me resolve all my evolution concerns. Talk about a reconciliation event!

Learning about evolution has helped me to understand the "natural man" (Mosiah 3:19) inherent in humanity. I see great value in recognizing and studying our connections to other animals and our ancient nonhuman ancestors. As someone training to be a physician, I find the study of evolutionary biology riveting, especially as it relates to developing cures for diseases and fighting off natural human frailties. I can now say with full faith that I feel perfectly comfortable accepting evolution. Though the Church is neutral on the matter, my faith and the theory of evolution are reconciled.

Cassidy

I graduated from BYU in 2020 with a bachelor's degree in biology, and shortly after, I worked for the Smithsonian in the National Museum of Natural History as part of the David H. Koch Hall of Human Origins. I am now substitute-teaching science and preparing to pursue a graduate degree in genetic counseling.

I grew up in a small town in Idaho and do not remember evolution being discussed. I had never heard evolution referred to as "evil-u-shun"; I don't remember people saying that evolution was contrary to the idea of a Creator. Evolution was never a topic I even thought to consider. But then, when I was in tenth grade, all of a sudden it was in every conversation. And the general attitude toward it was that acknowledging the idea of evolution made God less powerful and narrowed his role in our existence. At this same time, I discovered my love of biology. I had an incredible teacher who worked with a diverse background of religions. When we reached the evolution section, she emphasized that, in the context of her class, evolution simply referred to a change in allele frequencies (that is, varieties of genetic features) over time. The broad impact of those changes (for example, speciation events or the idea of a common ancestor of humanity) was not talked about very much, but I remember feeling some discomfort with the subject. In my mind, the existence of evolution seemed to imply that there was no place for the core beliefs I had held my entire life. If humans were the result of random changes in genetic features over time, what made me distinct from any other living creature on the planet? What made me a child of God? This thought scared me so much that I couldn't stand to dwell on it.

Fast-forward to twenty-year-old me walking around Ecuador on my mission, sharing my beliefs and taking time to contemplate my place in the world. I loved coming up with questions that made me reevaluate my role and purpose in life. I spent hours trying to understand why I was here and where I came from. This trail of thought brought me back to the question of not only why I was here but also how I came to be here. This time, I felt less fear and more curiosity. So when I got home from my mission and attended another semester of classes at BYU, I took a biology course. I had so many questions, but none loomed larger than that of human origins. This time, when my classmates and I reached the section on evolution, there was no shying away from the implications of change over time. I was fascinated. More than that, when my professor talked about how his faith and his absolute and complete acceptance of evolution were not mutually exclusive, I discovered that I no longer feared my questions. It was one of very few times in my life when I felt my understanding of God and his plan grow instantaneously.

I still have many questions, most of which I realize I won't be able to fully answer with the range of information available to me at this time. And I still pursue answers, because as I learn more about the origins of human life, I gain greater appreciation for Heavenly Father and the awesome scope of his plan.

What Do BYU Students Think About Evolution?

Over several years, we, as student researchers in the Jensen lab, surveyed students enrolled in introductory biology courses regarding their acceptance of evolution at the beginning and end of the semester. In conjunction with each survey, Dr. Jensen asked students to write a short essay about their thoughts on evolution. In between the two surveys, students were taught evolution with the inclusion of a reconciliation module. Survey data show that students almost universally increase their acceptance of evolution after that module.[20] Student essays reveal that students' feelings toward evolution vary greatly, but a few common themes clearly emerge. The following explanations and quotes are taken from these essays to illustrate these themes.

Student quotes about . . .

. . . feeling trepidation toward learning about evolution, prior to class.

- When the word "evolution" comes to my mind, I feel a sort of spirit of confusion or contention.
- Evolution makes me think of atheists and arguing with an atheist friend of mine. . . . While there is some truth to the theory of evolution, I believe it to be largely false.

. . . looking for ways to reconcile science and religion.

- I recognize the evolution of species all around me. . . . I can clearly see the resemblance between primates and humans. We are so alike. We look, think, reason, and even feel in similar ways. Evolution makes sense to me. . . . I know that God is the Creator. I know that the [biblical] account of the Creation is true. It does not make sense to me that humans are a coincidence that happened by some chance of evolution. My source for this belief is different than that for evolution. . . . Now the trouble, or the "unknown," comes when I try to combine both of these truths. Archeological, geological, and any other "-logical" evidence one may find doesn't disprove the scriptural accounts. . . . Frankly, I have thought of how

20. Manwaring and others, "Influencing Highly Religious Undergraduate Perceptions"; Lindsay and others, "Using a Reconciliation Module"; Daniel G. Ferguson and Jamie L. Jensen, "Role Models, Compatibility, and Knowledge Lead to Increased Evolution Acceptance," *Evolution: Education and Outreach* 14, no. 1 (2021): article 16, https://doi.org/10.1186/s12052-021-00155-x.

to combine them, and how to make them work together, and have gotten almost nowhere, or at least not anywhere that makes sense to me.

- I honestly have no clue what to think about evolution. All I know is that I have constantly struggled with the view of my church versus my view of evolution. . . . Thinking about evolution scares me because if it's true, does that mean my religion is false? I would hope that both my religious beliefs and evolution could exist in harmony and fit together somehow. For right now though, I don't know if that is possible or if that works, but I would like to see if it does.
- I have always been confused as to how evolution and religion can . . . coexist, [since] they seem to be separate explanations for our existence.
- I could see Heavenly Father using evolution to create humans, or maybe he just made us without evolution. I don't know. I'm not opposed to either way.

. . . their appreciation of a role model.

- I feel like Dr. [Jamie] Jensen had a really good way of combining the theory of evolution with religion, making it a lot more feasible for students to accept who maybe were uncomfortable with the subject or don't really understand it.
- [I liked] how she [Dr. Jamie Jensen] can actually show that, you know, religion and evolution aren't trying to contradict one another; like they don't have to be that way. You can . . . look at evolution from a gospel-centered perspective. . . . [Evolution is] not contradicting anything necessarily about whether God exists or not. . . . [It's] just taking the facts that we have and trying to understand them as we see them at the moment. . . . We're working towards finding that complete truth or the best understanding we have.

. . . their ability to reconcile.

- Now, I still may not have a "concrete" opinion, but I can say that the more information I have learned about evolution, [the more it] has helped me to grow my acceptance and understanding of why we have evolution. I can see why some people would say that Christians should not believe in evolution, but when looking at the facts, however simple or complex, one can really understand

how evolution would fit into a religious or other belief's values and timeline.

- I would say my thoughts on evolution have changed significantly since the beginning of the semester. In the beginning, I was very against it. Now, while I don't think it is 100 percent proven, I do think that it is a possible explanation for how organisms came to be on earth.
- Before this unit I would not have entertained the thought of evolution. . . . I then learned that the Church hasn't made a statement confirming or denying that evolution is real. This means that believing in evolution or not believing in evolution is neither right nor wrong. This makes me lean more toward the idea that evolution is real.
- At the beginning of this unit, I was still very skeptical about evolution. I thought that it conflicted with the teachings of the Church, especially relating to the origin of [humanity]. But now I've learned that the Church doesn't actually have a decided stance on the subject and that what I'd read was not the official position of the Church. This helped me to be much more open to the concept of evolution.

. . . finding peace from being able to reconcile.

- I feel like I can talk more intelligently about things, and . . . I wasn't necessarily . . . at peace with things before, but . . . I am at peace with things now.
- It increased [my testimony]. . . . It was cool. . . . It's not so much that it gave me new information; rather [it] gave me different ways to collect information. It gave me a different mindset that was a little bit more open to realizing that I might be wrong.

As shown by the quotes above, prior to the course, many students express a hesitation at—even at times a fear of—learning about evolution. Many are seeking ways to bring science and evolution together but, up to this point, have been given no bridge to help them reconcile. Students appreciate a role model who can provide them with tools to bring the science and their faith together. As you can see from the quotes we shared, many students find ways to successfully bridge this gap, and they find peace in doing so. As past BYU students who went through what these students have, and as researchers who studied this process, we

want to emphasize that it is encouraging and comforting to learn that we can reconcile the religion we love with the science we learn.

Conclusion

As members of a religious community and as students invested in science, reconciling religion and evolution is a fundamental step on our path to becoming successful scientists and faithful religious individuals. The long-standing opposition between the two ways of knowing has left many students feeling like they have to choose one or the other. By forcing this choice, we lose out on the incredible benefits offered by embracing both ways of knowing. As a religious university, if we leave our students with no way to harmonize these two ways of knowing, have we done our best to educate them and promote the critical thinking they will need to confront all the other theological challenges they will encounter?

Each of the students who contributed to this piece has had different experiences with opposition to the theory of evolution. The quotes and experiences gathered from biology classes indicate that this issue affects a large portion of our student population and that a great deal of confusion continues to surround the subject. For some here at BYU, the perceived conflict between science and religion has been a source of much doubt and uncertainty, but it does not have to be that way. As research suggests, the reconciliation approach is not only effective in helping students learn about and accept evolution, but it also has the potential to ease some of the doubts students experience with their religious beliefs. When students leave their classrooms at BYU, the goal is for them to be prepared for success in all aspects of their lives. By helping them to reconcile their doubts and questions in issues pertaining to science and religion, BYU faculty are providing them with a template for seeking understanding in relation not only to evolution but to every other major question they may encounter.

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modeling on students' evolution knowledge. He is married to Gina, and together they have five kids.

Ethan Tolman first began pursuing a career in the life sciences as a volunteer and then employee at the Aquarium of Boise in high school. He went on to earn a bachelor's of science in genetics, genomics, and biotechnology from Brigham Young University. As an undergraduate, Ethan worked as a research assistant and published papers on several projects related to public acceptance of evolutionary theory and willingness to engage in nonpharmaceutical interventions to curb the spread of COVID-19. Ethan then earned a PhD in evolution, ecology, and behavioral biology through the City University of New York and Richard Gilder Graduate School at the American Museum of Natural History's Partner Program, where he studied the evolutionary and conservation genomics of Odonata (dragonflies and damselflies). Ethan is currently a postdoctoral research associate in the Department of Biological Sciences at Virginia Tech University. His research interests include resolving the evolutionary history of dragonflies and damselflies, the role of hybridization as a driver of biodiversity, and the genomics of habitat specialists.

Spencer Shumway is currently a medical student at the University of Oklahoma College of Medicine. Prior to medical school, in 2023, Spencer graduated with a bachelor's of science in biochemistry from BYU. As an undergraduate researcher at BYU, Spencer attended and presented at national conferences and published several papers. He is a devoted husband and father of two children. Spencer enjoys spending time with his family, gardening, playing basketball, and is an avid film enthusiast.

Cassidy Shively graduated from Brigham Young University in 2020 with a bachelor's degree in biology. Since then she has worked as an independent contractor for the Smithsonian natural history museum, an HR specialist for a biostatistics company, and has recently returned to her love of teaching as a substitute teacher in the charter schools of Las Vegas. She is also preparing applications to genetic counseling programs across the United States and Canada. She still loves to talk about the reconciliation research that she participated in at BYU and loves to see its practical application as friends and family are able to see the connections between science and the gospel.

Dear Adam

I like the heft and handfeel of it, the lean, whir,
And twist from twining branch before the balance drops
Into my cupped palm, the shaky after-whisper
Of thickly green unfurled leaves, the supple thumb-stops
As I curve my fingers across its tempting crown,
And the delicate crackle when my teeth incise
Its sealed skin, the juice slipping into runnels down
My wrist in long, sticky tendrils, the ripe surprise
Against my tongue of slightly tart, piercing nectar
Until I hit the rough-textured center, the fat,
Fertile seed—resolving my qualms so that I'm sure,
Like the measured sun plunging and ascending, that
The shadowed path that snakes out past this garden's view
Opens to life and death and earth and sky and you.

—Cristie Cowles Charles

This poem won first place in the 2025 BYU Studies Poetry Contest.

Foreword to "'There Is Law': Joseph Smith's Use of Arbitration to Protect the Book of Mormon"

Richard E. Turley Jr.

In 2023, the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints announced it had commissioned me to write a new biography of the Church's founder, Joseph Smith Jr., to be titled *Joseph the Prophet*. Assisting in this endeavor are dozens of scholars, many of them with previous experience preparing the Joseph Smith Papers for publication.[1]

The Papers provide a solid foundation for the biography and are being supplemented by extensive new research. Many of Joseph Smith's legal cases have been made available online at JosephSmithPapers.org, but as part of the new research, several additional cases will be examined, and all the cases will be analyzed and annotated at a greater depth. This enriched series will ultimately appear as published volumes and contribute substantially to an understanding of the Prophet's life. Volume 1 will cover lawsuits and associated business transactions that arose in New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio from 1819 to 1837. Volume 2 will address the complicated legal actions and issues that arose in Missouri in 1838 and 1839. Volume 3 will cover litigation and business affairs that arose in Illinois and Iowa from 1840 to 1844.

Legal cases arose frequently in Joseph Smith's relatively short lifetime and played a prominent role in it. Courtrooms became familiar settings to him, and court cases and legal transactions consumed a large amount of his time. Individually, they each occupied important hours and days in

1. "First Presidency Commissions New Biography of the Prophet Joseph Smith," Newsroom, September 15, 2023, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/new-biography-the-prophet-joseph-smith.

his already busy schedule. The visits and cries of sheriffs and constables were relentless. Few seasons in his short adult life were free of lawsuits brought against him.[2] Several of these legal actions involved serious financial or property matters, and some of the lawsuits posed potential life-or-death consequences for him personally, as well as serious religious and economic consequences for the Church and its members.

This multivolume series aims to enable serious readers, even those without legal expertise, to come to grips with the legal dimension of Joseph Smith's life and his more than 220 encounters in court. The series presents and situates the legal calendars and court orders for all these cases to the fullest extent possible. They involve over sixty judges and lawyers, hundreds of substantive statutes, many types and levels of judicial procedures, and everything from laws about mundane transactions to principles of profound constitutional importance.

The selection presented here is a chapter about an 1830 arbitration that was initiated because Abner Cole—a Palmyra, New York, newspaper publisher—had started publishing excerpts from the Book of Mormon without Joseph Smith's consent. The purpose of the arbitration was to determine whether Joseph Smith had the exclusive right to publish the Book of Mormon or whether Cole could publish excerpts without permission.

Richard E. Turley Jr. is former Assistant Church Historian and Recorder and Managing Director of the Church History Department, Family History Department, Public Affairs Department, and Church Communication Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

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2. See "Legal Chronology of Joseph Smith," in *Sustaining the Law: Joseph Smith's Legal Encounters,* ed. Gordon A. Madsen, Jeffrey N. Walker, and John W. Welch (BYU Studies, 2014): 461–514, https://byustudies.byu.edu/online-book/sustaining-the-law/legal-chronology-of-joseph-smith, which lists month by month, and often day by day, the barrage of litigation and legal proceedings Joseph Smith faced during his lifetime.

"There Is Law"

Joseph Smith's Use of Arbitration to Protect the Book of Mormon

Jeffrey N. Walker, Andrew H. Hedges, and Gerrit J. Dirkmaat

Historical Introduction

This case marks the first time Joseph Smith invoked his legal rights to safeguard work connected with his prophetic calling from abuse or exploitation. The case arose from Abner Cole's[1] January 1830 efforts to publish Book of Mormon excerpts in his newspaper *The Reflector,* which he printed on the same Palmyra, New York, press that the Book of Mormon was being printed on. The case was evidently settled in Joseph Smith's favor through arbitration, an out-of-court option for adjudication that New York law considered legally binding.[2]

Joseph Smith's mother, Lucy Mack Smith,[3] provided the only known account of the events leading up to the arbitration.[4] According to her

1. Abner Cole (1783–1835) was a bar iron and castings manufacturer, lawyer, judge, and newspaper editor who was likely born in Chesterfield, Massachusetts. He moved to Palmyra, New York, by 1814. He served as a justice of the peace from 1814 to 1815 and as a constable in 1818. He started *The Reflector* in September 1829 under the pseudonym Obadiah Dogberry. He moved to Rochester, New York, in 1832 and continued to work as a newspaper publisher. See Kimberley Mangun and Jeremy J. Chatelain, "For 'The Cause of Civil and Religious Liberty': Abner Cole and the Palmyra, New York, *Reflector,*" *American Journalism* 32, no. 2 (2015): 184–205; "Cole, Abner: Biography," Joseph Smith Papers, accessed March 31, 2025, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/person/abner-cole.

2. See Act of Feb. 18, 1791, ch. 20, 1791 N.Y. Laws 14 (determining differences by arbitration).

3. Lucy Mack Smith (1775–1856) was an oilcloth painter, nurse, fundraiser, and author who was born at Gilsum, New Hampshire. She moved to Tunbridge, Vermont, in 1794 and married Joseph Smith Sr. there in 1796. They had eleven children; Joseph Smith Jr. was the fifth child and fourth son. She moved to Palmyra in 1816–1817 and to Manchester, New York, in 1825. She was baptized into the Church in 1830. See "Smith, Lucy Mack: Biography," Joseph Smith Papers, accessed March 31, 2025, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/person/lucy-mack-smith.

4. See Document 1: Excerpt from Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845, herein.

account, Oliver Cowdery[5] (fig. 1) and Hyrum Smith[6] (fig. 2), who were overseeing the printing of the Book of Mormon in Palmyra while Joseph was living in Pennsylvania,[7] found Cole "very busy at work" on his paper in E. B. Grandin's[8] print shop one Sunday afternoon. Upon examining the paper, Hyrum and Oliver found that Cole had promised his readers "to publish [in the paper] one form of Joe smith's Gold bible each week." According to Lucy's account, Cole had already "pilfered" a "form" of the Book of Mormon and "thrown [it] together" with some of his own work.[9]

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5. Oliver Cowdery (1806–1850) was a teacher, clerk, justice of the peace, lawyer, and newspaper editor who was born at Wells, Vermont. He moved to western New York circa 1825. He served as the principal scribe for Joseph Smith's translation of the Book of Mormon. Cowdery was baptized into the Church and was one of the Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon in 1829. With the assistance of Hyrum Smith, Cowdery prepared a duplicate copy of the Book of Mormon manuscript and oversaw the book's printing in Palmyra while Joseph was living in Pennsylvania. See "Cowdery, Oliver: Biography," Joseph Smith Papers, accessed March 31, 2025, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/person/oliver-cowdery.

6. Hyrum Smith (1800–1844) was a merchant, farmer, and cooper who was born at Tunbridge, Vermont. He moved to Palmyra in 1816–1817 and to Manchester, New York, in 1825–1826. In 1829, he was baptized into the Church and became one of the Eight Witnesses of the Book of Mormon. He assisted in arranging the publication of the Book of Mormon in 1829–1830 and was among the six original members of the Church, organized on April 6, 1830. See "Smith, Hyrum: Biography," Joseph Smith Papers, accessed March 31, 2025, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/person/hyrum-smith.

7. See "Introduction to Part 2: April 1829–March 1830," in *Documents, Volume 1: July 1828–June 1831,* ed. Michael Hubbard MacKay and others, Joseph Smith Papers (Church Historian's Press, 2013), 23–27, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/intro/documents-volume-1-part-2-introduction-april-1829-march-1830; and Royal Skousen and Robin Scott Jensen, eds., *Revelations and Translations, Volume 3, Part 1: Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 1–Alma 35,* Joseph Smith Papers (Church Historian's Press, 2015), 7–9, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/printers-manuscript-of-the-book-of-mormon-circa-august-1829-circa-january-1830/1#historical-intro.

8. E. B. Grandin (1806–1845) was a printer, newspaper editor and publisher, butcher, shipper, and tanner who was born in Freehold, New Jersey. He moved to Palmyra by 1828 and worked as a printer and newspaper editor and publisher. He printed the first edition of the Book of Mormon, and shortly afterward, he commenced building a new home, sold his print shop, and became a butcher. "Grandin, Egbert Bratt: Biography," Joseph Smith Papers, accessed March 31, 2025, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/person/egbert-bratt-grandin; Egbert Bratt Grandin, E. B. Grandin diary, 1831 January–1841 February, microfilm, accessed March 31, 2025, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/37e3e1db-2608-4413-b24d-58695ed4f889/0/1.

9. See Document 1: Excerpt from Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845, herein. In technical terms, one form of the 1830 Book of Mormon consisted of the set type, secured in a metal frame, for sixteen pages of the book. Lucy probably did not use the term in this sense (if she did, she was clearly mistaken) but instead used the term as a synonym for *extract,* which is the term Cole used and which better describes how much of the

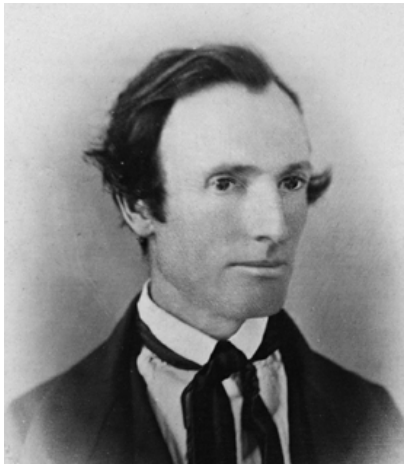

Figure 1. Oliver Cowdery oversaw the publication of the Book of Mormon and was with Hyrum Smith when Smith confronted Abner Cole in Grandin's print shop. Courtesy Church History Library.

Figure 2. Hyrum Smith helped oversee the publication of the Book of Mormon and unsuccessfully tried to dissuade Abner Cole from publishing extracts from it in *The Reflector.* Courtesy Church History Library.

In an attempt to persuade Cole to stop, Hyrum referred to the Book of Mormon's copyright, which Joseph Smith had applied for in June 1829,[10] and to the sacred nature of the book. When Cole refused to comply, Hyrum and Oliver reported to Joseph Smith Sr. what was

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Book of Mormon he actually published. See Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* [. . .], 2 vols. (New York, 1828), under "form" and "extract"; see also Royal Skousen, "Worthy of Another Look: John Gilbert's 1892 Account of the 1830 Printing of the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 21, no. 2 (2012): 67–69; "Gold Bible," *Reflector* (Palmyra, N.Y.), December 9, 1829, 57; and Document 2: Excerpts from *The Reflector,* September 1829–January 1830, herein. Except for the *Palmyra Freeman,* all newspapers can be found in the NYS Historic Newspapers website: https://www.nyshistoricnewspapers.org/.

10. Joseph Smith received the copyright certificate for the Book of Mormon from Richard R. Lansing, the clerk of the US District Court for the Northern District of New York, on June 11, 1829. However, the copyright would not be in effect until the Book of Mormon was actually published and several other steps were taken. See Royal Skousen, ed., *The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Typographical Facsimile of the Entire Text in Two Parts,* 2 vols., The Critical Text of the Book of Mormon 2 (Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2001), 1:48–49. For more information on the Book of Mormon's copyright efforts, see Jeffrey N. Walker, Gordon A. Madsen, Andrew H. Hedges, Gerrit J. Dirkmaat, and Michael H. MacKay, "Chapter 5: Copyrights and Early

happening. Deciding it was "necesary that Joseph should be sent for," Joseph Sr. set off for Harmony, Pennsylvania, where Joseph Jr. was living at the time. Joseph Sr. and Joseph arrived back in Palmyra the following Sunday, and Joseph Jr. went to Grandin's print shop where Cole was again purloining the text of the Book of Mormon. According to Lucy's account, Joseph forbade Cole from "meddling" with the Book of Mormon on the grounds that Joseph held the right to publish the book. Cole refused to stop and even challenged Joseph to a fight. Joseph persisted by stating that he knew his rights and would "maintain them" and that Cole would "find . . . out" about the "Law . . . if [he] did not know it before." Cole finally agreed to "submit to an arbitration" to decide the matter.[11]

Various records support Lucy's portrayal of Cole as strong-willed and contentious.[12] In addition to litigating lawsuits in his role as an attorney,[13] Cole spent a significant amount of time embroiled in lawsuits as a plaintiff or a defendant. The litigation he was personally involved in regarded a range of issues, including unpaid debts, assault and battery, and defamation of character; in some of the cases, the damages totaled several hundred dollars.[14]

The Smiths and Coles probably knew each other prior to the confrontations over the Book of Mormon. One indication of their familiarity with each other is that, according to Lucy's account, Hyrum and Cole and then Joseph Jr. and Cole addressed each other by name in Grandin's shop (fig. 3) without any need for introductions. When the Smiths moved to Palmyra in 1816–1817, they may have met and interacted with Cole in his role as an overseer of highways.[15] The Smiths and Coles may also have met because both families sent at least one child to the

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Church Publications," in *The Legal and Business Papers of Joseph Smith,* vol. 1 (Church Historian's Press, forthcoming).

11. Document 1: Excerpt from Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845, herein.

12. See Andrew H. Hedges, "The Refractory Abner Cole," in *Revelation, Reason, and Faith: Essays in Honor of Truman G. Madsen,* ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and Stephen D. Ricks (Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2002), 451.

13. Cole was active as an attorney from at least early 1819 to early March 1827. One of his areas of expertise appears to have been mortgage law. See "Notice," *Palmyra Register,* March 10, 1819, 4; "Village Record," *Wayne Sentinel,* October 6, 1826, 4; "Surveyor Generals Office," *Wayne Sentinel,* March 2, 1827, 4; and "Mortgage Sales," *Palmyra Register,* March 10, 1819, 4.

14. See Hedges, "Refractory Abner Cole," 451–52.

15. See "Old Village Records," April 1816, microfilm, Palmyra King's Daughters Free Library, Palmyra, New York. Overseers of highways had the responsibility "to repair and keep in order the highways within the several districts for which they shall be elected, to warn all persons assessed to work on the highways in their respective districts, . . . to collect all fines and commutation money, and to execute all such orders of the commissioners

Figure 3. Modern replica of E. B. Grandin's Print Shop in Palmyra, New York, where the first edition of the Book of Mormon was printed. In January 1830, Abner Cole used Grandin's press to illegally publish three excerpts from the Book of Mormon in his newspaper *The Reflector.* Courtesy Church History Library.

same school during the time the Smiths lived in Palmyra.[16] Additionally, Abner Cole's brother Dorastus[17] served on the jury in the Smiths' February 6, 1819, suit against Jeremiah Hurlbut.[18] Moreover, by winter 1829–1830, both Abner Cole and the Smiths had achieved a certain notoriety in the community—Cole, for his status as a local attorney and village gadfly; the Smiths, for Joseph's prophetic claims—and this notoriety would have made them at least aware of each other.

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of the town to which they belong." Act of March 19, 1813, ch. 33, § 3, 1813, 2 N.Y. Laws 270, 270 (regulating highways).

16. Donald L. Enders, "Treasures and a Trash Heap: An Early Reference to the Joseph Smith Family in Palmyra," *Journal of Mormon History* 40, no. 3 (2014): 202–3, 214.

17. O. Turner, *History of the Pioneer Settlement of Phelps & Gorham's Purchase, and Morris' Reserve* (Rochester, N.Y., 1852), 186. Dorastus Cole (c. 1793–1859) was a livery owner who was born in Massachusetts. He moved to Palmyra circa 1810 and operated a livery business there from at least 1828 to 1829. See "Livery Stable," *Wayne Sentinel,* February 8, 1828, 3; August 21, 1829, 4.

18. See Transcript of Proceedings, February 9, 1819, in Walker and others, "Chapter 1: Hurlbut v. Smith," in *Legal and Business Papers of Joseph Smith*.

It is unclear why Abner Cole began publishing *The Reflector* in September 1829. One factor may have been his debts. Lucy's account begins with a sentence (subsequently crossed out) noting that Cole was "destitute of Money [and] property" when Hyrum and Oliver found Cole in Grandin's shop.[19] Other records support Lucy's claim that Cole had suffered significant financial issues prior to starting his newspaper. In 1822, for example, Cole defaulted on a mortgage agreement he signed in 1816. In January 1824, the local sheriff seized several pieces of property belonging to Cole, including his office, and advertised them as for sale. Two years later, the sheriff seized and put up two more pieces of Cole's land for sale.[20]

Some of these seizures and sales may have been related to a ten-year $10,000 loan that Cole received from the New York legislature in April 1820 "for the purpose of enabling the said Abner Cole to carry on the manufacturing of bar iron and castings." The loan was issued at an interest rate of seven percent per year, and the interest was to be paid annually; the principal was to be paid off starting in 1830, with $2,000 due each year for five years. In addition, the principal and interest were "secured by mortgage on real estate . . . to double the amount of the sum loaned."[21] Cole's iron works business was operating by December 6, 1820, and advertisements were regularly published starting in January 1821. The advertisements ended in January 1824,[22] suggesting that production ceased around this time. January 1824 was also when the sheriff first seized and sold some of Cole's property. It is possible that the iron works venture was not profitable and that Cole's land was sold to make the annual interest payment on the venture or to pay off other creditors. Continued financial problems and the knowledge that the first principal payment of $2,000 was due on the government loan in 1830 may have motivated Cole to begin publishing *The Reflector* in September 1829.[23]

The Reflector cost one dollar for a four-month subscription,[24] and various of Cole's remarks in the paper suggest it made money, at least

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19. See Document 1: Excerpt from Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845, herein.

20. See *Western Farmer,* March 20, 1822, 3; *Wayne Sentinel,* January 7, 1824, 3; "Sheriff's Sale," *Wayne Sentinel,* March 10, 1826, 4; and *Wayne Sentinel,* June 23, 1826, 3.

21. Act of Apr. 1, 1820, ch. 128, 1820 N.Y. Laws 117.

22. See "New Forge," *Palmyra Register,* December 6, 1820, 3; "Notice," *Ontario Repository,* January 2, 1821, 3; and "Notice," *Ontario Repository,* January 28, 1824, 4. Cole's iron works business was located in Perrington (or Perrinton), New York, approximately eight miles west of Palmyra. See Horatio Gates Spafford, *A Gazetteer of the State of New York* (Albany, N.Y., 1824), "Perrinton, or Perrington."

23. See ch. 128, 1820 N.Y. Laws 117.

24. See *Reflector,* September 2, 1829, 2.

for a time.[25] For example, in December 1829, shortly before Cole began printing excerpts from the Book of Mormon, he noted that the paper had "been sought for and read with avidity" and that its success had "exceeded our most sanguine expectations."[26] Similarly, in May 1830, Cole stated that "the liberal encouragement our paper has heretofore received" provided the motivation to offer a third newspaper series (that is, volume).[27] Reader correspondence that Cole printed in the paper indicates a wide circulation, with subscribers living over fifty miles away from Palmyra.[28]

Cole may have had monetary reasons for starting the paper, but his purposes seem to have extended beyond financial concerns. Believing that most papers of the day were tools of political demagogues, Cole billed himself as the champion of "all-powerful truth" and dedicated himself to exposing the "bigotry, hypocricy [*sic*], and fanaticism" he saw in modern society.[29] Cole positioned himself as a member of the "freethought" press, a distinct type of journalism that was popular in the United States between 1825 and 1850 and that arose as a reaction to the excesses of the Second Great Awakening.[30] Freethought editors championed Enlightenment rationalism over religious authority and were constantly watching for religion's influence on secular affairs; anything pointing to blind obedience to religious authority was scorned. Cole lived up to the role of a freethought editor, attacking everything from church attendance to the temperance movement to efforts to end Sunday mail delivery.[31]

Cole began publishing his paper in the midst of a bitter rivalry between pro- and anti-Masonic newspaper editors in Palmyra and elsewhere in upstate New York. The conflict was instigated by the disappearance in 1826 of William Morgan, a former Freemason who was preparing to publish an exposé of the secret society. Freemasons

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25. Cole stopped publishing the paper in March 1831, after noting that "our friends and patrons" were behind on paying their dues. *Reflector,* March 19, 1831, 124.

26. "Our Own Affairs," *Reflector,* December 16, 1829, 61.

27. "To Our Patrons," *Reflector,* May 1, 1830, 4.

28. See "Syracuse, March 9, 1830," *Reflector,* March 16, 1830, 91.

29. "To the Public," *Reflector,* September 2, 1829, 1.

30. Albert Post, "The Rise and Fall of the Freethought Press," in *Popular Freethought in America, 1825–1850* (Octagon Books, 1974), 34–74; Susan Jacoby, *Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism* (Henry Holt, 2004), 151, argues that the freethought movement started in 1875. Authors Mangun and Chatelain argue that Abner Cole was part of the freethought movement. See Mangun and Chatelain, "For 'The Cause of Civil and Religious Liberty,'" 187–205.

31. See Post, *Popular Freethought in America,* 59; Hedges, "Refractory Abner Cole," 454–59.

opposed the publication, and following Morgan's disappearance, many people accused Freemasons of abducting and murdering Morgan.[32] Consequently, anti-Masons demanded the removal of Freemasons from public office.[33]

Throughout 1829 in Palmyra, Grandin's *Wayne Sentinel* and Jonathan Hadley's *Palmyra Freeman* regularly attacked each other because of their stances on Freemasonry. Grandin supported Masonry and denounced anti-Masonry as having been "instituted and organized by the disappointed and unworthy, whose only love is mischief, and whose sole object is selfish ambition and aggrandisement." Grandin dismissed the leaders of anti-Masonry as hypocritical and opportunistic "sharks" who by "imposture and imposition" were deliberately attempting to stir up the populace for their own political ends.[34] Hadley, on the other hand, supported anti-Masonry and argued that the institution of Masonry "committed the murder [of Morgan] and the *institution* APPROVES of the murder!"[35] Hadley appealed to the religious sensibilities of his readers: "We conjure every christian mason, by all that is dear to himself, to his friends, and to his country, and by all the ties that bind man to man, and man to GOD, to renounce immediately all connexion with freemasonry, '*the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth.*'"[36] The rivalry between Grandin and Hadley reached a boiling point in June 1829, when Grandin was tried for, and acquitted of, criminal libel because of statements his paper made against a certain anti-Mason; Hadley was a witness for the prosecution.[37]

In the midst of this raging antagonism, Joseph Smith and Martin Harris were looking for a Palmyra printer for the Book of Mormon, which Joseph was nearly finished translating. Joseph and Harris first approached Grandin, who rejected the request outright and even enlisted Harris's friends to attempt to dissuade Harris from paying for

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32. A. P. Bentley, *History of the Abduction of William Morgan and the Anti-Masonic Excitement of 1826–30* (Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, 1874); *A Narrative of the Facts and Circumstances Relating to the Kidnapping and Presumed Murder of William Morgan* [. . .], 3rd ed. (Rochester, N.Y., 1828).

33. William Preston Vaughn, "The Morgan Affair and Its Consequences," in *The Anti-Masonic Party in the United States: 1826–1843* (University Press of Kentucky, 1983), 1–9; Ossian Lang, "The Morgan Mystery and Masonic Persecution—1827 to 1836," in *History of Freemasonry in the State of New York* (Hamilton Printing, 1922), 108–25.

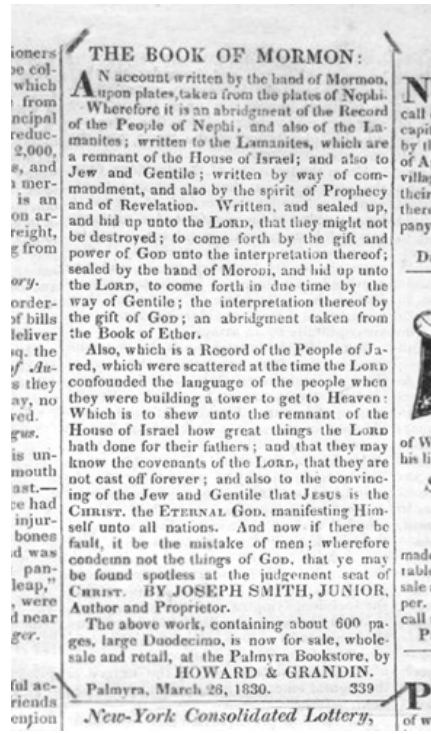
34. *Wayne Sentinel,* April 10, 1829, 2.

35. "Important Disclosure," *Palmyra Freeman,* April 21, 1829, 2, emphasis in original.

36. "Masonry," *Palmyra Freeman,* February 3, 1829, 3, emphasis in original.

37. See *Wayne Sentinel,* June 12, 1829, 2; and "Apologetical," *Palmyra Freeman*, June 9, 1829, 2.

the printing of the book.[38] In late June 1829, Grandin printed the title page of the Book of Mormon in the *Wayne Sentinel* (fig. 4) and accompanied it with a scornful commentary on what he called the "pretended discovery" of the plates. He also asserted that "most people" considered it to be a "gross imposition and a grosser superstition."[39]



THE BOOK OF MORMON:

AN account written by the hand of Mormon, upon plates, taken from the plates of Nephi.

Wherefore it is an abridgment of the Record of the People of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites; written to the Lamanites, which are a remnant of the House of Israel; and also to Jew and Gentile; written by way of commandment, and also by the spirit of Prophecy and of Revelation. Written, and sealed up, and hid up unto the LORD, that they might not be destroyed; to come forth by the gift and power of GOD unto the interpretation thereof; sealed by the hand of Moroni, and hid up unto the LORD, to come forth in due time by the way of Gentile; the interpretation thereof by the gift of GOD; an abridgment taken from the Book of Ether.

Also, which is a Record of the People of Jared, which were scattered at the time the LORD confounded the language of the people when they were building a tower to get to Heaven: Which is to shew unto the remnant of the House of Israel how great things the LORD hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the LORD, that they are not cast off forever; and also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that JESUS is the CHRIST, the ETERNAL GOD, manifesting Himself unto all nations. And now if there be fault, it be the mistake of men; wherefore condemn not the things of GOD, that ye may be found spotless at the judgement seat of CHRIST. BY JOSEPH SMITH, JUNIOR, Author and Proprietor.

The above work, containing about 600 pages, large Duodecimo, is now for sale, wholesale and retail, at the Palmyra Bookstore, by HOWARD & GRANDIN.

Palmyra, March 26, 1830. 339

New-York Consolidated Lottery,

Figure 4. *Wayne Sentinel,* March 26, 1830, page 3. E. B. Grandin printed the title page of the Book of Mormon and announced that the book was for sale approximately nine weeks after an arbitration ordered Abner Cole to stop printing extracts from it. Courtesy Church History Library.

Harris was likely quite familiar with the town's only other printer, Hadley, because Harris had recently been elected as a delegate to represent Palmyra at the Wayne County anti-Masonic convention.[40] Hadley lacked the facilities to print the book and apparently directed Harris and Joseph to Thurlow Weed, the printer Hadley apprenticed under who lived in Rochester, New York, and was the head of the state's anti-Masonic movement. Weed also refused to print the Book of Mormon, but Joseph and Harris were able to secure a printing bid from Elihu Marshall, another Rochester printer. When Joseph and Harris returned to Palmyra, they once again asked Grandin to print the book because they wanted to work with a nearby printer, and he finally agreed to print the Book of Mormon on the *Wayne Sentinel* press.[41]

38. See Pomeroy Tucker, *Origin, Rise, and Progress of Mormonism* (New York, 1867), 50–53.

39. *Wayne Sentinel,* June 26, 1829, 3.

40. See "Delegates," *Palmyra Freeman,* June 9, 1829, 2.

41. See Michael Hubbard MacKay and Gerrit J. Dirkmaat, *From Darkness unto Light* (Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2015), 163–75; see also Walker and others, "Chapter 8: Financing of the Book of Mormon," in *Legal and Business Papers of Joseph Smith.*

Hadley was incensed when he learned in August that the profits from the enormous printing job would not be going to his Rochester friend but to his archnemesis. Consequently, he published a lengthy condemnation of the Book of Mormon in the *Palmyra Freeman,* stating that the story of the miraculous discovery and translation of the plates was "the greatest piece of superstition" (fig. 5). Having been told that the Book of Mormon was similar to the Bible, Hadley derided Joseph as being "very illiterate" and incapable of producing such a work. In contrast, when Hadley told of Harris believing "the '*golden*' story" and taking characters from the book to scholars in the eastern United States, Hadley spared his fellow anti-Mason the pejoratives and referred to Harris as "honest and industrious."[42]

In September 1829, just weeks after Hadley published his censorious commentary on the Book of Mormon, Cole commenced publishing *The Reflector* on Grandin's press. Although Cole claimed to be above the political fray, in practice he often joined Grandin in his ongoing rhetorical war against the *Palmyra Freeman* and the anti-Masonic movement.[43] Thus, when Cole referenced the pending publication of the Book of Mormon in his first issue, it was in the context of Hadley's anti-Masonic paper having publicly denounced the book. Cole not only mocked the anti-Masons for their over-the-top recrimination of the as-yet-unpublished Book of Mormon but also belittled the Book of Mormon, Joseph, and his followers. Cole declared, "The Gold Bible, by Joseph Smith Junior, author and proprietor, is now in press and will shortly appear. Priestcraft is short lived!"[44]

Cole's use of the phrase "author and proprietor" referred to the Book of Mormon's printed title page, which was prepared in accord with the Copyright Act of 1790.[45] The language of the law only provided two possible designations for copyright applicants—author or proprietor—but

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42. "Golden Bible," *Palmyra Freeman,* August 11, 1829, 2, emphasis in original.

43. For example, in the second issue of Cole's paper, he accused Hadley of "uttering and publishing malicious libels." *Reflector,* September 9, 1829, 5.

44. "Selected Items," *Reflector,* September 2, 1829, 2; Document 2: Excerpts from *The Reflector,* September 1829–January 1830, herein.

45. This act included the specific form to be used to start the process for securing a federal copyright. The form is as follows:

> District of ____ to wit:
>
> *Be it remembered,* that on the ____ day of ____ in the ____ year of the independence of the United States of America, A. B. of the said district, hath deposited in this office the title of a map, chart, book or books, (as the case may be) the right whereof he claims as *author or proprietor,* (as the case may be) in the words following, to wit: [here insert the title] in conformity to the act of the Congress of the United States, intituled 'An act for the encouragement of learning, by

PALMYRA FREEMAN.

New Series—Vol. I.—No. 33. TUESDAY, AUGUST 11, 1829. Whole No. 72.

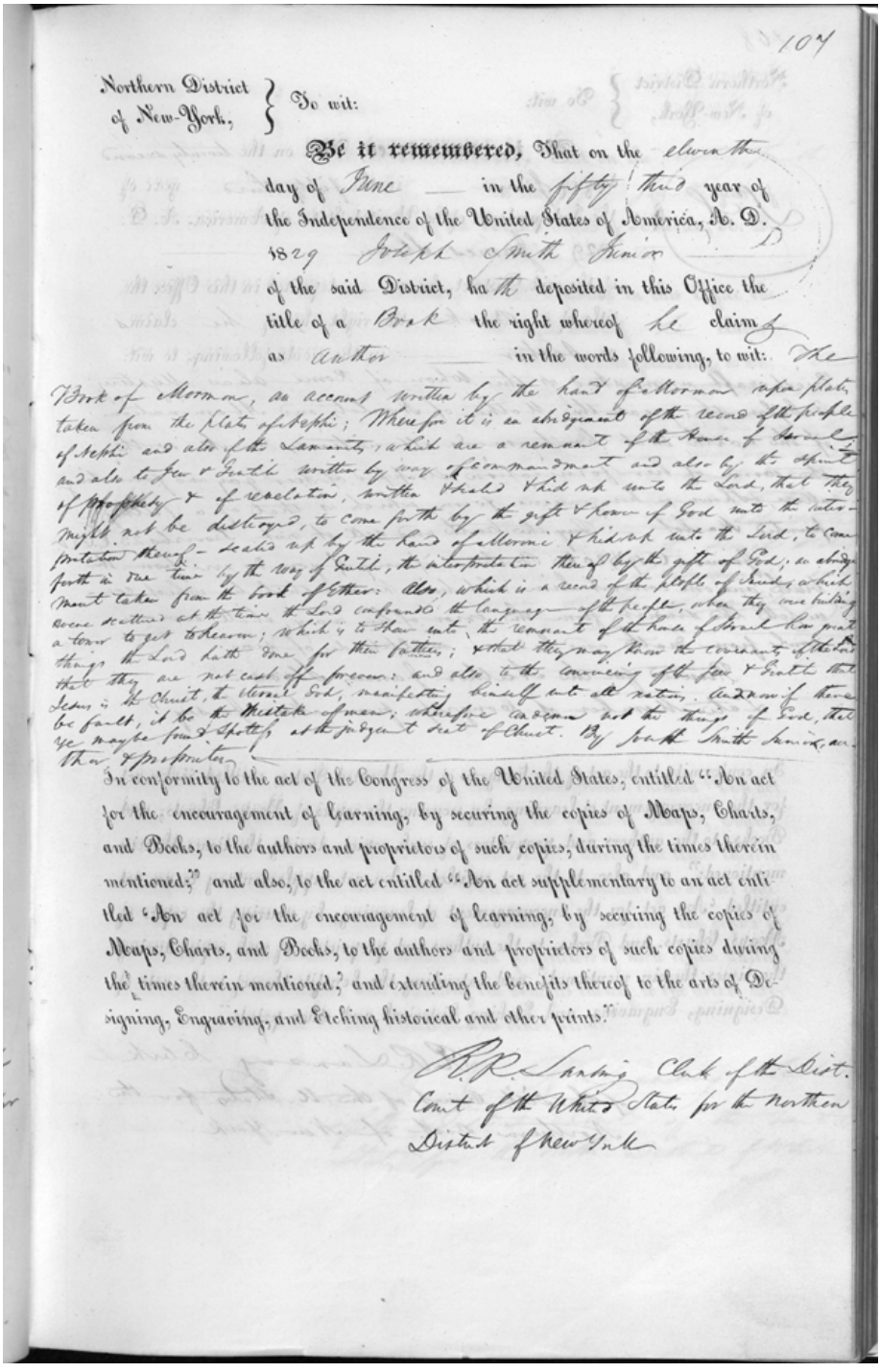
"GOLDEN BIBLE."

The greatest piece of superstition that has ever come within the sphere of our knowledge, is one which has for some time past, and still occupies the attention of a few superstitious and bigoted individuals of this quarter. It is generally known and spoken of as the "*Golden Bible*."—Its proselytes give the following account of it: In the fall of 1827, a person by the name of *Joseph Smith*, of Manchester, Ontario county, reported that he had been visited in a dream by the spirit of the Almighty, and informed that in a certain hill in that town, was deposited this Golden Bible, containing an ancient record of a divine nature and origin. After having been thrice thus visited, as he states, he proceeded to the spot, and after penetrating "mother earth" a short distance, the Bible was found, together with a huge pair of Spectacles! He had been directed, however, not to let any mortal being examine them, "under no less penalty" than instant death! They were therefore nicely wrapped up, and excluded from the "vulgar gaze of poor wicked mortals!" It was said that the *leaves* of the Bible were *plates* of gold, about eight inches long, six wide, and one eighth of an inch thick, on which were engraved charters or heiroglyphics. By placing the Spectacles in a hat, and looking into it, Smith could (he said so, at least,) interpret these characters.

An account of this discovery was soon circulated. The subject was almost invariably treated as it should have been—with *contempt*. A few, however, believed the "*golden*" story, among whom was *Martin Harris*, an honest and industrious farmer of this town. So blindly enthusiastic was Harris, that he took some of the characters interpreted by Smith, and went in search of some one, besides the interpreter, who was learned enough to *English* them; but all to whom he applied (among the number was Professor Mitchell, of New-York,) happened not to be possessed of sufficient knowledge to give satisfaction! Harris returned, and set Smith to work at interpreting the Bible. He has at length performed the task, and the work is soon to be put to press in this village!! Its language and doctrines are said to be far superior to those of the Book of Life!!!

Now it appears not a little strange that there should have been deposited in this western

Figure 5. Jonathan Hadley's *Palmyra Freeman* regularly attacked Egbert Grandin's *Wayne Sentinel* over political issues related to freemasonry. Once Joseph Smith agreed to publish the Book of Mormon on Grandin's press, Hadley attacked Joseph and the Book of Mormon as well. Inset from page 2 of the August 11, 1828, issue. Courtesy Richmond Memorial Library, Batavia, New York.



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Northern District of New-York, } To wit:

Be it remembered, That on the eleventh day of June in the fifty third year of the Independence of the United States of America, A. D. 1829 Joseph Smith Junior of the said District, hath deposited in this Office the title of a Book the right whereof he claims as Author in the words following, to wit: The Book of Mormon, an account written by the hand of Mormon upon plates taken from the plates of Nephi; Wherefore it is an abridgment of the record of the people of Nephi and also of the Lamanites, which are a remnant of the House of Israel; and also to Jew & Gentile written by way of commandment and also by the spirit of prophecy & of revelation, written & sealed & hid up unto the Lord, that they might not be destroyed, to come forth by the gift & power of God unto the interpretation thereof- sealed up by the hand of Mormon & hid up unto the Lord, to come forth in due time by the way of Gentile, the interpretation thereof by the gift of God; an abridgment taken from the book of Ether: Also, which is a record of the people of Jaredites, which were scattered at the time the Lord confounded the language of the people, when they were building a tower to get to heaven; which is to show unto the remnant of the House of Israel how great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; & that they may know the covenants of the Lord that they are not cast off forever: and also to the convincing of the Jew & Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations. And now if there be fault, it be the Mistake of men; wherefore condemn not the things of God, that ye may be found spotless at the judgment seat of Christ. By Joseph Smith Junior, author & proprietor

In conformity to the act of the Congress of the United States, entitled "An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned;" and also, to the act entitled "An act supplementary to an act entitled 'An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned;' and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of Designing, Engraving, and Etching historical and other prints."

R. R. Lansing Clerk of the Dist. Court of the United States for the Northern District of New York

Figure 6. Joseph Smith's copyright certificate for the Book of Mormon. Courtesy Rare Book and Special Collections, Library of Congress.

did not define what those terms meant.[46] The ambiguity resulting from the two possible appellations led some petitioners for copyright to assert both identifications in their copyright applications, though the designation "author and proprietor" was less common than the designation "author." Several contemporary individuals who applied for copyright protection for books published in New York used both designations. For instance, the copyright application for an annotated translation of the New Testament published in Albany in 1828 stated that Jeremiah Goodrich was the "author and proprietor." That application was filed with the same district clerk, Richard Lansing, that the copyright application for the Book of Mormon was filed with a year later (fig. 6).[47] The copyright application for the Book of Mormon used only the term "author" in the blank provided by the form, but the book's title page included with the form and subsequently printed in the Book of Mormon concludes by referring to Joseph Smith as the "author and proprietor."[48]

Although Joseph followed the terminology of the law and the precedent set by other translators of scripture by referring to himself as the "author," he was very clear that he was the translator of the Book of Mormon. For example, in the book's preface he made six references, including the following one, to his role as the translator: "I would inform you that I translated by the gift & power of God & caused to be written [the

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securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned.

C. D. clerk of the district of _____

Though it did not specify it, protection under the Copyright Act of 1790 extended to translators as well. Copyright Act of 1790, §3, emphasis added; see also n. 92, herein; see James Kent, *Commentaries on American Law* (New York, 1827), 2:373–74; and Wyatt v. Barnard, 35 Eng. Rep. 408 (England and Wales High Court of Chancery, 1814).

46. Webster's 1828 *American Dictionary* defines *author* as "one who produces, creates, or brings into being," and *proprietor* as "an owner; the person who has the legal right or exclusive title to anything whether in possession or not."

47. See Jeremiah Goodrich, *The New Testament of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ* (Albany, N.Y., 1828); see also Cuyler Staats, *Tribute to the Memory of De Witt Clinton* (Albany, N.Y., 1828); David Thomas, *Travels through the Western Country in the Summer of 1816* (Auburn, N.Y., 1819); and Eliza Dwight Willard Parsons, *Poems, on Various Subjects* (Troy, N.Y., 1826).

48. See "Copyright for Book of Mormon, 11 June 1829," in Mackay and others, *Documents, Volume 1: July 1828–June 1831,* 81, accessed March 31, 2025, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/copyright-for-book-of-mormon-11-june-1829/1. See also "Title Page of Book of Mormon, circa Early June 1829," in Mackay and others, *Documents, Volume 1: July 1828–June 1831,* 65, accessed March 31, 2025, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/title-page-of-book-of-mormon-circa-early-june-1829/1.

Book of Mormon]."[49] Similarly, when the Eight Witnesses swore to their testimony of having seen and handled the gold plates, they also made it clear that the designation "author and proprietor" was in reference to Joseph as the translator: "Joseph Smith, jun. the author & proprietor of this work has shewn unto us the plates of which hath been spoken, which have the appearance of gold & as many of the leaves as the said Smith has *translated* we did handle with our hands & we also saw the engravings thereon."[50] In his lengthy invective against Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon, Eber D. Howe scoffed at the designation "author and proprietor," which Howe recognized as a legal identifier to protect copyright. He claimed it was an attempt to ensure that Joseph was entitled to the "sole *profit* of the work."[51] In the second edition of the Book of Mormon published in 1837, Joseph replaced "author and proprietor" with "translated by," likely to remove any possible misunderstanding about his role.

In late September 1829, Cole again invoked the Book of Mormon as he satirically referenced Hadley's harsh condemnation of it: "We understand that the Anti-Masons have declared war against the Gold Bible.—Oh! how impious." In the same issue, Cole commented on Joseph and those who believed him: "The number of Gold Bible Apostles is said to be complete. Jo Smith Jr. is about to assign to each, a mission to the *heathen*." Cole also seized the opportunity to mock the Palmyra anti-Masonic delegate, Martin Harris, for the Book of Mormon's teaching that a New Jerusalem would be built in the promised land, sarcastically claiming that "Abraham Chaddock intends to build the first house in Harris' New Jerusalem."[52]

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49. "Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon," in Skousen and Jensen, *Revelations and Translations, Volume 3, Part 1,* 17, accessed March 31, 2025, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/printers-manuscript-of-the-book-of-mormon-circa-august-1829-circa-january-1830/3.

50. "Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon, circa August 1829–circa January 1830," in *Revelations and Translations, Volume 3, Part 2: Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon, Alma 36–Moroni 10,* ed. Royal Skousen and Robin Scott Jensen, Joseph Smith Papers (Church Historian's Press, 2015), 464, emphasis added, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/printers-manuscript-of-the-book-of-mormon-circa-august-1829-circa-january-1830/468.

51. See E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed [*sic*]: or, a Faithful Account of That Singular Imposition and Delusion, from Its Rise to the Present Time* (Painesville, Ohio, 1834), 20–21, emphasis in original; and Historical Introduction to "Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon, circa August 1829–circa January 1830," in Skousen and Jensen, *Revelations and Translations, Volume 3, Part 1,* 7–10, 16–17.

52. See "Selected Items," *Reflector,* September 23, 1829, 14, emphasis in original; and "Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon," in Skousen and Jensen, *Revelations and Translations, Volume 3, Part 1,* 275, 281, 377, 379. Cole's reference to a New Jerusalem

A week later, on September 30, the Book of Mormon again factored into Cole's repudiation of Hadley and the *Palmyra Freeman*. Under the heading "Great Men," the *Freeman* had printed quotes supposedly denouncing Freemasonry. One quote, "BEWARE of SECRET ASSOCIATIONS," was attributed to George Washington.[53] Cole took offense at the alleged quote and accused Hadley of manufacturing it to bolster the political position of anti-Masons. Cole asked, "Where did the grave editor of the Freeman find this 'solemn warning?' Has he been permitted to examine the hidden mysteries of 'the Book of Mormon?'"[54] As in the previous issue of *The Reflector,* Cole used the Book of Mormon to criticize the anti-Masons and then provided commentary that directly attacked Joseph and his followers. Attempting to leverage nineteenth-century Americans' overt anti-Islamic sentiments, Cole declared: "The 'Gold Bible' is fast gaining *credit*; the *rapid spread* of Islamism was no *touch* to it!"[55] In the next column, he published an unattributed "extract" from a theological dictionary about an obscure European sect, Men of Understanding, whose founders "pretended to be honored with celestial visions . . . , and declared the approach of new revelation from heaven, more perfect than the Gospel of Christ." Cole then sardonically asked his readers, "How does this *tally* with pretensions of Jo Smith Jr. and his followers—ha?"[56]

Cole again mocked the Book of Mormon in his October 7, 1829, issue, this time for the alleged statement that "the building of the TEMPLE OF NEPHI is to be commenced about the beginning of the first year of the Millenium." Cole sarcastically exaggerated the number of converts and mocked the belief that the Book of Mormon directly addressed Native Americans: "Thousands are already flocking to the standard of Joseph the Prophet. The Book of Mormon is expected to astonish the natives!!"[57]

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suggests that Joseph Smith's followers were sharing prophecies contained in the as-yet-unpublished Book of Mormon. In the same article, Cole noted that someone in the town of Mendon "had a *loud* call *to go* and preach the doctrines contained in the Gold Bible."

53. "Great Men," *Palmyra Freeman,* September 1, 1829, 2.

54. "Our Own Affairs," *Reflector,* September 30, 1829, 17.

55. *Reflector,* September 30, 1829, 18, emphasis in original. In subsequent issues of the paper, Cole published a lengthy diatribe against Islam to bookend the paper's comparison of Muslims to believers in the Book of Mormon. See "Mahometans," *Reflector,* October 14, 1829, 26–27; and "Mahometans," *Reflector,* October 21, 1829, 30–31.

56. "An Extract—Men of Understanding," *Reflector,* September 30, 1829, 18, emphasis in original. The unattributed extract is from Charles Buck, *A Theological Dictionary* [. . .], vol. 2 (Philadelphia, 1807), under "Men of Understanding."

57. "Selected Items," *Reflector,* October 7, 1829, 22. Cole cryptically claimed that he received this information from the "New-Jerusalem Reflector," possibly a tongue-in-cheek reference to Harris or Joseph or perhaps a response to something Hadley published in an issue of the *Palmyra Freeman* that is no longer extant.

In December 1829, Cole moved from mocking the Book of Mormon to instigating a legal controversy over his right to print the text. He announced to his readers that because "much curiosity has been excited in this section of the country on the subject, and as the work Itself [*sic*] will not be ready for delivery for some months to come," he had "concluded to commence publishing *extrasts* [*sic*] from it [the Book of Mormon] on or before the commencement of the second series" of his paper, scheduled to begin later that month.[58]

In the December 22 issue, Cole again promised to publish an extract from the Book of Mormon. He used the announcement as an opportunity to take another shot at the *Palmyra Freeman* and anti-Masonry by juxtaposing his willingness to publish an extract from the "Gold Bible" with his refusal to publish a poem from an anti-Masonic author who went by the pseudonym Bard of Visions and who had regularly been featured in the *Palmyra Freeman.*[59] On January 2, 1830, Cole published his first extract from the Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 1:1–2:3 (fig. 7),[60] apparently relying on printed Book of Mormon pages awaiting binding in Grandin's shop.[61]

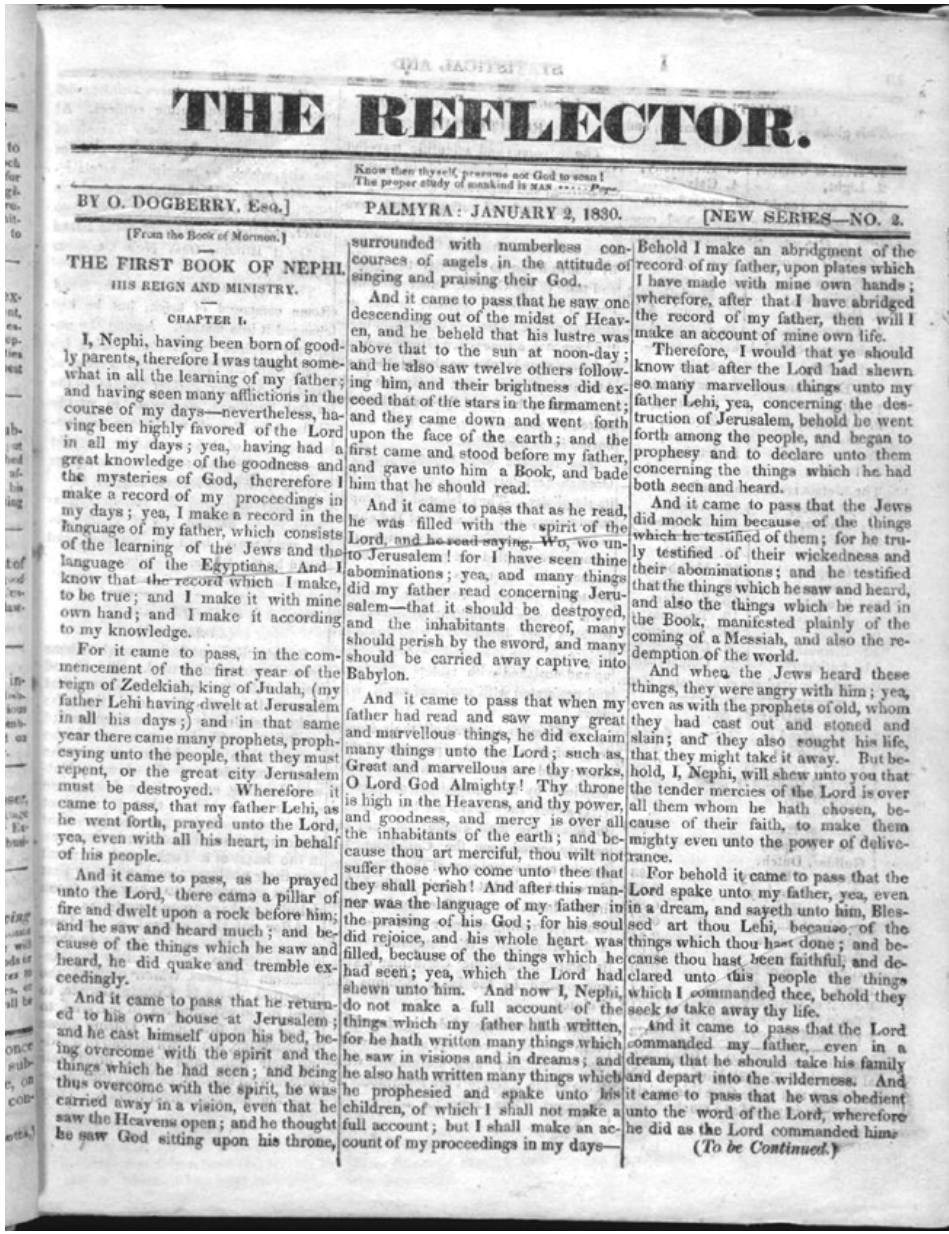
Cole's commentary accompanying his first Book of Mormon extract was much more circumspect than the acerbic denunciations Hadley had offered a few months earlier in the *Palmyra Freeman,* though Cole did not pass up the chance to paint the anti-Masons with the brush of hypocrisy. He informed his readers that he did "not intend at this time, to discuss the merits or demerits of this work" and that he was "astonished that some of our neighbors, who profess *liberal* principles, and are probably quite as ignorant on the subject as we are, should give themselves *quite* so much uneasiness about matters that so little concern them." Cole explained that the Book of Mormon would "stand or fall" on the basis of what readers thought. He also stated that—in contrast to Hadley and the anti-Masons—after having read "part of the first chapter, now before us," he could not "discover anything *treasonable,* or designed to subvert our liberties," though

58. "Gold Bible," *Reflector,* December 9, 1829, 57, emphasis in original; Document 2: Excerpts from *The Reflector,* September 1829–January 1830, herein.

59. *Reflector,* December 22, 1829, 8; Document 2: Excerpts from *The Reflector,* September 1829–January 1830, herein.

60. Unless otherwise noted, this and all subsequent references to chapters and verses in the Book of Mormon are as they appear in the 2013 edition; the chapters and verses are different in the 1830 edition.

61. "[From the Book of Mormon.] The First Book of Nephi. His Reign and Ministry," *Reflector,* January 2, 1830, 1, brackets in title in original; Document 2: Excerpts from *The Reflector,* September 1829–January 1830, herein; and Robin Scott Jensen, "Abner Cole and *The Reflector*: Another Clue to the Timing of the 1830 Book of Mormon Printing," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 24, no. 1 (2015): 239.



THE REFLECTOR.

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan!
The proper study of mankind is MAN ..... *Pope.*

BY O. DOGBERRY, Esq.] PALMYRA: JANUARY 2, 1830. [NEW SERIES—NO. 2.

[From the Book of Mormon.]

THE FIRST BOOK OF NEPHI.

HIS REIGN AND MINISTRY.

CHAPTER I.

I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father; and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days—nevertheless, having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days; yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God, therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days; yea, I make a record in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians. And I know that the record which I make, to be true; and I make it with mine own hand; and I make it according to my knowledge.

For it came to pass, in the commencement of the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah, (my father Lehi having dwelt at Jerusalem in all his days;) and in that same year there came many prophets, prophesying unto the people, that they must repent, or the great city Jerusalem must be destroyed. Wherefore it came to pass, that my father Lehi, as he went forth, prayed unto the Lord, yea, even with all his heart, in behalf of his people.

And it came to pass, as he prayed unto the Lord, there came a pillar of fire and dwelt upon a rock before him; and he saw and heard much; and because of the things which he saw and heard, he did quake and tremble exceedingly.

And it came to pass that he returned to his own house at Jerusalem; and he cast himself upon his bed, being overcome with the spirit and the things which he had seen; and being thus overcome with the spirit, he was carried away in a vision, even that he saw the Heavens open; and he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God.

And it came to pass that he saw one descending out of the midst of Heaven, and he beheld that his lustre was above that to the sun at noon-day; and he also saw twelve others following him, and their brightness did exceed that of the stars in the firmament; and they came down and went forth upon the face of the earth; and the first came and stood before my father, and gave unto him a Book, and bade him that he should read.

And it came to pass that as he read, he was filled with the spirit of the Lord, and he read saying, Wo, wo unto Jerusalem! for I have seen thine abominations; yea, and many things did my father read concerning Jerusalem—that it should be destroyed, and the inhabitants thereof, many should perish by the sword, and many should be carried away captive into Babylon.

And it came to pass that when my father had read and saw many great and marvellous things, he did exclaim many things unto the Lord; such as, Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty! Thy throne is high in the Heavens, and thy power, and goodness, and mercy is over all the inhabitants of the earth; and because thou art merciful, thou wilt not suffer those who come unto thee that they shall perish! And after this manner was the language of my father in the praising of his God; for his soul did rejoice, and his whole heart was filled, because of the things which he had seen; yea, which the Lord had shewn unto him. And now I, Nephi, do not make a full account of the things which my father hath written, for he hath written many things which he saw in visions and in dreams; and he also hath written many things which he prophesied and spake unto his children, of which I shall not make a full account; but I shall make an account of my proceedings in my days—Behold I make an abridgment of the record of my father, upon plates which I have made with mine own hands; wherefore, after that I have abridged the record of my father, then will I make an account of mine own life.

Therefore, I would that ye should know that after the Lord had shewn so many marvellous things unto my father Lehi, yea, concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, behold he went forth among the people, and began to prophesy and to declare unto them concerning the things which he had both seen and heard.

And it came to pass that the Jews did mock him because of the things which he testified of them; for he truly testified of their wickedness and their abominations; and he testified that the things which he saw and heard, and also the things which he read in the Book, manifested plainly of the coming of a Messiah, and also the redemption of the world.

And when the Jews heard these things, they were angry with him; yea, even as with the prophets of old, whom they had cast out and stoned and slain; and they also sought his life, that they might take it away. But behold, I, Nephi, will shew unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord is over all them whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance.

For behold it came to pass that the Lord spake unto my father, yea, even in a dream, and sayeth unto him, Blessed art thou Lehi, because of the things which thou hast done; and because thou hast been faithful, and declared unto this people the things which I commanded thee, behold they seek to take away thy life.

And it came to pass that the Lord commanded my father, even in a dream, that he should take his family and depart into the wilderness. And it came to pass that he was obedient unto the word of the Lord, wherefore he did as the Lord commanded him.

(To be Continued.)

Figure 7. *The Reflector,* January 2, 1830, page 1. Abner Cole evidently typeset this extract of 1 Nephi 1 using sheets of the text that had already been printed by E. B. Grandin's staff. Courtesy Church History Library.

"as to its religious character, we have as yet no means of determining." Cole told his readers that even if he did find something objectionable religiously, he would not—again, implicitly in contrast to the anti-Masons—"meddle with the *tender* consciences of our neighbors."[62]

Cole printed the next portion of the Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 2:4–15, on January 13, 1830.[63] Along with this excerpt, he printed an explanation that the term *Gold Bible* was derogatory slang that had been created by "unbelievers." He explained that "the true title of the work, as it appears from the copy-right, is 'The Book of Mormon.'" Cole also accurately described the book as consisting of multiple books with different authors and stated that "the whole purports to be a *compilation,* in ancient hierogliphics, on plates said to resemble plates of *gold,* by one of the *lost tribes* whose name was MORMON."[64] Cole concluded his piracy of the book on January 22 by publishing Alma 43:22–40, evidently using type that Grandin's office staff had recently set for printing. Cole did not include any commentary with this final extract.[65]

Several of Cole's statements about the Book of Mormon provide important insights into his activities. First, it is clear that he determined to publish extracts from the book at least three weeks before the first extract appeared in his paper. Second, in the September 16, 1829, issue of his paper, he sarcastically used phrases that occur in 1 Nephi 1 (for example, "great and marvellous things will 'come to pass'"),[66] indicating that he was reading from the book's text by that date. Third, in the January 13, 1830, issue of his paper, he explicitly referenced the Book of Mormon's copyright certificate; therefore, he published at least the last two extracts after he learned that Joseph had begun the process of obtaining the copyright for the book.[67]

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62. "Gold Bible," *Reflector,* January 2, 1830, 13, emphasis in original; Document 2: Excerpts from *The Reflector,* September 1829–January 1830, herein.

63. See "[From the 'Book of Mormon,' erroneously called the '*Gold Bible,*']" *Reflector,* January 13, 1830, 17, brackets in original title; Document 2: Excerpts from *The Reflector,* September 1829–January 1830, herein.

64. "'*Gold Bible,*'" *Reflector,* January 13, 1830, 20, emphasis in original; Document 2: Excerpts from *The Reflector,* September 1829–January 1830, herein.

65. See "Book of Mormon [Extract from the Book of Alma, Chapter xx.]," *Reflector,* January 22, 1830, 27–28, brackets in title in original; Document 2: Excerpts from *The Reflector,* September 1829–January 1830, herein; Jensen, "Abner Cole and *The Reflector,*" 240–42, 245.

66. "Selected Items," *Reflector,* September 16, 1829, 10; Document 2: Excerpts from *The Reflector,* September 1829–January 1830, herein.

67. "'*Gold Bible,*'" January 13, 1830, *Reflector,* 20, in Document 2: Excerpts from *The Reflector,* September 1829–January 1830, herein. Federal copyright law required the copyright certificate to be printed in the published work, meaning that only published works (and not works that were in the process of being published) had statutory copyright

Cole's piracy of the Book of Mormon text was not an isolated case. It was common practice for American newspapers to fill their pages with excerpts from larger works and with news reports first published in other papers. However, unlike most newspaper editors, Cole regularly did so without identifying the author or anything else about the work. For instance, he published a long history titled "The Greek Church" and a history of Islam titled "Mahometans" in October 1829 issues of *The Reflector,* with each article prefaced by the heading "COMPILED FOR THE REFLECTOR." However, these articles were nothing more than plagiarized content from Charles Buck's *Theological Dictionary* and from *The British Encyclopedia,* with almost no alterations made to the original texts. Similarly, he copied entries verbatim from the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and presented them to his readers without any attribution.[68] Therefore, Cole's willingness to print large extracts of the Book of Mormon without permission reflected his apparent belief that publishing a small portion of a copyrighted work in a newspaper was not a copyright violation. Alternatively, he may have known not only that he was infringing on the rights of copyright holders but also that taking legal action on copyright breaches was rare at the time.[69]

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protection. See n. 118, herein. Cole probably saw a copy of the certificate or a printed version of it in Grandin's print shop; the certificate was among the first things Grandin's staff typeset and printed (the certificate is on page ii of the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon, immediately after the title page). It is possible that Cole saw the copyright certificate by September 2, 1829, and therefore published all three extracts after he was aware of the certificate. See n. 132 herein. Additionally, Joseph may have provided Cole with a copy of the copyright certificate during or after their confrontation in Grandin's print shop. For more information on the copyright for the Book of Mormon, see Walker and others, "Chapter 5: Copyrights and Early Church Publications," in *Legal and Business Papers of Joseph Smith*; Joseph Smith, Junior, *The Book of Mormon* (Palmyra, 1830), ii; and "Title Page of the Book of Mormon, circa Early June 1829, as Published in *Wayne Sentinel,*" 3, Joseph Smith Papers, accessed April 7, 2025, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/title-page-of-book-of-mormon-circa-early-june-1829-as-published-in-wayne-sentinel/1.

68. A few of the dozens of articles that contain plagiarized content are "The Greek Church," *Reflector,* October 7, 1829, 23; "The Greek Church," *Reflector,* October 14, 1829, 26; "Mahometans," *Reflector,* October 14, 1829, 26–27; "Mahometans," *Reflector,* October 21, 1829, 30–31; and "Biography," *Reflector,* February 20, 1830, 54–55. The original sources of these articles are as follows: Charles Buck, *A Theological Dictionary,* vol. 1 (Philadelphia, 1807), "Greek Church"; William Nicholson, *The British Encyclopedia or Dictionary of Arts and Sciences* [. . .] (London, 1809), vol. 4, "Mahometans"; and *Encyclopedia Britannica,* 4th ed. (Edinburgh, Scotland, 1810), vol. 19, "Smeaton, John."

69. Around this time, several important legal cases related to publishing copyrighted materials in newspapers were just beginning to work their way through the American legal system. See Will Slauter, "Toward a History of Copyright for Periodical Writings:

At least two pieces of evidence suggest that Hyrum and Oliver's confrontation with Cole took place on Sunday, January 3, 1830. First, Lucy reported that Hyrum and Oliver found Cole on a Sunday after he had published his intent to provide his readers with extracts from the Book of Mormon and after he "had pilfered" a "form" of the book. Cole published his intent in the issue dated Wednesday, December 9, 1829, and published the first extract in the issue dated Saturday, January 2, 1830. Hyrum and Oliver may have confronted Cole the next day, Sunday, January 3. Second, Lucy reported that Joseph returned to Palmyra with his father the Sunday after Hyrum and Oliver found Cole in Grandin's print shop and that it was "one of the most blustering cold and disagreeable" days she had "ever experi[e]nced."[70] The winter of 1829–1830 in upstate New York was mild until Thursday, January 7, 1830, when an intense cold front moved in.[71] If the initial confrontation took place on January 3, the weather a week later (January 10) would have been just as Lucy described it. If these dates are correct, Cole published the second and third extracts (in the issues dated January 13 and 22, 1830) after Joseph confronted Cole.

Whenever the confrontations took place, the arbitration that decided the matter in favor of Joseph probably did not conclude until after January 22, 1830. Otherwise, Cole presumably would not have published an extract on that date. Whether Joseph was present for part or all of the arbitration or asked someone else to represent him is unknown, though his signing of an agreement with Martin Harris in Manchester, New York, on January 16, 1830, indicates that he was in the Palmyra area on that date.[72]

Using arbitration in lieu of having a case decided in a court was common from the earliest days in New York.[73] In 1791, the New York legislature passed an act for determining differences by arbitration (hereafter the Arbitration Act), which was patterned closely after the English

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Examples from Nineteenth Century America," in *Book Practices and Textual Itineraries: From Text(s) to Book(s); Studies in the Production and Editorial Process,* ed. Nathalie Collé-Bak, Monica Latham, and David Ten Eyck (PUN—Éditions Universitaires de Lorraine, 2014), 65–84.

70. Document 1: Excerpt from Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845, herein.

71. "Singular Winter," *Schenectady Cabinet,* January 6, 1830, 3; "From Albany," *New-York Spectator,* January 15, 1830, 5.

72. See Walker and others, "Chapter 8: Financing of the Book of Mormon," in *Legal and Business Papers of Joseph Smith*; "Agreement with Martin Harris, 16 January 1830," in MacKay and others, *Documents, Volume 1,* 104–8.

73. See William Catron Jones, "Three Centuries of Commercial Arbitration in New York: A Brief Survey," *Washington University Law Quarterly* 1956, no. 2 (1956): 194–223.

Arbitration Act of 1697.[74] The Arbitration Act established that parties could choose to have their dispute heard before one or more arbitrators or "umpires."[75] Once selected by the parties, the arbitrator(s) would inform the parties of the time and place of the arbitration.[76]

During the arbitration, the parties would supply any information they deemed relevant, and the arbitrator(s) would then make a ruling. If the losing party refused to comply with the ruling, the ruling could be submitted by affidavit to a court. Once filed with a court, the ruling became an attachment against the losing party.[77] Thereafter, the attachment was subject to judicial enforcement unless the court found that the ruling resulted from "corruption or other undue means."[78]

Early arbitrations were typically heard by a single arbitrator, but using two or three arbitrators was more common by 1828. When two were involved, the ruling had to be unanimous; when three were involved, the ruling had to be supported by the majority.[79] As with justices of the peace, arbitrators were not required to have any legal training; therefore, mistakes in applying the law were not a basis for vacating an arbitration's ruling.[80]

By 1830, when the arbitration between Joseph and Cole took place, the Arbitration Act had been amended twice. In 1816, justices of the peace were given authority to subpoena witnesses and place them under oath to tell the truth before the arbitrators. Being under oath made witnesses in an arbitration subject to perjury laws.[81] In 1828, the Arbitration Act was

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74. See ch. 20, 1791 N.Y. Laws 14; and Jones, "Three Centuries of Commercial Arbitration in New York," 211.

75. Further, Mitchell v. Bush, 7 Cow. 185, 187 (N.Y. Sup. Ct. 1827) established that the agreement to participate in arbitration did not need to be signified through a specific method; therefore, a parol (oral) agreement was sufficient. See also Nathaniel Hinckley Wadsworth, "Securing the Book of Mormon Copyright in 1829," in *Sustaining the Law: Joseph Smith's Legal Encounters,* ed. Gordon A. Madsen, Jeffrey N. Walker, and John W. Welch (BYU Studies, 2014): 109–10, https://byustudies.byu.edu/online-book/sustaining-the-law/securing-the-book-of-mormon-copyright-in-1829.

76. See Peters v. Newkirk, 6 Cow. 103, 107 (N.Y. Sup. Ct. 1826).

77. Arbitrators also had the power to award costs. See Cox v. Jagger, 2 Cow. 638, 648 (N.Y. Sup. Ct. 1824).

78. Ch. 20, 1791 N.Y. Laws at 15.

79. At the time, it was common for each party to choose an arbitrator and for those two arbitrators to choose a third arbitrator. (See Rathbone v. Lownsbury, 2 Wend. 594, 595 (N.Y. Sup. Ct. 1829); Crofoot v. Allen, 2 Wend. 494, 495 (N.Y. Sup. Ct. 1829); and M'Kinstry v. Solomons, 2 Johns. 57, 60 (N.Y. Sup. Ct. 1806).

80. See Cranston v. Kenny, 9 Johns. 212, 213 (N.Y. Sup. Ct. 1812); and Newland v. Douglass, 2 Johns. 62, 63 (N.Y. Sup. Ct. 1806).

81. See Act of Apr. 17, 1816, ch. 210, 1816 N.Y. Laws 242, 242–43; Act of Mar. 24, 1801, ch. 74, 1801 N.Y. Laws 74, 74–75; Bullock v. Koon, 4 Wend. 531, 534 (N.Y. Sup. Ct. 1830); and Ross ads. Rouse, 1 Wend. 475, 476–477 (N.Y. Sup. Ct. 1828).

revised again as part of a general revision of the laws in New York. The revisions to the act included allowing the parties to agree at the beginning of arbitration that the award could be filed in court as a judgment.[82] Making this agreement allowed the losing party to appeal the judgment in court. The revisions also gave a court the authority to vacate an arbitration ruling if the court found that (1) the arbitration's ruling was based on "fraud, corruption or other undue means"; (2) the arbitrators were biased or corrupt; (3) a party refused to postpone the arbitration when good cause was shown; or (4) "the arbitrators exceed[ed] their powers, or [made] an imperfect award" (in this case, the court could modify or correct the award).[83]

It is unknown exactly how Joseph and Cole arranged their arbitration and who served as arbitrators or witnesses. It is also unclear what arguments Joseph and Cole made. What is known is that in the 1830s, US copyright laws provided both federal and state protection through both common law and statute.[84] The earliest protections were derived from British law and covered only the right of first publication.[85] This

82. See Anonymous, 5 Wend. 102, 102 (N.Y. Sup. Ct. 1830).

83. See *Notes on the Revised Statutes of the State of New-York* (Albany, N.Y., 1829), 197–99.

84. The US Supreme Court explained the following in *Caliga v. Inter Ocean Newspaper Co.* (215 U.S. 182, 188 [1909]): "Statutory copyright is not [to] be confounded with the common-law right. At common law, the exclusive right to copy existed in the author until he permitted a general publication. Thus, when a book was published in print, the owner's common-law right was lost. At common law an author had a property in his manuscript, and might have an action against anyone who undertook to publish it without authority. The statute created a new property right, giving to the author, after publication, the exclusive right to multiply copies for a limited period. This statutory right is obtained in a certain way and by the performance of certain acts which the statute points out. That is, the author, having complied with the statute, and given up his common-law right of exclusive duplication prior to general publication, obtained by the method pointed out in the statute an exclusive right to multiply copies and publish the same for the term of years named in the statute. Congress did not sanction an existing right; it created a new one."

85. As Lysle R. Dirrim explained, "The existence of the common-law right is of great importance to the author of literary property. It gives him a property right in his creation that accrues automatically by the very act of writing. The form of literary property which is covered by the common law is the right to control the public use of a manuscript up to the moment when it is first generally published. It is the sole right of the author to decide by whom, when, where, and in what form, his manuscript shall be published for the first time, to restrain others from publishing it without his permission and from using it without his authority, and to recover damages from those publishing it without his permission or using it without his authority. The idea of the common-law property right should be kept distinguished from the other form of literary property right which is statutory and gives the right of monopoly after the first general publication." Lysle R. Dirrim, "The Common-Law Copyright and Its Limitations," *Dicta* 30, no. 3 (1953): 108–9.

protection is what copyright scholars typically refer to as *common-law copyright.*[86] As Robert Maugham noted in his 1828 legal treatise, "Manuscripts were always protected by the common law as the property of the author. . . . At common law the author of any literary composition had the sole right of printing and publishing the same for sale, and might bring an action against any person for publishing it without his consent."[87] British courts ruled that published works were protected under the Statute of Anne[88] but that unpublished works were not protected under this statute.[89] As such, courts recognized a common-law protection of unpublished works.[90] Similarly, in the United States the federal Copyright Act of 1790 provided statutory protection for published works only. As in England, prepublication rights were protected by common law.[91]

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86. See Melville B. Nimmer and David Nimmer, *Nimmer on Copyright* (Matthew Bender, 2024), vol. 1, sec. 2.02.

87. Robert Maugham, *A Treatise on the Laws of Literary Property* (London, 1828), 137.

88. Statute of Anne, 8 Ann., c. 19 (1710). The Statute of Anne "departed radically from company practices by setting limits on the term of copyright: twenty-one years for books already in print, fourteen years for new books with the possibility of a second fourteen-year term if the author were still living at the end of the first. At the end of the term of protection a book would become open to all." Ronan Deazley, Martin Kretschmer, and Lionel Bentley, eds., *Privilege and Property: Essays on the History of Copyright* (Open Book, 2010), 82–83.

89. See William F. Patry, *Patry on Copyright* (Thomson West, 2007), vol. 1, sec. 1:11; see also "Literary Property," *American Jurist and Law Magazine* 2, no. 4 (July and Oct. 1829): 256.

90. The statutory right of first publication was not viewed as preempting this common-law protection. See Ralph S. Brown Jr., "Unification: A Cheerful Requiem for Common Law Copyright," *UCLA Law Review* 24, no. 5/6 (1977): 1070–1106. By 1855, the US Supreme Court affirmed that "at common law, an author has a right to his unpublished manuscripts the same as to any other property he may possess." Little v. Hall, 59 U.S. 165, 170 (1855).

91. The formal name of the Copyright Act of 1790 was An Act for the Encouragement of Learning, by Securing the Copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the Authors and Proprietors of Such Copies, during the Times Therein Mentioned (Pub. L. No. 1-15, 1 Stat. 124 [1790]). This act was authorized in the US Constitution (art. I, §8, cl. 8) "to promote . . . useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors . . . the exclusive Right to their respective Writings." The Copyright Act of 1790 (secs. 3, 4) provided published works with copyright protection for up to twenty-eight years, so long as the author or owner completed multiple steps, including (1) providing a printed copy of the title page to the clerk's office of the district court where the author resided; (2) within two months of depositing the title page, publishing a copy of the filing for four weeks in one or more newspapers printed in the United States; and (3) within six months after publication, delivering a copy of the published work to the secretary of state. See also Walker and others, "Chapter 5: Copyrights and Early Church Publications," in *Legal and Business Papers of Joseph Smith.*

State legislatures concurrently gave citizens copyright protection.[92] In 1786, the New York legislature passed "An Act to promote Literature." This act acknowledged the existence of common-law copyright protections separate from any statutory rights extended. Specifically, the act states that "nothing in this act shall extend to effect, prejudice, or confirm the rights which any person may have to the printing or publishing of any book, or pamphlet, at common law."[93] The statute covered an array of copyright protections, including the right of first publication: "Any person or persons, who shall procure and print any unpublished manuscript, without the consent and approbation of the author or proprietor thereof first had and obtained, if such author or proprietor be living, and resident in, or inhabitant of the United States, shall be liable to pay the said author or proprietor his or her damages, for such injury, to be recovered with costs by action brought on this act, in any court of record."[94]

Yet when the US Congress passed the Copyright Act of 1790, which covered post-publication rights, state laws that provided the same protection were effectively preempted.[95] Because the Copyright Act of 1790 did not address prepublication rights, the first-publication provisions in New York's 1786 Act to Promote Literature remained operative. No 1830s cases dealt with New York's statutory right of first publication,[96] but the US Supreme Court ruled in 1834 that it supported the idea of state-level statutory laws protecting the right of first publication independent of common-law protection.[97]

During the arbitration, Joseph Smith could have made three main arguments. First, he could have argued that his work was protected

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92. Under the Articles of Confederation (predating the US Constitution), twelve of the thirteen colonies passed copyright legislation. See Thomas B. Nachbar, "Constructing Copyright's Mythology," *Green Bag* 6, no. 1 (2002): 37–38.

93. Act of Apr. 29, 1786, ch. 54, § 4, 1786 N.Y. Laws 298, 300.

94. Ch. 54, § 4, 1786 N.Y. Laws at 299–300.

95. Preemption of state law "refers to the authority of the Congress under the supremacy clause of the U.S. Constitution to enact statutes that displace or replace state and/or local laws and powers." *Federal Statutory Preemption of State and Local Authority: History, Inventory, and Issues* (U.S. Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, 1992), iii; see also Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison, *The Federalist Papers* (Read Books, 2018), Federalist no. 43; and John F. Whicher, "The Ghost of *Donaldson v. Beckett*: An Inquiry into the Constitutional Distribution of Powers over the Law of Literary Property in the United States," *Bulletin of the Copyright Society of the U.S.A.* 9, no. 2 (1961): 131–43.

96. It appears that the first New York case that addressed this issue was Palmer v. De Witt, 47 N.Y. 532, 532 (N.Y. Ct. App. 1872).

97. See Wheaton v. Peters, 33 U.S. 591, 657–58 (1834).

under the Copyright Act of 1790. However, the Copyright Act of 1790 and its amendments applied only to published works. Because the Book of Mormon was not published before Cole printed the extracts, this argument would have been ineffective, at least if Cole or the arbitrators were aware of the fine points of the law.[98] Second, Joseph could have argued that common-law copyright protection applied to the unpublished Book of Mormon and that, as the author, he had the common-law right of first publication—that is, a perpetual copyright in an unpublished work.[99] Third, Joseph could have relied on New York's 1786 Act to Promote Literature, which established a state-level statutory right to first publication. Lucy's account, which states that Joseph told Cole that the "book and the righ[t of p]ublishing it belongs to me,"[100] suggests that Joseph used either the second or third argument rather than arguing that he held copyright to the Book of Mormon.

The fact that Cole stopped publishing extracts from the Book of Mormon makes it clear that the arbitration was decided in Joseph's favor. Lucy's 1845 history likewise reported that the arbitration "decided that he should stop his proceedings forthwith; so he made us no farther [*sic*] trouble."[101] If any damages were awarded in the arbitration, they apparently were not significant enough for Lucy to mention; it is also possible that the damages from Cole's piracy were too speculative for the arbitrators to determine.[102]

The arbitrators may have determined that Cole acted with *animus furandi*—that is, the intent to steal. At that time, copying content was legally actionable if the defendant had "cop[ied] so much of a book as to serve as a substitute for it" or if the motive rose to the level of the intent to steal.[103] Cole did not copy enough of the Book of Mormon to serve as a replacement for it, but his actions, according to Lucy's account,

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98. See n. 118, herein.

99. See Kent, *Commentaries on American Law,* 2:375.

100. Document 1: Excerpt from Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845, herein.

101. "Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845," 168, Joseph Smith Papers, Church Historian's Press, accessed May 28, 2025, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1845/176.

102. The 1819 amendment to the Copyright Act of 1790 gave courts the option to grant equitable relief, including disgorgement. If a court had become involved, the amount Cole might have been required to pay could have been somewhat significant depending on the number of subscribers to *The Reflector.* See Oren Bracha, "The Adventures of the Statute of Anne in the Land of Unlimited Possibilities: The Life of a Legal Transplant," *Berkeley Technology Law Journal* 25, no. 3 (2010): 1463.

103. Kent, *Commentaries on American Law,* 2:383.

potentially demonstrated the intent to steal.[104] Thus, it is possible that one of the findings of the arbitration was that Cole acted with *animus furandi*.

Though Cole stopped printing excerpts from the Book of Mormon, he did not stop attacking Joseph and his associates in *The Reflector*. Indeed, Cole's attacks only intensified over time. In the last eight issues of the paper, spanning from January 1, 1831, to March 19, 1831, Cole published at least fourteen unflattering pieces on Joseph, his supporters, and the "Gold Bible."[105]

Chronology of Events

Date	Description
September 2, 1829	Abner Cole began publishing *The Reflector* on E. B. Grandin's Palmyra, New York, press—the same press on which the Book of Mormon was being published.
September 2–October 7, 1829	In *The Reflector,* Cole included several commentaries on Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon.
December 9, 1829	Cole announced in *The Reflector* that he would begin publishing extracts from the Book of Mormon.
January 2, 1830	Cole published 1 Nephi 1:1–2:3 in *The Reflector.*
Circa January 3, 1830	Hyrum Smith and Oliver Cowdery found Cole in Grandin's print shop and learned that Cole was publishing extracts of the Book of Mormon. Joseph Smith Sr. left Palmyra for Harmony, Pennsylvania, to inform Joseph Jr. of Cole's activities.
Circa January 10, 1830	Joseph Smith Sr. and Joseph arrived in Palmyra, and Joseph confronted Cole in Grandin's print shop. The two men agreed to participate in arbitration.
January 13, 1830	Cole published 1 Nephi 2:4–15 in *The Reflector.*
January 22, 1830	Cole published Alma 43:22–40 in *The Reflector.*
Circa January 23, 1830	Arbitration resulted in the ruling that Cole had to stop publishing Book of Mormon excerpts in *The Reflector.*

104. Lucy seemed concerned that the Book of Mormon excerpts Cole published would serve as a substitute for the Book of Mormon. See Document 1: Excerpt from Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845, herein. Cole apparently printed the excerpts to satisfy his readers' curiosity, which otherwise would not have been satisfied until the Book of Mormon was published some months later. It is possible that some people who would have bought the Book of Mormon did not because their curiosity was satisfied by reading the excerpts in Cole's newspaper.

105. See Hedges, "Refractory Abner Cole," 463–69.

Document 1: Excerpt from "Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845"

Document Description

Featured here is Lucy Mack Smith's account of Abner Cole publishing Book of Mormon excerpts in *The Reflector* and the steps that Hyrum Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and Joseph Smith took to stop Cole. This account is the only known record of these events. This transcription is faithful to the original, including redactions.

Source Note

Lucy Mack Smith, Joseph Smith v. Cole, *History, [Nauvoo, Hancock Co., IL], 1844–1845, bk. 9, pp. 9–11; handwriting of Martha Knowlton Coray and Howard Coray; Church History Library.*

Lucy Mack Smith dictated her history to Martha Knowlton Coray,[106] who inscribed it in eighteen booklets (most containing twelve pages) plus several loose sheets, which were included at the end of the compilation. Coray's husband, Howard Coray,[107] provided some scribal assistance. Under Smith's direction, the Corays inscribed two edited copies of the history in 1845.[108] The draft featured here contains several strikethroughs and insertions. According to the Corays' daughter, Martha

106. Martha Knowlton Coray (1822–1881) was a teacher who was born in Covington, Kentucky. She moved with her family to Bear Creek, Illinois by 1838 and was baptized into the Church in 1840. She married Howard Coray in 1841 and over the course of her marriage had thirteen children. She taught school with her husband in Nauvoo, Illinois, and recorded various discourses by Joseph Smith, George A. Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, and others. She also served as the secretary of the Female Relief Society of Nauvoo. See Elizabeth Ann Anderson, "Howard and Martha Coray: Chroniclers of Joseph Smith's Words and Life," *Journal of Mormon History* 33, no. 3 (2007): 83–113; "Martha Jane Knowlton," KWV9-HHC, FamilySearch.org, accessed April 21, 2025, https://ancestors.familysearch.org/en/KWV9-HHC/martha-jane-knowlton-1822-1881.

107. Howard Coray (1817–1908) was a bookkeeper, clerk, teacher, and farmer who was born in Dansville, New York. He moved to Pike County, Illinois, circa January 1839. In 1840, he was baptized into the Church and moved to Nauvoo, Illinois. He served as a clerk for Joseph Smith and helped compile a Church history. He served a mission to Pennsylvania in 1842–1843. See "Coray, Howard: Biography," Joseph Smith Papers, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/person/howard-coray.

108. Jennie N. Weeks, researcher, and Inez S. Cooper, comp., "Martha Jane Knowlton Coray," 5, Martha Jane Knowlton Coray Journal, 1873–1874, Coray Family Papers, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

"read over, several times, what she had written, making such changes and corrections as Mother Smith suggested."[109]

Martha Coray carried the unbound draft with her to Utah in 1850. The draft was in the Church Historian's Office by 1855[110] and has remained in continuous institutional custody ever since.

Document Transcript

~~There was one Esqr Cole who living in the village of Palm[yra]~~[111] ~~who about this time became destitute of Money property and~~

One Sunday <afternoon>. Hyrum became very uneasy he told Oliver [Cowdery] that ~~he's~~ <his> peculiar feellings led him to believe that something <going> was wrong at printing Office Oliver asked if he thought there would be any. harm in going to the office notwithstanding it was sunday. They debated some time at last Hyrum said I shall not stop to consider the matter any longer for I am going you may suit yourself about the matter but I will not suffer such uneasiness any longer without knowing the cause <in a few minutes> as they ~~wrote out or~~ <were on> ~~a few~~ their way to the printing establish~~ed~~<ment> when ~~that~~ they arrived there they found an <~~man~~ individual by the name of Coles [Abner Cole]> very busy at work printing a paper which seemed to be a <weekly> periodical of some description Hyrum <*>[112] <* said ~~How~~ why Mr. Coles you seem to be busy at work how comes it that you work Sunday Mr. Coles. ~~Bec~~ I cannot have the press during the week and I am obliged to print nights and Sundays>[113] took up one of them and discovered that the man was printing the book of Mormon by picemeal. ~~F~~ in the prospectus ~~he~~ Mr Cole agreed to publish one form of Joe smith's Gold bible each week and thereby furnish his subscribers with the ~~whole bo~~ principle

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109. Martha Knowlton Coray Lewis, as quoted in Anderson, "Howard and Martha Coray," 103.

110. Lavina Fielding Anderson, ed., *Lucy's Book: A Critical Edition of Lucy Mack Smith's Family Memoir* (Signature Books, 2001), 133.

111. TEXT: "~~Palm~~[*page torn*]."

112. TEXT: This asterisk corresponds to another asterisk near the bottom of the page, indicating that the text following the second asterisk should be moved here, as has been done in this transcript.

113. Each issue in *The Reflector*'s first series (September 2–December 16, 1829) was dated as being published on a Wednesday. The issues in the second series (in which the Book of Mormon extracts were published) were listed as being published on various days of the week. For example, the first five issues were dated Tuesday, December 22, 1829; Saturday, January 2, 1830; Wednesday, January 13, 1830; Friday, January 22, 1830; and Saturday, January 30, 1830.

portion of the book[114] for a ~~very small~~ <comparitively small> sum his Paper was entitled dogberry paper Winter Hill[115] and ~~there~~ <here>[116] he had thrown together the <most> disgusting and insignificant stuff that could be conceived of ~~jou~~ in juxta position with ~~ex~~ the form ~~which~~ of the Book of Mormon which he had pilfered— thus Classing the beautiful <unaffected> simplicity of this inspired writing— with the lowest and most contem[p]tible doggerel that ever ~~were~~ <was>[117] imposed upon any community ~~whatever~~— Hyrum was ~~indignant~~ <shocked> at this perversion of common sense and mor<a>l feeling as well as indignant at the unfair and dishonest course he took to get possession of the work

Mr Cole sa<i>d he what right have <you> to print the book of Mormon in this way. do~~n~~ you not know that we have secured a copy right—[118] [p. [9]]

It is none of your buisness sir said Mr cole I have hired the press and I will print what I please so help yourself

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114. In the first issue of *The Reflector,* dated Septemer 2, 1829, Cole told his readers that the Book of Mormon was "now in press and will shortly appear." It was not until the December 9, 1829 issue that he announced his intent to publish extracts from the Book of Mormon. At no point in his paper did he state that he would publish installments weekly or that he intended to publish the "principle portion" of the book. ("Selected Items," September 2, 1829, in Excerpts from *The Reflector,* September 1829–January 1830, herein; see also "Gold Bible," December 9, 1829, in Excerpts from *The Reflector,* September 1829–January 1830, herein.)

115. Cole published the paper's first series (September 2, 1829–December 16, 1829) under the pseudonym "Obadiah Dogberry, Jun." and indicated that the place of publication was "his 'Bower' on Winter Green Hill." The bower was a "snug, sequestered little habitation" he apparently constructed on Wintergreen Hill, located just north of Palmyra, and was where he composed his *Reflector* material. In the second series (the series in which the Book of Mormon extracts were published), he shortened the pseudonym on the masthead to "O. Dogberry, Esq." and occasionally referenced his bower. (*Reflector,* September 30, 1829, 17; see also *Reflector,* October 28, 1829, 34; "Our Own Affairs," *Reflector,* April 19, 1830, 128; "Diabolical," *Reflector,* February 27, 1830, 66; "'Cease, Rude Boreas,'" *Reflector,* January 22, 1830, 25; and "The Bower," *Reflector,* October 14, 1829, 28.)

116. TEXT: This insertion is in blue ink.

117. TEXT: This insertion is in blue ink.

118. The Book of Mormon copyright certificate is dated June 11, 1829. See Walker and others, "Chapter 5: Copyrights and Early Church Publications," in *Legal and Business Papers of Joseph Smith.* Technically, though Joseph had obtained a copyright certificate, copyright protection was not in force when Cole began printing excerpts from the Book of Mormon in January 1830. The 1802 amendment to the federal Copyright Act of 1790 required that for a work to receive copyright protection, the work had to be published, and the publication had to include the copyright certificate; therefore, works that were in the process of being published did not qualify for full copyright protection. See Copyright Act of 1802, ch. 36, § 1, 2 Stat. 171.

Mr Cole replied Hyrum I forbid you printing ~~any~~[119] more of that book in your paper for that is sacred and you mus<t> stop it

<Smith>[120] I dont care a dam for ~~what~~ you ~~say~~ ~~Mr.~~ ~~Smith~~ ~~I'm determined~~ ~~to~~ that damned Gold bible is going into my paper Hyrum and Oliver both contended with him a long time to dissuade him from his purpose but finding ~~all~~ they could do nothing with him they returned home and Mr cole issued his paper as he had done <several[121] other> numbers ~~before that of the same paper pu thus clandestinely publishing the book of mormon and before we could bring it to them in such a order to gratify the curiosity <of the people>[122] the whilst they also were more willing to pay <this> arrant knave for their information than to come in possession of it in a more honorable way and in a manner that would help <enable> the proprietors of the work to discharge the obligations they had entered into <♦♦♦♦> its order to its publication we learned that he was <had been> circulating a prospectus of his paper all through the country beginning about 10 miles distant and had agreed to publish one form of the Gold bible every week and when~~ we discovered him he had already isued som[e] six or 8 numbers—[123] Hyrum <&> Oliver returned immediately home and. after counciling with Mr. Smith [Joseph Smith Sr.] it was considered necesary that Joseph should be sent for. accordingly My husband set out as soon as possible for Penn[sylvania].[124] The day ~~that~~ ~~set~~ on which they were expected Home was one of the most blustering cold and disagreable that I ever experinced But they breasted the storm all day long. and when they arrived there they were ~~very~~ nearly s[t]iffened with the cold. however ~~they~~ Joseph made himself comfortable as soon as ~~po~~ he could and went the same night to the <printing> office as it was sunday the day in which Mr. Cole published his Dogberry Paper. Joseph saluted him very good naturredly with How do you do Mr Coles you seem hard at work ~~and~~ How do you do mr. Smith said Cole drily— Joseph then examined his

119. TEXT: This word was crossed out in blue ink.

120. TEXT: This insertion is in blue ink.

121. TEXT: The word "several" was inserted in blue ink.

122. TEXT: Blue ink commences with this insertion.

123. By January 3, 1830, the day Hyrum and Cowdery most likely discovered Cole in E. B. Grandin's print shop, Cole had published eighteen issues of *The Reflector.*

124. Joseph was living in Harmony, Pennsylvania. He had come to Palmyra, New York, in summer 1829 to arrange for E. B. Grandin to print the Book of Mormon and then returned to Harmony, arriving on October 4, 1829. See "Letter to Oliver Cowdery, 22 October 1829," in Mackay and others, *Documents, Volume 1,* 94, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-oliver-cowdery-22-october-1829/1.

[p. [10]] paper and— said Mr.cole that book and the righ[t of p]ublishing[125] it belongs to me, and I forbid you meddling [*page torn*] it ~~in the least degree~~

Mr. Coles threw off his coat and roll~~ed~~<ing> up his ~~Sleeve~~ Sleeves came towards my son in a great rage ~~b♦♦♦♦~~ roaring out ~~at the top of his voice~~ do you want to fight sir do you want to fight. I will publish just as what I'm a mind to and now if you want to fight just come on—

Well now Mr. Cole you had better keep on your coat for [i]t's[126] cold and I am not going to fight nor any thing of that sort but you have got to stop printing my book sir I assure you for I know my rights and shall maintain them

Sir ~~do~~ bawled out Cole if you think you are the best man just take off your coat and try it

Mr Cole said Joseph in a low significant tone there is Law— and you will find that out if you did not know it before but I shall not fight you for that would do no good and there is another way of disposing <of> the affair that will answer my purpose better than ~~to~~ fighting

Mr Cole began to cool off a little and finally concluded to submit to an arbitration[127] ~~withou~~ and stop his proceeding without making farther trouble.—

125. TEXT: "righ[*page torn*]ublishing".

126. TEXT: "[*torn page*]t's".

127. Following this text, the extant 1845 version of Lucy's history added "which decided that he should stop his proceedings forthwith; so he made us no farther [*sic*] trouble." "Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845," 168.

Document 2: Excerpts from *The Reflector,* September 1829–January 1830

Document Description

The featured excerpts from *The Reflector* provide evidence that Abner Cole looked at the Book of Mormon as early as September 16, 1829, that he planned to publish excerpts from the Book of Mormon at least three weeks before publishing the first excerpt, and that he saw the copyright certificate for the Book of Mormon by January 13, 1830. The Book of Mormon extracts he published in the January 2, 13, and 22, 1830, issues of his paper are the primary evidence that Cole violated Joseph Smith's publishing rights regarding the book. These transcriptions are faithful to the original sources, including misspellings, emphasis, and capitalization.

Source Note

Abner Cole, Joseph Smith v. Cole, The Reflector*, Palmyra, Wayne Co., NY, Sept. 1829–Jan. 1830; New York Historical Society, New York City; CHL.*

The Reflector was a weekly newspaper printed in Palmyra, New York, from September 1829 to March 1831. The paper was edited and published by Abner Cole, initially under the pseudonym "Obadiah Dogberry, Jun.," and then under the pseudonym "O. Dogberry, Esq." During the period when the featured excerpts were published, Cole printed his paper on E. B. Grandin's press in Palmyra. Two to five issues were published per month. Issues typically consisted of four or eight printed pages, each containing three columns of text. Cole charged readers one dollar for a four-month subscription.[128]

The excerpts dated September 2, September 16, and December 9, 1829, were transcribed from digital images of microfilm copies of original issues at the New York Historical Society's library.[129] The remainder of the excerpts were transcribed from digital copies of original issues at

128. *Reflector,* September 2, 1829, 2.

129. See NYSHistoricNewspapers.org, https://www.nyshistoricnewspapers.org/?a=cl&cl=CL1&sp=ref.

the Church History Library.[130] In a few instances, the text in the Church History Library's digital copies was impossible or difficult to read. In these cases, the digital images of the microfilm copies at the New York Historical Society's library were consulted to determine the wording.

Document Transcript

"Selected Items,"[131] September 2, 1829, 2

☞ The Gold Bible, by Joseph Smith Junior, author and proprietor,[132] is now in press and will shortly appear. Priestcraft[133] is short lived!

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130. O. Dogberry, *The Reflector,* n.s., Church History Catalog, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, accessed August 28, 2024, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/43e4821b-1b78-4e91-a386-430b53510e0c/0/0.

131. The section titled "Selected Items" contains many brief news items and rumors. The excerpt featured here is one of the items in the section.

132. See pages 105–7, herein. The phrase "by Joseph Smith Junior, author and proprietor" is found on the title page in the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon, printed in Grandin's shop, where Cole published *The Reflector.* Cole's use of the phrase indicates that he had seen the title page by the time he published the first issue of his paper, dated September 2, 1829. By this time, Cole probably had access to three versions of the title page's text, and it is unclear which version he quoted from. One version of the text was published in the June 26, 1829, issue of the *Wayne Sentinel*; Grandin printed it in his paper "as a curiosity" for his readers. In this version, Grandin rendered the phrase as "By JOSEPH SMITH, Junior, Author and Proprietor." The second version of the text was the typeset version of the title page, which Grandin's staff created when they began preparing, circa early September 1829, to print the Book of Mormon; Cole may have seen the typeset form or a printed copy of the title page in Grandin's print shop. On this title page, the phrase was rendered as "BY JOSEPH SMITH, JUNIOR, AUTHOR AND PROPRIETOR." Almost all of the title page's text, including the phrase "By Joseph Smith, Jun. Author and Proprietor," was also included on the copyright page of the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon; Cole may have seen the typeset form or a printed copy of the copyright page in Grandin's print shop. If Cole quoted from this last source, he was aware by September 2, 1829, of Joseph's efforts to secure a copyright. See Joseph Smith, Junior, *The Book of Mormon* (Palmyra, N.Y., 1830), i, ii; *Wayne Sentinel,* June 26, 1829, 3.

133. The term *priestcraft* appears several times in the Book of Mormon, first on page 109 of the 1830 edition (2 Ne. 26:29 in the 2013 edition). It is unlikely that this page had been typeset before Cole published the September 2, 1829, issue of his paper, since printing had just begun. Rather than referencing the use of the term in the Book of Mormon, Cole was probably using the term to criticize Joseph. At the time, the term referred to "the stratagems and frauds of priests; fraud or imposition in religious concerns; management of selfish and ambitious priests to gain wealth and power, or to impose on the credulity of others" (Webster, *American Dictionary,* "priestcraft").

"Selected Items,"[134] September 16, 1829, 10

The *Book of Mormon* is expected to be ready for *delivery* in the course of one year.— Great and marvellous things will "come to pass"[135] about those days.

"Gold Bible," December 9, 1829, 57

A work bearing this *cognomen*[136] is now in the Press; as much curiosity has been excited in this section of the country on the subject, and as the work Itself will not be ready for delivery for some months to come,—at the solicitation of many of our readers we have concluded to commence publishing *extrasts* from it on or before the commencement of the second series.[137]

Untitled, December 22, 1829, 8

"Gold Bible" next week.
"Bard of visions" *rejected.*[138]

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134. The section titled "Selected Items" includes many brief news items and rumors and begins on page 9. The excerpt featured here, located on page 10, is one of the items in the section.

135. The phrases "great and marvellous things" and "came to pass" both occur in chapter 1 of 1 Nephi in the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon. Cole's verbatim use of the first phrase and slightly modified version of the second phrase ("come to pass" rather than "came to pass") indicate that by the date he published this issue of his paper, he had read at least the beginning of the Book of Mormon, most likely by looking at unbound printed pages that were in Grandin's shop or possibly by looking at the printer's manuscript.

136. Referring to "having the same name," (Webster, *American Dictionary,* "cognominal") namely the "Gold Bible."

137. The second series (that is, volume) of the paper began with the December 22, 1829, issue. See the publication information on page 1 of that issue.

138. Bard of Visions was the pseudonym of an anonymous poet who was regularly featured in Jonathan Hadley's anti-Masonic paper. Whereas at least some of the Bard of Visions's poetry focused on nature and country life, the poem "The Knell of Masonry" railed against Freemasonry for keeping its members in "hellish bondage" and making oaths of "vengeance, blood, and death." The Bard of Visions was popular or controversial enough that Hadley's paper evidently received poetry submissions from other people who signed their work with the same pseudonym. Cole was apparently taunting the anti-Masons with his announcement: however ridiculous the anti-Masons perceived the "Gold Bible" to be, it merited publication in Cole's paper, whereas the anti-Masonic poetry by the Bard of Visions did not. See "Knell of Masonry," *Palmyra Freeman,* April 21, 1829, 1; "Summer's Morning in the Country," *Palmyra Freeman,* July 14, 1829, 1; and *Palmyra Freeman,* August 18, 1829, 2.

"[From the Book of Mormon.]" January 2, 1830, 1[139]

THE FIRST BOOK OF NEPHI.
HIS REIGN AND MINISTRY.

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CHAPTER I.

I, Nephi, having been born of goodly parents, therefore I was taught somewhat in all the learning of my father; and having seen many afflictions in the course of my days—nevertheless, having been highly favored of the Lord in all my days; yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God, thererefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days; yea, I make a record in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians. And I know that the record which I make, to be true; and I make it with mine own hand; and I make it according to my knowledge.

For it came to pass, in the commencement of the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah, (my father Lehi having dwelt at Jerusalem in all his days;) and in that same year there came many prophets, prophesying unto the people, that they must repent, or the great city Jerusalem must be destroyed. Wherefore it came to pass, that my father Lehi, as he went forth, prayed unto the Lord, yea, even with all his heart, in behalf of his people.

And it came to pass, as he prayed unto the Lord, there came[140] a pillar of fire and dwelt upon a rock before him; and he saw and heard much; and because of the things which he saw and heard, he did quake and tremble exceedingly.

And it came to pass that he returned to his own house at Jerusalem; and he cast himself upon his bed, being overcome with the spirit and the things which he had seen; and being thus overcome with the spirit, he was carried away in a vision, even that he saw the Heavens open; and he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God.

And it came to pass that he saw one descending out of the midst of Heaven, and he beheld that his lustre was above that to the sun at noonday; and he also saw twelve others following him, and their brightness

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139. This excerpt consists of 1 Nephi 1:1–2:3. Cole apparently typeset this extract by referring to sheets of the text printed by E. B. Grandin's staff. Brackets in original. See Jensen, "Abner Cole and *The Reflector,*" 239.

140. TEXT: The "e" in "came" is printed upside down.

did exceed that of the stars in the firmament; and they came down and went forth upon the face of the earth; and the first came and stood before my father, and gave unto him a Book, and bade him that he should read.

And it came to pass that as he read, he was filled with the spirit of the Lord, and he read saying, Wo, wo unto Jerusalem! for I have seen thine abominations; yea, and many things did my father read concerning Jerusalem—that it should be destroyed, and the inhabitants thereof, many should perish by the sword, and many should be carried away captive into Babylon.

And it came to pass that when my father had read and saw many great and marvellous things, he did exclaim many things unto the Lord; such as, Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty! Thy throne is high in the Heavens, and thy power, and goodness, and mercy is over all the inhabitants of the earth; and because thou art merciful, thou wilt not suffer those who come unto thee that they shall perish! And after this manner was the language of my father in the praising of his God; for his soul did rejoice, and his whole heart was filled, because of the things which he had seen; yea, which the Lord had shewn unto him. And now I, Nephi, do not make a full account of the things which my father hath written, for he hath written many things which he saw in visions and in dreams; and he also hath written many things which he prophesied and spake unto his children, of which I shall not make a full account; but I shall make an account of my proceedings in my days— Behold I make an abridgment of the record of my father, upon plates which I have made with mine own hands; wherefore, after that I have abridged the record of my father, then will I make an account of mine own life.

Therefore, I would that ye should know that after the Lord had shewn so many marvellous things unto my father Lehi, yea, concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, behold he went forth among the people, and began to prophesy and to declare unto them concerning the things which he had both seen and heard.

And it came to pass that the Jews did mock him because of the things which he testified of them; for he truly testified of their wickedness and their abominations; and he testified that the things which he saw and heard, and also the things which he read in the Book, manifested plainly of the coming of a Messiah, and also the redemption of the world.

And when the Jews heard these things, they were angry with him; yea, even as with the prophets of old, whom they had cast out and stoned and slain; and they also sought his life, that they might take it away. But behold, I, Nephi, will shew unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord

is over all them whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance.

For behold it came to pass that the Lord spake unto my father, yea, even in a dream, and sayeth unto him, Blessed art thou Lehi, because of the things which thou hast done; and because thou hast been faithful, and declared unto this people the things which I commanded thee, behold they seek to take away thy life.

And it came to pass that the Lord commanded my father, even in a dream, that he should take his family and depart into the wilderness. And it came to pass that he was obedient unto the word of the Lord, wherefore he did as the Lord commanded him.

(*To be Continued.*)

"Gold Bible," January 2, 1830, 13

We do not intend at this time, to discuss the merits or demerits of this work, and feel astonished that some of our neighbors, who profess *liberal* principles, and are probably quite as ignorant on the subject as we are, should give themselves *quite* so much uneasiness about matters that so little concern them. The *Book*, when it shall come before the public, must stand or fall, according to the whims and fancies of its readers. How it will stand the test of rigid criticism, we are not prepared to say, not having as yet examined many of its pages.— We are, however, prepared to state, that from a part of the first chapter, now before us, and which we this day publish, we cannot discover any thing *treasonable,* or which will have a tendency to subvert our liberties. As to its religious character, we have as yet no means of determining, and if we had, we should be quite loth to meddle with the *tender* consciences of our neighbors.

"[From the 'Book of Mormon,' Erroneously Called the 'Gold Bible.']," January 13, 1830, [17][141]

THE FIRST BOOK OF NEPHI.
HIS REIGN AND MINISTRY.

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CHAPTER I.
(*Continued from our last.*)

141. This excerpt consists of 1 Nephi 2:4–15 (Book of Mormon, 2013 ed.). Cole apparently typeset this extract by referring to sheets of the text printed by E. B. Grandin's staff. See Jensen, "Abner Cole and *The Reflector,*" 239.

And it came to pass that he departed into the wilderness. And he left his house, and the land of his inheritance, and his gold, and his silver, and his precious things, and took nothing with him save it were his family, and provisions, and tents, and he departed into the wilderness; and he came down by the borders near the shore of the Red Sea; and he travelled in the wilderness, on the borders, which was nearer the Red Sea; and he did travel in the wilderness with his family, which consisted of my mother, Sarah, and my elder brothers, which were Laman, Lemuel and Sam.

And it came to pass that when he had travelled three days in the wilderness, he pitched his tent in a valley beside a river of water; And it came to pass that he built an altar of stones, and he made an offering unto the Lord, and gave thanks unto the Lord our God. And it came to pass that he called the name of the river Laman, and it emtied into the Red Sea; and the valley was on the borders near the mouth thereof.

And when my father saw that the waters of the river emptied into the fountain of the Red Sea, he spake unto Laman, saying: O that though mightest be like unto this river, continually running into the fountain of all rightousness. And he also spake unto Lemuel: O that thou mightest be like unto this valley, firm, and steadfast, and immoveable in keeping the commandments of the Lord. Now this he spake because of the stiffneckedness of Laman and Lemuel; for behold, they did murmur in many things against their father, because that he was a visionary man, and that he had led them out of the land of Jerusalem, to leave the land of their inheritance, and their gold, and their silver, and their precious things, and to perish in the wilderness. And this they said he had done because of the foolish imaginations of his heart. And thus Laman and Lemuel, being the eldest, did murmur against their father. And they did murmur because they knew not the dealings of that God who had created them. Neither did they believe that Jerusalem, that great city, could be destroyed according to the words of the prophets. And they were like unto the Jews, which were at Jerusalem, which sought to take away the life of my father.

And it came to pass that my father did speak unto them in the valley of Lemuel, with power, being filled with the spirit, until their frames did shake before him. And he did confound them, that they durst not utter against him; wherefore they did do as he commanded them. And my father dwelt in a tent.

(*To be Continued.*)

Untitled, January 13, 1830, 19

The forthcoming "Book of Mormon," has been miscalled the "Gold Bible."

"'Gold Bible.,'" January 13, 1830, 20

We inadvertently neglected in our remarks last week, respecting this *wonderful* work, to accompany them with the *explanations* requisite to a correct understanding of it. The appellation of "Gold Bible," is only a *cant cognomen* that has been given it by the *unbelievers*—for be it known that this Book, as well as the sacred volume which is held so valuable by all good christians, is not without its *revilers* and *unbelievers*—by way of *derision.* The true title of the work, as appears from the copy-right, is "The Book of Mormon"—comprising a great number of Books, or parts, by different primary authors, all of which are divided into Chapters. The first is "The First Book of Nephi," of which we gave an extract in our last, and is continued in the present number of our paper. The whole purports to be a *compilation,* in ancient hierogliphics, on plates said to resemble plates of *gold,* by one of the chosen of the *lost tribes,* whose name was MORMON.

"Book of Mormon [Extract from the Book of Alma, Chapter xx.]," January 22, 1830, 27–28[142]

Behold, now it came to pass, that they durst not come against the Nephites in the borders of Jershon; therefore they departed out of the land of Antionum, into the wilderness, and took their journey round about in the wilderness, away by the head of the river Sidon, that they might come into the land of Manti, and take possession of the land; for they did not suppose that the armies of Moroni would know whither they had gone. But it came to pass, as soon as they had departed into the wilderness, Moroni sent spies into the wilderness, to watch their camp; and Moroni, also, knowing of the prophecies of Alma, sent certain men unto him, desiring him that he should inquire of the Lord whither the armies of the Nephites should go, to defend themselves against the Lamanites. And it came to pass that the word of the Lord came unto Alma; and Alma

142. This excerpt consists of Alma 43:22–40 (Book of Mormon, 2013 ed.). Textual evidence indicates that Cole did not typeset this selection himself; rather, he used the type that Grandin's staff had set in preparation to print this part of the Book of Mormon. See Jensen, "Abner Cole and *The Reflector,*" 240–42.

informed the messengers of Moroni that the armies of the Lamanites were marching round about in the wilderness, that they might come over into the land of Manti, that they might commence an attack upon the more weak part of the people. And those messengers went and delivered the message unto Moroni.

Now Moroni, leaving a part of his army in the land of Jershon, lest by any means, a part of the Lamanites should come into that land and take possession of the city; and Moroni took the remainder part of his army and marched over into the land of Manti. And he caused that all the people in that quarter of the land, should gather themselves together to battle, against the Lamanites, to defend their lands and their country, their rights and their liberties; therefore they were preparedagainst the time of the coming of the Lamanites. And it came to pass, that Moroni caused that his army should be secreted in the valley which was near the bank of the river Sidon which was on the west of the river Sidon, in the wilderness. And Moroni placed spies round about, that he might know when the camp of the Lamanites should come.

And now as Moroni knew the intention of the Lamanites, that it was their intention to destroy their brethren, or to subject them and bring them into bondage, that they might establish a kingdom unto themselves, over all the land; and he also knowing that it was the only desire of the Nephites to preserve their lands and their liberty, and their church, therefore he thought it no sin that he should defend them by stratagem; therefore he found, by his spies, which course the Lamanites were to take. Therefore he divided his army, and brought a part over into the valley, and concealed them on the east, and on the south of the hill Riplah; and the remainder he concealed in the west valley, on the west of the river Sidon, and so down into the borders of the land Manti. And thus having placed his army according to his desire, he was prepared to meet them.

And it came to pass that the Lamanites came up on the north of the hill where a part of the army of Moroni was concealed. And it came to pass that as the Lamanites had passed the hill Riplah, and came into the valley, and began to cross the river Sidon, the army which was concealed on the south of the hill, who was led by a man whose name was Lehi; and he led his army forth and encircled the Lamanites about, on the east, in their rear.

And it came to pass that the Lamanites, when they saw the Nephites coming upon them in their rear, turned them about, and began to contend with the army of Lehi; and the work of death commenced, on both

sides; but it was more dreadful on the part of the Lamanites; for their nakedness was exposed to the heavy blows of the Nephites, with their swords and their cimeters, which brought death almost at every stroke; while on the other hand, there was now and then a man fell among the Nephites, by their swords, and the loss of blood; they being shielded from the more vital parts of the body, or the more vital parts of the body being shielded from the strokes of the Lamanites, by their breast-plates, and their arm-shields, and their head-plates; and thus the Nephites did carry on the work of death among the Lamanites. And it came to pass that the Lamanites became frightened, because of the great destruction among them, even until they began to flee towards the river Sidon. And they were pursued by Lehi and his men, and they were driven by Lehi into the waters of Sidon; and they crossed the waters of Sidon. And Lehi retained his armies upon the bank of the river Sidon, that they should not cross.

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Getting to 100

When I was 13 I decided to live for 100 years.
When I tell people this, their eyebrows scrunch in doubt.
I see the old person highlight reel in their eyes:
father erased by cancer, grandmother's mind in hibernation.
But my script favors addition over subtraction.
Ferris Bueller t-shirt + mint cruiser bike with a basket
= cheeky old lady delivering surprise daffodils
to firefighters and second grade teachers.
If I don't hang on, who will represent the Age of Aquarius?
Who will remind my children that for every breakup and lay-off
there are days of violets and teacakes pouring from heaven
and it all comes out in the wash?
By my calculations I'll have 11 giggly great-grandchildren
under the age of 9. We'll drink blackberry lemonade
and read picture books to the quail family under the yew.
Already I'm transforming into my 100-year-old self.
More of a tapioca pudding body than I'm used to.
My only chance to try out moonlight hair
because after liftoff I'll be sunset blonde again.
I have a theory: there's an inverse relationship
between body and spirit. What deflates our body
blows up our soul like a hot-air balloon.
Sometimes my inner airship can't stop humming.
Maybe you too? Save the date
and join me for bluegrass and baklava
on my 100th birthday: the day before liftoff.

—Vauna Davis

This Branch of the Church

The Early Development of Local Administration in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Part 2, The Church in Flux, 1846–1851

Brandon Plewe

A primary concern of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the spiritual and physical welfare of its members, and local congregations have always been the primary mechanism for that ministry. However, the structure and leadership of local administrative organizations has changed significantly over the history of the Church, most significantly under its first two presidents, Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. During these years, the terms and structures that are familiar to us—wards, presidents, bishops, stakes, and so on—emerged, but so did many practices that did not survive the 1877 Priesthood Reorganization.

This is the second article in a series evaluating the evolution of local Church administration from 1830 to 1877. The first article covered the lifetime of Joseph Smith, as the core principles of priesthood administration were revealed and new practices were introduced to care for a rapidly growing Church.[1] This installment covers the period from 1846 through 1851, as the Saints moved to western Iowa, then to the Great Basin, in both places reconstructing a local Church organization in dozens of new settlements.

As Brigham Young and the rest of the Twelve prepared to leave Nauvoo in early 1846, stakes, wards, and branches were largely suspended as leaders and families packed up and traveled across Iowa on their way to

1. Brandon Plewe, "This Branch of the Church: The Early Development of Local Administration in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Part 1, The Emergent Church, 1830–1845," *BYU Studies* 64, no. 1 (2025): 45–80.

the West. However, once they stopped, the needs of personal ministry would resume, especially for the poor and widows, joined by the families of the departing Mormon Battalion. Congregational organization was always one of the first items of business at each place of settlement.

Winter Quarters and Kanesville: 1846–1852

Brigham Young and the Twelve planned to lead an express party over the Rocky Mountains that summer to find a site for their settlement. When the slow, muddy trek across Iowa and the mustering of the Mormon Battalion made that plan unrealistic, they realized in late July of 1846 that they would need to temporarily settle more than ten thousand Saints along the Missouri River for the winter and perhaps longer.[2]

By October, perhaps a quarter of the pioneers had settled in the new town of Winter Quarters, while the rest built new settlements across the river in what would soon be designated as Pottawattamie County, Iowa, named after the indigenous tribe that was recently evicted. Some form of administrative structure was soon needed to accommodate the needs of the community, especially the poor, widows, and families of soldiers in the Battalion. This included ecclesiastical needs such as holding Sunday meetings, tithing collection, and disciplinary actions. There were also community issues such as building roads, ferries, and fences, and partitioning residential and agricultural lands.

Not Quite Stakes: The First Apostolate

While each side of the river had more than enough members for a stake organization, neither met the primary requirement for a stake as discussed in the previous article: designation as a permanent place of gathering. That was never the intent here; it was merely a temporary resting place on the way to a new home. During a Sunday sermon in Winter Quarters on March 28, 1847, "Elder Geo. A. Smith said that he expected

2. Brigham Young to Bro. [George] Miller and captains of fifties, August 1, 1846, holograph, image 2 of "1846 August," Brigham Young Office Files, 1832–1878 (Bulk 1844–1877), General Correspondence, Outgoing, 1843–1876, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/de2aec04-b252-4f2b-b34b-5614dee4c414/0/1; Richard E. Bennett, "The Mormon Exodus as Seen Through the Horace K. Whitney Journals," in *Far Away in the West: Reflections on the Mormon Pioneer Trail,* ed. Scott C. Esplin, Richard E. Bennett, Susan Easton Black, and Craig K. Manscill (Religious Studies Center; Deseret Book, 2015), 139–41.

God would take the Twelve to the very place for a stake of Zion."[3] The short-term needs of the Saints along the Missouri were different than the principles and policies of a permanent gathering place. The organization there thus included elements that would be familiar to us and some that never appeared before or since.

The first and longest-lasting institutions were two twelve-member high councils; one was organized on the east side of the Missouri River (usually called the Pottawattamie High Council) on July 21, 1846,[4] and another on the west side on August 7.[5] Because there was no operational civic government on either side, these high councils administered both church and state. In fact, the one on the west side was usually called the Winter Quarters *Municipal* High Council; it was in operation until April 1848 when the last residents of Winter Quarters either left for the west or crossed back into Iowa.[6] The Pottawattamie High Council operated until May 1852.[7]

However, neither region ever had a presidency as a stake would. Instead, for almost all of the period from 1846 to 1852, members of the Twelve were living here, and by right of their general authority, they personally presided over the high councils and the members. The first winter, there were at least seven Apostles in the region who met regularly, including Brigham Young. They were primarily concerned with planning the exodus in the spring and only indirectly oversaw local matters by advising the high council. As Young prepared to depart in April 1847, he called Patriarch John Smith "as the President over the affairs in

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3. Historian's Office History of the Church, 1839–circa 1882, 1847 January 1–December 29, holograph, image 107, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/a7f96aea-d4ce-4c49-86f1-fa283c5e0b01/0/106.

4. Pottawattamie High Council, 1846 July–1851 February, holograph, 1 [image 7], Pottawattamie High Council Minutes, 1846–1852, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/e7cfb225-a0b7-49e3-8d3c-ffe1d40738bf/0/0.

5. Winter Quarters Municipal High Council [clerk was Samuel Russell], Minutes, 1846 August 7–October 7, holograph, image 3, Winter Quarters Municipal High Council Records, 1846–1848, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/712b0b76-0ee8-42ad-937c-cd1587150b6e/0/2.

6. W. W. Major, Winter Quarters Municipal High Council, Minutes, 1847 July 18–1848 April 15, holograph, image 54, Winter Quarters Municipal High Council Records, 1846–1848, Church History Library LR 6359 21, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/0ddc178b-8238-4ee7-aca4-b0dce74a6659/0/53.

7. Pottawattamie High Council, 1851 March–1852 May, holograph, 72, Pottawattamie High Council Minutes, 1846–1852, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/78c73aae-6d54-4d84-a94f-a908bd531cde/0/71.

this place."[8] However, there is no evidence that Smith's role was anything more than a figurehead for the few weeks before he too departed in June, destined to become the first president of the stake at Great Salt Lake City. Like William Marks before him, John Smith was a kind of permanent stake president, serving wherever he lived.[9]

By the time the last companies left in July 1847, Orson Hyde was the only Apostle remaining in the region, having built a residence in Iowa. Apparently, the Twelve had decided that he would stay behind, although an official calling is not documented. He almost immediately began exercising personal authority over both high councils. At a conference in July in Iowa, he was sustained as "the representative of Bro. Brigham."[10] Later in the month, he worked with the Winter Quarters high council to discipline the Garden Grove Branch.[11]

Elder Hyde continued to personally preside over the region for the next several years. Between the 1848 and 1849 emigration seasons, George A. Smith and Ezra T. Benson also stayed behind, and the three Apostles functioned as a de facto presidency. In the April 1849 conference, Hyde was first officially sustained as (depending on the source) "presiding officer of the Church here" or "President of Pottawatamie county," with his junior Apostles as counselors.[12] After Smith and Benson led

8. Historian's Office History of the Church, 1839–circa 1882, 1847 January 1–December 29, 77 [image 107]; Thomas Bullock, Sunday Meeting Minutes, Winter Quarters, holograph, image 3, 1847 March–April, 1846–1850, Historian's Office General Church Minutes, 1839–1877, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/96c1aea5-8abb-455b-af26-48ab6bdfef0e/0/2.

9. John Smith served in Adam-ondi-Ahman 1838, Zarahemla 1839–1842, Ramus/Macedonia 1843–1844, Nauvoo 1844–1846, Winter Quarters 1847, and Salt Lake 1847–1848. "Smith, John: Biography," Joseph Smith Papers, https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/person/john-smith.

10. Pottawattamie High Council, 1846 July–1851 February, 39–42 [images 49–52], https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/e7cfb225-a0b7-49e3-8d3c-ffe1d40738bf/0/0?lang=eng.

11. Winter Quarters Municipal High Council, Minutes, 1847 July 18–1848 April 15, holograph, image 9, Winter Quarters Municipal High Council Records, 1846–1848, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/0ddc178b-8238-4ee7-aca4-b0dce74a6659/0/8. Hyde convinced the high council to disfellowship the entire branch based on rumors of widespread apostasy. When the branch president personally testified that only a few members were involved and had been disciplined, the branch was restored. It is unclear why this matter was handled by the western high council rather than the eastern one.

12. Pottawattamie High Council, 1849 April 6–8, holograph, 5, Pottawattamie High Council Conference Minutes, 1848–1851, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/3d6807c0-aab0-4f58-84db-9bfc6e69767d/0/4; "Conference Minutes," *Frontier Guardian*

emigrant companies to the Salt Lake Valley, Hyde continued as the sole presiding authority, even in absentia when he led a company west in the summers of 1850 and 1851.

In April 1851, Orson Hyde "was sustained President of the Stakes and Branches of the Church East of the Rocky Mountains under the direction of the 1st presidency."[13] This role was more like that of a mission or area president than a stake president. The word "stake" was used only once in extant documentation when Orson Hyde referred to himself as the "President of the Stake and the High Council" on June 21, 1851;[14] thus, we cannot definitively conclude that it was considered a stake. Although he occasionally dealt with matters as far away as St. Louis, New Orleans, and New York, he continued to focus most of his attention on western Iowa and convincing the remaining Saints to emigrate. When he led another company in the summer of 1852, he left no regional organization in place, making it clear that those who had not yet emigrated were on their own.

We might call this type of regional organization an *apostolate,*[15] having some similarities to a stake but with a resident Apostle at the helm rather than a presidency. This structure would reappear several times in Utah, especially with Elder Hyde.

Winter Quarters Wards

Beneath the Apostles and high councils, local organization was quite different on the two sides of the Missouri River. The single large settlement of Winter Quarters was divided into wards as in Nauvoo, and a bishop was ordained to take care of the sick, poor, aged, and single mothers in each ward. Those called included several who had been bishops in Nauvoo, in keeping with the notion of the office of bishop being a lifetime ordination. Of the twenty-two original Winter Quarters bishops, thirteen would serve again in Utah and some for the rest of their lives.

(Kanesville, Iowa) May 2, 1849, 1, col. 4, https://archive.org/details/FrontierGuardianVol1/Frontier%20Guardian%20-%20Vol%201/page/n25.

13. Pottawattamie High Council, 1851 April 6–20, holograph, image 2, Pottawattamie High Council Conference Minutes, 1848–1851, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/0fb0d435-3213-42d0-9b88-73886693c0cd/0/1.

14. Pottawattamie High Council, 1851 March–1852 May, holograph, image 23, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/78c73aae-6d54-4d84-a94f-a908bd531cde/0/22.

15. My term; it was never called this (or anything else) at the time, and I have not been able to find much discussion of this as a recurring type of organization in subsequent histories.

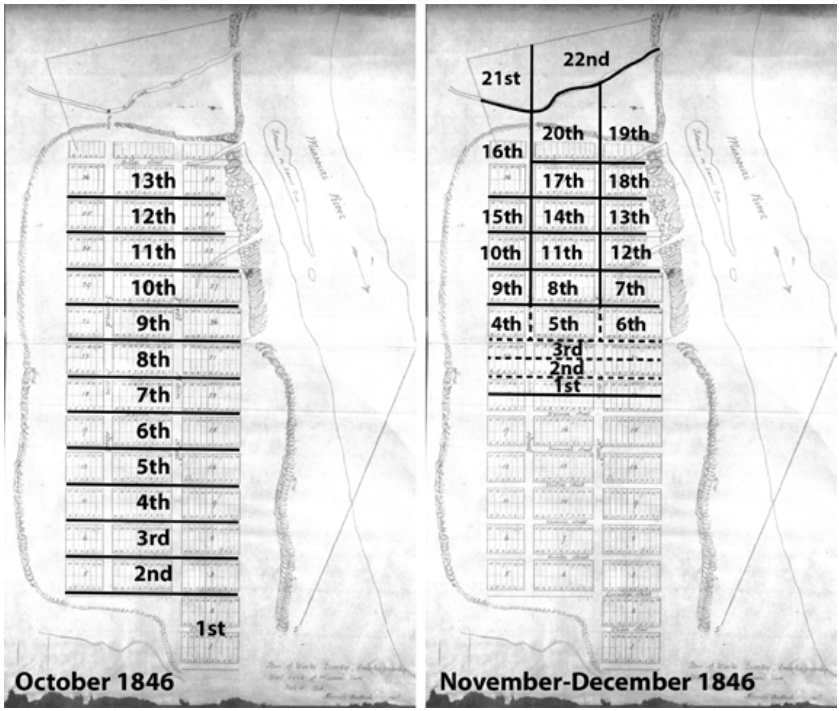

Figure 1. Wards in Winter Quarters. October 1846 (most likely) at left, November 1846 proposal at right. Final December wards appear to be almost the same as November, except for some possible changes in the south. Drawn by the author over a base map from Thomas Bullock, Plan of Winter Quarters, circa 1846, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/dd8259dd-7b32-4550-ad3d-68bf88ba38d2/0/0.

In October 1846, thirteen wards were created by a committee of three Apostles, with a bishop ordained in each one but no boundaries given.[16] By correlating these bishops with those who served later, it appears that these first wards were divided simply as rows of blocks (fig. 1).[17]

16. Willard Richards, Journal, 1846 August–December, 16:182 [image 187], Willard Richards Journals and Papers, 1821–1854, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/d478dcd1-a5c0-4636-9b28-0a7075947b2f/0/186; bishops are listed in Winter Quarters Municipal High Council, Minutes, 1846 October 23–1847 July 12, holograph, image 9, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/efa742c6-59e9-4822-9ef3-af49aa1c1ccc/0/8.

17. Brandon Plewe, "Locating the Winter Quarters Wards," working paper, Mormon Places, March 2018, http://mormonplaces.byu.edu/reports/2018-1_wqwards.pdf.

As the town quickly grew, some wards became much larger than others, exacerbated by a decision to abandon the south half of the plat to more easily protect the remaining city from the Native Americans to whom the land technically belonged.[18] The bishops requested a more even division, and in November, they proposed a new set of twenty-two wards, but the high council rejected the new proposal.[19] Several revisions were submitted in the next few weeks, and a final partition was accepted on December 13.[20] No documentation of the final boundaries is extant, but most of the bishops were the same as the November draft, suggesting that most wards were divided as originally proposed with the most significant differences in the southern part of town. The wards averaged about 150 members, and the community totaled almost thirty-five hundred residents at the end of 1846.[21]

These bishops served extensively, as the needs were great during the winter of 1846–1847. Following the semiorganized ward pattern of Nauvoo, the wards were not initially distinct congregations since the entire community met in a common plaza on Sundays. However, as the winter weather worsened, meeting outside became impractical, and the bishops were asked to meet in homes (and hold school) within their wards. This made these wards the most like modern wards that had yet been and would be for the next several years. On December 20, in a description that should be familiar to any modern bishop, Brigham Young "instructed the Bishops to get up meetings in their several wards & there the Saints might assemble themselves together, confess their sins, pray with & for each other, humble themselves before the Lord, & get up a Reformation that all should learn to exercise themselves in the principles of righteousness."[22]

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18. Lawrence G. Coates, "Cultural Conflict: Mormons and Indians in Nebraska," *BYU Studies* 24, no. 3 (1984): 275–300; Willard Richards to Thomas L. Kane, February 24, 1847, Willard Richards Papers, Church History Library MS 1490 box 3 folder 7, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/53ff4cb2-b137-4a1f-9bdb-af977f55a92a/0/0.

19. Winter Quarters (Nebraska), Winter Quarters Recommendations for Ward Divisions, 1846 November 26, holograph, image 1, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/ba9f84b9-05e8-42ea-8223-0ee96ebfbf28.

20. Winter Quarters Municipal High Council, Minutes, 1846 October 23–1847 July 12, holograph, image 46, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/efa742c6-59e9-4822-9ef3-af49aa1c1ccc/0/45.

21. Bishops' Reports, 1846 December, holograph, image 9, Winter Quarters Bishops' Reports, 1846–1847, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/7bd0f6af-09d8-490b-b011-e878e7123612/0/8.

22. Willard Richards and Thomas Bullock, Journal vol. 17, 1846 December–1847 April, holograph, images 26–27, Willard Richards Journals and Papers, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/bc9f64b9-af10-4233-b43d-8787fadaa0e6/0/25.

Of the twenty-two Winter Quarters bishops, thirteen joined about half of their members in the exodus of 1847. At least some replacement bishops were called,[23] but up until the town was abandoned in 1848, it does not appear that the ward structure functioned as consistently as before.

Pottawattamie Branches

On the Iowa side of the river, the organization was somewhat different. In June 1846, while most pioneers were still concentrated in a single "grand encampment" along the trail east of the Council Bluffs, the Twelve called eighty-nine brethren as bishops to care for the Battalion families.[24] Some were already on the high council; this dual role would continue throughout the Pottawattamie sojourn. Some never served, while several soon moved to Winter Quarters and became bishops there. The initial plan was for them to not have specific geographical jurisdictions, but within weeks they divided themselves into neighborhoods or wards. No documentation of the locations of these wards or the bishops' assignments has survived, but they probably lasted no longer than a few months as a new organization emerged.

In the autumn, those families who did not move to Winter Quarters began to scatter to find long-term living arrangements, establishing dozens of settlements over one hundred miles of the Iowa prairie. In such a state, it made more sense to organize them as branches. In the first year, at least thirty branches were organized, with many more the following year. About seventy-five to eighty unique branch names are documented in various sources, including the minutes of the Pottawattamie High Council and High Priests Quorum, Branch records, journals, emigration company reports, and other reports to the First Presidency. Of these, about forty are well-documented as significant branches, most of which were organized sometime in 1847–1848 and disorganized when members moved west sometime between 1850 and 1853. Many of the rest of the names have been found to be alternate names for other branches; some were very short-lived branches with only a passing mention or two, while

23. Winter Quarters 14th Ward (Nebraska), Winter Quarters 14th Ward Tithing Record, 1846–1847, holograph, image 3, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/a516f886-caab-4270-8f33-007721ea5624/0/2.

24. Pottawattamie High Council, Minutes, 4 [image 11]; William G. Hartley, "Council Bluffs/Kanesville, Iowa: A Hub for Mormon Settlements, Operations, and Emigration, 1846–1852," *The John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 26 (2006): 20–21.

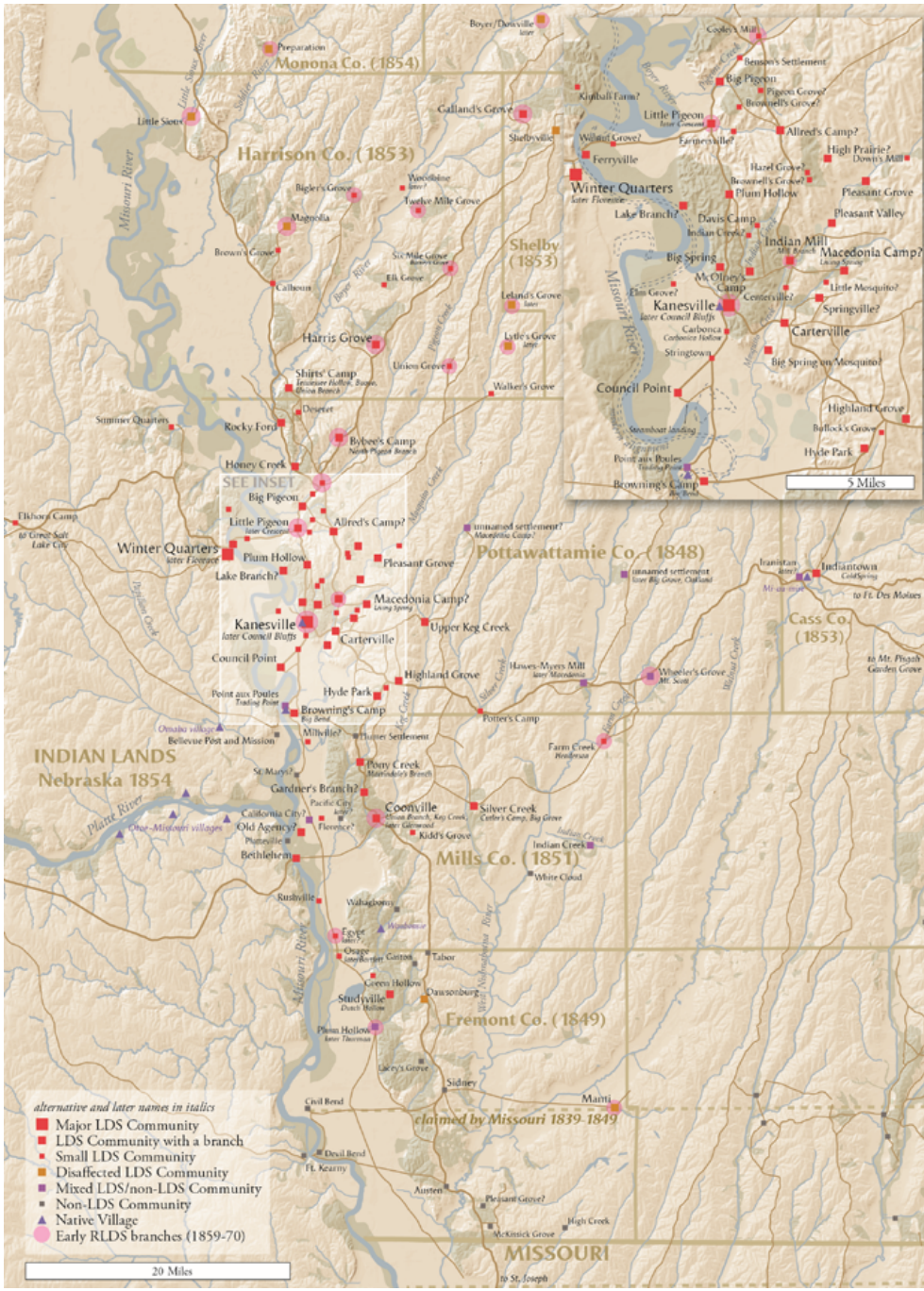

Figure 2. Branches in the Missouri Valley, 1846–1852. From Brandon Plewe, S. Kent Brown, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard H. Jackson, eds., *Mapping Mormonism: An Atlas of Latter-day Saint History,* 2nd ed. (BYU Studies, 2014), 77. Detailed information on each branch is available on MormonPlaces, https://mormonplaces.byu.edu/.

others were likely just settlement locations without an official branch organization at all. It is likely that about sixty branches may have existed at one time or another, with probably no more than forty-five at any single time (fig. 2).

Each branch was led by a presiding elder, who was responsible for administrative activities such as conducting meetings and performing ordinances.[25] However, activities of the Aaronic Priesthood, such as baptizing, caring for the poor, collecting tithing, and judging disputes and disciplinary issues were still reserved by scripture to the bishop.[26] In late 1847 and early 1848, a few branches convinced the high council to assign them a bishop.[27] The high council made it a region-wide policy in July 1848.[28] By the fall, there were at least forty branches with both a president and a bishop sharing leadership duties, the latter often being one of the acting bishops from 1846.[29]

I will call this new type of organization a *dual-leader branch,* similar to the dual-leader congregational stakes from 1840.[30] It is important to note that most of these bishops were never ordained to the priesthood office of bishop but only acted in that role. In a fully organized branch, the bishop was assisted by a called priest, teacher, and deacon, who may have held that priesthood office or could be an elder acting in that office. This structure would reappear in Utah in coming years with mixed success.

Each branch president and bishop were generally able to distinguish their leadership duties; at least, there is not documented evidence of the authority disputes that would later occur in Utah (to be discussed in subsequent articles in this series). As in Illinois, the branch president was the primary authority, with the bishop having a more specific responsibility over tithing and the temporal needs of members.

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25. Pottawattamie High Council Minutes, V.1 65 [image 75].

26. See Plewe, "This Branch of the Church . . . Part 1," 51.

27. One example is William Draper Jr., who was called in the Council Point Branch, October 23, 1847, as recorded in Pottawattamie High Council, Minutes, 67 [image 77]. Another example is Lebbeus T. Coons in the Rushville Branch, January 22, 1848, as recorded in Pottawattamie High Council, Minutes, 78 [image 88].

28. Pottawattamie High Council, Minutes, 103 [image 113].

29. Pottawattamie High Council, Minutes, 105 [image 115], 112 [image 122]; Silas Richards to Brigham Young, October 10, 1848, image 1, M–R, 1848, General Letters, 1840–1877, General Correspondence, Incoming, 1840–1877, Brigham Young Office Files, 1832–1878 (Bulk 1844–1877), https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/6de70c3b-2c3c-4f8e-9ce9-322c3a75f206.

30. See Plewe, "This Branch of the Church . . . Part 1," 61.

Traveling Leaders

To coordinate the work of the bishops in both Winter Quarters and Iowa, especially tithing (including donations of cash, goods, and labor), the pattern of the original stakes was followed by calling a presiding bishop to oversee the temporal ministry in the region. In Winter Quarters, Newel K. Whitney functioned in this role, even though he was in principle the primary bishop over the entire Church.[31] In Iowa, Joseph Knight was initially called in December 1846 as a bishop over the settlement on the "East side of the river" (later called Ferryville or River Branch).[32] By mid-1848, the high council had expanded his jurisdiction, and in October Conference, he was sustained as "President of the Bishops" in Pottawattamie County.[33] He was succeeded by Aaron Johnson in 1849[34] and William W. Lane in 1850.[35]

With regards to the more ecclesiastical duties of the Melchizedek Priesthood, it was difficult for the high council to manage the forty branches scattered over four hundred square miles of Iowa, necessitating a form of regional leadership not seen before or since. In the spring of 1848, a committee was formed to help the remaining residents of Winter Quarters relocate in the Iowa settlements. The committee was led by Lyman Stoddard of the high council and included William Draper Jr., Jerome Benson, and others. In July, these three were each assigned to oversee several branches.[36] They frequently traveled around the region, conducting business such as organizing new branches, reorganizing presidencies and bishoprics, and conveying information between local leaders and the high council. Their titles changed several times over the years: "travelling missionaries among the branches" in October 1848,[37]

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31. Mosquito Creek Conference Minutes, October 6, 1848, image 5, Pottawattamie Lands (Iowa), 1848–1852, Historian's Office Minutes and Reports (Local Units), 1840–1886, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/e305f992-64c7-4acd-9c4a-5c93be2e08ab/0/4.

32. Journal History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, December 3, 1846, 1, typescript, image 957, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/c8703fa3-c68c-495e-aadc-63c50f024f41/0/956.

33. Mosquito Creek Conference Minutes, October 6, 1848, image 5.

34. "Special Conference," *Frontier Guardian,* July 25, 1849, 2, col. 6, https://archive.org/details/FrontierGuardianVol1/Frontier%20Guardian%20-%20Vol%201/page/n49.

35. Pottawattamie High Council, 1846 July–1851 February, image 249.

36. Pottawattamie High Council, 1846 July–1851 February, 105 [image 115].

37. Mosquito Creek Conference Minutes, October 6, 1848, image 6.

"Travelling Elders" in April and August 1849,[38] and "traveling missionaries" in October 1849.[39]

In 1850, Lyman Stoddard was alone called the "presiding traveling elder."[40] That summer, he apparently called several branch presidents as traveling elders to oversee regional groups of branches.[41] In 1851, the emigrating Stoddard was replaced by James C. Snow (like Stoddard, a member of the high council),[42] who spent the next several months visiting branches and hearing appealed cases, especially those in which the branch itself or a branch leader was a party.[43]

It should not be surprising that there was some confusion between the jurisdiction of the presiding bishop and the traveling president, both of whom were overseeing branches and hearing court cases. The distinction was not clarified by the high council until April 1851, when it was resolved that "the Bishop and his assistants have the power to settle all matters of difficulty wherein Dollars and cents or property is concerned. . . . Also that Brother J. C. Snow, the agent of the council, and his agents, shall have authority to settle all difficulties of a moral or spiritual kind."[44]

By the spring of 1851, the organization of the Church in Pottawattamie County had become quite mature. The respective tasks of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood leaders had been clearly defined and separated into distinct leadership structures, all under the direction

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38. Conference Minutes, *Frontier Guardian,* April 18, 1849, 2, col. 4, https://archive.org/details/FrontierGuardianVol1/Frontier%20Guardian%20-%20Vol%201/page/n21; "Appointments," *Frontier Guardian,* August 8, 1849, 2, col. 6, https://archive.org/details/FrontierGuardianVol1/Frontier%20Guardian%20-%20Vol%201/page/n53.

39. Pottawattamie High Council, 1849 October 6–7, holograph, image 5, Pottawattamie High Council Conference Minutes, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/baf4959b-586a-45c6-8dde-d0af03fce34a/0/4.

40. Coonville Branch (Iowa), Coonville Branch Record, 1848–1851, holograph, 13 [image 15], Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/4e7d3460-9fa4-49ce-8877-94c4aaa1c4e8/0/14.

41. Coonville Branch President Lebbeus T. Coons oversaw six branches in the south. See Coonville Branch (Iowa), Coonville Branch Record, 13 [image 15]. Macedonia Branch President William R. Terry oversaw five branches in the Mosquito Creek area. See William Reynolds Terry, Autobiographical sketch, circa 1858, photocopy of manuscript, image 38, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/f3466daf-51f9-4be6-bde5-fd404447316b/0/37.

42. Pottawattamie High Council, 1851 March–1852 May, image 2, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/78c73aae-6d54-4d84-a94f-a908bd531cde/0/1.

43. James C. Snow, Record Book, 1840–1851, holograph, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/97704266-7e00-464c-b7e4-10425583fbb4.

44. Pottawattamie High Council, 1851 March–1852 May, image 12, punctuation standardized.

of the senior Apostle, Orson Hyde. Iowa's exact organizational structure was never implemented again, although dual leadership, apostolates, and presiding bishops would reappear in Utah, and the calling of traveling leaders without a specific geographic jurisdiction has reappeared in a variety of forms through to today's Area Seventies.

During the winter and spring of 1852, almost every remaining branch reorganized itself as an emigration company. Not everyone left; some Saints were still not ready to leave, while others had become either disaffected with the Church in Utah or too attached to the fertile land of Iowa. A few branches remained intact with scattered members elsewhere. The last Saints loyal to Brigham Young emigrated in 1853; most of those who remained eventually joined the New Organization (later the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, or RLDS, now Community of Christ) after missionaries arrived in 1860–1861.[45]

Settling Deseret: 1847–1851

As pioneers flowed into the Salt Lake Valley, the focus of building and expanding settlements was intimately connected with a need for ecclesiastical organization and pastoral ministry. This organization initially followed the Nauvoo model but soon began to evolve as new situations arose.

While the pioneers were still camping in their tents and wagons, Sunday meetings were held at what would become Temple Square. Brigham Young and other leaders preached in the morning, and in the afternoon they would gather again to partake of the sacrament. The men who had been bishops in previous settlements usually administered the sacrament.[46] For the first few weeks, the community continued to be organized according to the emigration structure laid out in a revelation to Brigham Young (D&C 136) for organizing emigration companies into groups of tens, fifties, and hundreds with captains over them.

At their fourth weekly meeting, August 22, 1847, Brigham Young established a more permanent Church organization to take care of the settlement before he left to get the next season of emigration ready. "I move that there be a Pres. to preside over this place," he proposed,

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45. For example, "Mormon News," *True Latter Day Saints' Herald,* 2 no. 6 (August 1861): 143, https://www.google.com/books/edition/True_Latter_Day_Saints_Herald/aFwoAAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&pg=PA143&printsec=frontcover.

46. Meeting minutes, August 1, 1847, holograph, images 5 and 7, Historian's Office General Church Minutes, 1839–1877, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/33844a75-fab0-4417-81b3-ac7439e86d41/0/4.

which was seconded and passed by the congregation. He also proposed that they choose a high council and other officers. He explained that the Apostles who remained would call these officers and hoped that the body of the Church there would approve them. The minutes read as follows: "We wish to know who is coming the next co.—if Uncle John Smith comes it's our mind that he preside." They also voted to name the place "The Great Salt Lake City" and name the river "The Western Jordan."[47]

Brigham Young and a few others then left for the east. On September 4, near South Pass, they encountered the Daniel Spencer Company, including John Smith.[48] After a few days of meeting and resting, Smith continued onwards with a general epistle from Brigham Young and the Apostles, authorizing him to lead and further elaborating how to organize the stake and government of Great Salt Lake City: "It is wisdom that certain officers should exist among you, to preside and attend to the various branches of business that exist, or that may arise during our absence; and we would nominate John Smith to be your President, with liberty for him to select his two Councillors, and we suggest the names of Charles C. Rich, and John Young."[49]

They then went on to recommend names of twelve men to make up the high council. In addition to giving practical advice on surviving the winter, they authorized the stake leaders to be the civil government as well. "It is the duty of the council to see that good & wholesome laws are enforced against all such, & to institute any office & call any officer to put down or remove such nuisances if necessity shall require which we hope may never be."[50]

The Salt Lake Stake and its Wards

When John Smith arrived in the Valley on September 25, he found the Saints hard at work. They had built a fort on the current site of Pioneer

47. Special conference minutes, August 22, 1847, image 34, Historian's Office General Church Minutes, 1839–1877. John Smith was the logical choice, continuing his service as President of the Nauvoo Stake and (very briefly) of Winter Quarters.

48. John Smith, Journal, 1846 February–1854 May, holograph, 50 [image 54], John Smith Papers, 1833–1854, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/e7e77760-0586-4ecc-83ec-6a81fea3a1bc/0/53.

49. An Epistle of the Council of the Twelve Apostles to the Saints in the Great Salt Lake City, September 9, 1847, holograph, image 10, General Epistles, 1841–1868, Brigham Young Office Files, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/3d69494b-927b-491a-947c-83002d2e86db/0/9.

50. Epistle of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, image 6.

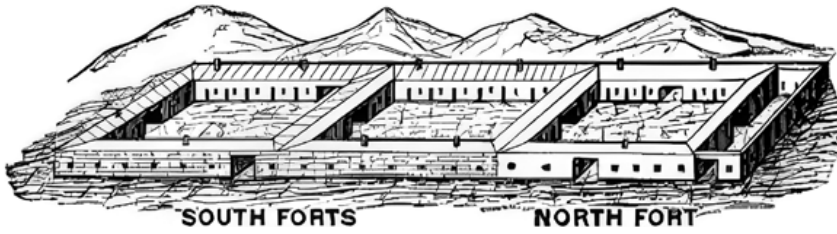

Figure 3. The expanded fort, looking west. From Hubert Howe Bancroft, *The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft,* vol. 26, *History of Utah, 1540–1886* (New York, 1889), 277.

Park (it would soon be extended to the north and south; see fig. 3) and planted crops on the surrounding lands.

Once the remainder of this last emigrating company had arrived, the stake was organized on October 3 according to the instructions in the epistle.[51] The Saints continued to hold weekly public meetings as one congregation in the fort. They would also read the epistle each time to remind themselves what needed to be done to prepare for winter.[52] The high council and stake presidency functioned as the legislative branch of the government during this time. The stake records contain several ordinances and orders given by the high council establishing laws and punishments for things like drunkenness, theft, and so forth, and there are records of petitions sent to them by various citizens for approval to settle new areas and other requests.[53]

By the end of the first emigration season, there were almost two thousand Saints living in and around the fort—almost as many as had been in Winter Quarters a year earlier. Thus, the same need for more personal pastoral care arose. Fortunately, several existing bishops were already there. After just a month of existence, on November 7, the stake moved to divide the expanded fort into five geographically defined wards under individual bishops,[54] all of whom had served as bishops previously:

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51. Salt Lake Stake, October 3, 1847, holograph, image 5, Salt Lake Stake Conference Minutes, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/99f4ed22-619d-4b6d-9737-2813a3b73f45/0/4.

52. For example, during Sunday worship services on October 17 and November 14, 1847. Salt Lake Stake Minutes, 1847–1848, holograph, images 13 and 16, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/95f9a195-cc1c-48e4-a2b1-63bbe5660ee2/0/12.

53. Minutes, Petitions, Salt Lake Stake Papers 1847–1849, Church History Library.

54. Journal History of the Church, November 7, 1847, typescript, image 839, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/a84034e2-b2c3-43fd-9821-261211f6fda7/0/838.

- North Addition: Bishop Joseph B. Noble (previously bishop of Winter Quarters 13th/20th)
- North Half of Old (central) Fort: Bishop Tarleton Lewis (Nauvoo Fourth)
- South Half of Old (central) Fort: Bishop John S. Higbee (Winter Quarters 19th)
- East Half of New (south) Fort: Bishop Jacob Foutz (Nauvoo Eighth)
- West Half of New (south) Fort: Bishop Edward Hunter (Nauvoo Fifth, Winter Quarters First)

The bishops soon called counselors and carried on the work they had done previously: collecting tithing, caring for the poor, blessing children, and conducting disciplinary actions.[55] By the beginning of 1848, they were referring to the five wards by number;[56] Noble refers to his ward as the "First Ward," so it is possible that they were numbered in the above order.[57] These first wards did not include all the settlers. As early as the autumn of 1847, several families had found new settlements to the north and south, and throughout 1848, fort inhabitants began to build homes on their lots across the newly surveyed city. That said, the fort was not completely abandoned until 1849. As their original jurisdictions emptied out, it is not clear how the five bishops, now led by newly ordained Presiding Bishop Newel K. Whitney, may have altered their geographic jurisdictions.

In the autumn of 1848, Brigham Young and other leaders began to return to Salt Lake and to take more direct control over affairs there.[58] At the October conference (at which the Salt Lake Saints were first able to sustain Young as President of the Church), he ordained John Smith as Patriarch to the Church, replacing him with Charles C. Rich as stake

55. Edward Hunter, Bishop's Record, 1844–1848, holograph, 185, image 57, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/b8a29293-b2fc-436c-ab73-71b1204c9969/0/56.

56. Minutes, 1848 April 1–June 11, image 4, Salt Lake Stake Papers, 1847–1849, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/1466268f-1029-4a7f-a71f-aea747b9fb73/0/3.

57. Bishop's Report, First Ward, February 24, 1848, Bishops Reports 1848–1866, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/dbbdf21b-6a93-4fa8-8fce-229ff1ac85c0/0/0.

58. Their frequent presence in various meetings is noted in the many minutes of meetings of different quorums.

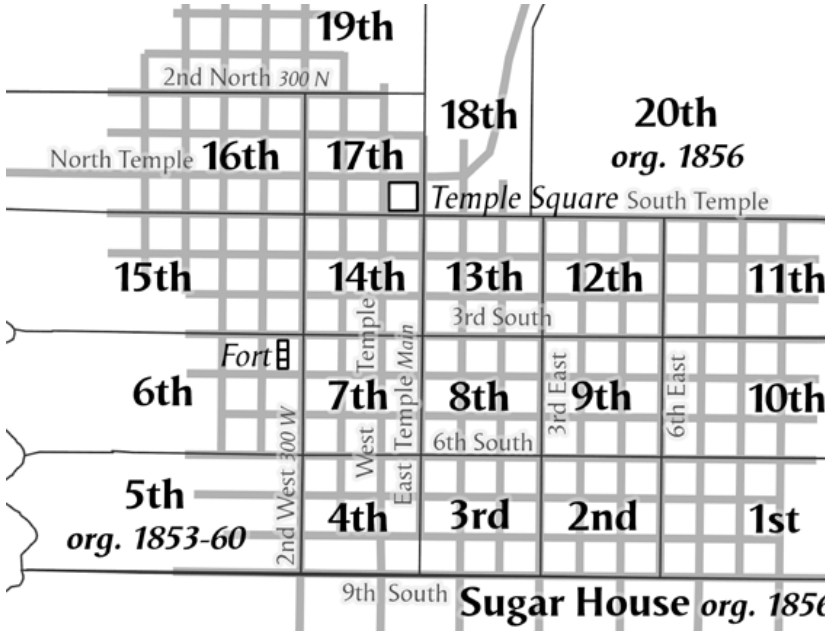

Figure 4. Wards in Great Salt Lake City, 1849–1877.

president.[59] In December, the Council of Fifty was reconvened,[60] which quickly took charge of governmental affairs from the high council.

By February 1849, the settlement expansion and the calling of four new Apostles (including Stake President Rich) required a reorganization. On February 13, Daniel Spencer was ordained stake president and a committee was formed "to lay off the city into wards," led by Presiding Bishop Newel K. Whitney but with President Young and three other Apostles as members.[61] The next day, they met and designed a simple solution to divide the city into nineteen wards of nine blocks each, including four wards south of the city (fig. 4). On February 16, the high

59. Meeting minutes, October 8, 1848, 3 [image 8], Salt Lake Stake Minutes, 1847–1848, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/98acbbcd-86dd-4758-99ca-bf7407a90cf8/0/7.

60. Jedediah S. Rogers, ed., *The Council of Fifty: A Documentary History* (Signature Books, 2014), 136–37.

61. Council meeting, February 13, 1849, image 20, Historian's Office General Minutes, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/f6598bc1-87e0-4169-a7bd-a060f9c6dd29/0/19.

council was reconstituted, and a revised plan to divide the settlements outside the city was announced, as shown in figure 5.[62] On February 22, the first new bishops were ordained, many of them having led previous congregations (as shown below).[63] Over the next few months, more were ordained,[64] until almost all the designated wards were operational by the middle of 1849. In the list below, the number of houses comes from a report on April 30, 1849.[65]

- Ward No. 1, Bishop David Fairbanks ordained February 22, thirty-seven houses
- Ward No. 2, John Lowry ordained February 22, thirteen houses
- Ward No. 3, Christopher Williams ordained February 22, thirty houses
- Ward No. 4, Benjamin Brown ordained April 8, nine houses
- Ward No. 5, declared in 1847 but not organized with a bishop until 1853
- Ward No. 6, William Hickenlooper ordained February 22, eight houses
- Ward No. 7, William G. Perkins ordained February 22, forty houses
- Ward No. 8, Addison Everett ordained February 22, twenty-five houses
- Ward No. 9, Seth Taft ordained February 22, thirty-two houses
- Ward No. 10, David Pettigrew ordained February 22, twenty-two houses
- Ward No. 11, not organized until 1851, five houses
- Ward No. 12, Benjamin Covey ordained February 22, twenty-two houses
- Ward No. 13, Edward Hunter ordained February 22, thirty-seven houses

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62. History of Brigham Young, 1849 February, 9, image 25, Historian's Office History of the Church (draft), 1845–1867, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/d59029d8-79e7-4dc9-b345-467b8bacac50/0/24.

63. Meeting minutes, February 22, 1849, holograph, 80 [image 87], Presiding Bishopric Bishop's Quorum Minutes, 1841–1851, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/3664bcab-178a-4dd8-9409-912ee9135c13/0/86.

64. Meeting minutes, March 25, 1849, holograph, 82–83 [images 89–90], Presiding Bishopric Bishop's Quorum Minutes.

65. Thomas Bullock, Report of number of houses in wards, April 30, 1849, holograph, image 14, Historian's Office General Church Minutes, 1839–1877, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/cb05e9e1-514a-4517-88fc-e48ef009b6e6/0/13. The 5th and 15th Ward each say "not reported" with "10" and "27" written in the margin respectively.

- Ward No. 14, John Murdock ordained February 22, twenty-eight houses
- Ward No. 15, Abraham O. Smoot ordained February 22, twenty-seven houses
- Ward No. 16, Isaac Higbee ordained February 22; led company to Utah Valley in 1849 and replaced by Shadrach Roundy April 14, twenty-five houses
- Ward No. 17, Joseph L. Heywood ordained February 22, thirty-two houses
- Ward No. 18, Newel K. Whitney ordained February 22, twenty-five houses
- Ward No. 19, James Hendricks ordained February 22, twenty-one houses
- Kanyon Creek Ward, "the five-acre survey and all east of it," declared in 1847 but not organized with a bishop until 1854 as Sugar House
- Mill Creek Ward, "the ten-acre survey and all east of it," Joel H. Johnson ordained April 8
- Big Cottonwood Ward, "between the ten-acre survey and Cottonwood Creek" (now Holladay), John Holladay, organized sometime before August
- Mississippi or South Cottonwood Ward, "south of Cottonwood Creek" (now Murray), William Crosby ordained sometime before April, fifty-three houses
- Canaan Ward, "west of Jordan River," declared in 1847 but not organized with a bishop until 1852 as West Jordan
- North Mill Creek Ward, "including Sessions Settlement" (later North Canyon, then Bountiful), Orville S. Cox ordained April 8, forty-seven houses
- North Cottonwood Ward, "between Sessions Settlement and the Weber River" (now Farmington), Joseph L. Robinson ordained March 25
- Weber River Ward "at the Brown Settlement" (now Ogden), James Brown ordained March 25

Unlike the earlier stakes discussed in part one of this series, the Salt Lake Stake is the first that is consistently called such (not "branch" nor "high council of . . ."), with a much clearer regional jurisdiction than before. Thus, we can consider the Salt Lake Stake as the first clearly

modern stake; the only significant difference from a truly modern (post–1877) stake was the presence of a stake-level presiding bishop. At this time, President Young laid out the responsibilities of the stake president more clearly than had ever been done before, giving him broad authority and autonomy, saying:

> He should take charge of all the affairs of the stake, spiritual & temporal, under the direction of the First Presidency. It is his privilege to call on the Presidency, the Twelve, the High Priests, the different quorums, or any man in the stake, to assist him, whether in making a suitable place to meet in, or in spiritual matters, and he should see that the bishops and teachers do their duty. He should be present when the lesser priesthood are organized and called together, and give directions in temporal matters, and lay before them the necessities of the place, to build up a city to the name of the Lord. He should see that there are no idlers and no waste, and he should always be on hand. He should be the first man to walk on the stand at meetings. It is his right to call on me and whom he pleases to preach, and I submit to the powers that be; and if I choose to preside, I'll tell him. It is his duty to see that the congregation is in order, and that every man is in his place in spiritual things and in temporal things, to see that every man pays his tithing and his taxes, and if any will not pay, bring up such a man to account. The Twelve are not the ruling authorities here, they are as subject to the authorities, to the President of the stake and the high council, and ought to observe every law and ordinance as much as any other members of the Church, the same as if they had no office.[66]

In most respects, the twenty-four organized wards were initially very similar to the semiorganized wards of Nauvoo and Winter Quarters. The city met together on Sunday in a newly built bowery on the temple square and was conducted by President Spencer; the bowery was divided so that each ward sat together. Three wards in turn provided the sacrament each week (as they had in Nauvoo).[67] The bishops had the same responsibilities for the temporal concerns of the members through the work of Aaronic Priesthood holders, including holding disciplinary and civil courts when necessary.

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66. Council meeting minutes, February 16, 1840, holograph, image 1, Historian's Office General Church Minutes, 1839–1877, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/fd312dd9-2a99-43d5-97df-925e05d940d1/0/0.

67. Public meeting minutes, March 25, 1849, Salt Lake City, holograph, image 4, Historian's Office General Church Minutes, 1839–1877, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/5043e288-94b0-4d4e-af76-80e20030a763/0/3.

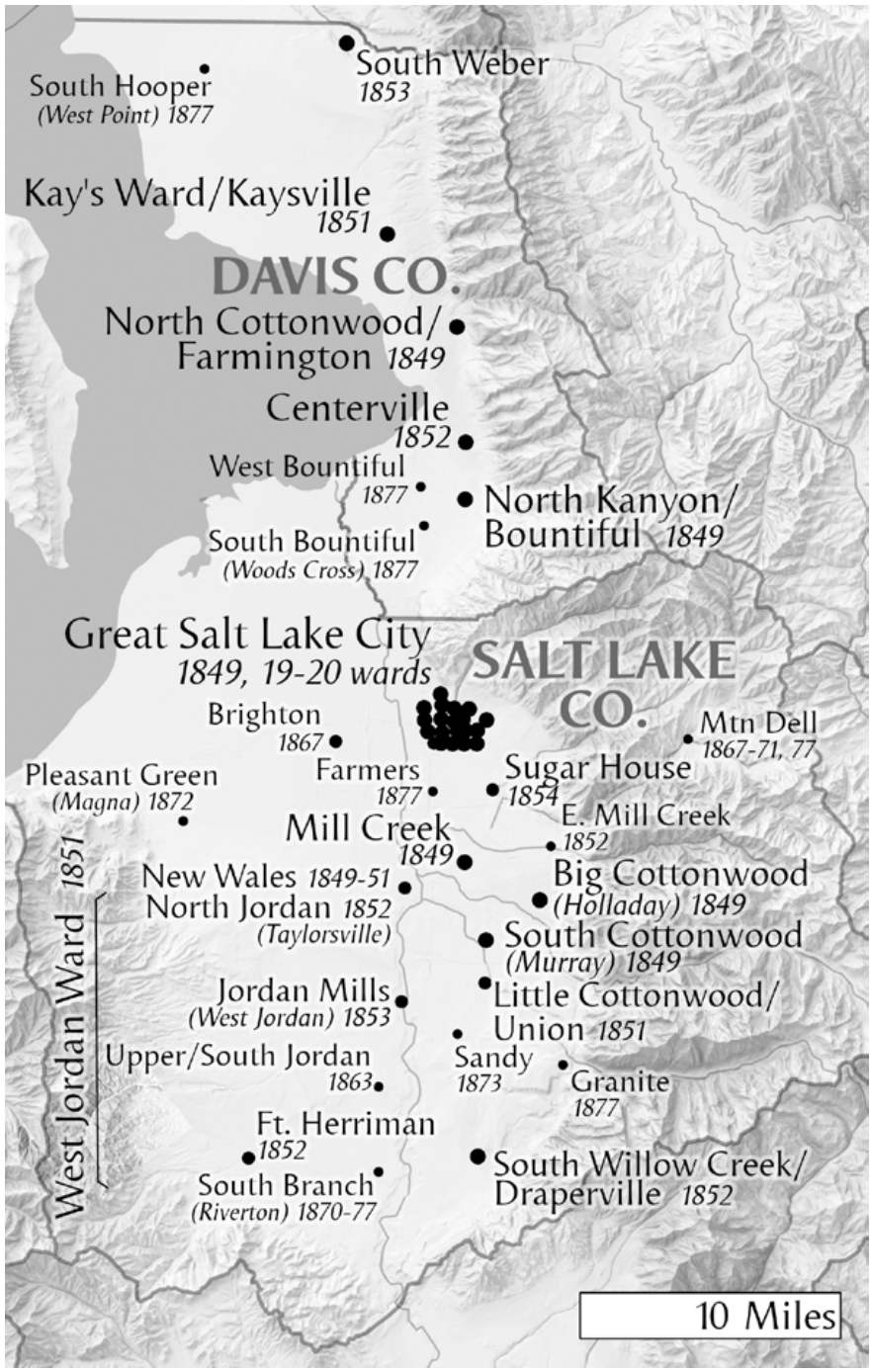

Figure 5. Congregations in Salt Lake and Davis Counties, 1849–1877.

However, there were some important differences from Nauvoo. First, the city wards had no relationship to civil wards; the city was not incorporated until 1851, and even then, it was only divided into four municipal wards. Second, this was the first time that rural congregations were called wards rather than branches and led by bishops rather than presidents. Extant records do not indicate exactly how the "country wards" (as they were often called) functioned at first. They did not generally join the city meetings, so to the extent that they met on their own on Sundays, they would be the first clear examples of the modern ward—a distinct congregation with a bishop as the sole presiding authority.

Without a city government, the high council and bishops were put in charge of practical concerns for the city as well as their pastoral duties. For example, two of the first tasks assigned to the bishops were to assign members to build a council house and a fence around the city. To do this, they asked their members to work a tithing of one day in ten. They also had the responsibility to organize resupply teams to go east to meet incoming immigrants.[68]

In addition to the bishops' ongoing temporal duties, there are hints of greater spiritual authority. In a February 22, 1849 meeting, Brigham Young mentions that the bishops "preside over wards," and Heber C. Kimball says the bishop should be "a father to his ward" and charges them to "take charge" of their members' temporal and spiritual welfare. In a meeting of the Bishops' Quorum on November 11, 1849, one of the bishop's counselors asked if they should reinstitute the visiting of the Aaronic Priesthood to members of the Church, as dictated in D&C 20:47 and practiced in Nauvoo and Winter Quarters. Presiding Bishop Newel K. Whitney responded that "the Bishops are the Fathers of their wards and they can call on H[igh] Priests or the Lesser Priesthood to visit the members."[69] In a meeting a week later, one of the bishops raised the concern that the youth of his ward were using profanity and other immoral behaviors, and Bishop Whitney instructed the bishops to send members of the Aaronic Priesthood to visit the ward families.[70]

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68. Meeting minutes, March 25, 1849, in "A Record of the Quorum of the Lesser Priesthood," holograph, 82–106 [images 89–113], Presiding Bishopric Bishop's Quorum Minutes, 1841–1851, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/3664bcab-178a-4dd8-9409-912ee9135c13/0/88.

69. Meeting minutes, November 11, 1849, in "Record of the Quorum of the Lesser Priesthood," 91 [image 98].

70. Meeting minutes, November 18, 1849, in "Record of the Quorum of the Lesser Priesthood," 92 [image 99].

On these and other instances, the bishops did not appear to fall under the authority of the stake president in any practical sense, but rather they fell under the Presiding Bishop, forming a single church-wide quorum.[71] In fact, despite President Young's instructions above, President Spencer seems to have had few responsibilities other than conducting Sunday meetings. That said, on July 13, 1851, President Spencer and Presiding Bishop Hunter ordained new bishops for several of the country wards in the Great Salt Lake Valley "under the direction of President Brigham Young," including the new Little Cottonwood Ward (now Cottonwood Heights).[72] This suggests that the stake president held at least some authority beyond the city. However, he did not always preside over ordinations in his stake; earlier that same year, Brigham Young reorganized the "branches" (in the general sense) at North Mill Creek and North Cottonwood (Bountiful and Farmington) without President Spencer.

Branching Out

Even with fewer than five thousand people in Salt Lake City, many pioneers found it already too crowded and looked for other opportunities elsewhere. As settlements sprung up in several new locations in 1850 and 1851, congregational organization soon followed. While the Salt Lake Stake quickly became a rather modern-looking stake, the pattern elsewhere was to do the exact opposite. The congregations organized outside the Valley between 1850 and 1852 look downright strange to us, as we shall see.

Permanent settlement beyond the Salt Lake Valley began as soon as the spring of 1848 and in two forms that would be repeated for many years. In an example of the first type (which I term a *called* settlement), James Brown was authorized by Church leaders to purchase the Miles Goodyear homestead on the Weber River and recruit pioneers for a settlement under his leadership, which they called Brownsville (later Ogden).[73] Meanwhile, what I will call *ad hoc settlements* were begun without any

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71. The Salt Lake bishops continued to meet as a quorum, independent of the stake structure, into the 1880s. Presiding Bishopric Bishops Meeting Minutes, 1851–1884, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/record/45143647-edd4-4424-8df9-a98bf5d59959/0.

72. Meeting minutes, 1844 November–1851 July, July 13, 1851, 51, Presiding Bishopric Bishop's Quorum Minutes, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/6dae9766-04b7-4074-87c7-26e4373101fe/0/50.

73. Joanne J. Hanson, *Ogden Utah Weber Stake 1851–2001: A Chronological History* (privately published, 2003), 16.

central Church guidance or centrally designated leader, being just one or more families settling on their own. Over the next three years, several of both types were established.[74]

- *Called settlements.* 1848: Weber (Ogden); 1849: Utah (Provo), Sanpete (Manti); 1851: Little Salt Lake (Parowan), San Bernardino (California), Salt Creek (Nephi), Fillmore.
- *Ad hoc settlements.* 1848: North Mill Creek (Bountiful), North Cottonwood (Farmington); 1849: Mill Creek, South Cottonwood (Murray), Holladaysburgh (Holladay), Little Cottonwood (Cottonwood Heights), New Wales (Taylorsville), Tooele; 1850: Kaysville, Cherry's (Centerville), West Jordan (Taylorsville), American Creek (American Fork), Hobble Creek (Springville), Spanish Fork, Dry Creek (Lehi), Battle Creek (Pleasant Grove), Peteetneet (Payson).

The called settlements were intended to be larger central gathering places (in the original general sense of stakes), and all were eventually organized as stakes and county seats. The ad hoc settlements generally had a peripheral status, becoming branches or wards of the nearest stake. However, this did not happen in a way that directly reflects modern practice.

Both types of settlements usually started out with some kind of leader, who was commonly (but not always) called a *president* or a *presiding elder* before any distinct ecclesiastical organization such as a ward or branch was organized. I call such a semiorganized place a *presided settlement* (it did not have a categorical name at the time). Usually, the called settlements had a president called by Church leaders, while the ad hoc settlements had a president who was self-declared (especially if he organized the founding group) or elected by the founding settlers. This simple structure continued to be very common through 1877 as new settlements proliferated throughout the region, but it rarely lasted more than a couple years before a more formal organization was established.

The three northern 1848 settlements (Weber, North Cottonwood, North Mill Creek) were designated as wards in the Salt Lake Stake in February 1849, as described above. The two in Davis County, joined by Kay's Ward (Kaysville/Layton) in 1851 and Centerville in 1852, continued to function within that stake to some degree for many years; evidence of this includes a few appeals of ward decisions to the Salt Lake High Council.[75]

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74. Detailed information for each settlement and its ecclesiastical leadership is available on MormonPlaces https://mormonplaces.byu.edu/.

75. The issue of the extent of the Salt Lake Stake, including these appeals, will be discussed in the forthcoming part 3 of this article series.

However, distance prevented the Weber Ward at Brownsville from having much connection with the stake, so it was reorganized as an independent branch in March 1850 with a president (Lorin Farr) and bishop (Isaac Clark). This began a re-emergence of the dual leadership of president and bishop that had originated with the congregational stakes of the Nauvoo era (see the previous article in this series) and was employed in western Iowa as discussed above.[76]

The Utah and Sandpitch companies initially followed the same dual-leadership pattern as Weber, except for the Utah (Provo) Company where one person, John S. Higbee, was initially called as both president and bishop.[77] In the Sandpitch (Manti) settlement, Isaac Morley initially served as president and John Lowry as bishop.[78]

Congregational Stakes Re-emerge

By the beginning of 1851, all these settlements had become permanently established. Brigham Young personally reorganized each of the three primary towns as stakes with a full presidency, bishopric, and high council: Weber/Ogden on January 26,[79] Utah/Provo on March 19,[80] and Sanpete/Manti on April 29.[81]

These were generally based on the *congregational stake* structures of Joseph Smith's day: a single congregation with a presidency, bishopric, and high council. This direct promotion was certainly in keeping with the *general branch* concept discussed in the previous article, demonstrating that this idea was more widespread and deeper than just Joseph. In fact, during their early life, all three of these are called *branches* as often, if not more so, than they are called *stakes.* For example, the

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76. Milton R. Hunter, *Beneath Ben Lomond's Peak: A History of Weber County, 1824–1900* (Publishers Press, 1966), 432.

77. Historian's Office History of the Church, 1839–circa 1882, March 17, 1849, 40 [image 58], Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/f2c6c940-515e-4c5f-ae00-c85ff039cf15/0/57.

78. "Manti Ward Historical Record, Book A, 1850–1854," August 26, 1850, 5 [image 9], Manti Ward General Minutes, 1850–1862, 1877, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/e7402fab-fb70-4120-972a-6406bdfb594b/0/8.

79. "Visit of the Presidency to Weber," *Deseret News,* February 8, 1851, 5, https://newspapers.lib.utah.edu/details?id=2569232.

80. Utah Fort (Provo)–Hobble Creek (Springville), March 19–20, 1851, image 35, Historians Office General Church Minutes, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/6af4fc37-8897-4d05-b74b-3f8069ffd7db/0/34.

81. Manti, April 29–30, 1851, image 4, Historian's Office General Church Minutes, 1839–1877, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/7e28dfc0-27d5-4018-ba9c-d964744f3aa3/0/3.

original minutes of the Provo organization in March include the statement, "re-elected Isaac Higbee to be the Prest of the ~~**Stake**~~**Branch** [*sic*] in Utah and organized a High Council for this **Stake** . . . Elias Blackburn was elected to be the bishop of the **place.**"[82] This language may sound sloppy and inconsistent to modern ears, but makes sense if one conceives of a stake as a permanent gathering place and as a special kind of branch, while recognizing that all branches have presidents, but only stakes have high councils.

That said, none of the three new stakes followed the Nauvoo-era congregational stake pattern exactly. Each was given a high council, which the outlying Illinois stakes did not have. The Weber Stake was divided into two wards with separate bishoprics, because settlement had begun in two areas separated by a couple of miles and the Ogden River. The Utah Stake may have had limited regional authority, as four of the high council lived in neighboring Springville and another one soon moved to Spanish Fork to become its bishop.[83] Meanwhile, the settlement at Manti appears to have had a rather loose organization: There was a presidency, a bishop, a high council, a patriarch, and priesthood quorums, but there is no evidence of them being collectively called a stake for several years. Instead, they referred to themselves as leaders of "Manti City," "Sanpete Valley," or the "San Pete Branch."[84]

An extreme example of the ad hoc settlement is the short-lived Welsh community established west of the Jordan River (in what would later become Taylorsville) in September 1849. One Welsh immigrant described Dan Jones's vision for what he called New Wales as follows: "He advised us to stick together and all go over Jordan River and settle there as an independent nation, with Mrs. Lewis [who would become a polygamous wife of Dan Jones] as our queen."[85] Some of the Welsh settled in the city among the other Saints and met with them at Temple Square on Sunday mornings and then held their own Welsh-language

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82. "Extracts from Journal, 1851 March 17–26," 2, Brigham Young Office Files, 1832–1878 (Bulk 1844–1877), Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/df3c0114-3bc6-4efc-bc30-37bab5bd7077/0/1.

83. The new bishop of Spanish Fork was William Pace. *Deseret News,* January 24, 1852, 3, col. 2, https://newspapers.lib.utah.edu/details?id=2579134.

84. "Manti Ward Historical Record, Book A, 1850–1854," images 7, 13, 38, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/e7402fab-fb70-4120-972a-6406bdfb594b/0/6.

85. Isaac Barlett Nash, "The Life-Story of Isaac B. Nash," The Welsh Saints Project, Center for Family History and Genealogy at Brigham Young University, https://welshsaints.byu.edu/Resource_Info.aspx?id=202.

meetings in the evening.[86] Those that settled across the river were organized into a branch with a president and counselors that were set apart by Dan Jones instead of by the General Authorities or stake leaders; they held their own Welsh-language Sunday meetings.[87] The New Wales branch was eclipsed by the emerging North Jordan settlement and branch by 1851, as most of its inhabitants went to Sanpete and Box Elder counties.[88]

The ad hoc settlements and the later settlement companies were also organized as congregations in 1851, but in keeping with their informal origin, they followed six different combinations of leadership and authorization:

- *Bishop-led branch/ward organized by a general authority:* Kay's Ward (Kaysville), January 27, 1851;[89] Little Cottonwood (Cottonwood Heights), July 31, 1851;[90] Dry Creek (Lehi), February–March 1851;[91] Pleasant Grove, March 25, 1851;[92] Salt Creek (Nephi), June 1851[93]

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86. Historical Department Office Journal, 13:1 [image 4], Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/6a97bd34-762a-412a-b9ac-be58bf804d00/0/3.

87. Dan Jones to W. Phillips, November 20, 1849, in "Tri llythyr oddiwrth Capt. D. Jones, ac un oddiwrth Mrs. Lewis (o Gydweli), o Ddinas y Llyn Halen" (Merthyr Tydfil, Wales, [1850]), https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/7a71466c-083d-41b7-81b3-66bdbc3208a3/0/0. English translation at The Welsh Saints Project, https://welshsaints.byu.edu/Resources/pdf/21137.pdf.

88. Frederick S. Buchanon, "Imperial Zion: The British Occupation of Utah," in *The Peoples of Utah,* ed. Helen Z. Papanikolas (Utah State Historical Society, 1976), 61–113.

89. Horace S. Eldredge, report extracted from journal, image 4, Letters, 1851 January–August, Deseret News editor's files, 1850–1854, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/ffe363ae-01cc-4a51-8f72-f18718f9f288/0/3.

90. Meeting minutes, June 24, 1851, 6 [image 20], Presiding Bishopric Bishops Meetings Minutes, 1851–1884, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/d6ef2526-92a6-45f5-9906-6879ac3353b3/0/19.

91. Local histories frequently state that George A. Smith ordained David Evans as bishop in April 1851, but Smith was known to be in Parowan then. Other later sources say Brigham Young called him in February or March. George A. Smith was there by mid-March. Lehi Ward General Minutes, 2:2, Church History Library.

92. "Clark, George Sheffer Bishop's License," photocopy, contributed by Roger Grua, FamilySearch, accessed April 11, 2025, https://www.familysearch.org/memories/memory/3125661.

93. Parowan, 1854 May 17, image 65, Historian's Office General Church Minutes, 1839–1877, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/435983e1-2d15-47b0-b35f-21328378bbc2/0/64.

- *Bishop-led branch organized by the members:* American Fork, May 25, 1851[94]
- *President-led branch organized by a general authority:* Tooele, April 24, 1850;[95] Peteetneet (Payson), December 20, 1850[96]
- *President-led branch organized by the members:* West Jordan, late 1850[97]
- *Dual-leader branch organized by the members:* Spanish Fork, December 21, 1851;[98] Salt Creek (Nephi), September 1851[99]
- *Dual-leader branch organized by a general authority:* Louisa (Parowan), February 9, 1851;[100] Springville, March 20, 1851;[101] Payson, March 23, 1851;[102] Fillmore, October 29, 1851.[103]

The San Bernardino company, led by Apostles Amasa Lyman and Charles C. Rich, had greater plans. As they entered the Los Angeles Basin, and before they even located a settlement site, they organized

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94. "American Fork Ward Historical Record, Book A, 1851 to 1883," 3, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/d8488c80-d541-4fca-aee0-1852041e5e2e/0/0.

95. John Rowberry to Willard Richards, [month missing] 1, 1851, Willard Richards Journals and Papers, 1821–1854, Incoming correspondence, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/46bf78d8-85ff-49cc-b21b-deb620d2743d.

96. Payson Ward General Minutes, 1850–1892, vol. 2, 1850, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/12773a88-1385-4fda-8f36-d39540a9fa77/0/1.

97. Bishops' Reports, 1848–1866, September 1851, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/f384a527-25c9-4399-b9d9-770fcaad5caf/0/6.

98. President Stephen Markham and Bishop William Pace. *Deseret News,* January 24, 1852, 3, col. 2, https://newspapers.lib.utah.edu/details?id=2579120.

99. Juanita Brooks, ed., *Not by Bread Alone: The Journal of Martha Spence Heywood 1850–56* (Utah State Historical Society, 1978), 65.

100. George A. Smith, Journal, 1850 December–1851 April, image 77, George A. Smith Papers, 1834–1877, Church History Library, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/1d407c4f-655e-4b87-8ced-714ac6fae673/0/76.

101. President Asahel Perry and Bishop Aaron Johnson. Utah Fort (Provo)–Hobble Creek (Springville), March 19–20, 1851, image 36, https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets/6af4fc37-8897-4d05-b74b-3f8069ffd7db/0/35.

102. Bishop Benjamin Cross. Utah Fort (Provo)–Hobble Creek (Springville), March 19–20, 1851, image 40.

103. Stella H. Day and Sebrina C. Ekins, *Milestones of Millard: 100 Years of History of Millard County* (Art City Publishing, 1951), 3. Secondary histories agree on this organization event, but no primary source has been found, even in daily journals of several people who were present.

themselves as a congregational stake with a presidency (separate from the two Apostles), a bishopric, and a high council. Clearly, this was intended to be a major part of the Deseret plan for securing a transportation corridor to a Pacific port and a gathering place for California Saints.[104]

Conclusion

At the close of 1851, the local administration of the Church in Utah Territory had settled into a pattern that would have been somewhat familiar in Nauvoo: a central regional stake at the headquarters city divided into semiorganized wards, congregational stakes (with dual leadership) in a few outlying settlements that had been designated as regional centers, and branches (many with dual leadership) in ad hoc settlements. The one major novelty in the hierarchy was the "country ward" found in the settlements just north and south of Great Salt Lake City, which were very similar to modern wards. Specifically, the following were organized, as shown in figure 6:

- Weber: congregational stake
- Tooele: president-led branch
- Salt Lake Valley (including Davis County): premodern regional stake
  - Semiorganized wards: eighteen of nineteen city wards
  - Modern bishop-led wards: Kays, North Cottonwood, North Mill Creek, South Mill Creek, South Cottonwood, Big Cottonwood, Little Cottonwood
  - Presided settlements: West Jordan
- Utah Valley: no regional organization
  - Provo: congregational stake (possibly with jurisdiction over Springville and Spanish Fork)
  - Dual-leadership branches: Springville, Spanish Fork, Payson
  - Bishop-led branches: Dry Creek, American Fork, Pleasant Grove
- Sanpete/Manti: congregational stake
- Nephi: dual-leader branch

104. Milton R. Hunter, *Brigham Young the Colonizer,* 4th ed. (Peregrine Smith, 1973), 78–80.

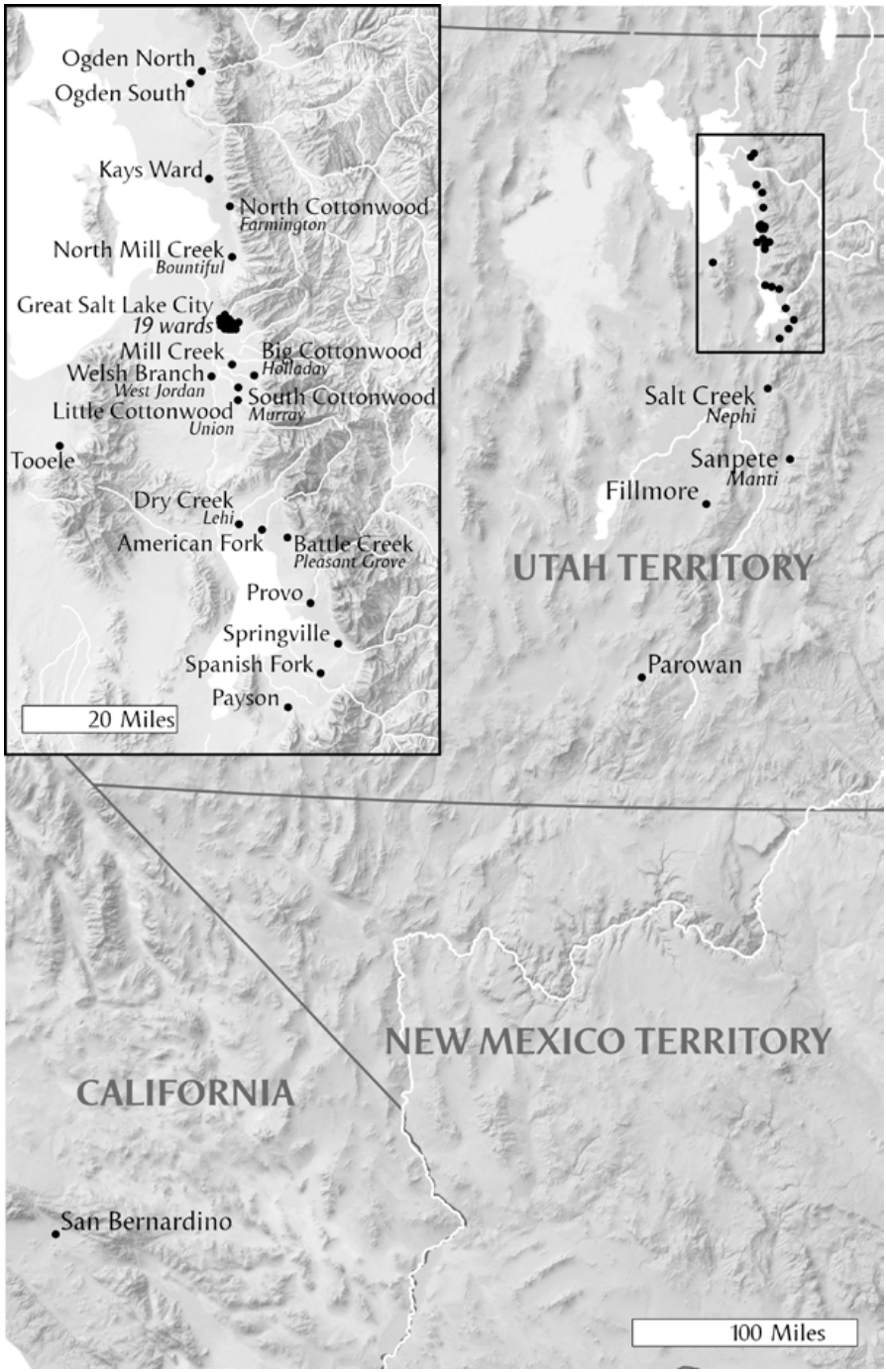

Figure 6. Organized settlements at the end of 1851.

- Fillmore: dual-leader branch
- Parowan: apostolate dual-leader branch
- San Bernardino: apostolate congregational stake

Over the remainder of the 1850s, significant changes would occur in these settlements and other settlements founded nearby. The modern-looking ward and stake would gradually replace many of the odd organizations, but other unique leadership structures would emerge. This will be visited in the next article.

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Baptisms for the Dead

The God who divided the waters from the land,
Who made a dry path through the middle of a sea,
Rests today
On the boy in the font.
He forgot to make his bed today,
Played Brawl Stars with his buddies the whole drive here.
He has cross country tryouts and girls on his mind
And—heavier still—doubt like a riptide.
Is he fast enough? Funny enough? Smart enough?
He worries more about street cred than service,
But today, God will make a savior of him.
When that hand raises to the square
Something rises in him,
Straightens his shoulders,
Strengthens his voice.
And with that ancient power, he parts the waters,
Senses who he really is:
More God than boy.

—Stacy DeLange

Latter-day Saint Theology Among Christian Theologies
By Grant Underwood

William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2025

Reviewed by John G. Turner

Grant Underwood's *Latter-day Saint Theology Among Christian Theologies* is a project born out of hope. Underwood, a former Richard L. Evans Chair of Religious Understanding at Brigham Young University, has spent years in dialogue with other Christians. In particular, he was part of a "Mormon-Evangelical Dialogue" that met at least once a year for more than two decades. (Full disclosure: I attended two sessions.) Underwood didn't only talk with other Christians. He read their theology—a lot of their theology.

The result is an exhaustive but winsome volume that puts the teachings of his own church "into conversation" with other streams of Christianity (5). Underwood acknowledges that this playing field isn't exactly level. Formal theology has mattered far more to Catholic, Orthodox, and many streams of Protestant Christianity than it has to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and other movements that trace their inspiration to the Prophet Joseph Smith. James E. Talmage and Bruce R. McConkie did not establish theological traditions akin to those sparked by Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin. Students at the University of Notre Dame take required courses from a Department of Theology. Students at Brigham Young University take required courses from Religious Education. But one does not have to be a professional theologian to engage in theological reflection. "Mormon theology," Underwood observes, "fundamentally is 'preached theology,'" or "doctrine" taught by the church's General Authorities (10–11). Beginning with Joseph Smith, moreover, church leaders have reexamined questions that have animated Christian thought for two millennia.

Why engage in this work of dialogue, both in person and in print? Underwood desires to contribute "in some small way to the irenic goal of shedding the parochial coil of an exclusivist faith for the glistening

skin of inclusivist Christian discipleship" (547). That is not an easy goal, given that the Restoration began with Jesus Christ telling the young Joseph Smith that the churches of his day "were all wrong" and that "their creeds were an abomination" (JS–H 1:19). Smith accordingly told his mother that he had "learned for [himself] that Presbyterianism is not true" (JS–H 1:20). Protestant Christians minced few words of their own when critiquing the upstart church that the adult Joseph Smith and his followers organized, and Underwood himself lived through decades in which Protestant denunciations of his church as a dangerous anti-Christian cult were common. Underwood is a man not given to easy discouragement.

How to begin? Underwood organizes his book around the *loci communes*, "the standard, classical subdivisions of theology," beginning with the nature of God (5). That is precisely where Joseph Smith would have begun. "I wish to go back to the beginning," the Prophet preached less than three months before his death.[1] Smith began what became known as the King Follett Discourse with a simple question: "What kind of a being is God?"[2] A simple question, but the answers of many Christian theologians have been maddeningly complex, in part because they have asserted that God's perfection is incomprehensible to human beings. Apophatic theology, therefore, proceeds by stating what God is not. God is not corporeal. God does not change. God does not have emotions. In short, God is utterly different from mortal humans. Cataphatic theologians, by contrast, positively state that God is holy, perfect, omniscient, and omnipotent.

Underwood accordingly starts at the beginning, and, for non-Latter-day Saint readers, his book starts with a bang. He quotes scholars who affirm that the God of the Hebrew Bible has a body and notes that some Christians adhered to the corporeality of God at least through the fourth century. However, most Christian leaders in both the West and the East, influenced by Platonism and Greek philosophy, more generally reinterpreted those biblical passages as allegory or accommodation to the limits of human reason (19–24). Joseph Smith set aside that venerable tradition. He saw God the Father and Jesus Christ as "personages" (JS–H 1:17), beings with "glorified, celestial flesh" (25). As Smith taught in the

1. "Discourse, 7 April 1844, as Reported by Thomas Bullock," in *Documents, Volume 14: 1 January–15 May 1844,* ed. Alex D. Smith, Adam H. Petty, Jessica M. Nelson, and Spencer W. McBride, Joseph Smith Papers (Church Historian's Press, 2023), 316.

2. "Discourse, 7 April 1844, as Reported by Thomas Bullock," 317.

above-quoted sermon, "if you were to see [God] today, you would see him in all the person, image, [and] very form of man."[3] In keeping with his purpose of explicating Latter-day Saint doctrine only where it is clear, Underwood cautions that Latter-day Saint church leaders have avoided elaboration on what it means for God to have once "dwelt on a Earth," as Smith taught.[4] Underwood suggests that Smith's intent did not seem to "imply that God was once a fallen, sinful individual like the rest of us, but rather to declare that God and humans are linked 'ontologically'" (26). And God's past pointed to humanity's potential.

Underwood's approach is thoughtful. The Latter-day Saint doctrine of a corporeal God startles and even repels many other Christians, but Underwood roots the idea not just in the revelations of his own church, but in the questions and speculations of other Christian traditions. He does so without engaging in facile parallels, however. Underwood observes that Eastern church fathers took seriously the idea of human participation in divine glory, grounded in their understanding of the incarnation. Athanasius, the fourth-century Alexandrian theologian, taught that "God became man so man could become god" (540). At first glance, Athanasius's formula resembles Lorenzo Snow's couplet, "as God now is, man may become" (540). Not so fast, Underwood objects. Athanasius and the other Cappadocian theologians weren't proto-Latter-day Saints. For them, humans came to share in God's characteristics and attributes, but not in God's divine nature (541). For Joseph Smith, as Underwood summarizes, "God was once human, and humans can become gods" (541). Underwood concludes that "this was one of the Mormon prophet's most distinctive doctrines, and one that is virtually without parallel in Christendom, East or West" (541). Latter-day Saint doctrine, Underwood asserts, rests on modern revelation, not on ancient Christian antecedents.

That careful act of comparison is one of the virtues of this book. Another is Underwood's capacious reading across Christian traditions. To say that Underwood has read widely is akin to commenting on an ocean's size. He has read more widely than anyone would expect upon opening this book. He's remarkably unsnobby and quite comfortable to cite ideas he finds useful from evangelical and Pentecostal publications

3. "Discourse, 7 April 1844, as Reported by William Clayton," in Alex D. Smith, Adam H. Petty, Jessica M. Nelson, and Spencer W. McBride, eds., *Documents, Volume 14,* 329, punctuation added for readability.

4. "Discourse, 7 April 1844, as Reported by Thomas Bullock," 318.

that some academic theologians might eschew. The result is a deep conversation not just with Christianity's greatest theological hits but also with contemporary thinkers who shaped his on-the-ground theological dialogues.

Space does not permit an exhaustive summary, appreciation, and critique of Underwood's remaining *loci*. Befitting his subject, Underwood devotes two long chapters to the Latter-day Saint doctrine of the church and its priesthood, and several chapters detail his church's understanding of baptism, the Lord's Supper, and other ordinances. My one quibble is that Underwood treats the subject of "scripture" in his introduction rather than in a stand-alone chapter, though he includes an illuminating discussion of revelation within his treatment of the church (333–39). New to me was the Latter-day Saint interpretation of the "rock" in Matthew 16:18 as "revelation" (333).

Underwood's hope goes beyond irenicism. He concedes that his book betrays "an undertone" of "'holy envy'—genuine admiration for the principles and practices of another's faith" (8–9). I have to make a similar confession. I admire Joseph Smith and his successors for asking theological questions that my own Protestant tradition has regarded as settled. Sometimes I have found things to admire in their answers as well, but even when I disagree, the Latter-day Saint tradition has challenged me to think more clearly about what it is I believe and why. So I have some holy envy as well, in part because I have had guides like Grant Underwood when I have engaged in these conversations.

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Latter-day Saint Art: A Critical Reader
Edited by Amanda K. Beardsley and Mason Kamana Allred

Oxford University Press, 2024

Reviewed by Maddie Blonquist

The Center for Latter-day Saint Arts' impressive new volume, *Latter-day Saint Art: A Critical Reader* (Oxford University Press, 2024), makes an ambitious and long-awaited contribution to the fields of religious studies, art history, visual and material culture, and cultural theory. This edited collection is both intellectually and physically substantial, with over 600 pages, nearly 250 reproductions, and twenty-two authors from a myriad of disciplines. Scholars of history, art, film, and media studies share space with artists, museum directors, filmmakers, curators, theologians, and journalists who span the spectrum in their relationship to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The result? A bustling neighborhood of thinkers, where visiting readers converse with both seasoned scholars and intrepid newcomers in their collective effort to expand and multiply definitions of Latter-day Saint art.

As each contributor develops their own answer to the question "What has been accomplished in the field of LDS visual art, and why does it matter?" (viii), a striking array of responses emerge. With an eclectic lineup, a range of topics and methodologies is to be expected. This includes (but is not limited to) the following: the theological underpinnings of Latter-day Saint art (Terryl Givens); Latter-day Saint architectural design and temple art renewal (Colleen McDannell, Josh Edward Probert, Rebecca Janzen); modernism, art education in Utah, and contemporary Latter-day Saint art movements (Glen Nelson, Menacham Wecker, Analisa Coats Sato, Chase Westfall); race and gender in Latter-day Saint art, education, and experience (Jennifer Reeder, W. Paul Reeve, Carlyle Constantino, Amanda K. Beardsley); Latter-day Saint subjectivity and embodiment in film (Randy Astle, Mason Kamana Allred); the Latter-day Saint landscape and public image as defined through monuments, cartoons, and photography (Nathan Rees, Mary Campbell, James

Swensen); and the construction of global Latter-day Saint identities from the perspective of immigrant converts and globe-trotting artists (Ashlee Whitaker Evans, Heather Belnap, Linda Jones Gibbs, Glen Nelson, Laura Paulsen Howe).

Latter-day Saint Art will be most helpful to academics, but its value extends to those outside traditional intellectual contexts. Professors' syllabi will benefit from the inclusion of individual chapters best suited to their courses, while independent scholars interested in religion, art, and cultural theory can gain further insight into their respective fields as they are exposed to uniquely Latter-day Saint paradigms. This book will be an invaluable resource to any reader wanting to understand the complex relationships between personal faith, systematized belief, religious institutions, and cultural production. Latter-day Saint readers especially, of any degree of commitment or affiliation, will learn something about themselves as they witness each author navigate the push for assimilation and the pull of peculiarity that has characterized the Latter-day Saint experience for over two hundred years.

Previous publications—like Lorin Wheelwright's *Mormon Arts, Volume I* (Brigham Young University Press, 1972); Robert Davis and Richard Oman's *Images of Faith: Art of the Latter-day Saints* (Deseret Book, 1995); Vern Swanson, Robert Olpin, and William S. Seifrit's *Artists of Utah* (Gibbs Smith, 1999); Herman Du Toit's *Masters of Light: Coming unto Christ Through Inspired Devotional Art* (Cedar Fort, 2016); Laura Allred Hurtado's exhibition catalog *Immediate Present* (Mormon Arts Center, 2017); and the Brigham Young University Art Department's *A 15-Year Expanse, Volume 1* (Actual Source, 2020)—have brought attention to the quality of creation amongst Latter-day Saint artists in past decades. However, until recently, the serious study of Latter-day Saint art has largely remained a peripheral niche within academic scholarship—understudied and underappreciated.

Latter-day Saint Art seeks to address this lack of scholarship by meeting the "need for more theory, criticism, and investigation of [Latter-day Saints'] place in history" (viii). This deployment of rigorous scholarship around Latter-day Saint topics follows broader trends in the field of Mormon Studies and adds a unique perspective to the current discourse surrounding the way a religion and its material objects fashion cultural identity.

In their introduction, editors Amanda K. Beardsley and Mason Kaman Allred articulate the scope of their project: "Taken as a whole, our volume is . . . inevitably, reductive in its focus on visual art to define

a religion. In this self-conscious approach, it generates unprecedented depth, a diversity of voices, and an equal expansion of our vision of what Mormon art was, is, and can be" (3). By limiting itself primarily to a treatment of visual art—namely, "painting, sculpture, photography, film, architecture, exhibitions, and various material cultural products"—the project more easily accommodates breadth and depth within those categories, effectively demonstrating what a focused study of art can tell us about a particular (or peculiar) religion (10).

It is difficult to fault a project that is so self-aware. The editors and collaborators are both clear-eyed and constrained about what this project is, what it is not, what it can and cannot reasonably do, and what it should spur next. In their foreword, Glen Nelson and Richard Bushman—cofounders of the Center for Latter-day Saint Arts and formidable scholars in their own right—outline their criteria for the project's success: "This book will have succeeded if it provokes a responding barrage of additional scholarship and art criticism" (x). Likewise, the primary goal of the volume, as outlined by Beardsley and Allred, is to "both shave off the accretion of traditional and confining conceptions of Mormon art and expand our imagination of its power and potential to shape identity, experience, and community with others, as well as the divine" (15). *Latter-day Saint Art* operates as a successful catalyst and will continue to prove its worth as new scholarship emerges in response—which the editors "welcome and encourage" (9). Whether it be through critical rebuttals to the individual authors' contributions or the occurrence of new questions born out of their findings, this volume will prompt additional research, study, and insights into the field of Latter-day Saint art for those who work within and adjacent to it. However, the project's interdisciplinarity opens itself up to the risk of unevenness and incoherence.

For example, some contributions in *Latter-day Saint Art*—like Colleen McDannell's careful tracing of the shift in temple art over the last two decades, Glen Nelson's uncovering of the influence of the Art Students League of New York on Latter-day Saint artists, and Analisa Coats Sato's extrapolation of the unique parameters within which faculty and students of the Brigham Young University Art Department work—are stronger than others and best exemplify the editors' overarching objectives. Other chapters, like Mary Campbell's photo-historic unpacking of Brigham Young's "Big Ten" or Rebecca Janzen's essay on Mexican Mormon architecture, are of narrower interest, most meaningful to those working within a specific subset of scholarship.

The book is not a chronological survey of Latter-day Saint Art. Rather, the chapters are organized loosely by thematic category, although without the help of formal dividing sections. Authors are placed in dialogue with one another around unifying topics, such as art as theology, image-making, politics of space, institutions and identity, and exhibition and display—all of which are outlined only in Beardsley and Allred's introductory essay. This choice was likely made to honor the complexity of the various authors' arguments, methodologies, and topics while maintaining a seamless dialogic transition between the chapters. Still, because section breaks are not built into the structure of the book, it is up to the reader to discover this logic in the book's introduction or to decipher it intuitively.

All this is to say that the interdisciplinary nature of the volume, though largely effective given the project's aims, comes with a few trade-offs. The book does not pretend (or want) to be an exclusively devotional *or* art historical *or* historical *or* religious *or* cultural—*or* whatever!—work of scholarship. For this reason, it may not maintain consistent audience appeal from chapter to chapter and risks irking those in need of a little more organization.

Despite these drawbacks, *Latter-day Saint Art* is full of admirable attempts to be more international, diverse, and equitable in its topical scope and authorial representation. Further study of Latter-day Saints and their cultural products will require much more of this, due to the Church of Jesus Christ's increasingly global member population and influence. While it is impossible to fully escape the US-centric nature of Mormonism in its origination, this volume opens the door to international artists, subjects, and regionally specific phenomena within Latter-day Saint identity—and will hopefully prompt support of international scholars who are best positioned to speak on such topics.

This book takes diverse representation a step further by embracing many different, and potentially paradoxical, definitions of Latter-day Saint art. Beardsley, Allred, and their community of contributors aim to offer "a variety of approaches and artworks," giving "substance and detailed vitality to the beautiful and multidimensional answer to the always inadequate question of singularly defining what Mormon art is" (15). It seems appropriate, then, that Terryl Givens, author of *People of Paradox: A History of Mormon Culture* (Oxford University Press, 2007), was tasked with the inaugural chapter. Consistent with his previous publications, Givens writes in *Latter-day Saint Art* about the various theological, systemic, and cultural paradoxes of Mormonism: the tension

between individual salvation and communal exaltation, the belief in continuing revelation and an open canon without recent additions to Latter-day Saint scripture, and the conflation of sacred and recreational space from pulpit to basketball court in Latter-day Saint chapels, to name a few. Though these oppositional ideologies and features of the faith exist in tension, for Givens, they are not necessarily at odds. "These paradoxes," he writes, "are destabilizing in the best of ways, providing the catalyst, the energy, for perpetual self-examination and healthy discontent" (18).

Not only does Givens demonstrate how to accept seemingly opposing perspectives, he simultaneously lays the foundations for the authors that follow. The volume itself lives in paradoxical tension with its desire to create room for nuance and complexity while necessarily limiting its scope. Readers who resist adopting Givens's mindset (or put simply by others as a "both things are true" approach[1]) may find themselves frustrated, unable to fully appreciate the diversity of perspectives and multiplicity of definitions the book puts forth. However, those who embrace the book's multifaceted approach to Latter-day Saint art will benefit from the varied perspectives it presents.

Continuing the theme of welcoming complex, diverse viewpoints, this book, unlike most publications, does not end with a summary of answers but instead puts forth a series of open-ended questions. Rather than cyclically reinforcing any one argument in its conclusion, this volume—very deliberately—does not end where it begins. It effectively reviews what LDS art has come before, explains how and why LDS art is where it is currently, and uses its momentum to propel us forward into uncharted territory. In her incisive afterword, Laura Allred Hurtado marks a definitive turn in the discourse. She writes, "If I were asked to define Mormon art—a philosophical question I've grown tired of and that has taken up so much of the discourse as to become distracting—not only would I struggle to answer, but I would likely wonder whether the question itself is worth asking, because of the circular and limiting nature of the inquiry itself" (627).

Without discrediting the thoughtful and brilliant contributions of the collected authors, Hurtado expertly weaves together common threads, distills central arguments, communicates the stakes, and launches us into a new era of scholarship. Like a musical elision, her essay could

1. See Kate Holbrook, *Both Things Are True* (Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship; Deseret Book, 2023).

be both the end of this book and the beginning of the next, marking a methodological shift and ceremoniously breaking new ground within the study of Latter-day Saint art.

Thanks to *Latter-day Saint Art*—and much to the relief of authors like Hurtado—scholars can move beyond subjective debates regarding what is or isn't Mormon art. The triumph of this volume is threefold: It puts to rest our preoccupation with a singular definition of Mormon art, thus expanding the criteria for canonic inclusion; it provides alternative frameworks with which future scholars can proceed; and it urges readers to consider all that Latter-day Saint art already is and can be. The study of Latter-day Saint art will never be the same.

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COVER

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